

however, beer became the more popular than ale: by 1598 a foreign visitor could write that "the general drink is beer.. excellently well tasted, but strong and what soon fuddles." The appearance of a number of books on hop growing reflects the growing demand for hops in the making of beer. One might suspect that the book came into Forbes' collection almost accidentally, but his copy is abundantly annotated in his own hand and the annotations show a wide experience of hop growing. Can Forbes have had a hop farm?

(Ed. note: In a later issue of the Bulletin Professor Watson will publish a supplement to his earlier article on agricultural manuals in the University's Library. In collaboration with Professor Roberta Styran, he is also preparing an article on our collection of pharmacopoeias).



THE FORBES COLLECTION - COLLECTING HABITS AND THE PERSONAL LIBRARY

by

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What follows is, despite its appearance, neither free association in the presence of columns of figures, nor a parody of statistics (one of the adjuncts of modern library science which is truly scientific). It is a tentative way to begin to come to grips with the building of a personal library if one is allowed the initial assumption that a man builds his library -- that it grows with him, not untended, but with his care.

It must be said straightway that my discussion needs great amplification by example in order to make any distinct claims about the collecting habits of Forbes as revealed in his existing library stock. If a full-scale study of his collection were made, that study would have to be prefaced by the generalizations and qualifications I put forth below. I must stress how well aware I am of the dangers of oversimplifying the problems at hand and of the vague nature of much of the "data". This in my defense in case bare numbers -- which seem often to convince us when words fail -- lend too definite a tone to this essay.

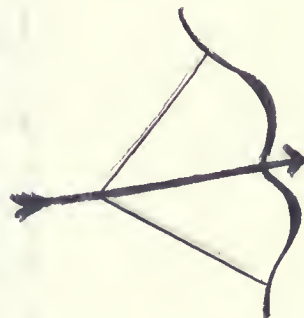
Personal libraries are I think built up by association. Names or genres or subjects become established early, and the collection builds outward from them. We do not expect Forbes' library to be like Wing in miniature: we expect his prejudices, even his curious lacunae. We will never know how Forbes built up his collection; about this we can make only careful generalizations. If he has a high number of first editions of contemporaries such as Baxter, we should be safe in assuming that he got hold of those texts, in the main, relatively soon by seventeenth-century book trade standards after their appearance. It will be seen from the small sampling which follows that Forbes acquired on the average one-third of the output of individual titles by those of his contemporaries in whom he seems to have been interested. This is not surprising when one considers that Forbes had a great interest in controversial literature, and it is surely indicative that Forbes' habits of acquisition were not random. Similarly, if we assume as I have done that most titles were probably acquired (this need not always be taken as meaning "purchased") relatively soon after publication,

we can postulate a steady interest in the publishing career of certain individuals.

My thesis is really a proposal: that a personal library can be studied, not merely enumerated. That we could, through some effort and if the survey were broad enough, use numerical data to certain advantage. Does the proportion of one sort of books held in a library relative to the number published in a similar time-period vary significantly from individual to individual? Or is it constant, based on a large sample of personal libraries? Would a comparable library in another century show a radically different figure? What of the proportion of classical texts: is a relatively low percentage among Forbes' books consistent with what we know of seventeenth-century education in Scotland? What of the conspicuous gaps? Do we too readily assume that an educated man intellectually active in the latter half of the seventeenth century would have the works of Milton in his possession? Forbes has but one item. If enough data could be assembled, bare figures would begin to help us understand the intellectual life of the times. We have bibliographical records against which we may reflect the data: the Term catalogues (from 1668), Wing, Maunsell's catalogue of "divinity" (1595), contemporary booksellers' printed lists, institutional donation registers, and other private libraries. Jayne notices 217 private libraries between 1600 and 1640 in his Library catalogues of the English renaissance (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1956).

From Michael Finlayson's article I have taken six names dealt with. Of course others could as well have been chosen, and of course Baxter's name is an obvious choice. I span the period covered in the Finlayson article, and beyond that to include the publishing careers of all six figures. Using Wing, and STC where applicable, I have plotted every distinct title (second and later editions are not counted) within five-year time-units. I then surveyed Forbes' stock including the "bound-withs" in the same way.

