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Sir Francis Leicester's 'good library' at Nether Tabley

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Abstract

This article examines the book collection of Sir Francis Leicester (1674–1742) of Nether Tabley Hall, Cheshire. It charts the genesis of his collection; from an initial collection inherited from his grandfather Sir Peter Leicester to one directed by the interests of Sir Francis Leicester himself. The kind of collection Sir Francis assembled and whether it had a particular kind of identity is examined. The connections between this collection and those owned by other members of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century elite is considered. Whether national and local scholars knew about his books and were granted access is explored. Evidence is provided for access having been granted by Sir Francis to non-elite readers from a variety of professional backgrounds. These potential readers are identified.

Keywords: Sir Francis Leicester, Sir Peter Leicester, Nether Tabley Hall, Tabley Old Hall, Cheshire, book collection

Introduction

To understand what kinds of books were available to members of the Cheshire nobility and gentry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most researchers have considered the National Trust collections at Dunham Massey, Lyme, and Tatton.¹ However, during their long lives, these three properties were just part of a network of many similar estates within the county, and almost all would have had some kind of library or collection of books. This article will look specifically at one of the lesser-known collections, the one formerly at Nether Tabley Hall (later known as Tabley Old Hall) and now preserved at Tabley House, near Knutsford, its successor property.² The University of Manchester owns Tabley House, where the majority of books remain visible to visitors in the picture gallery.³ The man responsible for the genesis of the Tabley collection was the historian Sir Peter Leicester (1614–1678), author of *Historical Antiquities* (London, 1673).⁴ This article however, will concentrate on Sir Peter's little-known grandson Sir Francis Leicester (1674–1742), who was an enthusiastic book buyer in his own right.

Charles II had bestowed a baronetcy on Sir Peter in 1660. Francis Leicester was born in 1674, the second surviving son of Sir Robert Leicester, second baronet (1643–1684), and his wife, Meriel (1638–1707). He was part of a generation born into the relative peace after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. The choice of his godparents was an almost symbolic reconciliation of Cheshire factions. The royalists Sir Geoffrey Shakerley and Peter Venables were his godfathers. His godmother was Vere Booth, the daughter of George Booth, first Baron Delamer of Dunham Massey (1622–1684), who had been a parliamentary supporter. The death of his older brother Robert (1669–1675), who had delighted family and friends with his brilliance, ensured that Francis ultimately inherited Tabley. His parents probably guided his early education at his mother's home, Marcham in Berkshire, until he went to school. On Sir Robert's inheritance, they returned to Cheshire, where Sir Robert died unexpectedly at Tabley in 1684, and his ten-year-old son inherited the Leicester

baronetcy and the manor of Nether Tabley. Young Sir Francis was then at Shrewsbury school, where his younger brother Peter (b. 1676) died of smallpox in 1685. His widowed mother visited the school to mourn one child and watch over Sir Francis, who had also succumbed to smallpox. Fortunately, he survived and he continued at school. After Shrewsbury, he attended Eton (1688–91), and then in 1692 he went up to St John’s College, Cambridge, after which he spent a year at the Middle Temple.⁵ In 1696, he left England to undertake his Grand Tour of Europe, and he returned in 1698.⁶ Sir Francis was fluent in French and Italian as well as Greek and Latin. The world beyond Tabley, Cheshire, and Britain must have fascinated him as, according to the inventory taken on his death, he kept ‘2 globes, one Celestial the other Terrestrial [*sic*], with leather covers’ in his bedroom.⁷ He married Frances Thornhill, a Yorkshire heiress and wealthy widow, in February 1705, and they had only one surviving child, a daughter called Meriel. Sir Francis served as Sheriff of Cheshire (1705–06). He was later to sit as one of the Tory members of Parliament for the Lancashire constituency of Newton from 1715 until 1727. This was the pocket borough of his friend and patron, the Nonjuror Peter Legh XII (1669–1744) of Lyme Park. His fellow MP for the same borough was the ‘ardent Jacobite’ William Shippen (1673–1743).⁸

