

ARTICLE

Early Modern Music in the Collection of Ellen Ann Willmott (1858–1934)

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Abstract

Ellen Ann Willmott, although known primarily as a horticulturist, was also an amateur musician and the owner of an important library. As well as containing books on botanical subjects, this library was particularly strong in its early modern musical contents, both manuscript and printed. This article examines the early modern music in Ellen Willmott's library (which featured composers ranging roughly from Thomas Tallis to Henry Purcell), her collecting habits, and her methods of acquisition. It also evaluates what happened to her library after her death, including the circumstances of its dispersal by auction in 1935, charting the disposal of the more significant items to their various winning bidders. In so doing, it offers a window onto the economics of the music trade — a trade driven by an item's condition and completeness, and stimulated by the early music revival.

Keywords: Early modern music; collectors; Willmott; Quaritch; Sadler; auctions

Ellen Ann Willmott, once known as ‘the greatest of living women-gardeners’, achieved fame in her lifetime as a horticulturist.¹ She was the first woman to take an active role on a Royal Horticultural Society committee, an original recipient of the same society's Victoria Medal of Honour, and one of the first female fellows of the Linnean Society.² Willmott was known for developing new plants, many of which (including the famous *Willmottiae* and *Warleyensis* cultivars) were named after her or her home, Warley Place in Essex;³ her garden, which was visited by Queen Mary, Queen Alexandra, and Princess Victoria, contained over 100,000 different species of trees, shrubs, and plants, and was cared for by as many as 104 gardeners.⁴ In 1909, Bernard Quaritch published a book of photographs of Willmott's garden, taken by Willmott herself, which was deemed to be of ‘exceptional interest to horticulturists’.⁵ A book on roses cultured in her garden, *The Genus Rosa*, was published between 1910 and 1914.⁶

Images are reproduced by permission of the British Library London, Bernard Quaritch Ltd., and by kind permission of the Berkeley family and Spetchley Park Gardens Charitable Trust. I thank Wallace Kwong and Karen Davidson for various forms of help while my research was in progress.

¹Gertrude Jekyll, *Children and Gardens* (Country Life, 1908), p. 13.

²Paula Sewell, ‘Miss Ellen Willmott of Warley Place, Essex: Eminent Gardener, Horticulturist and Garden Photographer’, *Garden History*, 42 (2014), pp. 89–105 (p. 90).

³J. C. Shenstone, ‘The Gardens of Warley Place, Brentwood, Essex’, *Essex Naturalist*, 17 (1912), pp. 40–60 (p. 41).

⁴Audrey le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place: Her Life and her Gardens* (Faber & Faber, 1980), p. 93.

⁵[Anon.], ‘Science Gossip’, *The Athenaeum*, 4278 (23 October 1909), p. 499. The book is Ellen Willmott, *Warley Garden in Spring and Summer* (Wheldon & Wesley, 1909).

⁶Ellen Ann Willmott, *The Genus Rosa*, 25 vols (John Murray, 1910–14).

Although Willmott's achievements as a horticulturist are well known, at least in plant circles, her passion for book collecting is less well documented. Willmott accrued a varied, though not extensive, library. As well as containing various books on botanical subjects, her hoard also contained some particularly valuable music items, including prints, manuscripts, and autograph letters in the handwriting of famous composers. A substantial portion of this music was produced in the early modern period (i.e. between the years c. 1500 and 1700), including various printed partbooks and some historically significant manuscript items — a few of which are today recognized as important. Despite her library's notable contents, however, little work has been done on Willmott's collection. A brief summary of her music holdings appeared in the fourth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*,⁷ and Willmott was later included by Alec Hyatt King in his survey of music collectors; he reported that she was 'the last of the few women who have collected music, which she did with taste and discrimination', although he gave only a very thin description of her collection.⁸ A substantial biography of Willmott by Audrey le Lièvre was published in 1980, and another, by Sandra Lawrence, appeared in 2022, but both make only brief mention of her music.⁹ One item from Willmott's library has more recently received some scholarly coverage (a manuscript volume containing Henry Purcell's Violin Sonata, among other works, previously thought lost), but her collection has otherwise gone neglected.¹⁰ This is partly due to the fact that scholarship on music bibliography has prioritized collectors and collections of the eighteenth century;¹¹ studies on those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are few.¹² Existing work has also tended to focus less on amateur collectors, usually because records of their activities survive only rarely.¹³ This is more the pity given that music ownership in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was almost entirely male-dominated; since the posthumous auction of Willmott's collection in 1935, only a handful of female collectors have become known — all of them the owners of very modest collections.¹⁴ Several questions consequently remain about Willmott and her music collection in terms of its contents, her methods of acquisition, and the circumstances under which her collection was dispersed.

The following pages seek to address these questions primarily by recourse to Willmott's papers, which are today kept at Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire. Although little known and not yet fully catalogued, these provide information on Willmott's dealings with various booksellers; the papers survive in large quantity, which is unusual for an amateur collector.¹⁵ They provide information about her methods of acquisition, details of her expenditure, and give clues as to the potential criteria that may have lain behind

⁷*Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by H. C. Colles, 6 vols (Macmillan, 1940), III, pp. 167–68.

⁸A. Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music, c. 1600–1960* (Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 74.

⁹le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, pp. 163 and 219–20; Sandra Lawrence, *Miss Willmott's Ghosts: The Extraordinary Life and Gardens of a Forgotten Genius* (Blink Publishing, 2022).

¹⁰Peter Holman, 'A Purcell Manuscript Lost and Found', *Early Music*, 40 (2012), pp. 469–87, doi:10.1093/em/cas100.

¹¹See, for instance, R. J. Bruce and H. D. Johnstone, 'A Catalogue of the Truly Valuable and Curious Library of Music Late in the Possession of Dr. William Boyce (1779): Transcription and Commentary', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 43 (2010), pp. 111–71, doi:10.1080/14723808.2010.10541033; H. Diack Johnstone, 'Thomas Bever: An 18th-Century Jurist and his Collection of Old Music', *The Musical Times*, 164 (2023), pp. 75–94.

¹²Of the few studies, see in particular Arthur Searle, 'Julian Marshall and the British Museum: Music Collecting in the Later Nineteenth Century', *British Library Journal*, 9 (1985), pp. 67–87; and James Coover, *Music at Auction: Puttick and Simpson (of London), 1794–1971* (Harmonie Park Press, 1988).

¹³H. Diack Johnstone, 'Claver Morris, an Early Eighteenth-Century English Physician and Amateur Musician Extraordinaire', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 133 (2008), pp. 93–127 (p. 93), doi:10.1093/jrma/fkm010.

¹⁴Music belonging to a Miss Cornewall, Herefordshire, appeared listed in a sale catalogue produced in 1796; music belonging to a Mrs Fawcett was listed in a catalogue issued by an unknown seller in 1845. The same year the music collection of a Miss Wainwright was auctioned by Lewis. Puttick sold the collections of Lady Mary Elizabeth Sykes in 1847, Maria Hackett in 1875, Elizabeth Masson in 1876, and Mrs Mapleson senior in 1881, although no others appear to be known until Willmott. See Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, pp. 17, 135, and 138–39.

¹⁵Willmott's papers are currently kept in boxes in the Berkeley Castle archives, although it is hoped they will be fully catalogued at some point in the future. I refer to individual documents in the Willmott papers simply by correspondent and date.

her purchases. Hitherto unnoticed correspondence among Willmott's papers details how she sought to sell off items from her library when she hit financial hardship in the 1920s; the eventual fate of some items may also be tracked, thanks to material relating to the posthumous auction of the library in 1935. An annotated auctioneer's copy of this sale's catalogue, at the British Library, London, reveals the identities of the winning bidders, as well as the prices they paid.¹⁶ Several lots from that sale may be found in subsequent sale catalogues; this allows for the custodial history of certain items once in Willmott's collection to be traced successively from owner to owner, thus providing a panorama of the English music trade and its economics in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Willmott and her Library

Ellen Willmott was born in 1858 to Frederick Willmott (1825–92), a solicitor, and Ellen Fell (d. 1898), a scion of the wealthy Tasker family. In 1875 the Willmott family moved from London to Warley Place, Essex, a large estate which comprised a house with two lodges, set in fifty acres of parkland (see [Figure 1](#)); the family also had a chateau at Tresserve, Aix-les-Bains, France, acquired in 1890.¹⁷ Frederick Willmott died in 1892; Ellen inherited Warley, along with her sister Rose, who had married Robert Valentine Berkeley in 1891 and who moved to her husband's home, Spetchley Park in Worcestershire, in 1897. Their mother died in 1898, leaving effects worth just over £134,000 — an extremely large sum, roughly the equivalent of £15 million today — the sole beneficiaries of which were Ellen and Rose.¹⁸ With her mother dead and her sister having left home, Ellen was left at Warley alone, free to indulge in her apparent passion for purchasing books, both musical and botanical.



Figure 1. Warley Place, Essex, photographed by Ellen Willmott, date unknown. From a private collection; reproduced by permission.

¹⁶Sotheby & 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* (Kitchen & Barratt, 1935). The auctioneer's copy of the catalogue is at the British Library, shelf mark S. C. Sotheby 1531.

¹⁷Le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 57.

¹⁸Currency equivalents are based on figures provided by the Bank of England Inflation Calculator <<https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>> [accessed 22 July 2025].

Willmott's earliest biographer, Audrey le Lièvre, was the first to point out that she was well connected musically: she was friends with Sir Frederick Bridge (1844–1924), organist of Westminster Abbey and a professor at the Royal College of Music and the University of London, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), Professor of Music at the University of Cambridge, and Sir Walter Parratt (1841–1924), Heather Professor of Music at Oxford, Organist of St George's, Windsor, and Master of the Queen's Music — who le Lièvre reckoned 'must have opened many doors' for her.¹⁹ But her papers shed light on an even larger cast of musicians and musicologists with whom Willmott corresponded, including Sir Hugh Allen (1869–1946), principal of the Royal College of Music, Sir John Stainer (1840–1901), Professor of Music at Oxford University, and, crucially, William Barclay Squire (1855–1927), who was for much of his life involved with the music department of the British Museum.

Willmott was also a capable musician herself. She was a lutenist, an 'accomplished violinist', and, according to one commentator, 'an expert musician, playing the violin, viola, cello, organ and piano'.²⁰ Her collection contained some twenty-eight instruments (most of them plectral or wind), some of which were valuable, including several Amati violins, and a harpsichord given to her by her father around 1870.²¹ Willmott's papers show that she regularly attended concerts and held musical evenings at home.²² She was a member of the Folk-Song Society and the International Musical Society,²³ and she also sang: she attended weekly rehearsals of the London Bach Choir and was 'devoted to madrigal singing'.²⁴ This would explain her interest in purchasing madrigal publications of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the details of which are set out below.

By the time Willmott's collection was auctioned off in 1935, it purportedly ran only to 575 items, divided in the auction catalogue into 'The General Library' (lots 1–117), 'The Botanical Library' (lots 118–381), and 'The Musical Library' (lots 382–575).²⁵ With a library containing fewer than six hundred items, and a music section of fewer than two hundred, Willmott appears to have been the custodian of a carefully assembled *bibliothèque choisie* rather than an inveterate accumulator: her library was modest by the standards of some contemporary collectors whose hoards ran into the thousands.²⁶ The 1935 Willmott auction catalogue makes clear on its title page that it was offering for sale items 'selected from the library at Warley Place', however; therefore it did not fully represent the true extent of her collection.²⁷ Unfortunately no complete inventory for Willmott's library survives, published or

¹⁹le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 151.

²⁰Alfred Parsons and Graham Stuart Thomas, *A Garden of Roses* (Pavilion, 1987), p. 12. Betty Massingham, 'Gardeners of the Past: Ellen A. Willmott', *Gardeners' Chronicle*, 156 (1964), p. 385, discusses her as a lutenist, and Dawn MacLeod, *Down-to-Earth Women: Those Who Care for the Soil* (Blackwood, 1982), p. 54, as a violinist.

²¹This harpsichord was recently sold; see lot 39 in Sotheby's 'Property from the Berkeley Collection' auction, 11 December 2019 <<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2019/spetchley-property-from-the-berkeley-collection>> [accessed 18 June 2025]. D. W. Krummel, 'An Edwardian Gentlemen's Musical Exhibition', *Music Library Association Notes*, 32 (1976), pp. 711–18 (p. 715); le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 30.

²²Jane Brown, 'Miss Willmott's Ghost', *The Independent*, 11 September 1999 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/the-essay-miss-willmott-s-ghost-1117862.html>> [accessed 6 October 2025]. Various items in Willmott's correspondence attest to her attendance at concerts, including the Three Choirs festival. See Karen Davidson's handlist, 'Willmott Box 13–19 Private correspondence', Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire.

²³See the front matter to the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, 2.6 (1905), p. vii; *Report of the Fourth Congress of the International Musical Society, London, 29 May–3 June 1911*, ed. by Charles Maclean (Novello, 1912), p. 3.

²⁴Ellen Shoshkes, *Jaqueline Tyrwhitt: A Transnational Life in Urban Planning and Design* (Routledge, 2016), p. 61; Parsons and Thomas, *A Garden of Roses*, 12. Some correspondence in Ellen Willmott's papers refers to madrigal societies, although it is not immediately clear which ones. See Davidson's 'Willmott Box 13–19 Private correspondence'.

²⁵Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts*, [p. i].

²⁶For example, the music collection of James E. Matthew (1867–1924) contained around five thousand items; the auction of Julian Marshall (1836–1903), 'one of the greatest of all British collectors' according to Hyatt King, listed 1556 items; the 1917 music auction of W. H. Cummings (1831–1915) listed 1744 items. See Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, pp. 64–65; Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Famous Musical Library of Books, Manuscripts, Autograph Letters, Musical Scores, etc., the Property of the Late W. H. Cummings* (Kitchen & Barratt, 1917); Searle, 'Julian Marshall and the British Museum'.

²⁷Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts*, title page; see Figure 16.

otherwise; nor are items she owned generally easy to track down because of her tendency not to mark her volumes in any way — Willmott's books and manuscripts are not usually identifiable from any inscribed name or acquisition note; nor did she use bookplates.²⁸ Consequently her items are seldom to be traced in subsequent sale catalogues, with only a few notable exceptions (mentioned below). A sense of the true extent of Willmott's library may nevertheless be gleaned from the numerous invoices for books and manuscripts that survive in her papers, not all of which appeared listed in the 1935 auction, and also from an interim list of her books that was drawn up in a bid to tout certain items to London booksellers when Willmott hit financial hardship in the 1920s.

The majority of music collectors active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were regular attenders at book auctions — most of which were held in London, where the principal auctioneers and book dealers had their premises. Auctioneers' copies of sale catalogues, marked up with the names of winning bidders and the prices they paid, reveal who bought what and for how much; in the case of music sales, these catalogues shed light on a relatively small but hardcore cast of purchasers who attended auctions regularly.²⁹ Ouseley (who purchased 'one rare item after another'), Marshall, and Cummings are names which crop up again and again in these annotated auction catalogues, all of whom were regular bidders at auctions;³⁰ Willmott's name, though, has not yet been found as a winning bidder in a single book sale held between 1900 and 1934, when, to judge from her papers, she was at her most active as a collector. She seems not to have attended any auctions herself, even though Warley Place is only fifteen miles from central London. Instead, Willmott's *modus operandi* appear to have been those of an armchair purchaser: she perused sale catalogues, buying items at fixed advertised prices from specific dealers, or she had an agent bid on her behalf in the saleroom at auctions.³¹ (Most of Willmott's invoices record purchases from numbered catalogues, with fixed prices, rather than lots acquired at named auctions.)

Willmott's various purchases are documented by her numerous invoices: these show that she had dealings with several booksellers, both at home and abroad. More than three hundred invoices survive from London-based firms, but there are also bills from dealers in Stratford-upon-Avon, Bath, and Derby, and some thirty invoices from booksellers in France, Switzerland, and Germany.³² Most of the booksellers with whom Willmott had dealings appear to have supplied books of a general nature or on botanical subjects. Only a few (Frost, Lemencier, Rosenthal, and Tregaskis) supplied books *on* music; scores, recently published rather than antiquarian, were supplied chiefly by Augner, Breitkopf & Härtel, and Novello & Co. For a handful of dealers Willmott was a regular customer: nineteen invoices survive from Cumin & Masson of Lyon (1904–11); sixteen from Gregory George of Bath (1903–12); sixteen from Novello & Co., London (1908–22); and no fewer than sixty-six from the London firm of Wesley & Sons (1903–18).³³ But it is the London bookseller Bernard Quaritch who supplied Willmott with the most items, including music. More than two hundred invoices and related correspondence survive in her papers from that firm, ranging from September 1899 to July 1912, shedding light on a thirteen-year

²⁸This contrasts with other collectors such as Sir Frederick Ouseley (1825–89), who would typically 'annotate his books and manuscripts, often with comments on the beauty or otherwise of the music, perhaps with an eye to their future sale or publication'; see Stephen Roe, 'The Newly Rediscovered Autograph Manuscripts of Johann Christian Bach's Milan Sacred Music at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg (ND VI 540, Vols. 1–4)', in J. C. Bach, ed. by Paul Corneilson (Ashgate, 2016), pp. 355–74 (p. 360), doi:10.4324/9781315092362.

²⁹Many of these annotated copies are today at the British Library; they were previously kept at the British Museum. For a handlist, see British Museum, *List of Catalogues of English Books Sales 1676–1900, Now in the British Museum* (British Museum, 1915).