The tabulation, for what it is worth, follows. The grouping of Forbes' items in the five-year periods by imprint date is again subject to the qualification that it is probable that most of the titles were acquired soon after their appearance, though Forbes' possession of two Baxter items with imprint dates between 1700 and 1704 where no new titles of Baxter appeared reminds us that we are on thin ice here. The publishing statistics by themselves begin to show patterns, and might be expressed graphically to some advantage. The last column shows the Forbes holdings as a percentage of the published figure -- averaging about one-third.



Date	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-99	00-04	05	TOTAL	%
BAXTER published								2	10	36	24	7	19	17	45	6	17	4			187	-
Forbes								1	2	14	4	3	7	9	11	6	5	2	2		66	35.3
BURROUGHS published						4	8	10	8	10	4	2	1	2							49	-
Forbes						1	1	1	7	4	2	-	1								17	34.7
GATAKER published		2	18	3	-	3	2	7	9	1	1	-	1								47	-
Forbes		2	-	-	-	1	-	2	3	1	1	-	1								9	19.1
OWEN published																						-
Forbes							4	9	11	13	5	8	5	8	12	1	5	1	2		84	-
SEDGWICK published							1	2	2	3	1	3	2	7	1	1	1	-	3		27	32.1
Forbes						2	5	3	2	5	3	-	-	-	-	1					21	-
VINES published						-	2	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-					7	33.3
Forbes							4	6	-	8	4										22	-
							1	4	-	5	3										13	59.0

TOTAL PUBLISHED:

TOTAL IN FORBES' COLLECTION:

410
139

-
33.9%

Now I want to glance briefly at another point of view. A provincial Anglican priest's library which seems to be roughly contemporary with Forbes' is catalogued in the Miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society.* The introduction does not tell us, unfortunately, who might have formed the collection, but it does state that it "appears to have been collected within a limited period, and to have received no subsequent additions" (p. 16). It concludes with a comment which as well describes the Forbes Collection:

The bibliographer will look in vain for any work of surpassing interest; but the curious reader may find in these pages a faithful account of what was then considered a useful library of reference for the theological student.

We may leave my statistics for a few comparative notes of interest for these two seventeenth-century collections. Perhaps these notes make more persuasive the thought that the man makes the books as much as the books make the man, and that the personal element in a library can be isolated and studied. The Tong library, for example, has no Baxters at all. Burroughes, Gataker, Owen, Sedgwick and Vines are similarly unrepresented. I am not surprised to find that both libraries have Salmasius' De gubernatione Dei; more interestingly, both possess Pflacher's Analysis typica testamenti. They share an Alsted Encyclopaedia, 1630 (the only Alsted in the Tong library, as opposed to a dozen items among Forbes' books); both possess Burnet's History of the Reformation of the Church of England, which might be expected, Comenius' Janua, Thomas Manton's Practical commentary...on the Epistle of James, 1657 (the only Manton in the Tong library, but one of twelve in Forbes'), and at least sixteen other items in common. Where Forbes has none, the Tong library has thirteen items by Jeremiah Drexelio (1581-1638), an Augsburg Jesuit whose many works encompassed topics from theology to astronomy and Hermetic literature and were translated into English and even into Welsh in the seventeenth century. All thirteen are foreign printings, being the products of Cologne or Antwerp. Beside Forbes' two Erasmus items, Tong's library has a higher percentage: seven texts, including a 1540 New Testament. Forbes' interesting Quaker holdings, which include a broadside, are not paralleled in the Tong collection. The Tong library, by my quick count, has 342 items. Among them are some twenty-eight classical texts, a slightly higher proportion, I imagine, than Forbes' library can show.

We have begun to see how much one personal library can tell us about another. If enough material could be gathered from such sources as Notes and queries (that graveyard of raging issues where, the writer of the article on the Tong library assures us, much data on personal libraries has been interred) and from the sources Jayne specifies, work of value could be done on this very interesting aspect of the seventeenth-century background.



* Botfield, Beriah. "The catalogue of the minister's library in the Collegiate Church of Tong, in Shropshire, with some notes of that structure", Miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society, 3 (1856-57).