After the Restoration, Sir Peter had worked tirelessly to restore the family position and prosperity after the confiscation and fines suffered during the Interregnum. Sir Francis saw it as his duty to continue his grandfather’s campaign of consolidation. Bent on similar aspirations were his nearby cousins the Leycesters of Toft, the Mainwarings of Over Peover (although they had fought against Charles I), and his neighbours the Egertons of Tatton, the Leghs of East Hall, and the Leghs of West Hall, High Legh. The social networks of Sir Francis criss-crossed the county to include other Cheshire families such as the Warrens of Poynton and the Cholmondeleys of Vale Royal, and far beyond the county’s border. He inherited Irish, Welsh, and Yorkshire lands from his wife, sat for a Lancashire constituency, and, because of parliamentary business, visited London regularly. He told Mr Legh, ‘In a little time I shall be of Sir [Michael] Warton’s mind, that one may hear more in 2 hours out of the House than in a whole session within doors.’⁹ Despite his exasperation, at Westminster Sir Francis supported important economic developments for Cheshire such as the scheme to make the river Weaver navigable. While any spare time he had in London was undoubtedly spent politicking and entertaining (he preserved a libretto from Handel’s 1724 *Giulio Cesare*, for instance), he also spent it acquiring books. All the surviving book bills in his papers are from London booksellers of the 1730s.

With his father’s early death, Sir Francis began his literary patronage at an early age. The *Academy of Armory* (Chester, 1688) was a ‘storehouse of armory and blazon’ written by the Chester-based herald painter and genealogist Randle Holme (1627–1700). He dedicated chapter 3 of book III to ‘The Right Worshipful’ Sir Francis, who was only fourteen. Sir Peter Leicester was the intended original dedicatee, but on his death he was replaced by Sir Robert.¹⁰ His untimely death, ‘much Lamented by all Loyal Hearts’, ensured Sir Francis was the recipient of the final published dedication. He was praised as: ‘so Loving, Pious, and Loved an Off-spring, we are engaged through your forward Contribution to advance the Work, to devote this Chapter of our Labours to your Noble Consideration, hoping the good acceptance thereof’.¹¹ It was an acknowledgement of a family tradition of historical and genealogical research and the reading and collecting of books, rather than any active involvement in the work. The choice of the young Sir Francis, as his life later demonstrated, was not such an inappropriate decision.

It is uncertain when Sir Francis began to buy books seriously. Unlike his grandfather, Sir Peter, who was a copious annotator of his books, Sir Francis rarely marked or dated his books. Some books still at Tabley do seem to indicate that he was an active buyer in the 1690s. It would be satisfying if among his earliest purchases was the Tabley copy of *The Works of the Right Honourable Henry, Late Lord Delamer and Earl of Warrington Containing his Lordships Advice to his Children* (London, 1694).¹² Thematically it fits with a young man seeking guidance from an older, more experienced local magnate, although Henry Booth, first Earl of Warrington (1652–1694), was a Whig in contrast to the Tory Leicesters. He was also half-brother to Vere Booth, the godmother of Sir Francis. His book included advice on the kind of reading he expected his sons to undertake.

[N]ext to God's Law, there is nothing more necessary for an English-man than to be well acquainted with the Law of his own Country [...] Next to a knowledge in the Law, History is very necessary, and especially of our own Country. And though we have many Chronicles, yet the Lives of our Kings that are written by particular hands are the best, and give the truest account of things. It is also necessary to look into the Histories of other Countreys and the Lives of Famous Men [...] To read a Play or Romance now and then for diversion, may do no hurt; but he that spends most of his time in such Books, will be able to give a very ill account of it.¹³

Sir Francis followed this pattern assiduously, and all of these types of books can be found in his collection. However, while he owned plays, he appears to have had little time for novels or romances. Lord Warrington advised his sons 'to enquire after other Books of that sort'. Taking this advice, Sir Francis developed a lifelong habit of patronizing bookshops.¹⁴

In 1723, the antiquarian William Stukeley (1687–1765) viewed the growing collection when he had been 'entertain'd by the worthy Sir Francis Leicester' at Nether Tabley. He recorded that 'here is a good library completed by the curious possessor, with a vast addition to his ancestor's store, of all the English history especially'.¹⁵ This paper will consider how and why Sir Francis expanded the collection he inherited from his grandfather at Nether Tabley Hall. Additionally, it will examine evidence for who was granted access to the Tabley shelves, whether they were members of the Cheshire elite and neighbours of the Leicesters, local scholars, or even humbler readers. Stukeley was wrong in one sense: this collection was never 'completed' as Sir Francis acquired books up to his death. That he was still so interested, even as he lay dying, encapsulates his important influence on the Tabley collection despite his obscurity in the usual telling of its history.