³⁰Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, p. 67; also pp. 58 and 64.

³¹This seems to come down to a matter of preference rather than women being unwelcome in the auction chamber; women were attending auctions as early as the eighteenth century. See Cynthia Lawrence, *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors, and Connoisseurs* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 239.

³²Invoices survive from firms in Aix-en-Provence, Chambéry, Lyon, Nice, Nancy, Paris, Brussels, Geneva, Neudamm, and Munich.

³³These totals reflect the music invoices as they are currently available; further invoices may come to light in the future.

relationship. Although only a small portion of these documents pertain to music purchases, they nevertheless bring into focus Willmott's apparent musical interests, documenting her penchant for early modern music, especially madrigals.

Early Acquisitions, 1890–1904

Exactly when Willmott began purchasing books is uncertain. Audrey le Lièvre reckoned that the foundations of Willmott's 'magnificent library of rare books at Warley Place' were laid in the 1870s, when she received for her sixteenth birthday a harpsichord which had purportedly belonged to Princess Amelia.³⁴ Relatively few invoices survive from the end of the nineteenth century to prove this position (the earliest extant Willmott book invoice appears to be from Librairie Jullien of Geneva, dated 1897), although a letter to Willmott from the booksellers Ellis & Elvey, dated 19 April 1890, refers first to the cleaning and rebinding of a volume described as 'Simpson', and then to two volumes of music by the German composer Giovanni Girolamo Kapsperger (1580–1651), which Willmott had left with them 'for enquiry'; the letter also tells us that she owned Book IV of his *Villanelle* and Book I of his *Motetti*. It has not yet been possible to find evidence for Willmott's acquisition of these volumes, and worse is that some of her bills were recently disposed of because they were in very poor condition.³⁵ If le Lièvre was able to substantiate book acquisitions in the 1870s and 1880s, then she presumably had access to documents which are today lost or inaccessible.³⁶

This incomplete state of Willmott's papers is illustrated by her various invoices from Bernard Quaritch. The earliest Quaritch invoice is dated 1 September 1899, for a single item: *A Dictionary of English Booksellers*, at a price of 1s. 8d. Next come nine further invoices, dated as far as 27 March 1902, for a total of £81 1s. 2d. Yet a statement issued to Willmott by Quaritch on 31 March 1902 records a balance of £861 10s. 9d. already owing on 31 December 1901 — about £91,000 today, even though no invoices can be found to explain how this balance was accumulated. The Willmott papers are therefore incomplete insofar as Quaritch invoices are concerned; consequently they do not fully represent the extent of her purchases. The same appears to be true of the paper trail for other sellers: if by le Lièvre's reckoning Willmott's collecting really did begin on or just after her sixteenth birthday in 1874, then some twenty-five years' worth of acquisitions are today undocumented. The lion's share of the invoices, insofar as they can be located, range in date roughly from 1897 to 1931, suggesting that Willmott's purchases began about the time her sister Rose left home — perhaps boosted by the inheritance of her mother's estate, which had come to Ellen and Rose in 1898.

The Julian Marshall Sale (1904)

Although she purchased some Amati stringed instruments of historical importance at the end of the nineteenth century,³⁷ Willmott's first major acquisitions of early modern music appear to have come in 1904, when she purchased fifteen lots from the third auction (of four) that dispersed the books and manuscripts of Julian Marshall (1836–1903), 'the greatest of all British collectors', whose library

³⁴le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 26. Le Lièvre calls this instrument a piano, but it was a harpsichord (see below); she also suggests that the Princess Amelia who previously owned it was Princess Amelia (1783–1810), fifteenth daughter of King George III, although, as will be seen below, this instrument is more likely to have been connected to Princess Amelia (1711–1786), daughter of King George II, if indeed there was ever any royal connection at all.

³⁵See Karen Davidson, 'A Note on Invoices' in her undated handlist 'Willmott Box 27–32 Business', Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire, which explains about the disposal of certain items that were 'too badly damaged to keep'.

³⁶Not all of Willmott's papers are currently accessible; some which are accessible are in such poor condition that they cannot be produced for inspection.

³⁷According to le Lièvre, Willmott acquired an Amati violin from William Ebsworth Hill & Sons in December 1889, an Amati viola and cello in May 1890, and a further violin in November 1890, in order to complete an Amati quartet; *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 49. Lawrence contends that the first Amati violin was acquired in 1885; see *Miss Willmott's Ghosts*, pp. 86–87.

LONDON, 15 Piccadilly, W. 13 July 1904

Miss Willmott
to BERNARD QUARITCH,

My terms are Cash. POST OFFICE ORDERS payable at PICCADILLY CIRCUS, W.

Lost	at	Lot	Marshall Sale	Limit	Purchased for		
3		1	Abell				
		2	Albion			5	2 6
		22	Bateson			17	10
		30	Bennett			19	10
30		183	Dibdin				
		373	King			4	4
		376	Kirbye			20	5
		444	Morley } the best copy made up from				
		445	Morley } two lots			52	10
25	5	466	Notes & Querles				
		484	Playford			10	15
		487	Playford			14	5
		495	Purcell			29	15
		524	Songs			4	
		580	Terry			1	1
		589	Tadpaffer				17
		601	Watson			8	15
		611	Wilbey			48	10
			b.			236	19 6
			commission 10%			23	14
						£ 260	13 6

Figure 2. Quaritch's invoice to Ellen Willmott, 13 July 1904, following the Julian Marshall sale.

contained a 'formidable array of early printed English music'.³⁸ This third Marshall sale ran from 11 to 12 July 1904; it was handled by Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge.³⁹ An invoice from Quaritch to Willmott dated 13 July that year lists her various purchases from that sale in sequence: except for lots 466, 580, and 589, all of her purchases were music (see Figure 2). Lots 1, 2, 373, 483, 484, and 495 were music volumes of the seventeenth century; lot 524 was a collection of songs published in about 1725; lots 22, 30, 376, 444, 445, 601, and 611 were madrigals published in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century by composers including Thomas Bateson, John Bennett, George Kirbye, Thomas Morley, Thomas Watson, and John Wilbye. (See Table 1.)

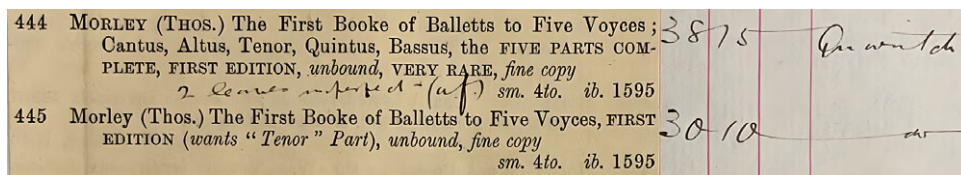
This invoice is important for several reasons. First, it records the earliest of Willmott's purchases that testify to her apparent affinity for early modern music — particularly madrigals. Second, it offers clear evidence that Quaritch was bidding at the auction as Willmott's agent: Willmott had evidently selected items she wanted from the Marshall catalogue, so that Quaritch could bid at the sale on her behalf (a letter from Quaritch to Willmott dated 11 July 1904 confirms that he was 'returning your marked catalogue

³⁸Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, p. 64; Searle, 'Julian Marshall and the British Museum', p. 50.

³⁹Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Valuable & Interesting Library of Julian Marshall [...] 11 July 1904* (Kitchen & Barratt, 1904). An annotated copy of this catalogue survives at the British Library, shelf mark S. C. Sotheby 1068.

Table 1. Madrigal publications purchased by Willmott at the 1904 sale of Julian Marshall

Lot	Composer	Title
22	Thomas Bateson	<i>The First Set of English Madrigales to 3, 4, 5 and 6 Voices</i> (London, 1604), four volumes only (the Cantus, Altus, Bassus, and Sextus parts) and <i>The Second Set of Madrigales</i> (London, 1618), two volumes only (the Cantus and Bassus parts)
30	John Bennett	<i>Madrigalls to Foure Voyces</i> (London, 1599), three volumes only (Altus, Tenor, and Bassus); the Bassus was a MS copy in the hand of Dr Burney
376	George Kirbye	<i>First Set of English Madrigalls to 4, 5 & 6 Voyces</i> (London, 1597), five volumes only (Cantus primus, Cantus secundus, Tenor, and Bassus in one volume, Sextus loose and uncut)
444	Thomas Morley	<i>The First Booke of Balletts to Five Voyces</i> (London, 1595) five volumes complete, unbound, '2 leaves imperfect'
445	Thomas Morley	<i>The First Booke of Balletts to Five Voyces</i> (London, 1595) four volumes only (Cantus, Altus, Quintus, Bassus), unbound
484	John Playford	<i>Select Ayres and Dialogues for One, Two, and Three Voyces</i> (London, 1659), three volumes complete, unbound
487	John Playford	<i>Choice Ayres, Songs, and Dialogues</i> (London, 1675–84), five volumes complete, variously bound/unbound
495	Henry Purcell	<i>Sonnatas of III Parts: Two Viollins and Basse: to the Organ or Harpssecord</i> (London, 1683)
601	Thomas Watson	<i>The First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished</i> (London, 1590), Sextus and Bassus parts only, in one volume
611	John Wilbye	<i>The First Set of English Madrigals to 3. 4. 5 and 6 Voices, Newly Composed</i> (London, 1598), complete, and <i>The Second Set of Madrigals to 3. 4. 5. and 6. Parts</i> (London, 1609), five volumes of six, lacking Sextus part

**Figure 3.** Lots 444 and 445 in the 1904 sale of Julian Marshall (annotated copy in the British Library, London, S. C. Sotheby 1268). Reproduced by permission.

which was given me by Messrs. Sotheby' at the Marshall sale). Third, this invoice suggests that Willmott may have been interested in only the best available copies of early modern printed music. For instance, lots 444 and 445 appear combined in the invoice for a total price of £52 10s.; both are referred to simply as 'Morley', and are described as 'the best copy made up from two lots'. Recourse to Marshall's 1904 catalogue reveals that these were volumes belonging to Morley's *First Booke of Balletts to Five Voyces*. The first (lot 444), although complete with all five partbooks present, described as a 'fine copy', had '2 leaves imperfect'; the second (lot 445), although it was similarly called a 'fine copy', lacked its Tenor partbook (see Figure 3).⁴⁰ It would therefore seem that Quaritch combined them to make 'the best copy made up from two lots', as indicated in his invoice.

Also telling is lot no. 183 in the Marshall invoice, a collection of autograph letters from the composer, dramatist, and novelist Charles Dibdin (1745–1814) and his contemporaries. This lot appears on the

⁴⁰Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Valuable & Interesting Library*, lots 444 and 445.

invoice without a price. The annotated catalogue for Marshall's 1904 sale reveals that it went not to Quaritch but to the collector William Thomas Freemantle (1849–1931), for a price of £30.⁴¹ Willmott, having marked up her copy of the Marshall auction catalogue, presumably identified not only lots of interest, but also maximum prices that she was willing to pay, including for the Dibdin letters (she already owned at least one letter in his hand).⁴² It would seem that she was unwilling to pay as much as £30 for them, however, and that her maximum price, communicated to Quaritch in advance, was exceeded by Freemantle. This suggests that Willmott's spending was not yet entirely unbridled.

Almost all of the music volumes purchased by Willmott via Quaritch at the Marshall sale were printed partbooks — a format in which each voice part is presented in its own volume, belonging to a set, rather than in score (partbook sets are therefore vulnerable to loss of one or more of their constituent volumes, which can render them useless for performance purposes). Scrutiny of the 1904 Marshall catalogue reveals that not all of the partbook sets Willmott purchased were complete. Lot 22 comprised two partbook sets: Bateson's *First Set of Madrigales* (1604) and the same composer's *Second Set of Madrigales* (1618). Each set ought to have had six separate volumes (Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus, Quintus, Sextus), but the former offered only the Cantus, Altus, Bassus, and Sextus books — four volumes out of six; the latter offered only the Cantus and Bassus books — two out of six. Similarly, lot 445, Morley's *First Booke of Balletts to Five Voyces* (1595), lacked its Tenor partbook, giving only four volumes out of five. Willmott's madrigal purchases from the Marshall sale of 1904 are listed in [Table 1](#).

Other items won at the same sale were acquired complete but were impractically bound. Lot 376, Kirbye's *First Set of English Madrigalls to 4, 5 & 6 Voyces* (1597), and lot 601, Watson's *First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished* (1590), were purchased as complete sets, so had all of their respective voice parts, but the partbooks of both publications were bound together in a single volume (see [Figure 4](#)). This would have required all four, five, or even six musicians to sing from different pages of a single composite volume simultaneously, making performance extremely difficult if not impossible. This suggests that Willmott was acquiring music for antiquarian rather than practical purposes — a point which receives further discussion below.

Quaritch's invoice to Willmott for purchases made on her behalf at the 1904 Marshall sale (see [Figure 2](#)) is the only record we have to show that material from his collection entered hers. Julian Marshall's bookplate has not yet been found in any material subsequently purchased by Willmott, even though it is 'easy enough to encounter' in other items he once owned (Marshall himself requested that his bookplates be retained by later owners).⁴³ Since his bookplates do not appear in any of Willmott's copies, it would seem that she had them removed in order to provide her own. Yet although Willmott was sent sketches and samples for the commission of a bookplate from the booksellers John and Edward Bumpus in 1907, a design seems not to have been settled upon. An invoice to Willmott from the Rembrandt Gallery, moreover, also dated 1907, lists the purchase of bookplates, but they do not appear to have been used. This makes tracing items from her collection difficult.

The Worshipful Company of Musicians Loan Exhibition (1904)

Willmott's purchases from the 1904 Julian Marshall sale coincided with an exhibition of 'beautiful old instruments, rare books, fine pictures, interesting manuscripts, chronological examples of music typography, and mementoes of musicians', held at Fishmongers' Hall, London, from 28 June to 16 July

⁴¹Ibid., lot 183.

⁴²The Worshipful Company of Musicians' Loan Exhibition of 1904, which receives more detailed discussion below, featured a letter from Dibdin to E. W. Brayley, dated 14 June 1827, which had been 'lent by Miss E. A. Willmott'. See *Worshipful Company of Musicians, An Illustrated Catalogue of the Music Loan Exhibition Held [...] by the Worshipful Company of Musicians at Fishmongers' Hall, June and July 1904* (Novello, 1909), p. 311.

⁴³Searle, 'Julian Marshall and the British Museum', p. 67. Searle uncovered a letter from Julian Marshall to the British Museum, asking that 'it would please my vanity a little if you could keep the MSS. together, and be careful that my bookplate appears in each volume'; see *ibid.*, p. 72.

- (a) 376 Kirbye (George) *The First Set of English Madrigalls to 4 · 5 · & 6 · Voyces, newly published, FIRST EDITION, Cantus primus and secundus, Tenor, Bassus and Sextus, in 1 vol. calf (from the Grenville Library), the Sextus part loose and uncut, VERY RARE sm. 4to. T. Este, 1597* 205 - Quiretch
- (b) 601 Watson (Thos.) *The First Set of Italian Madrigalls Englished: Sextus and Bassus Parts, ORIGINAL EDITION, in 1 vol. calf gilt sm. 4to. T. Este, 1590* 875 - Quiretch

Figure 4. Impracticably bound items (lots 376 and 601) purchased for Willmott at Julian Marshall's 1904 sale (annotated copy in the British Library, London, S. C. Sotheby 1268). Reproduced by permission.



Figure 5. Photograph of the Worshipful Company of Musicians Loan Exhibition (1904), Fishmongers' Hall, London. Reproduced by permission of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

1904 (see Figure 5).⁴⁴ It was hosted by the Worshipful Company of Musicians to celebrate the three-hundredth anniversary of their royal charter. Although evidence of her acquisitions for the later years of the nineteenth century is thin on the ground, Willmott evidently had an established music collection in place by 1904, since, as well as lending twenty-eight instruments to the exhibition, she also lent several music manuscripts — including items in the handwriting of J. S. Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Schubert.⁴⁵ She also lent some autograph letters from composers including Crotch, Dibdin, Smart, and Walmsley.⁴⁶ (Krummel pointed out that Willmott lent more music manuscripts than anybody else (twenty-one items), followed by Felix Moscheles (thirteen items)).⁴⁷ By June 1904, then,

⁴⁴Worshipful Company of Musicians, *English Music 1604 to 1904, Being the Lectures Given at the Music Loan Exhibition of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, held at Fishmongers' Hall, London* (Walter Scott Publishing, 1906), p. xi.

⁴⁵These included a copy of Bach's *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*, BWV 662, Beethoven's sketches for his Concerto in Eb, op. 73, and his Sonata in D, op. 28, some Brahms sketches with the composer's signature, some Mendelssohn songs, a Mozart sketch of 'Ah, spiegiarti', K. 178, and various Schubert sketches. The instruments included a bell harp, guitar, theorbo, cittern, and two sets of bagpipes. See Worshipful Company of Musicians, *An Illustrated Catalogue of the Music Loan Exhibition*, pp. 134, 137–38, 163, 181–83, 190–91, 194, 198, 201–02, 205, 220, and 228.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 276–78, 286, 288, 291, 291 297, 300, 311, and 333. The Liszt material lent for the exhibition is detailed in Hugh Macdonald and William Wright, 'A Lost Liszt Piano Piece Recovered', *Journal of the American Liszt Society*, 23 (1988) pp. 99–100 (p. 99).

⁴⁷Krummel, 'An Edwardian Gentlemen's Musical Exhibition', p. 716.

Willmott had assembled a musical collection that included instruments, prints, manuscripts, and autograph letters, even though only a handful of music purchases are documented by her invoices by this point. Indeed, the fact that her music and instruments were included in the exhibition at all suggests that she was already known as a collector of some importance: the curators included material in the exhibition belonging not only to members of the Worshipful Company, but also to ‘other notable collectors’.⁴⁸

Significantly, the Loan Exhibition of 1904 featured some forty-four early modern music items, most of which were printed partbooks containing madrigals. These were lent not by Willmott but by A. H. Littleton (1845–1914), W. H. Cummings (1831–1915), T. W. Taphouse (1838–1905), Sir August Manns (1825–1907), and G. E. P. Arkwright (1864–1944), among others.⁴⁹ According to her documentable purchases, Willmott’s acquisition of early printed music did not begin until Marshall’s sale of July 1904, while the Worshipful Company’s Loan Exhibition was still in progress. Perhaps it was sight of the early printed material at this exhibition which induced Willmott’s future purchases, documented by the several items she bought from the third Marshall sale.

Further Purchases, 1905–08

Willmott’s next major haul of early modern music came in 1905, when she purchased numerous items from Quaritch’s catalogue no. 237, issued in February that year. This included a collection of ‘Elizabethan Madrigals and Part-Songs’, all of them by early modern composers, running to thirty-three items.⁵⁰ An invoice from Quaritch to Willmott dated 6 March 1905 records that she purchased twenty-seven of the thirty-three madrigal prints listed, at a total cost of £559 17s. — roughly the equivalent to £63,000 today (see Figure 6).

A few of the purchases from this catalogue were complete partbook sets. Item 2 was all five volumes of Byrd’s *Psalmes, Sonets and Songs* (1588), for £30; item 14 was all five volumes of Gibbons’s *First Set of Madrigals and Mottets* (1612), for £84; item 28 was all six volumes of Watson’s *First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished* (1590), for £72. Willmott’s other purchases, however, were incomplete sets, some with only two out of an original five or six volumes present. Item 1, for instance, was four volumes of six (Cantus, Altus, Bassus, Sextus) to Bateson’s *Second Set of Madrigales* (1618), bound together in a single volume, for £16; item 8 was five volumes of six (Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus, Quintus) to Croce’s *Musica sacra: To Sixe Voyces* (1608), for £16; item 9 was two books of five (Cantus and Bassus) to Michael East’s *Second Set of Madrigales to 3. 4. and 5. Parts* (1606), for £10. Willmott also purchased several incomplete Byrd publications: item 3 was two volumes of six (Contratenor and Bassus) to his 1589 *Songs of Sundrie Natures*, for £10 10s.; item 4 was two volumes of six (Bassus and Sextus) to the 1610 edition of *Songs of Sundrie Natures*, also for £10 10s.; item 5 was four volumes of five (Superius, Medius, Contratenor, Tenor) to his *Cantiones sacrae* (1589), for £16; item 6 was two volumes of five from the second set of *Cantiones sacrae* (1591), for £6 10s.

In purchasing incomplete sets of partbooks, Willmott was presumably seeking to make good deficiencies in sets she already owned. This appears to be the case with item 1, the four volumes of six (Cantus, Altus, Bassus, Sextus) to Bateson’s *Second Set of Madrigales* (1618), bound together in a single volume and lacking its Tenor and Quintus books. Willmott had been able to purchase only the Cantus and Bassus parts to this publication at the Marshall sale of 1904;⁵¹ her purchase from Quaritch’s catalogue 237 would therefore have given her the Altus and Sextus parts that were wanting, but duplicates of the Cantus and Bassus parts. The four volumes listed in catalogue 237 were also accompanied by a ‘transcript of

⁴⁸Worshipful Company of Musicians, *English Music 1604 to 1904*, p. xi. Willmott does not appear to have joined the Company as a member.

⁴⁹Worshipful Company of Musicians, *An Illustrated Catalogue of the Music Loan Exhibition*, pp. 73–80.

⁵⁰Bernard Quaritch, *A Catalogue of Rare and Valuable Books Comprising Africa, America, Archaeology, Bibles and [...] a Collection of Elizabethan Madrigals*, no. 237 (Bernard Quaritch, 1905).

⁵¹Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Valuable & Interesting Library*, lot 22.

LONDON, 15 Piccadilly, W. 6th March 1905 188

Miss Willmott,
Worley Place, Great Warley, Essex.

to BERNARD QUARITCH.

Terms Cash, without Discount. All Books are sold as perfect. No claims for imperfections admitted after a lapse of 2 Months.
All goods, whilst in transit, are at the risk of Consignees. Post-Office Orders payable at 21 ROBERT STRAUGH, S.W.

	£	s	d.
The items just sold have been amalgamated where necessary, and the property sent for comparison.			
Cat. 237			
1 Pateson Madrigals, 4 pts. in 1 vol., & 1 vol. oblong Svo.	16	0	0
2 Byrd, Psalmes, Sonnets & Songs, 1588, 5 pts.	20	0	0
3 Byrd, Songs of Sundry Natures, 1589, 2 pts.	10	10	0
4 Byrd Songs of Sundry Natures, 1610, 2 pts.	10	10	0
5 Byrd, Liber primus Sacrarum Cantionum, 4 pts. 1589	16	0	0
6 Byrd, Liber secundus Sacrarum Cantionum, 2 pts., 1591	6	10	0
7 Byrd, Psalmes, Songs & Sonnets, 5 pts. 1611	32	0	0
8 Croce, Musica Sacra, 5 pts., 1603	16	0	0
9 Este, Second set of Madrigals, 1606 2 pts.	10	0	0
10 Este, Third set of Books, 1610 2 pts.	9	9	0
11 Este, Fifth Set of Books, 1618, 2 pts.	9	9	0
12 Farnaby, Canzonets, 2 pts. 1593	12	10	0
14 Gibbons, First set of Madrigals, 1612, 5 pts. (morocco case to be forwarded)	34	0	0
15 Morley, Canzonets, 1597 3 pts.	10	10	0
19 Morley, Canzonets, 1595 1 pt.	5	0	0
20 Morley, Canzonets, 1597 3 pts. (Altus part will be sent later, title being in course of repair)	17	10	0
21 Madrigals, 2 pts. 1598	10	10	0
22 ----- Large paper 2 pts.	22	10	0
23 Madrigals, 1600 3 pts.	16	10	0
24 Madrigals, The Triumphs of Briana, 1601 3 pts.	17	10	0
25 Ravenscroft, Discourse of the true Use of Charactering 1 vol. 1614	37	10	0
26 Tomkins, Songs (1622) 3 pts.	15	00	
27 Ward, First set of Madrigals, 1613, 5 pts.	28	0	0
28 Watson, First set of Madrigals, 6 pts. 1590 (morocco case to be sent gratis)	72	0	0
30 Wilbye, Second set of Madrigals, 2 pts. 1609	9	9	0
31 Yonge, Musica Transalpina, First Book, 4 pts., 1588	20	0	0
32 Yonge, the same, Second Book, 3 pts. 1597	16	0	0
	559	17	0
Allowance	29	17	0
	530	0	0

Figure 6. Invoice from Bernard Quaritch to Ellen Willmott, dated 6 March 1905, recording various purchases from catalogue 237.

the Tenor and Quintus parts from a copy which belonged to Edward Taylor, Gresham Music Lecturer, 1837–1863’ — essentially offering her a complete if not entirely authentic set.⁵²

The same appears to be the case with item 28 — all six volumes to Watson’s *First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished* (1590), sold unbound. Willmott had already purchased the Sextus and Bassus volumes of this publication at the Marshall sale, bound in a single volume;⁵³ her purchase of the same set from Quaritch would have given her a complete copy, even though she would have ended up with some redundant volumes. Her Byrd purchases from catalogue 237 are harder to justify, since no previous Byrd acquisitions are recorded in Willmott’s papers (none were purchased for her at the Marshall sale, even though some Byrd lots were available).⁵⁴ Willmott may already have acquired some incomplete Byrd sets by the time catalogue 237 was issued, the purchase of which is unrecorded, or she was speculatively buying incomplete sets in the hope that the absent partbooks would eventually turn up for sale. (If the latter, then she did not succeed: the same Byrd sets are listed in her posthumous auction of 1935 as incomplete.)⁵⁵

⁵² Quaritch, *A Catalogue of Rare and Valuable Books*, no. 237, item 1.

⁵³ Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Valuable & Interesting Library*, lot 601.

⁵⁴ Some Byrd lots featured in the Marshall sale were offered complete, and some were described as defective; see *ibid.*, lots 59–64.

⁵⁵ Willmott’s 1935 auction offered the Sextus and Bassus volumes to Byrd’s *Songs of Sundrie Natures* (1610); see Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts*, lot 411.

Willmott does, at least, seem to have been purchasing sets of particularly good quality from Quaritch's catalogue 237, even if some were lacking their constituent partbooks. Item 7, five volumes of six to Byrd's *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets* (1611), was unbound, but 'in lovely state as though just issued'; item 9, two volumes of five of East's *Second Set of Madrigales to 3. 4. and 5. Parts* (1606) was again unbound, but 'in very fine state'.⁵⁶ Item 14, all five volumes of Gibbons's *First Set of Madrigals and Mottets* (1612), had uncut pages, but was 'in beautiful condition';⁵⁷ item 28, all six volumes of Watson's *First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished* (1590), sold unbound, was 'in sound state'.⁵⁸ Willmott's acquisition of these sets of volumes, whether complete or incomplete, suggests that she was seeking the best possible copies she could find. This notion is supported by the volumes she did *not* buy from the Quaritch catalogue: items 15, 17, 18, and 29. Item 15 was all three volumes (Cantus, Altus, and Bassus) to the first edition of Morley's *Canzonets to Two and Three Voices* (1593), but some leaves were missing, and various margins were described as defective; Willmott went instead for item 16, which offered the same publication but only the Altus partbook (which had only a defective last leaf).⁵⁹ Presumably Willmott had already acquired the Cantus and Bassus volumes to this publication, or she intended to complete the set at a later date (if she did complete the set, then it did not feature in her posthumous auction, which lists only the third edition of this publication, issued in 1606, bound into a single volume).⁶⁰ Lots 17, 18, and 29 were not purchased presumably because they offered volumes that Willmott had already purchased at the 1904 Marshall sale.⁶¹ This suggests that Willmott was careful not to purchase material she already owned, unless seeking to complete a set that was missing one or more of its volumes.

Further evidence of Willmott's preference for high-quality copies is offered by a correspondence card that accompanies Quaritch's invoice of 6 March 1905, bearing the same date (see Figure 7). It shows that Willmott had sent some material to Quaritch 'for comparison'. The volumes were drawn from seven partbook publications; six were acquired at the 1904 Marshall sale (all the sets snapped up at that sale, excluding those of Bennett and Kirbye), along with a Bassus partbook to Byrd's *Songs of Sundrie Natures*, the purchase of which is not documented in Willmott's papers. If Willmott was sending material 'for comparison' to Quaritch in advance of ordering items, then it would seem she was seeking to find the best copies available — ones which would complement her existing copies and offer an impression of uniformity. This same list shows that Willmott had also sent him her set of Morley's *First Booke of Balletts to Five Voyces* (1595), which had been purchased complete from Marshall (lot 444 in his 1904 sale), but which had '2 leaves imperfect'; presumably she was seeking a perfect copy.

The Armstrong–Finch Manuscript

One item shown at the 1904 Loan Exhibition was a manuscript volume containing Purcell's Violin Sonata in G Minor, Z. 780 (among other works), known today as the Armstrong–Finch manuscript, named after its two copyists (now London, British Library, MS Mus. 1851); it had been lent by its then owner, the Oxford bookseller T. W. Taphouse.⁶² The manuscript may be traced to the saleroom only as early as 1814, when it appeared in the auction of Granville Sharp (1735–1813), held from 7–9 February that year; from there it went to the bookseller James Bartleman (1769–1821) for 2s. 6d.; it went in his sale

⁵⁶Quaritch, *A Catalogue of Rare and Valuable Books*, no. 237, items 28, 14, 7, and 9.

⁵⁷Ibid., item 14. The term 'uncut' refers to books with untrimmed text blocks, with the pages still attached to adjacent pages at the top or fore-edge. Uncut pages cannot be opened, and would have substantially hindered practical use.

⁵⁸Ibid., item 28.

⁵⁹Ibid., items 15 and 16.

⁶⁰Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts*, lot no. 494.

⁶¹Morley's *First Booke of Balletts to Five Voyces* (1595), five volumes complete; Morley's *First Booke of Balletts to Five Voyces* (second edition, 1600), three volumes of five; Wilbye's *First Set of English Madrigals* (1598), six volumes complete. See Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Valuable & Interesting Library*, lots 444, 450, and 611.

⁶²Worshipful Company of Musicians, *An Illustrated Catalogue of the Music Loan Exhibition*, p. 30.

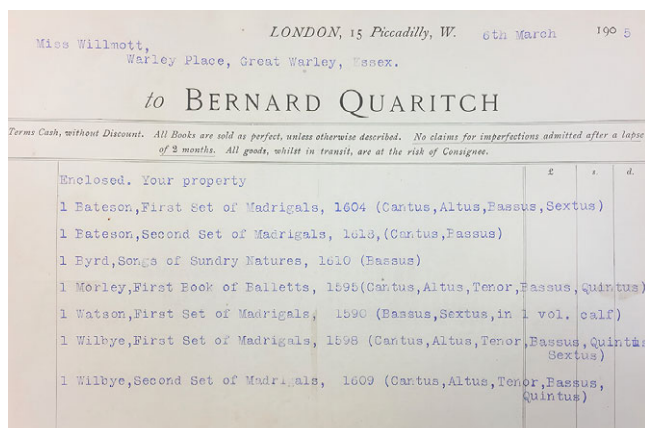


Figure 7. Correspondence from Bernard Quaritch to Ellen Willmott, dated 6 March 1905, detailing her property that had previously been sent for comparison.

of 22 February 1822 for £1 2s. to an unknown purchaser.⁶³ It then entered the collection of the violinist George Pigott (1795–1853), whose collection was auctioned on 21 February 1889;⁶⁴ it was purchased by Taphouse, as recorded by a note in his handwriting on a flyleaf to the manuscript.⁶⁵

Taphouse died in 1905. Le Lièvre claimed that Willmott acquired the Purcell manuscript ‘from the private sale of the possessions of Mr Taphouse of Oxford’, but it features clearly as lot no. 773 in the (public) auction of his collection held in July 1905, where it went to the bookseller Ellis for £8 10s.⁶⁶ It is next found in Willmott’s library. Presumably she had laid eyes on it at the 1904 Loan Exhibition and was tempted to buy it when it came up for sale soon after, although no invoices from Ellis to Willmott have yet been located in her papers (Ellis is unlikely to have been acting as her agent at the Taphouse sale, since Quaritch was also in attendance).⁶⁷ Exactly when the manuscript entered Willmott’s possession is therefore uncertain; she had evidently acquired it by 30 May 1911, however, for Purcell’s Violin Sonata was performed that day, from a score ‘edited from a MS. in the possession of Miss Willmott, by Sir Frederick Bridge’, even though he had actually edited the work from the manuscript while it was in Taphouse’s possession.⁶⁸ Exactly how much Willmott paid for the volume is uncertain, although she presumably paid more than the £8 10s. Ellis had paid for it in the Taphouse sale of July 1905.

⁶³Leigh & Sotheby, *A Catalogue of the Extensive and Valuable Music, Printed and in Manuscript, of the Late Granville Sharpe, Esq.* (Leigh & Sotheby, 1814), lot 26; for winning bidders and prices paid, see London, British Library, S. C. Sotheby 84. White, *A Catalogue of the Very Valuable and Celebrated Library of Music Books, Late the Property of James Bartleman, Esq. (Deceased)* (J. Hayes, 1822), lot 135; for prices fetched but not the names of winning bidders, see London, British Library, S. C. Sotheby 1077. Cited in Holman, ‘A Purcell Manuscript Lost and Found’, p. 486.

⁶⁴Puttick & Simpson, *Catalogue of the Valuable Library of Music of the Late George Pigott, Esq.* (Geo. Witt, 1889), lot 1. This item is described as ‘Corelli, Twelve Solos for the Violin, with a Thorough-bass’; the manuscript contains fifteen sonatas for violin and continuo, either by or attributed to Corelli, as well as works by Thomas Farmer, Raphael Courteville, Gottfried Finger, and Henry Purcell. A copy of the Pigott catalogue is in Cambridge University Library; I thank Liam Sims, Rare Books Librarian, for access to it.

⁶⁵‘Bought at Puttick & Simsons’, Feb. 21 1889... From the collection of the late Mr George Pigott [of] Dublin, T. W. Taphouse, Oxford.’

⁶⁶Le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 219; Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Valuable and Interesting Musical Library, Consisting of Ancient and Modern Printed Music, Musical Manuscripts and Collections, of the Late T. W. Taphouse, Esq. M. A.* (Dryden Press, 1905), p. 76. A fully annotated copy of this catalogue survives at London, British Library, S. C. Sotheby 1289.

⁶⁷Quaritch’s name appears listed as a winning bidder in the auctioneer’s copy of the Taphouse catalogue several times: see, for instance, lots 4, 23, 38, and 149 in the annotated copy of the catalogue at London, British Library, S. C. Sotheby 1289.