Methodology

The books now at Tabley House comprise three major collections: the seventeenth-century collection of Sir Peter Leicester, Sir Francis Leicester's early eighteenth-century collection, and the books of his great-grandson Sir John Fleming Leicester, later first Baron de Tabley (1762–1827). In addition, there are other strands, notably nineteenth-century books and the twentieth-century reading matter of the penultimate owners, Cuthbert Leicester Warren and his wife Hilda, and the books of their son Colonel John Leicester Warren. The book collection at Tabley House is a well-recorded one. Sir Peter Leicester catalogued his books, as did Sir Francis, and their many catalogues have survived.¹⁶ The late nineteenth-century owner, the formidable Eleanor Leighton, the Hon. Lady Leighton Warren, organized another comprehensive catalogue, still at Tabley House. After the University of Manchester acquired Tabley, the books were inspected and listed by specialists from

the University of Manchester Library; some rare and unique items were transferred there. This was in the late 1980s before Tabley House was opened to the public. The original lists were computerized as Excel spreadsheets in the late 1990s. In 2015, a volunteer programme began with the Bowdon (Cheshire) branch of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies to create a comprehensive and detailed inventory of all the remaining books at Tabley.

For the purpose of this research, Sir Francis Leicester's catalogues were of vital importance. We are fortunate to have a rough one he wrote himself in about 1720. It feels like a catalogue drawn up in mid-move, hastily put together, and an attempt to keep track of what he owned. The later, and final catalogue, was a much grander one. Fine paper was used, and a clerk wrote it out; his hand was elegant and calm, in contrast to the earlier effort of, as he appears from the page, a preoccupied Sir Francis. While both describe his collection, as Towsey cautions about catalogues in general, 'the inescapable fact is that however clearly they appear to describe readers' preferences in the past, catalogues actually say nothing at all about the use of books'.¹⁷ Indeed, the Tabley catalogues do not (in the main) reveal when or where during his life Sir Francis acquired a particular book. Similarly, they cannot easily tell us why he bought the books he did, or, in the words of Lundberg and May, which 'were read more intensively than others and had a deeper and more lasting effect'.¹⁸ That he felt the need for catalogues at all raises other questions. Was it for his own benefit? He was a man who liked order and regularity in all things. Was it a mark of his own opinion of his status as a reader and a collector? Interestingly, after his death in 1742, no other owner of the Tabley books cared enough to commission another catalogue until the Hon. Lady Leighton Warren. That meant the collection went without a proper audit for nearly one and a half centuries. Some books were apparently borrowed (and not returned) or lost during that long period.¹⁹ Despite such caveats about what exactly library catalogues can usefully reveal, Darnton has concluded that 'a catalogue of a private library can serve as a profile of a reader'.²⁰ However, it was vital to turn to the surviving books to ensure a fuller profile of Sir Francis as possible.

The catalogues were used alongside a physical identification and inspection of his books. Aside from the authors, subject matter, and publishing history of the books themselves, they yielded other crucial data. There was information about some of their provenance, prior to their acquisition for Tabley, and information drawn from their bindings (some books he neglected to have bound entirely) and condition. The physical examination revealed that Sir Francis favoured neat, unfussy bindings. Any very fine binding usually indicated a second-hand purchase. The overwhelming majority of his books are disappointingly free from all kinds of marginalia. This should not be interpreted too harshly as proof that Sir Francis did not read his books. As Purcell points out, 'whether people wrote in the margins of books was determined not just by personal preference, but by fashion'.²¹ All his books contain his handwritten pressmarks. He never turned down the corner of a page, or damaged a binding. If he were alive and reading today, he would never break a paperback's spine. Even using the book catalogues in conjunction with surviving books produced only a partial and, perhaps, rather nebulous understanding of Sir Francis Leicester's reading and collecting. As Towsey suggests, 'book ownership does not necessarily reflect what a person actually read'.²² Thus, any conclusion drawn solely from those two sources was challengeable. It was therefore necessary to discover any other evidence about Sir Francis and his books, to contextualize the catalogues and books themselves.