⁶⁸*Report of the Fourth Congress of the International Musical Society*, ed. by Maclean, p. 23; J. F. Bridge, ‘Purcell’s Violin Sonata’, *Musical News*, 30 May 1903, p. 513.

LONDON, 11 Grafton Street, New Bond Street, W. 2 nd January 1909			
Telephone: QUARITCH LONDON. Telephone: 0473 GERRARD.		Miss Willmott Warley Place Great Warley Essex.	
10 BERNARD QUARITCH.			
Terms Cash, without Discount. All Books are sold as perfect, unless otherwise described. No claims for imperfections admitted after a lapse of 2 Months. All goods, whilst in transit, are at the risk of Consigner. Books can only be sent on inspection, provided it be understood that the decision as to buying or rejecting them must be made within three days of their having been received.			
22- 1928.	Cat. 270.	£ s. d.	
	1367 Lhoumeau, S. Ravaut-sur-Seine 1893.	5	-
	110 Handel, Suites de Péage c. 1743.	1	-
	261 Elizabethan Music Book, MS. on paper. 1591	52	10
	253. Yonge, Musica Transalpina 2 sets, 2 vols. 1588-97.	84	-
	40. Catch Club, 2 pts. in 1 vol. c. 1730.	3	10
	223. S. N. Museum, Descriptive Catalogue of Musical Instruments 1874	18	-
	203 Recueil d'airs de différents auteurs Paris 1717.	4	4
	4 Strom, Thesaurillo de la Divina di Messer Pietro Aaron, Venice 1523	12	12
	262 Le Jeune, Dodeca corde selon les Sonnes Medes. 4 pts. Paris 1618	8	8
	Medici, il Secondo Libro delle Canzoni 1604	81	10
		198	17

Figure 8. Invoice from Bernard Quaritch to Ellen Willmott, dated 2 January 1909, recording her various purchases from catalogue 270.

The Willmott Manuscript

Willmott's next major music spree came in 1908, when she made several purchases from Quaritch's *A Catalogue of Books on Music Offered for Sale by Bernard Quaritch*, no. 270, published in November that year.⁶⁹ An invoice to Willmott from Quaritch dated 2 January 1909 records nine purchases from that catalogue, varied in nature, at a total cost of £198 17s. — about £20,500 today (see Figure 8). The most expensive purchase, item 253, was two sets of madrigals: a complete set of Yonge's *Musica transalpina* (both the first and second sets, 1588 and 1597), which went to Willmott for £84 — about £8,750 by today's standards. The partbooks were bound together as '2 books of six pts. each, in 2 vols'.⁷⁰ Willmott had already purchased four volumes of the first six-part set (1588) from Quaritch's catalogue 237, at £20 (item 31), and therefore ended up with some duplicates. It was perhaps purchases such as this which caused le Lièvre to claim that Willmott accrued her library with 'care and greed'.⁷¹

The second most expensive purchase, however, was item 261: an 'Elizabethan Music Book, MS on paper', dated 1591, which went to Willmott for £52 10s. — roughly £5,300 today. This is the volume known today as the Willmott manuscript, named after Willmott herself. It is a lone contratenor partbook from a set originally of five volumes, containing sacred Latin-texted polyphony; it was one of several Tudor partbooks owned by the Norwich merchant John Sadler (d. 1592).⁷² Willmott's acquisition of a single partbook can hardly have been done in the name of practical use: a successful performance from this book alone, with only a single voice part present, would have been impossible. For some works represented in the partbook

⁶⁹Bernard Quaritch, *A Catalogue of Books on Music Offered for Sale by Bernard Quaritch*, no. 270 (Bernard Quaritch, 1908).

⁷⁰Ibid., no. 270, lot 253.

⁷¹le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 218.

⁷²On John Sadler see Matthias Range and Julia Craig-McFeely, 'Forty Years in the Wilderness: John Sadler of the Sadler Partbooks', *Music & Letters*, 101 (2020), pp. 657–89, doi:10.1093/ml/gcaa016. On the fate of his complete set of partbooks, see James Burke, 'The Custodial History of the Sadler Partbooks (Oxford, Bodleian Library MSS Mus. e. 1–5)', *Music and Letters*, 104 (2023), pp. 1–30, doi:10.1093/ml/gcac046.

- 261 ELIZABETHAN MUSIC BOOK. Oblong sm. folio, MS. ON PAPER (48 ll.), in red and black on a five-line staff, 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"—*Defyled is my Name*. This was reprinted by Hawkins.

The following occurs on one of the pages:

Reason doth wonder howe faithes tell can
that marie is a virgin and god a man,
leane the reason and beleue the wonder
for faithes is aboue and reason is under

Figure 9. The description for the 'Elizabethan Music Book' in Quaritch's catalogue 270, November 1908, advertised for a price of £52 10s.

Willmott owned a printed edition, which could have supplied the missing voice parts;⁷³ but attempts to sing directly from the Willmott manuscript itself, even if other voice parts were available elsewhere, would have been thwarted by the fact that several music-bearing leaves in this volume are now, and presumably were then, missing — something not reported in the description of the item in the catalogue (see Figure 9).⁷⁴ Even if it were complete, there is no evidence to show that Willmott was herself conversant with mensural notation, so as to sing from the volume directly. Although she was involved with various musical groups, madrigal societies and choirs in the latter half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries typically sang from transcriptions, in modern notation, rather than facsimiles of originals.⁷⁵

Since a lone partbook from a set of five volumes cannot have been purchased with utility in mind, this raises the question of Willmott's purchase motivations. Possibly she was interested in the volume's contents: music aside, the book contains several illustrations, including one of a triple Tudor rose, dated 1591; therefore it might have appealed both to her botanical as well as her musical interests. (According to the sale description, the book's depiction of a triple Tudor rose makes it 'almost certain that royal ownership can be claimed for this remarkable volume', but this cannot be proved, and seems unlikely.) Alternatively, Willmott might have been banking on other volumes from the same set making it onto the market, even though only one further partbook from this set is known to survive (a volume known today as the Braikenridge manuscript);⁷⁶ the other volumes from the set, assuming they were ever produced, have never been definitively traced to any library or sale catalogue.⁷⁷

It seems more likely, however, that Willmott was acquiring early modern material not primarily for practical use but for antiquarian purposes, as mentioned above. This would explain why she purchased

⁷³For instance, the Willmott manuscript includes the contratenor part to Byrd's *Ne irascaris Domine*— a work which appeared printed in Byrd's *Cantiones sacrae* (1589). Willmott had acquired this printed set almost complete, lacking only the Bassus book, as lot no. 5 in the Marshall sale of 1904.

⁷⁴The missing leaves in the Willmott manuscript were not reported until it was sold from Willmott's library in 1935; see below. Also included in Quaritch's catalogue no. 270 (1908), following the listing of the Willmott manuscript, was a full-page reproduction of fol. [34]^r.

⁷⁵I thank the anonymous reviewers of this article for making this point.

⁷⁶The Braikenridge manuscript is now MS Tenbury 1486 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

⁷⁷Before it was sold by Quaritch to Willmott, the Willmott manuscript was in the possession of the Becher family of Southwell. Peter Peckard (d. 1797) gave Elizabeth Becher (d. 1844) the partbook as one of 'Four volumes of Antient Music' in 1788 — suggesting that it was then accompanied by three other volumes from the same set. Elizabeth Becher then gave them to her niece Mary Cranfield Becher (d. 1885) in 1838, after which we lose sight of them. The subsequent custodial history of the Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts is charted in James Burke, 'On the Trail of the Willmott and Braikenridge Manuscripts', *Early Music*, 51 (2023), pp. 391–406, doi:10.1093/em/caad037.

partbook sets bound together as single composite volumes, which must have made performance from them a somewhat convoluted exercise, assuming it was ever attempted. Given that practical use seems not to have been Willmott's principal motivation, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that material from her collection (insofar as it may be traced to the libraries in which it today resides) contains little in the way of performance annotations.⁷⁸ With books and manuscripts owned by a musically literate individual, we typically find added performance directions, fingerings, bowing indications, or even the odd correction — signs that the owner engaged with or performed from them.⁷⁹ But in material from Willmott's collection there are none — at least none which can be said with any certainty to have come from her.

Loans

Apart from her loan of various items to the Worshipful Company of Musicians exhibition in 1904, Willmott occasionally lent other items from her collection. Her copy of Forbes's *Cantus, Songs and Fancies, to Three, Four, or Five Parts, Both Apt for Voices and Viols* (1682) was lent to Sir Frederick Bridge for a lecture given at Gresham College in 1915 (Bridge had been Gresham Professor of Music since 1890, a position he combined with several others, including King Edward Professor at the University of London from 1903 onwards).⁸⁰ A report of the lecture published in the *Musical News* of 1916 records that the 'British Museum, the Royal College of Music and the late Dr Cummings possessed examples' of this publication, printed in 1662, 1666, and 1682, adding that 'the copy which Sir Frederick dealt with was lent to him by Miss Ellen Willmott; he was glad to return it and be free from the responsibility of so precious a book'.⁸¹ Willmott owned the third edition of 1682, bound in blue morocco with gilt edges (this later appeared as lot no. 443 in the auction of 1935). Willmott's source of acquisition for this volume has not yet been established: Quaritch listed two 1682 copies in January 1899, one of which was similarly bound in blue morocco with gilt edges and offered for £12 10s.; it was described as a 'perfect copy'.⁸² (Willmott's copy, by the time it was sold in 1935, had 'minute defects in [its] title').⁸³ Julian Marshall also had a copy which went as lot 224 in his 1904 sale, also bound in blue morocco with gilt edges, but with its last leaf 'supplied in photo-lithography'; it was not acquired by Quaritch but by Ellis, for £11.⁸⁴ Willmott also lent items to the Royal College of Music, discussed below.

Disposals

By the end of 1909, Willmott was experiencing financial difficulties. As well as the costs incurred by Warley Place, with its army of up to 104 gardeners, she had funded several overseas plant-collecting expeditions; she had also spent a considerable sum on antiques, cars, clothing, jewellery, and silverware.⁸⁵ (Willmott's first biographer, le Lièvre, appears to have hit the nail on the head when she wrote, 'whenever

⁷⁸This is not entirely without precedent; the manuscripts of viol music once owned by the singer and clergyman John Gostling (1650–1733) show no signs of practical use; see Peter Holman, *Life after Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Boydell Press, 2010), p. 306.

⁷⁹This applies even to theoretical volumes: Ouseley assured Sir John Stainer that he had read all his rare works of musical theory from front to back. See Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, pp. 67–68.

⁸⁰W. G. Alcock, rev. Judith Blezard, 'Bridge, Sir (John) Frederick (1844–1924)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/>> [accessed 18 June 2025].

⁸¹*Musical News and Herald*, 51 (1916), p. 278. For the background to these items, see Charles Sanford Terry, 'John Forbes's "Songs and Fancies"', *The Musical Quarterly*, 22 (1936), pp. 402–19.

⁸²Bernard Quaritch, *A Catalogue of Rare and Valuable Books*, no. 185 (Bernard Quaritch, 1899), item 613. A second copy, listed by Quaritch as lot 814, was apparently larger, 'bound in olive morocco extra, gilt edges, formerly in David Laing's library'. This may be the copy that ended up as lot no. 302 in Taphouse's 1905 sale, which was bound in brown morocco.

⁸³Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts*, lot 443.

⁸⁴Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Valuable & Interesting Library*, lot 224.

⁸⁵le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 163.

she wanted something, she bought it'.⁸⁶ By 30 June 1905, the extent of Willmott's balance owing to Quaritch was £1199 3s. 10d. — roughly £126,000 today.⁸⁷ As well as her ongoing book acquisitions, she purchased a property in Boccanegra, Italy, for 12,950 lire in 1905; in 1906 she undertook a full redecoration of Warley Place, which included 'extensive structural alterations in the music-room' — work which cost £1131.⁸⁸ To make matters worse, Tresserve, the family chateau near Aix-les-Bains (apparently filled with rare books from the bookseller Jullien), had burned down in 1907 and needed rebuilding.⁸⁹ Willmott sought to sell her properties at Tresserve as well as Boccanegra, but without success.⁹⁰

Willmott's spending continued. An invoice from Quaritch dated 18 January 1909 asks for £151 for only three items (all of them botanical); a statement of her account dated 31 December 1909 records a balance owing of £713 1s. 6d. Although some returns made small reductions to her debt, a further statement of account dated 30 June 1910 still shows a substantial balance owing of £699 11s. 6d. This balance was further reduced, by returns rather than payments, to £599 14s. 6d. by 30 September 1910. Quaritch himself wrote to Willmott on 3 October 1910, beseeching her, 'as I have several very heavy payments to make this month I shall be obliged if you could make it convenient to remit me a substantial cheque on account'.

No substantial cheque seems to have been forthcoming, for Willmott's balance owing to Quaritch at the end of December 1910 was £626 12s. 10d. Her reaction was to return further items for credit against her account. Fifteen volumes of a botanical series were returned on 9 February 1911 for £63, although small purchases continued to be made; a statement of 30 June 1911 left a balance owing of £572 18s. 4d. A credit note issued on 2 September 1911 confirms that she had returned the two complete sets of Yonge's *Musica transalpina* which she had purchased in 1909, even though Quaritch had written to her on 18 January 1909 persuading her to keep it ('I do hope I can induce you to keep the Yonge *Musica Transalpina*, payment can of course be made entirely at your convenience, it is almost impossible to obtain another complete set'). Returned it was, however, and a credit note for £75 12s. (the original price, less commission) was issued on 2 September 1911. By 1 December 1911, her balance had been reduced to £389 21s. 2d.

In 1913, presumably in a bid to raise further funds, Willmott sold one of her Amati violins and a Stradivarius violin to the firm of William Ebsworth Hill of Bond Street, London — the same firm from which she had purchased her first Amati in December 1889.⁹¹ She also tried to let out various satellite buildings on the Warley estate for £500 a year, and at Boccanegra, both unsuccessfully.⁹² She did succeed in letting Tresserve, which had needed rebuilding following the fire of 1907 — work that had to be financed with a loan from the Credit Foncier de France.⁹³ Evidence of some restraint in her spending comes in a letter dated 2 October 1918 from the London violin maker Arthur F. Hill. It requests that Willmott return a madrigal book (of which no further details are known) should she not wish to purchase it — a volume which had presumably been sent to her on approval (see Figure 10). Otherwise, Willmott's spending seems to have been only slightly stunted in terms of the books purchased. She evidently didn't cease searching for material, since a letter to her from Barclay Squire, dated 20 January 1917, states, 'I have none of the autographs wanted'. (A further letter from Barclay Squire to Willmott, dated 3 March 1921, also mentions autographs.)

In 1918, Willmott sought to dispose of her complete set of Gibbons's *First Set of Madrigals and Mottets* (1612), which she had purchased from Quaritch's catalogue 237 in 1905 for £84, uncut but 'in beautiful condition'. A letter from Ellis of 29 New Bond St dated 6 July 1918 states:

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Bernard Quaritch to Ellen Willmott, 30 June 1905.

⁸⁸Le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, pp. 138 and 164.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 51.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 189.

⁹¹Le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 172. See also the papers from William E. Hill to Ellen Willmott for the year 1913. Lawrence has pointed out that this violin was purchased in 1885, and that she could find no evidence for any Stradivarius purchase; see *Miss Willmott's Ghosts*, pp. 86–87.

⁹²Le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 172; correspondence from Grimaldi Bank, Ventimiglia, to Ellen Willmott dated 1908 and 1919.

⁹³See the various letters from Credit Foncier to Ellen Willmott dated 1908, 1911, 1912, and 1916.

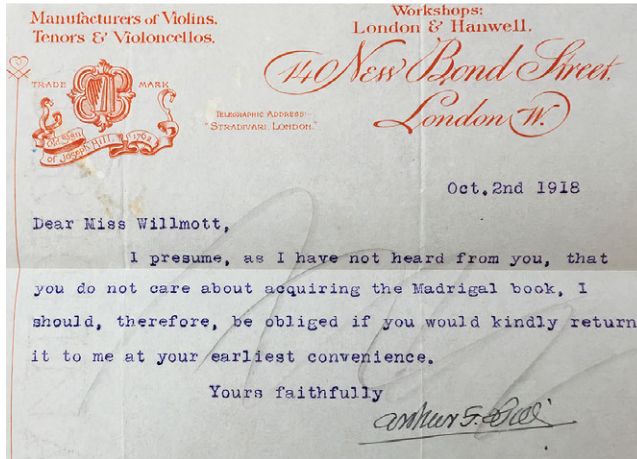


Figure 10. Letter from Arthur F. Hill to Ellen Willmott, dated 2 October 1918.

We think we made an offer for it at the time, but heard no more from you, so it is still in our safe. We think we may shortly have an opportunity of showing it to a possible buyer, so if you would let us know what is the lowest price that you can accept for it we might hope to effect its sale.

Whatever Willmott's lowest price was is not known; no reply to this letter can be found. What is clear, however, is that these five Gibbons partbooks stayed with her until the end: they are listed in her Sotheby's auction of 1935 (as lot 447).

Further attempts at disposal may also be traced. In 1920 Willmott sought to sell her two-manual harpsichord by Jacob Kirkman (1766), which had been purchased for her by her father around 1870 — thought once to have been the property of Princess Amelia. It appeared in a sale held by Sotheby's on 12 November 1920, along with some furniture, but failed to sell, despite advertisement.⁹⁴ Willmott also sought to sell some music. A letter to her from Barclay Squire, one of her long-term correspondents, dated 25 January 1921, explains that he had 'written to Cockerell to say you will write to him about the Autographs' (see Figure 11).⁹⁵ This was Sir Sydney Carlyle Cockerell (1867–1962), then the director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Presumably Willmott was hoping to sell some autographs to him, following an introduction from Barclay Squire; Cockerell was able to indulge in various purchases, ranging 'from Greek vases to [...] music autographs' thanks to backing from the Friends of the Fitzwilliam.⁹⁶

Barclay Squire also adds, 'as to the Elizabethan book I am told that the Museum would recommend the Trustees to give £10 for it. Could you let it go at this? Do, please, for it ought not to go to Leeds!' As will be seen below, he was referring to the Willmott manuscript. Barclay Squire worked in the music department of the British Museum for thirty-five years until 1920, and was therefore well placed to

⁹⁴Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of Highly Important Old English and French Furniture and Tapestries [...] the Property of [...] Baroness Zouche of Haryngworth [...] Miss Willmott [...] Friday, November 12th, 1920* (Kitchen & Barratt, 1920). The harpsichord appears as lot no. 124; the annotated auctioneer's copy of this catalogue in the British Library records that it sold to 'Angel' for £310, but a later summary of the harpsichord's ownership history, produced by Sotheby's themselves for the sale of the same instrument in 2019, states categorically that it went unsold in 1920 (the 2019 sale description for the instrument states that any royal connection, were one to exist, would have been with Princess Amelia (1711–1786), daughter of King George II, not Princess Amelia (1783–1810), daughter of George III). This sale was advertised in the *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 37.212 (1920), pp. 265–66 (p. 266). Ebsworth Hill had also corresponded with Willmott about the harpsichord in 1918, but this presumably came to nothing; see Ebsworth Hill to Ellen Willmott, 18 November 1918.

⁹⁵Several letters survive from William Barclay Squire to Willmott, penned between 1913 and 1921.

⁹⁶Stella Panayotova, 'St Cockerellius: The Director-Collector', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 13 (2007), pp. 387–420 (p. 393).

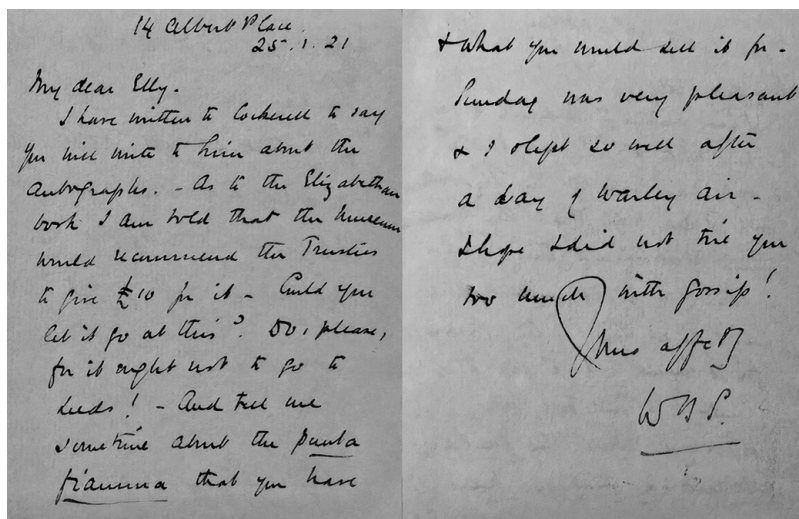


Figure 11. Letter to Ellen Willmott from William Barclay Squire, 25 January 1921.

intercede with potential prospective purchasers on Willmott's behalf.⁹⁷ The identity of the interested party in Leeds, whether institutional or individual, is not specified; possibly it was the Leeds-based music collector Frank Kidson (1855–1926), whose collecting focused on old English songs and dances, although he also owned various seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English publications as well as Thomas Morley's *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musike* (1597).⁹⁸ No correspondence between Willmott and Kidson on the matter has been found to corroborate this possibility.

It has not been possible to locate Willmott's reply to Barclay Squire (no letters from her survive in his papers), but his plea that the Willmott manuscript should not go to Leeds was apparently heeded.⁹⁹ Documentation dated 1 April 1921 shows that a Mr Gilson of the British Museum was recommending that the trustees purchase from Willmott 'a volume of 16th cent. vocal music, containing a part of pieces by Tallis, W. Byrde, J. Sadler, etc., dated 1591, with curious calligraphic ornament'; it was being 'offered for £10'.¹⁰⁰ The purchase of the book, apparently brokered by Barclay Squire, was approved by the Standing Committee of the British Museum on 9 April 1921 (see Figure 12).¹⁰¹ A further report from Gilson, dated 25 April 1921, reports that the purchase was to be cancelled, however, as his recommendation 'had been made under a misrepresentation. The book was submitted through a third person [Barclay Squire], and Mr Gilson believed the price to have been agreed, but this was not the case.'¹⁰² A note of the cancellation was entered in the minutes of a British Museum Standing Committee meeting on 7 May 1921, when the trustees 'authorised the withdrawal of the transaction'.¹⁰³ Willmott presumably wanted more than £10 for the volume — not surprising given that she had paid more than £52 for it some ten years previously.

⁹⁷On Barclay Squire see A. Hyatt King, 'William Barclay Squire, 1855–1927, Music Librarian', *The Library*, fifth series, 12 (1957), pp. 1–10, doi:10.1093/library/s5-XII.1.1.

⁹⁸Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, p. 73; J. T. Lightwood, 'Frank Kidson' [obituary] <<https://tradsong.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Obit.pdf>> [accessed 18 June 2025]. The Morley and other early items acquired by Kidson are now in the Frank Kidson Collection in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

⁹⁹Barclay Squire's papers are today at London, British Library, Add MSS 39679–80, 49527, and 50852.

¹⁰⁰This was Julius Parnell Gilson (1868–1929), Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum from 1911 until 1929.

¹⁰¹London, British Museum, British Museum Records, Minutes of the British Museum Trustees, 1921, c. 3820.

¹⁰²No light is shone on this misunderstanding in Gilson's personal papers at the British Library, and no further documents pertaining to the matter have yet been located in the British Museum Records.

¹⁰³London, British Museum, British Museum Records, Minutes of the British Museum Trustees, 1921, c. 3827.

Mr Gilson has the honour to recommend to the Trustees
the purchase from
Miss Willmott,
Warley Place,
Great Warley, Essex,
of a volume of 16th cent. vocal music, containing a part
of pieces by Tallis, W. Byrde, J. Sadler, etc., dated 1591,
with curious calligraphic ornament.
Offered for £10 -- --.

Mr Gilson regrets to have to report to the Trustees
that his report last month of the offer of an Elizabethan
book of music by Miss Willmott for £10 was made under a
misapprehension. The book was submitted through a third
person, and Mr Gilson believed the price to have been
agreed upon, but this was not the case. Mr Gilson asks
leave to withdraw the report.

J. R. Gilson

Figure 12. Excerpts from a 'Report Respecting Offers for Purchase', 1 April 1921, and a 'Report from Mr Gilson to the Trustees of the British Museum', 25 April 1921. Source: British Museum Records.

While Willmott was in touch with Barclay Squire about letting a partbook go to the British Museum, she was also communicating with Quaritch about disposing of her entire library. A letter from Quaritch to Willmott dated 24 February 1921 explains that he would be 'quite prepared to buy a selection of your books, though at the present time it would not be possible for me to buy the whole'. He then suggests sending a Mr Craddock, who had 'for many years been in charge of my scientific books', to Warley to assess her library. (This suggests it was the botanical books that were being assayed rather than her music volumes.) On 3 March 1921, however, Barclay Squire wrote to Willmott, informing her that he had visited Quaritch's, where he had run into Mr Dring, Quaritch's stock manager. He reported:

He said — as I have done — that you paid top prices for your books & cannot expect to make anything on them. I know this is the case with the music books & I expect it is the same with the others. Still if I were you I should be content to get what I can for them & cut your losses.

Quaritch wrote again to Willmott on 20 July 1921, explaining that Mr Craddock was no longer with the company, and that a Mr Williams would instead make the inspection. Presumably the books to be inspected did not include music, for a 'List of the Music, Books and Mss. belonging to Miss Willmott, Great Warley [...] made from perusal and examination of the books' was drawn up on 12 July 1921 by Barclay Squire (the document does not mention his name, but it is in his distinctive handwriting).¹⁰⁴ This list extends to some fourteen pages, and provides a partial inventory of some but not all of the music in Willmott's possession at the time. It includes a good deal of her printed material but excludes music

¹⁰⁴See Willmott Papers, 'List of the Music, Books and Mss. belonging to Miss Willmott, Great Warley' (handwritten list). Barclay Squire's handwritten list is also accompanied by a typed version, produced by William Agency. Three copies were apparently produced, presumably for the perusal of booksellers.

manuscripts and autograph letters; consequently it did not list the Willmott manuscript or the Armstrong–Finch manuscript, for which Willmott is today known. Presumably she had wished to keep these volumes for herself, or she reckoned they would fetch a higher price if sold individually.

A further letter from Quaritch to Willmott, dated 28 July 1921, mentions that he had ‘not heard from Mr Barclay Squire regarding the books. Was he to communicate with me?’ Presumably Willmott had engaged Barclay Squire to lobby Quaritch into buying some of the music in her collection. Quaritch wrote next on 3 August 1921, confirming that he was enclosing ‘the list of books selected by my assistant yesterday, and I will make you an offer for them tomorrow’, but this presumably refers to botanical volumes. A further letter from Quaritch dated 4 August 1921 offers her £1250, although it does not mention music or Barclay Squire.

As well as seeking to dispose of some material herself, Willmott was occasionally approached by persons interested in purchasing items from her collection. One such request came from the artist William Westley Manning (1868–1954), who was, like Willmott, a music collector.¹⁰⁵ He wrote to her on 27 January 1923, remembering ‘the interesting musical autographs which you lent to the exhibition at Fishmongers’ Hall’ and enquiring as to whether she ‘should feel disposed to part with a small Schubert’. Presumably she did not accede to his request, for three Schubert manuscripts featured in the eventual 1935 auction of her collection (lots 572–74). No further letters to Willmott from Manning have yet been found to document any further approaches; nor do any replies from Willmott appear to survive.

Wheldon & Wesley, 1924 and 1926

In 1923, Ellen Willmott turned to the firm of Wheldon & Wesley, London, to dispose of some books (the firm to which Mr Craddock had jumped ship from Quaritch).¹⁰⁶ A duplicate copy of a letter, sent from Wheldon & Wesley to City and Midland Bank, dated 9 June 1923 and signed by Craddock, explains that the firm had been instructed by Miss Willmott to sell some of her library: ‘The first portion of her books to be dealt with by us were included in our Illustrated Catalogue. It has some biographical interest. Miss Willmott has realised up to the present from this portion, £1420. 2s. 6d.’—roughly £74,400 today. The letter then refers to forthcoming listings: ‘Part 2 of the Illustrated Catalogue is in the printer’s hands. It will include Miss Willmott’s beautiful collection of English Madrigals.’ Craddock also explains the basis on which the books were being sold: ‘We have made it a rule to advertise every book sold by us on commission for Miss Willmott [...] we pay her the advertised price less 25%.’ (In 1924, Wheldon & Wesley re-issued her book *Warley Garden in Spring and Summer*, which they had first published in 1909.)

The music was listed in *Wheldon & Wesley’s Illustrated Catalogue of Recent Purchases of Rare Books* (1924), which featured forty-eight items of ‘Elizabethan Madrigals and other early English music’ (listed as nos. 136–84). Included were partbook sets by Bateson, Byrd, Gibbons, Morley, Watson, Wilbye, and Young; the manuscript of Purcell’s Violin Sonata was absent. The advertised prices in this catalogue are generally higher than those Willmott had herself paid. For instance, her four volumes from Bateson’s *First Set of Madrigales* (1604), listed as no. 136, were being sold for £38; the same four books had been purchased, along with two volumes of Bateson’s *Second Set of Madrigales* (1618), at the 1904 sale of Julian Marshall, for £17 10s. — roughly £2 18s. 4d. per volume. In the 1924 catalogue, four volumes were being sold for roughly £9 10s. per book. The same is true of no. 141, two volumes (Contratenor and Bassus) of Byrd’s *Songs of Sundrie Natures* (1589), which had been purchased by Willmott for £10 10s. from the Marshall sale, but which was listed for £24 — a price inflated by 120 per cent more than she had paid. Even her five volumes (of six) to Byrd’s *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets* (1611), listed as no. 145, which she had purchased unbound but ‘in lovely

¹⁰⁵Details of a Manning Bach acquisition are recorded in ‘A New Autograph of Bach’, *The Athenaeum*, no. 3886 (19 April 1902), p. 506: ‘Mr. W. Westley Manning is the possessor of this newly recovered autograph’. A similar account was provided in the ‘Occasional Notes’ section of *The Musical Times*, 43 (1902), pp. 313–16 (p. 315). He also owned original documentation pertaining to Byrd, acquired by him in 1932, now at London, British Library, Egerton MS 3722: see [Westley Manning], ‘William Byrd: A Newly Discovered Holograph’, *The Times* (12 January 1933), p. 10.

¹⁰⁶*Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*, 18 (1991), p. 74.

state as though just issued' for £30, were listed for £42.¹⁰⁷ No. 156 was Gibbons's *First Set of Madrigals and Mottets* (1612), complete, which Willmott had acquired from Quaritch's catalogue 237 in 1905, for £84. (Evidently it had not been sold by Ellis to their prospective purchaser in 1918.) In Wheldon & Wesley's 1924 catalogue, it was being sold for £160 — almost twice what she had paid for it.

Only a few partbook sets were offered complete. No. 181 was Watson's *First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished* (1590), complete and unbound, for £120. Willmott had acquired this set from the Marshall sale some twenty years previously for only £8 15s., and stood to make more than ten times what she had paid for it. (She had also acquired those volumes bound together as a single volume; clearly, by 1924 she had had them disaggregated into parts.) Also offered complete as no. 182 was Wilbye's *Second Set of Madrigals to 3. 4. 5. and 6. Parts* (1609), unbound, for £70. Willmott had acquired five of the six volumes to this set in the 1904 Marshall sale, along with all six volumes to Wilbye's *First Set of English Madrigals to 3. 4. 5. and 6. Voices* (1598), for a hammer price of £48 10s. — roughly the equivalent of £4 8s. 2d. per book. (The missing book to the second set was acquired by methods unknown.) At £70, each partbook was selling at roughly £11 13s. 4d., about three times what she had paid for them. (Any money received by Willmott, assuming the books sold, would have been subject to a deduction of 25%, for commission due to Wheldon & Wesley.)

The most important item offered for sale in the 1924 catalogue was the Willmott manuscript, which appeared as item no. 154 (see [Figure 13](#)). It was given more than a full page of description, as well as two plates (fols [16]^f and [38]^f). The catalogue claims, as Sotheby's had in 1908, that the partbook has a royal provenance, noting that it was 'doubtless used by the Queen [Elizabeth], the presence of the dated drawing of the triple Tudor rose indicating the royal ownership'. It also calls the volume 'probably the finest MS. of its kind in existence', listing it at £850 (roughly £44,700 today). Had it sold, it would have netted Willmott £637.50 after commission — more than ten times the £52 10s. she had paid in 1908.

Although the 1924 catalogue offered fewer than fifty items for sale, a brief report on it made it into the *London Mercury and Bookman*. This comments on some of the more notable items, including the Willmott manuscript (described as a 'service book, folio, of 48 leaves, dated 1591, and written for Queen Elizabeth'); it also draws attention to the fact that some items are still 'in the original wrappers and uncut' — a guarantee of good condition, perhaps, and offering confirmation that the volumes were probably not acquired by her for practical use:

Messrs. Wheldon & Wesley, of 2, 3, & 4, Arthur Street, W.C.2, have sent me a copy of the second part of the new catalogue (New series, number 11). This contains only about fifty volumes, but they form a remarkably fine little collection of books of Elizabethan Madrigals and other early English music. Many of the greatest names are here. There is, for instance, at the price of £160, Orlando Gibbons's *First Set of Madrigals*, quarto, 1612, in five parts (Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus, Quintus). This book is in remarkable condition, since all the parts, save the Tenor, are in the original wrappers and uncut. Another book is T. Watson's *First Set of Madrigals*, quarto, 1590 (six parts), for which £120 is asked; and there is J. Wilbye's *Second Set of Madrigals* (six parts), quarto, 1609, for £70. Other famous musicians represented in this catalogue (which is illustrated) are Bateson, Bird, Farnaby, Morley, Playford and Purcell. A manuscript of great interest is a service book, folio, of 48 leaves, dated 1591, and written for Queen Elizabeth. The price of this is £850.¹⁰⁸

Despite this positive report, it seems that the 1924 catalogue was not a success: a further catalogue was issued in 1926.¹⁰⁹ This was a general catalogue which included a subsection of 'Elizabethan Madrigals and Other Early English Music'; it listed thirty items, most of them printed partbook sets that were incomplete, but excluding some items that had appeared in the 1924 catalogue, including the Willmott manuscript. Prices were the same as those advertised previously (see [Figure 14](#)).

¹⁰⁷ Quaritch, *A Catalogue of Rare and Valuable Books*, no. 237, item 7.

¹⁰⁸ I. A. Williams, 'Bibliographical Notes', *London Mercury and Bookman*, 9 (1923), pp. 531–32.

¹⁰⁹ Wheldon & Wesley, *Wheldon and Wesley's Catalogue*, no. 18, *Rare and Valuable Books* (Wheldon & Wesley, 1926).

- 154 ELIZABETH (Queen). SERVICE BOOK. 1591.
Oblong small folio. MS. 48 leaves (96 pages).
Written for Queen Elizabeth. In Latin, with notation on a five-line stave. 49 ornamental initials, grotesques, etc., and a full-page drawing of the triple Tudor rose (dated 1591). In the original binding of calf, panel and line gold tooling, corner fleurons. £850

A volume of entrancing interest which was doubtless used by the Queen, the presence of the dated drawing of the triple Tudor rose indicating the royal ownership. It comprises introits, graduals, etc., numbered 1—5 and 8—26. A fragment of Tallis's motet (Superius part) —*Gaude virgo Maria*, remains to represent either No. 6 or No. 7. A Contratenor part is in the Bodleian library. It is probable that certain leaves belonging to these two numbers were removed by Elizabeth on religious grounds.

The MS. is finely written throughout and the drawings beautifully executed. The latter were done by a master-hand, and comprise wonderfully interlaced initial letters, some of which are in outline, some very delicately shaded, and others in gold, silver, and colours. In addition there is an illuminated figure of a harp, and a number of grotesque beasts and birds, as well as a few conventional ornaments.

The musical compositions are by Tallis, Bird, Robert Johnson, and John Sadler. It is improbable that any have been published. Certainly the known pieces by Tallis, on the authority of Grove, have never appeared in print.

In addition to the pieces by the great composers, Tallis and Bird, there are several by the lesser known Robert Johnson and John Sadler. The former is probably the ecclesiastic who composed "Anne Boleyn's Complaint"—*Defyled is my name*. It is stated in the *Dict. of Nat. Bvg.* that he was "possibly chaplain" to that Queen. There was another Robert Johnson, who, in January, 1573-4, was a retainer in the household of Sir Thomas Kytson, of Hengrave Hall, Suffolk. He

assisted at the grand entertainment given by the Earl of Leicester to Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth. In 1612 he composed music for Shakespeare's *Tempest*. It is considered that he was a relative of the chaplain.

The following occurs at the end of Sadler's *Miserere* (No. 20):

"Reason doth wonder howe faith tell can
that marie is a virgin and god a man,
leau the reason and beleue the wonder
for faith is aboue and reason is vnder"

Apart from its importance as a relic of the great Queen, this is probably the finest MS. of its kind in existence. A specially interesting feature is that Sadler's *Anima Christi* (No. 21) is for contratenor (contralto), a piece of evidence which indicates the singing voice of Elizabeth.

- 155 FARNABY (G.). CANZONETS. London. Peter Short. 1598.
Small quarto. Cantus (*a printer's rule and some headlines cut*), Bassus. *Unbound. In a case.* £45
(*Cantus, title:*) Cantus. Canzonets To Fowre Voyces, With a Song of eight parts. Compiled By Giles Farnaby Bachilar of Musicke. London Printed by Peter Short dwelling on Bredstreet hil at the signe of the Star. M.D.XCVIII.
Cantus.—[A] B—D'. Bassus.—as Cantus. Steele 171.
- 156 GIBBONS (O.). FIRST SET OF MADRIGALS. London. Thomas Snodham. 1612.
Small quarto. 5 parts (Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus, Quintus). *All, except the Tenor part (unbound), in the original wrappers, uncut. In a red levant morocco pull-off case.* £160
(*Cantus, title:*) Cantus. The First Set Of Madrigals And Mottets of 5. Parts: apt for Viols and Voyces. Newly Composed by Orlando Gibbons, Batcheler of Musicke, and Organist of his Maesties Honourable Chappell in Ordinarie. London: Printed by Thomas Snodham, the Assigne of W. Barley. 1612.
Cantus.—A—C'. Altus.—as Cantus. Tenor.—as Cantus. Bassus.—as Cantus. Quintus.—as Cantus.

II. ELIZABETHAN MADRIGALS AND OTHER EARLY ENGLISH MUSIC

- 201 **BATESON (T.). FIRST SET OF MADRIGALS.** London. Thomas East. 1604.
 Small quarto. Cantus, Altus (*several top blank margins slightly wormholed*), Bassus, Sextus (*two ornamental initials coloured*). *Unbound. In a case.* £38
 (Cantus, title:) Cantus. The first set of English Madrigales: to 3. 4. 5. and 6. voices. Newly composed by Thomas Bateson practitioner in the Art of Musicke, and Organist of the Cathedral Church of Christ in the Citie of Chester. 1604. In London Printed By Thomas Este.
 Cantus.—[A]² B—D¹ E². Altus.—as Cantus. Bassus.—as Cantus. Sextus.—[A]² B⁴ (B, blank—cut away).
- 202 **BIRD (W.). PSALMS, SONNETS, AND SONGS.** London. Thomas East. 1588.
 Small quarto. Superius (*without G²*), Medius, Contratenor (*without [A]² B₁₋₃ G², bottom margins wormholed, some words affected*), Tenor. *Unbound. In a case.* £45
 (Superius, title:) Superius. Psalmes, Sonets, & songs of sadnes and pietie, made into Musicke of five parts: whereof, some of them going abroad among diuers, in vntrue coppies, are heere truly corrected, and th'other being Songs very rare & newly composed, are heere published, for the re-creation of all such as delight in Musick: By William Byrd, one of the Gentl: of the Queenes Maiesties honorable Chappell. Printed by Thomas East, the assigne of W. Byrd, and are to be sold at the dwelling house of the said T. East, by Paules wharfe. 1588. Cum priuilegio Regie Maiestatis.
 Superius.—[A]² B—F⁴ G². Medius.—as Superius. Contratenor.—as Superius. Tenor.—as Superius. Bassus.—as Superius. Steele 113.
- 203 **BIRD (W.). SONGS OF SUNDRY NATURES.** London. Thomas East. 1589.
 Small quarto. Contratenor, Bassus (*a word on H₄ affected by a mending*). *Unbound. In a case.* £24
 (Contratenor, title:) Contratenor. Songs of sundrie natures, some of grauitie, and others of myrth, fit for all compa-nies and voyces. Lately made and composed in-to Musick of 3. 4. 5. and 6. parts: and pub-lished for the delight of all such as take pleasure in the exercise of that Art. By VWilliam Byrd, one of the Gentlemen of the Queenes Maiesties honorable Chappell. Imprinted at London by Thomas Este, the assigne of William Byrd, and are to bee sold at the house of the sayd T. Este, beeing in Aldersgate streete, at the signe of the blacke Horse. 1589. Cum priuilegio Regie Maiestatis.
 Contratenor.—[A]² B—F⁴. Bassus.—[A]² B—H⁴. Steele 120.

- 204 **BIRD (W.). LIBER PRIMUS SACRARUM CANTIONUM.** London. Thomas East. 1589.
 Small quarto. Superius (*part of a headline on A₂ affected by a small tear*), Medius, Contratenor, Tenor. *Early blue paper wrappers. In a case.* £38
 (Superius, title:) Superius. Liber primus Sacrarum Cantio-num Quinque vocum. Autore Guilielmo Byrd Organista Regio, Anglo. Excudebat Thomas Est ex assigna-tione Guilielmi Byrd. Cum priuilegio. Londini. 25. Octob. 1589.
 Superius.—A—D⁴. Medius.—as Superius. Contratenor.—as Superius. Tenor.—as Superius. Steele 121.
- 205 **BIRD (W.). PSALMS, SONGS, AND SONNETS.** London. Thomas Snodham. 1611.
 Small quarto. Cantus primus, Cantus secundus, Tenor, Bassus, Sextus. *Unbound. In a case.* £42
 (Cantus primus, title:) Cantus primus. Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets: some solemne, others ioyfull, framed to the life of the Words: Fit for Voyces or Viols of 3. 4. 5. and 6. Parts. Composed by William Byrd, one of the Gent. of his Maiesties honourable Chappell. 1611. London: Printed by Thomas Snodham, the assigne of W. Barley.
 Cantus primus.—[A]² B—E⁴. Cantus secundus.—as Cantus primus. Tenor.—[A]² B—D⁴. Bassus.—as Cantus primus. Sextus.—[A]² B⁴.
- 206 **BLOW (J.). AMPHION ANGLICUS.** London. William Pearson. 1700.
 Small folio. *Portrait by R. White. Contemporary panelled calf.* £10
 Amphion Anglicus. A VVork Of Many Compositions, For One, Two, Three and Four Voices: With several Accompanements of Instrumental Musick; And A Thorow-Bass to each Song: Figur'd for an Organ, Harpsichord, or Theorboe-Lute. By Dr. John Blow. London: Printed by William Pearson, for the Author; and are to be Sold at his House in the Broad-Sanctuary, over-against Westminster-Abby, and by Henry Playford, at his Shop in the Temple-Change, Fleet-street. mdcc.
- 207 **BOWMAN (H.). SONGS.** Second Edition. Oxford. For Richard Davis. 1679.
 Folio. *Engraved frontispiece, letterpress title with dedication on the reverse, 84 engraved pages. One corner repaired, the numbering of the leaf affected thereby. Half blue morocco.* £12
 Songs, For One, Two, & Three Voyces To The Thorow-Bass. With some Short Symphonies. Collected Out of some of the Select Poems of the incomparable Mr. Cowley, and Others. And Composed By Henry Bowman, Philo-Musicus. The Second Edition, Corrected and Amended by the Authour. Imprimatur: Hen. Clerke, Vice-Cancellarius Oxon. Junii 12. 1677. Oxford, Printed for Ric. Davis. In the year M. DC. LXXIX.

As with the 1924 catalogue, the 1926 catalogue was subject to a brief review. An anonymous commentator reported in the *Publishers' Circular and Booksellers' Record* that

No librarian or collector can afford to overlook this catalogue, which includes a section, sure to create a furor amongst American collectors, devoted to Elizabethan Madrigals and other early English music. Since the Huth and Christie Miller dispersals no other collection to equal this has been offered for sale. It would require a special number of the P.C. [*Publishers' Circular*] to deal with half the rarities in this catalogue.¹¹⁰

Despite this recommendation, however, this sale seems not to have been a success either: although no correspondence has yet been located to shed light on the matter, all of the items listed appear in Willmott's posthumous 1935 auction. Presumably the prices at which her items were advertised in both sales were deemed to be too high.

Final Years

According to one commentator, Ellen Willmott became a rather 'sad and impoverished' figure towards the end of her life, having become 'increasingly eccentric and paranoid'; she 'booby-trapped her estate to deter thieves'.¹¹¹ (She was even said to keep a revolver in her handbag, for fear of being robbed).¹¹² Having squandered most of her fortune, she seems not to have given up on the idea of selling specific items in her library. A letter dated 1 August 1932 to Willmott from Sir Hugh Allen, director of the Royal College of Music from 1919 to 1937, reveals information about a loan — perhaps a permanent loan — of a 'Choir Bk' to the college (see Figure 15).¹¹³ The letter does not reveal anything about this choirbook, but it may have been one of the three seventeenth-century 'choir books' listed in her posthumous auction.¹¹⁴

Willmott's initiating correspondence with Allen cannot be found, but she had clearly written to him, claiming that some items she had lent to the College had not been returned. Allen states:

I think you may have forgotten that the MSS you lent us some considerable time ago of a Choir B [oo]k was returned to you at your own request & we have the receipt from the people who fetched it for you. I would not let it go without obtaining this receipt.

He then refers to a 'Beethoven sketch', which Willmott must have also claimed to have lent:

As to the Beethoven sketch you mention, I think you must have sent it to someone other than the College, for I am pretty certain that we have never had it & that if we had I would have returned it with the choir Bk.


¹¹⁰'Alpha', 'Antiquarian Catalogues for 1926', *The Publishers' Circular and Booksellers' Record*, 13 February 1926, p. 147. Mentioned are Henry Huth (1815–78) and Sydney Richardson Christie-Miller (1874–1931), music belonging to whom was auctioned in Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of the Famous Library of Printed Books, Illuminated Manuscripts, Autograph Letters and Engravings, Collected by Henry Huth*, 9 vols (Dryden Press, 1911–20), and Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of a Very Important, Interesting and Valuable Collection of Books of Airs, Ballads, Catches, Madrigals, Songs and Other Music [...] the Property of S. R. Christie-Miller* (Dryden Press, 1919).

¹¹¹Susie Bicknell, 'Letters from Clarence Bicknell to Ellen Willmott between 1902 and 1916' (December 2016), <https://clarencerbicknell.com/wp-content/uploads/clarence_bicknell_letters_to_ellen_willmott.pdf> [accessed 18 June 2025].

¹¹²Le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 203.

¹¹³Willmott would also have known Allen through the London Bach Choir: he had been its conductor since 1907 and she had been a member since 1911 and was auditioned by Allen himself. She attended its Tuesday evening rehearsals 'assiduously' unless abroad; see *ibid.*, pp. 150–51.

¹¹⁴Lots 418 and 420 were choirbooks containing 'Masses, Anthems, Psalms, Canticles, etc.', arranged for three choirs in twelve parts, each of twelve volumes; lot 419 contained 'Duets and Solos, with Organ Part', in three volumes. See Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts*, lot nos. 418–20.


 Prince Consort Road,
 South Kensington,
 London, S.W. 7.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC.
 Telegrams: "Initiative, Southkens, London."
 Telephone: "1160 Westons"
 8681 Kensington

Aug. 1 1932

Dear Miss Willmott,

I would have replied to your letter which I received a few days ago but I have been preoccupied with the end of term which is always a very hectic time.


I think you may have forgotten that the MSS you lent us some considerable time ago of a Chor Bk was returned to you at your own request & we have the

receipt from the people who fetched it for you. I would not let it go without obtaining this receipt.

As to the Beethoven sketch you mention I think you must have lent it to someone other than the College for I am pretty certain that we have never had it & that if we had I should have returned it with the Chor Bk.

I should be very sorry that your kind loan to the College of the Elizabethan Bk should give you anxiety or trouble.

Will you let me know if


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 8681 Kensington

you have now found it and relieve me of any doubt as to any going astray from the time it was handed over to your agents in the matter.

Yours sincerely
 H. B. Allen

Figure 15. Letter from Sir Hugh Allen to Ellen Willmott, dated 1 August 1932.

Allen then thanks her for her 'kind loan to the College of the Elizabethan Bk', but expresses regret if this loan has caused her 'anxiety or trouble', asking her to 'let me know if have now found it and relieve me of any doubt as to any going astray from the time it was handed over to your agents in the matter'. Precisely what this Elizabethan book was is uncertain: it could have been one of the various printed madrigal partbooks she owned, although it would have perhaps been odd to lend a single volume rather than a complete set. Possibly this volume was the Willmott manuscript.

Willmott died on 27 September 1934, unmarried. Since she had no heirs, her entire estate, including her library, passed to her brother-in-law's family (her sister Rose died in 1922). Willmott's personal effects were assayed at £12,787 9s.; probate was granted on 4 December 1934 to her nephew, Robert George Wilmot Berkeley (1898–1969).¹¹⁵ According to le Lièvre, it had at one time been Willmott's intention to bequeath a portion of her library to the British Museum, but this did not happen; le Lièvre also alludes to the possibility that Willmott was minded to leave 'a collection of rare madrigals to one of the madrigal societies in existence at that time', but this does not appear to have happened either.¹¹⁶ Nor did any items in which Quaritch had been interested seem to have left her collection before the posthumous auction of 1935.

Sales

Sotheby's, April 1935

Willmott's books and manuscripts were principally auctioned off by Sotheby's, in a sale that ran for three days from 1 April 1935. The auction does not seem to have been particularly well advertised: only two advance notices of it appear to have been published. The first appeared in the *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* in April 1935, just before the auction; it was very short, recording that only a 'selection from the botanical, musical and general library, the property of Miss. E. A. Willmott' was to be sold, 'by order of the Executor'.¹¹⁷ The second was published in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* on 23 March 1935: this featured a brief article on the 'botanical library of the late Miss Ellen Willmott', but it also mentioned the 'large collection of musical books and MSS' in Willmott's library, drawing attention to various early printed editions and Purcell's violin sonata:

There is also a large collection of musical books and MSS in Miss Willmott's library, notably 16th and 17th century madrigals, early printed editions of Purcell, Handel and others, musical manuscripts of Bach, Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Liszt, the sole existing MS. of Purcell's only violin sonata, and autograph letters of many of the great composers.¹¹⁸

The Sotheby's catalogue itself offered a total of 575 lots for sale, divided in the auction catalogue into 'The General Library', 'The Botanical Library', and 'The Musical Library'. As pointed out already, the catalogue makes clear on its title page that it was offering for sale items 'selected from the library at Warley Place' (see [Figure 16](#)). Presumably Sotheby's selected only books which they believed to be particularly valuable — much in the same way that Quaritch had been interested only in a 'selection' of Willmott's library in the 1920s. A preamble to the sale catalogue made mention in general terms of some of the more noteworthy items in her collection.¹¹⁹

Items in Willmott's collection that were deemed to be the most important were allocated the most space in the auction catalogue. A few lots consequently have several substantial paragraphs of

¹¹⁵See the *England & Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995*. It was Robert George Wilmot Berkeley who appears to have dealt with Willmott's probate, and not Robert Valentine Berkeley, her brother in-law.

¹¹⁶le Lièvre, *Miss Willmott of Warley Place*, p. 492.

¹¹⁷*The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 66.385 (1935), pp. i–xvi (p. ix).

¹¹⁸James Kilpatrick 'Art in the Salerooms', *The Saturday Review*, 159 (1935), p. 378.

¹¹⁹Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts*, [p. i].

CATALOGUE
OF
VALUABLE BOOKS
AND MANUSCRIPTS
ON
BOTANY, MUSIC AND GENERAL SUBJECTS
SELECTED FROM THE LIBRARY AT WARLEY PLACE, ESSEX

The Property of Miss G. A. Willmott (decd.)

(SOLD BY ORDER OF THE EXECUTOR) *K*

THE BOTANICAL COLLECTIONS comprise:—the rare Herbarius of 1485, *in the Passau and Paris editions*, and other important early Herbals and Works on Horticulture; a very fine Series of Books with coloured plates, including Andrews' Roses and Geraniums; Boissier's Voyage Botanique and Flora Orientalis; Bonelli's Hortus Romanus; Buchoz' Herbar Colorié de l'Amérique; Bulliard's Flora Parisiensis; Duhamel's Traité; Jordan and Fourreau's Icones; Lawrence's Roses; Redouté's Roses; Lord Bute's Botanical Tables; Tenore's Flora Napolitana; and many others, with an exceptional set of Curtis' Magazine, 1787-1913; Miss Willmott's own Drawings for the "Genus Rosa"; and many fine early Flower Drawings, including two ascribed to P. J. Redouté;

THE MUSICAL COLLECTIONS comprise:—Rare XVI and XVII Century Madrigal Part Books of Bateson, Gibbons, Morley, Forbes, Watson, Wilbye, Yonge; Early Manuscripts of English and Italian Church Music; Early Printed Editions of the Music of Purcell, Handel, Corelli, Zipoli, etc.; The Sole existing Manuscript of Henry Purcell's only Violin Sonata; Autograph Musical Manuscripts of Bach, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Liszt and others; Autograph Letters of Wagner, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Gretry, Rossini, etc., and a signed Receipt of J. B. Lully; Theoretical Works and Books of Instruction; Illustrated Song Books of the XVIII Century;

Manuscripts of Laujon's Recueil, *bound for Madame du Barry*, and of Airs for the Guitar, *bound for Vicomtesse (Adolphe) du Barry*;

WHICH WILL BE SOLD BY AUCTION

BY MESSRS.

SOTHEBY & CO.

G. D. HOBSON, M.V.O.

F. W. WARRE, O.B.E., M.C.
C. V. PILKINGTON.

C. G. DES GRAZ.



Auctioneers of Literary Property & Works illustrative of the Fine Arts

AT THEIR LARGE GALLERIES, 34 & 35, NEW BOND STREET, W. 1

On MONDAY, 1st APRIL, 1935, and Two Following Days

IN CONJUNCTION WITH

MESSRS. KEMSLEY'S, 164 BISHOPSGATE

AT ONE O'CLOCK PRECISELY

On View at least Two Days previous.

Catalogues may be had.

Illustrated Catalogue (12 plates) price 4/6

Figure 16. Inner title page of Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts on Botany, Music and General Subjects*.

description, whereas other, less important items are given only a few lines. The most important lot descriptions also feature plates. The two lots which were evidently adjudged to be the most important of the music sale were the Willmott manuscript, the lone partbook once owned by John Sadler, and the Armstrong-Finch manuscript, containing the only extant contemporary copy of Purcell's Violin Sonata.

The Willmott manuscript appeared as lot no. 537 (see Figure 17). Sotheby's description made the same mistake as Quaritch in his catalogue 270 of 1908, since John Sadler is again named as a composer

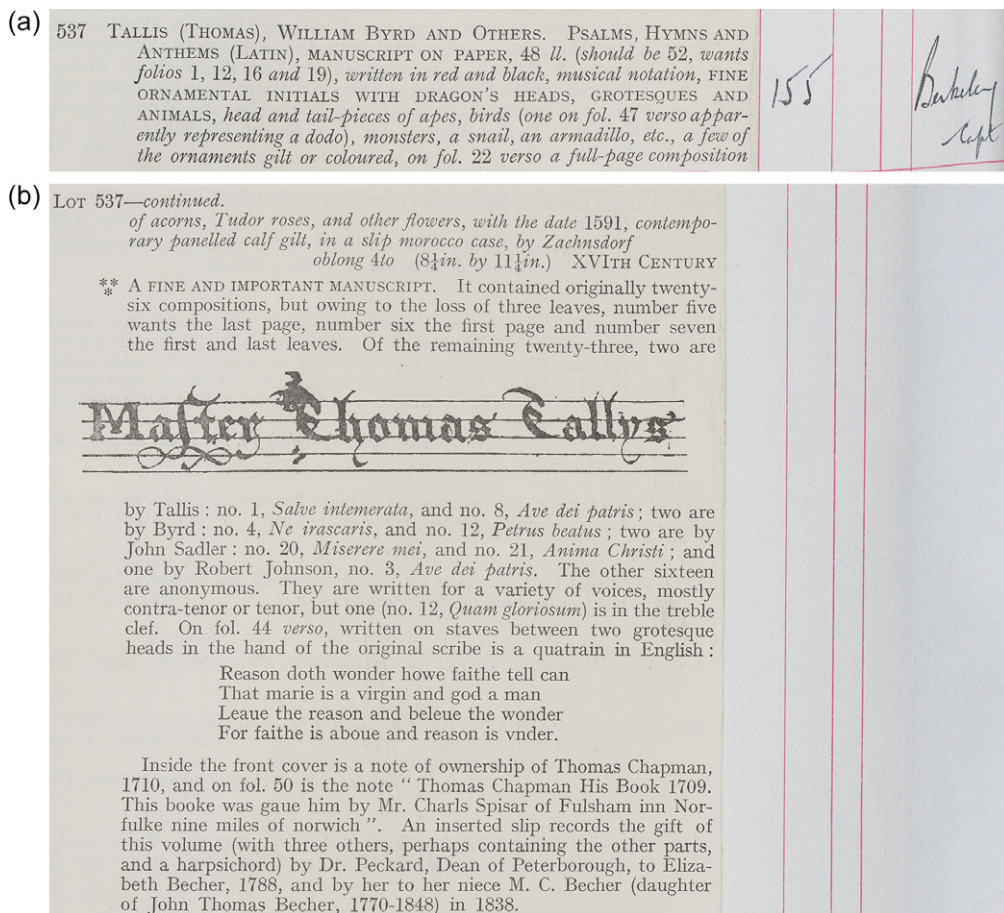


Figure 17. Lot 537 in Sotheby's Willmott sale (annotated copy in the British Library, London, S. C. Sotheby 1531).

rather than as a copyist or an early owner, although a paragraph summarizing the various later owners named in the manuscript is provided — something which Quaritch's previous listing had not included. The partbook is described as a 'fine and important manuscript', but the fact that some leaves are missing is also mentioned. When this catalogue was prepared in 1935, it was not yet known that another volume from the same set, the Braikenridge manuscript, was in private ownership near Bristol. Edmund Fellowes seems to have become aware of the Willmott manuscript in 1939, since he transcribed its contents that year; it was only in 1942 that the owner of the other extant volume initiated a correspondence with Fellowes, informing him of its existence, which caused Fellowes to realize the two volumes were part of the same set.¹²⁰

The Armstrong–Finch manuscript went as lot 516 in the Willmott sale (see Figure 18). The catalogue description provided what was then the 'best information available regarding both the volume in general and Purcell's violin sonata in particular', that is, until the manuscript recently resurfaced.¹²¹ It includes

¹²⁰The ownership history of these two partbooks receives more detailed discussion in Burke, 'On the Trail of the Willmott and Braikenridge Manuscripts'. Fellowes's transcription of the Willmott manuscript is now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, as Tenbury MS 1474.

¹²¹Robert Illing, *Henry Purcell, Sonata in G Minor for Violin and Continuo: An Account of its Survival from Both the Historical and Technical Points of View* (Flinders University, 1975), p. 10.

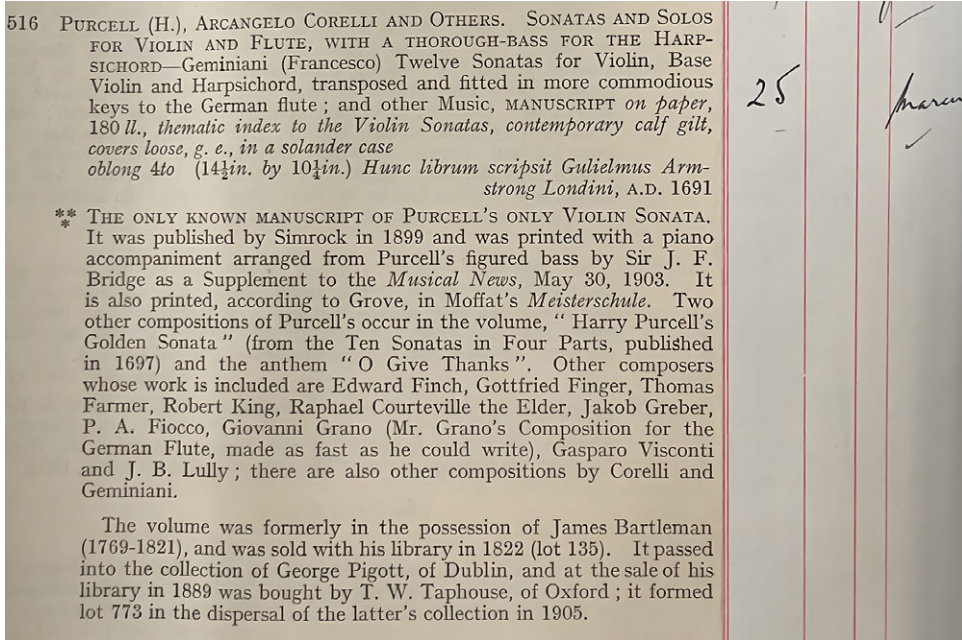


Figure 18. Lot 516 in Sotheby's Willmott sale of 1935 (annotated copy in the British Library, London, S. C. Sotheby 1531).

important information on the state of the manuscript, its contents, and, importantly, its previous owners. Peter Holman has pointed out that some material described in the Sotheby's catalogue is now missing from the manuscript: a 'thematic index to the Violin Sonatas' and an inscription, 'Hunc librum scripsit Gulielmus Armstrong Londini, a.d. 1691'.¹²² This makes the Willmott catalogue description an important witness to its prior state. (Some former listings for the same manuscript, in the sale catalogues of previous owners, were 'rather summary': for instance, that of 1814 did not mention any instruments, nor that the volume had come from Finch's library.)¹²³ Her copy of Forbes's *Cantus*, in blue morocco leather, went to 'Edwards' for £10 10s. — a little less than the £12 10s. she had paid Quaritch for it in 1899, assuming that was her source of acquisition.

Sotheby's also listed some of Willmott's more important musical instruments, in an instrument-specific sale held on 5 April 1935. The Kirkman harpsichord of 1766, with its apparently royal pedigree, which had failed to sell in November 1920, went to 'Goodwin' for £90, according to the annotated auctioneer's catalogue. (It seems not to have left the family, however, since it was recently sold by the same family, via Sotheby's, in a sale held on 11 December 2019; it fetched £56,250.)¹²⁴ Some lots in this 1935 instrument sale attracted less than they were perhaps worth; one commentator, writing some nine years after the sale, records that the 'fine collection [of instruments], formerly at Warley Place, Essex, in the possession of Miss Willmott, was dispersed piecemeal at her death'.¹²⁵

¹²²Holman, 'A Purcell Manuscript Lost and Found', p. 470.

¹²³Ibid., p. 474.

¹²⁴Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of [...] a Selected Portion of the Well-Known Collection of Musical Instruments, the Property of Miss E. A. Willmott [...] 5th of April 1935* (Kitchen & Barratt, 1935), lot 68; Sotheby's 'Property from the Berkeley Collection' auction, 11 December 2019, lot 39.

¹²⁵Eric Halfpenny, 'A National Collection of Instruments of Music', *The Musical Times*, 87 (1946), pp. 105–07 (p. 106). The results of some keyboard sales were recorded by Donald Boalch: a spinet in a mahogany case with ivory naturals was sold to Messrs Oliver; a clavichord, dating apparently from 1791, was sold to David McKenna; see Donald Howard Boalch, *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord, 1440 to 1840* (Macmillan, 1956), pp. 43 and 66.

A THREE-MANUAL PIPE ORGAN in carved Mahogany case, driven by $\frac{1}{2}$ h.p. Crossley Gas Engine; a **CHAMBER ORGAN**, by Henry Holland, in Charles II. Oak Case; a number of **ANTIQUÉ MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**, of English, French, Italian, Chinese, and Arabian origin; a large collection of bound and unbound **ORGAN, PIANOFORTE, and OTHER MUSIC. Operatic Scores**, a small library of Musical Books, and other items from the collection of the late Miss Ellen Willmott. Will be sold by Auction at Warley Place, Brentwood, on Tuesday, 4th June, 1935. Catalogues of the Auctioneers, Messrs. Kemsley, 164, Bishopsgate, E.C.2.

Figure 19. An advertisement for the Kemsley sale, 4 June 1935, *The Musical Times*, 76.1108 (1935), p. 489.

Kemsley, June 1935

A further sale, involving instruments and also some music, was held on 4 June 1935 by Kemsley of Bishopsgate, London; an advert for this sale was placed in the *Musical Times* in June 1935. This refers to a three-manual pipe organ, a chamber organ, and ‘a number of antique musical instruments’; also mentioned is a ‘large collection of bound and unbound Operatic scores’ and ‘a small library of Musical Books’ (see Figure 19).¹²⁶ It has not been possible to locate a copy of this catalogue, which had been available for purchase from the auctioneer. Whether any early music appeared listed in its pages is therefore uncertain.

Results and Subsequent Sales

The most successful item in the principal Willmott sale, handled by Sotheby’s, was lot 537, the Willmott manuscript. This attracted a winning bid of £155 (roughly £9,500 today) from Willmott’s brother-in-law, Robert Valentine Berkeley — not a bad price for an orphan partbook from a set originally of five volumes. Next was lot 550, Wilbye’s *Second Set of Madrigals to 3. 4. 5. and 6. Parts* (1609), offered complete, which went to Quaritch for £125 (Willmott had acquired the Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Quintus, and Bassus parts from the 1904 Marshall sale; the purchase of the Sextus book is not recorded). Morley’s *First Booke of Balletts to Five Voyces* (1595) was offered complete with all five partbooks present, thanks to Willmott’s purchase of two lots in the 1904 Marshall sale (even if she ended up with redundant partbooks); it went to ‘Maggs’ for £105. Lot 447, Gibbons’s *First Set of Madrigals and Mottets* (1612), with all its five volumes present, went to Harry Richardson Creswick (1902–88) for £102; he purchased it for Cambridge University Library.¹²⁷ The prices fetched by these complete sets were high; Hyatt King has put on record that for ‘madrigals and the like, £20 was an average price for a complete set up to about 1918 when in the Littleton sale, Watson’s madrigals (1590) fetched £46’.¹²⁸ By the time of Willmott’s 1935 sale, the average hammer price seems to have been subject to further inflation, since some complete sets, such as Wilbye’s *Second Set of Madrigals to 3. 4. 5. and 6. Parts*, went for as much as £125.

Some partbook sets, although they were offered complete, fared less well. Lot 548, Watson’s *First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished* (1590), with all six partbooks present, went to Quaritch, but for only £88 — possibly because the volumes were ‘not quite uniform in size’.¹²⁹ Lot 494, Morley’s *Canzonetts, or Little Short Songs to Three Voices* (1606), had all three volumes present, but it went to Maggs for only £39,

¹²⁶Front matter, *The Musical Times*, 76.1108 (1935), pp. 481–96 (p. 489).

¹²⁷Creswick was on the Cambridge University Library staff from 1926 to 1938; he later moved to the Bodleian Library as Deputy Librarian, and in 1945 was appointed Bodley’s Librarian, but returned to Cambridge University Library as Librarian in 1946. A label on the front of the volumes, which are today in Cambridge University Library, shelf mark Syn.4.61.53, confirms that they were ‘presented by Alwyn Faber Scholfield’, who paid for them; their accession date was 4 April 1935. (I thank Liam Sims for this information.) All volumes save for the Tenor partbook retain their uncut pages, as observed in the 1935 sale description and in other previous descriptions mentioned above.

¹²⁸Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, p. 95.

¹²⁹Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of Valuable Books and Manuscripts*, lot 548.

perhaps because all three of its books were bound in one single volume — even though the publication itself was described in the catalogue as ‘extremely rare’.¹³⁰ Incomplete partbook sets naturally attracted lower bids than complete ones. Lot 493, Morley’s *The Triumphs of Oriana* (1601), went to Quaritch for only £8 — presumably because it offered only three volumes (Quintus, Tenor, and Bassus) of an original six. Willmott’s Bassus and Sextus volumes to East’s *Third Set of Bookes* (1610) went as lot 436 to Quaritch for £6, probably because four volumes were missing. Lot 551 offered volumes from three separate publications: the Altus book to Wilbye’s *Second Set of Madrigals to 3. 4. 5. and 6. Parts* (1609), lacking the title page and the next leaf; the Quintus book to Yonge’s *Musica transalpina* (1588), lacking the title page; and a manuscript copy of the Bassus part to Bennett’s *Madrigalls to Foure Voyces* (1599), in the hand of Dr Burney. All three were knocked down to the London bookseller Ellis for the bargain price of £1. These lower prices brought the average prices fetched by the early modern music in the sale down considerably. Hyatt King observed that up until about 1918, complete sets of madrigals generally fetched around £20 per set: although prices soared to as much as £290 per set in the Christie–Miller sale of 1919 (thanks to the bidding of the American dealer George D. Smith), ‘sanity returned’ in the 1920s; by the time of the Willmott sale, the average price of complete madrigal sets was closer to £40.¹³¹ This observation, however, is only a rough average, and does not make clear that rarer items fetched higher prices or that incomplete or defective items attracted much lower prices. Some of the bidders at the principal Willmott sale of 1935 paid much more than £40 for complete sets, and some netted bargains.

The Armstrong–Finch manuscript, containing Purcell’s Violin Sonata, apparently sold to a ‘Marcus’ for £25 (Figure 18). For some years this was thought to be the antiquarian book dealer Hans Marcus, but he denied purchasing the volume when asked in 1972; Holman later suggested that it went unsold, and that it was bought in by the auctioneer because it failed to reach its reserve.¹³² (It did, however, sell in a recent Sotheby’s auction for £87,500.)¹³³ The music in Sotheby’s Willmott sale, including the autograph letters, raised £1931 8s — roughly £119,000 today.¹³⁴

Even though the Sotheby’s auction was publicized with minimal fanfare, reports of the sale were published fairly widely. The most detailed summary appeared in the *Publishers’ Circular and The Publisher and Bookseller* on 27 April 1935. A preamble points out that ‘prices throughout the sale were excellent, and in many cases were far higher than was generally anticipated’.¹³⁵ After the botanical books are dealt with, a section on music summarizes the most important lots of the sale, the prices they fetched, and even the names of their winning bidders. After giving some further results for ‘other works worthy of mention’, the author goes on to detail results for what they perceived to be the more important manuscript items of the sale, although both the Armstrong–Finch and the Willmott manuscripts were omitted:

Although the musical library of the late Miss Willmott was not quite so extensive as the botanical, it contained several exceedingly rare and valuable books. The best example was John Wilbye’s ‘The Second Set of Madrigales to 3, 4, 5, and 6 parts, apt both for Voyals and Voyces,’ one or two leaves slightly stained, but otherwise fine copies, unbound, 1609, which went to Messrs. Quaritch for £125. Two other works reached three Figures, namely, T. Morley’s ‘The First Book of Balletts to Five Voyces,’ 5 parts complete, unbound, 1595, £105 (Maggs), and Orlando Gibbons’ ‘The First Set of Madrigals and Mottets of 5 Parts,’ fine copies, unbound, 1612, £102 (Creswick). Of chief importance among the manuscripts was one by Bach, ‘Trio and Air’, on two pages, folio, which received a final bid from Messrs. Quaritch of no less than £120. A one-page MS. by Gluck made £58; a 22-page

¹³⁰Ibid., lot 494.

¹³¹Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, p. 96.

¹³²Holman, ‘A Purcell Manuscript Lost and Found’, pp. 469–70.

¹³³See lot 81 in Sotheby’s ‘Important Manuscripts, Continental Books and Music’ auction, 3 December 2019.

¹³⁴See the last leaf of the annotated copy of the Willmott catalogue in the British Library.

¹³⁵G. J. W., ‘The Botanical and Musical Collections of the Late Miss E. A. Willmott’, *The Publishers’ Circular and The Publisher and Bookseller* (1935), pp. 575–76 (p. 576).

MS. by Mendelssohn, 'Six Duets for Soprano Voices, and Piano,' £21; a 2-page MS. by Mozart, £25; and finally, the original MS. of Schubert's 'Blondel zu Marien', 3 pages, went to Messrs. Maggs Bros, at £33.¹³⁶

The Willmott manuscript was mentioned in a summary of the 1935 Sotheby's sale published in the *London Mercury*, a paragraph of which dealt with music. This also referred to other items sold, although the names of the winning bidders were not included:

In the musical section £120 was paid for J. S. Bach's autograph score of a Trio and Air, about 100 bars in length, and £155 for a sixteenth-century manuscript volume of psalms and hymns by Tallis, Byrd and other composers. Several rare early English books of madrigals were sold, among them being:— Thomas Watson, *First Sett of Italian Madrigals Englished*, 1590, £88; Orlando Gibbons, *First Set of Madrigals*, 1612, £102; and John Wilbye, *Second Set of Madrigals*, 1609, £125.¹³⁷

Within a year of 1935, booksellers who had snapped up items at the principal Willmott auction were publishing their own catalogues that listed her stock. Quaritch, who, as we have seen, was already familiar with Willmott's musical and other books from his dealings with her as her agent and from her attempts to sell him her library in the 1920s, was named as the winning bidder for some seventeen music lots. He seems not to have issued a music catalogue immediately, although he did so for Willmott's botanical items,¹³⁸ but he did list some of her stock in later, non-specialist catalogues. For instance, the Bassus and Sextus volumes to East's *Third Set of Bookes* (1610), which had sold as lot 436 to Quaritch for only £6, were then listed in Quaritch's catalogue no. 524 of 1936 for £20 — more than three times what he had paid for them (they were then purchased by the Folger Library).¹³⁹ Similarly, Ward's *First Set of English Madrigals to 3. 4. 5. and 6. Parts* (1613), which had been purchased by Willmott from the 1904 Marshall sale for £17 5s., went to Quaritch in her sale as lot no. 547, for only £9 9s. To whom Quaritch sold this volume, and for how much, is not known.¹⁴⁰

In 1935, Ellis of Bond St issued a catalogue entitled *Rare Old Music, Including Many Pieces of the 17th and 18th Centuries, Purchases from the Late Miss Willmott's Collection, etc.* (see Figure 20).¹⁴¹ This listed a total of 124 items, even though Ellis's name appears next to only twenty or so lots in the Sotheby's catalogue for the Willmott auction of 1935. Exactly how much music in Ellis's catalogue was Willmott's is therefore uncertain; the catalogue does not mention her beyond the cover, and Ellis may have been listing stock purchased at Willmott's Kemsley sale — the catalogue to which has not yet been located. Ellis, unsurprisingly, was also selling her music at a profit. Ellis acquired Watson's *First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished* (1590), as lot 549 in her sale, for only £3; this appears in his catalogue for £12

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷I. A. Williams, 'Biographical Notes & News', *The London Mercury*, 32 (1935), pp. 64–65. Only one music item appears to have been reported on in its own right in the months following the sale: the Reverend Greville Cooke (1894–1989), a professor of piano and composition at the Royal Academy of Music, purchased a Liszt autograph (lot no. 563) for £1 15s., and published a transcription of it in *The Piano Student* in 1935; see Macdonald and Wright, 'A Lost Liszt Piano Piece Recovered', p. 99, and [Greville Cooke], 'An Unpublished Liszt Manuscript', *The Piano Student*, 2 (1935), pp. 64–65.

¹³⁸Bernard Quaritch, *A Catalogue of Important Books on Botany, Many with Fine Coloured Plates, from the Libraries of the Late Lord Batterssea, Miss Ellen Willmott and Other Recent Purchases*, no. 509 (Bernard Quaritch, 1935).

¹³⁹Bernard Quaritch, *A Catalogue of Books, Newsbooks and Pamphlets Printed before 1700 Relating to Charles I, the Civil War and the Commonwealth, 1625–1660*, no. 524 (Bernard Quaritch, 1936), item 764. Today their respective Folger Library shelf marks are ac5095 and ac5096.

¹⁴⁰It later appeared in a Sotheby's auction on 11 December 1967, where it was purchased again by Quaritch, before it was acquired by Dr Bent Juel-Jensen (1922–2006). It was acquired by Robert S. Pirie in 2007, from whose collection it was recently auctioned, again by Sotheby: it appeared as lot no. 836 in 'Property from the Collection of Robert S. Pirie, Volumes I and II: Books and Manuscripts', New York, 2 December 2015, where it fetched a price of \$4,750.

¹⁴¹This catalogue was also advertised in the *London Mercury* in 1936, which stated that it listed '114 old musical books, many being publications of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, drawn from the library of the late Miss Ellen Willmott'. See *The London Mercury*, 33 (1936), p. 200.

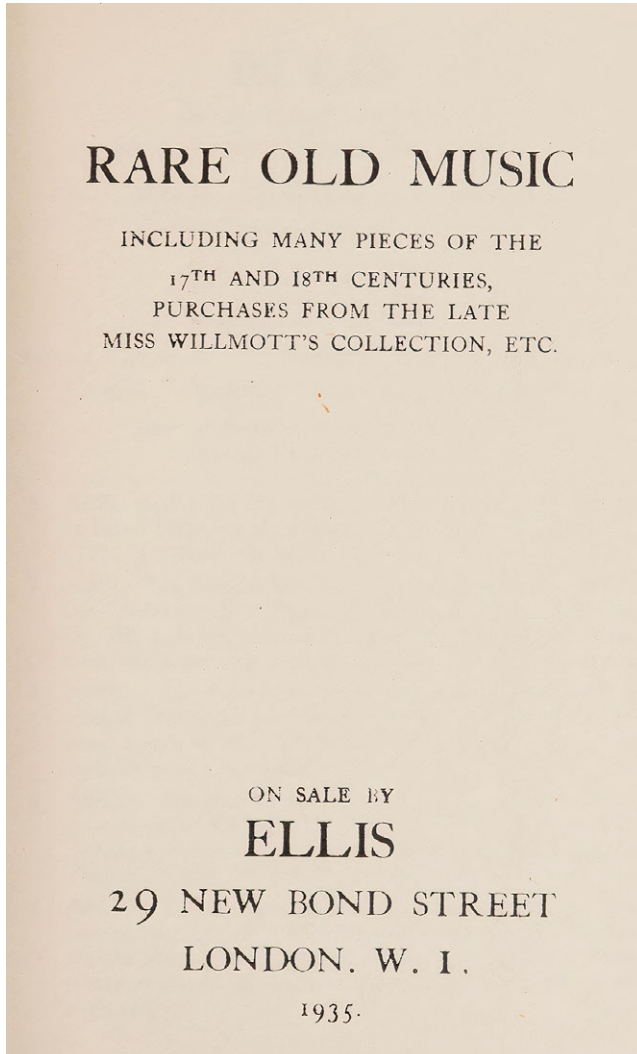


Figure 20. Ellis's *Rare Old Music, Including Many Pieces of the 17th and 18th Centuries, Purchases from the Late Miss Willmott's Collection, etc.*

12s. — more than four times the price. (The lone Altus partbook to Wilbye's *Second Set of Madrigals to 3. 4. 5. and 6. Parts* (1609), which went to him for only £1, did not appear.) Similarly, Ellis's purchase of Purcell's *Sonnatas of III Parts: Two Viollins and Basse: to the Organ or Harpsecord* (1683), as lot no. 512 in Willmott's sale, went to him for £18 10s., but was listed by him at a price of £30. Both Quaritch and Ellis stood to make handsome profits from reselling Willmott's stock.

The library of Ellen Willmott may not have been the largest assembled by an individual around the turn of the twentieth century; nor, to judge from its contents, was it the most varied. It did, however, contain various early modern music items, including printed partbooks and important manuscript items such as the Willmott manuscript and the Armstrong–Finch manuscript. Evidence for Willmott's early acquisitions may be thin on the ground, but a substantial corpus of booksellers' receipts, invoices, and other correspondence in her papers — which survive in unusually large quantity for an amateur collector — shed light on her methods of acquisition and expenditure. They show that the printed partbooks were acquired in haste, initially from the 1904 auction of Julian Marshall, and then at various stages from or

through Quaritch — purchases which may have been motivated by her encounters with early prints and manuscripts at the 1904 Loan Exhibition of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, and was perhaps further driven by her involvement in madrigal societies and choirs which performed that music, albeit from modern transcriptions.

Information about items Willmott purchased from their respective sale or auction catalogues reveals that she was likely interested in only the best available copies (sending copies she owned to booksellers ‘for comparison’), even when partbooks were bound together in single volumes or where a volume offered only a single voice part. Composite volumes and books bearing lone voice parts may have been unsuited to practical use, but Willmott appears to have been collecting music primarily for antiquarian rather than practical purposes (even though at least one printed set of partbooks was dis-bound and disaggregated into separate parts while in Willmott’s custody, which may signal an ambition for at least some practical use, even if this ambition was not realized). Consequently none of her material traced so far exhibits any on-page markings to prove practical engagement with it, even though she was herself musical.

Willmott’s acquisition of early modern music, in a collecting stint that appears to have run for more than thirty years from its first recorded traces in 1898, is of significance to musicologists because it neatly coincides with the early music revival which burgeoned in England from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. In this revival, published writings introduced specific sources, their contents, and their composers; individuals such as R. R. Terry sought to transcribe from manuscript partbooks with the aim of liturgical performance; editions such as the seminal *Tudor Church Music* series published in the 1920s, which ‘played a pivotal role’ in the revival of sixteenth-century music, made that music accessible to the public.¹⁴² The availability of early modern music at auction and sale, conversely, made the primary sources of that music available to connoisseurs and collectors — motivated by exhibitions and published editions, as well as liturgical and public performances.

Of greater significance, however, is what Willmott’s papers reveal about her various interactions with booksellers and auctioneers, and what these tell us about the music trade in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Coover has noted that ‘we know very little about the everyday working of the music market’.¹⁴³ This situation is redressed somewhat by Willmott’s archive, which documents her purchasing activities and modus operandi. We can also trace her attempts to sell off items when she hit financial hardship in the 1910s and 1920s — attempts which seem to have fallen flat, presumably because Willmott had paid high prices for her items (as she was reminded by Barclay Squire) and was reluctant to let them go for less than she had paid. The eventual 1935 auction of Willmott’s library, handled principally by Sotheby’s, adds further to the picture. Some important manuscript items fetched high prices; some complete partbook sets also did well, while other complete sets fared less well, perhaps owing to their condition. Some items were had at knock-down prices: within a year of the principal Willmott auction, booksellers who had snapped up items were re-listing her stock in their own catalogues, with Quaritch and Ellis making handsome profits.

Today, Ellen Willmott is rarely identified as a former owner in items that were once part of her collection. (The main exceptions are the Willmott and Armstrong–Finch manuscripts.)¹⁴⁴ But the various invoices and receipts in her archive do at least allow for her sources of acquisition to be tracked: the annotated auctioneer’s copy of Willmott’s 1935 catalogue at the British Library reveals the identities of the winning bidders and the prices they paid, and several items from that sale may then be found in

¹⁴²Suzanne Cole, ‘The Early Twentieth-Century Revival of Tudor Church Music’, *Context*, 37 (2012), pp. 130–34 (p. 132).

¹⁴³James Coover, ‘Puttick’s Auctions: Windows on the Retail Music Trade’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 114 (1989), pp. 56–68 (pp. 56–57), doi:10.1093/jrma/114.156.

¹⁴⁴The Willmott manuscript was acquired by the Bodleian Library, Oxford, on 1 January 2022, following allocation by the government in lieu of inheritance tax; its Bodleian shelf mark is MS. Mus. c.784. The Armstrong–Finch manuscript recently resurfaced after a period of some ninety years and is in private ownership; see Holman, ‘A Purcell Manuscript Lost and Found’. Willmott is also identified as a former owner in Otto Edwin Albrecht, *A Census of Autograph Music Manuscripts of European Composers in American Libraries* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), p. 327.

subsequent catalogues. It is therefore possible for items in Willmott's collection to be traced successively from owner to owner, revealing information on their custodial history. Willmott's papers, unusually, offer us evidence of acquisition, attempted disposal, and then eventual dispersal; they offer us a window onto the economics of the music trade as items changed hands — driven perhaps by the early music revival, or by an item's condition and completeness. They also build a compelling case study of a woman's taste for early modern musical material, both printed and manuscript, driven apparently by an antiquarian impulse — a field in which Ellen Willmott stood with other unmarried women of her generation, including the instrument collector Margaret H. Glyn (1865–1946), the writer and editor Cecie Stainer (1867–1937), and the folk-song collector Lucy Broadwood (1858–1929), some of whom have received attention in recent work.¹⁴⁵ Their activities, and the interconnections between them, invite further study.

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¹⁴⁵Margaret H. Glyn was a collector of instruments but also an author on music; see Charles Abdy, *The Glyns of Ewell: The Story of a Family from 1736 to 1946* (Charles Abdy, 1994); Margaret H. Glyn, *Analysis of the Evolution of Musical Form* (Longmans, Green, 1909); and Margaret H. Glyn, *Elizabethan Virginal Music and its Composers* (W. Reeves, 1934). Elizabeth Cecil 'Cecie' Stainer was the author of several articles on fifteenth-century music and a daughter of Sir John Stainer. Lucy Broadwood was one of the 'central pillars' of the Folk-Song Society, serving as its secretary and its journal editor, and was at the 'administrative heart of the folksong movement from the early 1890s until the mid-1920s'; David Gregory, *The Late Victorian Folksong Revival: The Persistence of English Melody, 1878–1903* (Scarecrow Press, 2010), p. 536–37. Recent work on these figures includes James Burke, 'Meetings with an "Interesting Relic": Early Encounters with the Sadler Partbooks', *Early Music*, forthcoming, doi:10.1093/em/caaf045; and Dorothy de Val, *In Search of Song: The Life and Times of Lucy Broadwood* (Ashgate, 2011).