Other evidence was found after as thorough an examination as possible of the Leicester Warren family of Tabley records, held by Cheshire Archives and Local Studies in Chester. This was almost an attempt to catch Sir Francis in the very acts of reading and collecting, and the archive yielded crucial documentation that helped animate the lay figure of Sir Francis in his study. This included letters from his private correspondence where he discussed literary matters with a friend. A small number of book bills (Sir Francis carefully ticked off each purchase he had received) and a few bills for contemporary newspapers had also survived. Additionally, the inventories of Nether Tabley Hall, compiled after his death in 1742, revealed a little more about his collection. This research was complemented by a few pieces of archival material still preserved at Tabley House. One crucial discovery was the original wording of Sir Francis Leicester's memorial tablet, in his own handwriting. This proved that being a reader and a learned man was a crucial part of his sense of self and that he wanted that recorded in stone for posterity.

A family collection

When Sir Peter Leicester died in 1678 he 'laid upon his descendants the charge that they alienate none of the books, but treat them as an heirloom not to be sold away or even loaned to others'.²³ This bequest consisted of 'all my Bookes' (this encompassed printed books, historic manuscripts, and his own voluminous notebooks of research and written, but unpublished, compositions) and the physical space, 'the Study wherein they now remayn in the Mannour-house of Nether Tabley'.²⁴ On the death of Sir Robert Leicester in 1684, Sir Francis inherited. While Sir Peter's books initially must have dominated, Sir Francis soon began to buy his own books and added those to his inherited collection.

Eventually all the books at Tabley would be listed together in manuscript catalogues as his own books. Sir Peter's books had their small and neat pressmarks crossed through (but not erased entirely), and new pressmarks were put beneath their predecessors because Sir Francis created his own study (his description) in about 1723/24, called the 'New Library' in the 1742 inventories. This was just one physical indication of just how much the collection at Tabley had grown during the lifetime of Sir Francis.

One small source of additional books came from his relations, and his acquisition followed West's pattern of the 'dominant collection [... to which] other personal collections migrated if they were not sold or bequeathed away on their owner's death'.²⁵ At Tabley there is a copy of Edmund Borlase's *The History of the Execrable Irish Rebellion Trac'd from Many Preceding Acts, to the Grand Eruption the 23. of October, 164*, that had belonged to Sir Robert. It has his son's pressmark inside the cover, and a fragment of a letter, used as a bookmark, is still preserved between its pages. This scrap of paper was directed 'to my Honored Mother' and signed by a young Sir Francis. In one book father, mother, and son are united and their memory preserved. Books that had belonged to his mother Meriel, Lady Leicester, were also preserved. She had been celebrated locally for her 'knowledge and understanding, known to all',²⁶ and this was reflected in the seriousness of her reading. As an example of her few surviving books, she signed her own copy of Daniel Brevint's *Saul and Samuel at Endor* (London, 1674).²⁷

When Sir Francis married Frances Thornhill in 1705 she brought books to their marriage. Her books probably arrived at Tabley in June 1705, as part of the '4 Wagon loads of goods' recorded by the

steward Thomas Jackson in his diary.²⁸ She wrote ‘Frances Thornhills Book’ in her copy of the correspondence between the Cambridge Platonist John Norris (1657–1712) and the philosopher and promoter of women’s education Mary Astell (1666–1731), *Letters Concerning the Love of God* (London, 1695). After her marriage, she acquired a copy of Jeremy Taylor’s *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (London, 1706), and signed the title page with her married name, ‘Frances Leicester’. She owned a new and smart folio set of Jeremy Collier’s *The Great Historical, Geographical, Genealogical and Poetical Dictionary* (London, 1701). On the first page of the text, she wrote ‘Frances Thornhill Book 1701’, so she had bought it new.²⁹ After her death, Sir Francis went on to add the 1705 supplement and the 1721 appendix to his wife’s set of Collier’s *Dictionary*. Listing them on page 32 of his final catalogue, he declared, ‘So now it is all compleat’. A sense of debt, personal loss, perhaps the preservation of their reading together and family piety, probably guided his preservation of her books. The swelling collection became typical of what Purcell describes as a ‘repository of family memory’.³⁰

Family books like these were a minor source of growth for, as William Stukeley saw, Sir Francis had made a ‘vast addition’. If Sir Francis began acquiring books and pamphlets when he went to Cambridge in 1692, then excluding those titles printed before that date gives a working figure of how much he added. In the final catalogue, the ‘Memoirs and Essays’ class had 173 titles and of these, Sir Francis probably added 57 per cent. In the smaller class of ‘Heraldry’ (a favourite of his grandfather), he probably only purchased 32 per cent, while under ‘Lives of Particular Persons of Distinction’ he had perhaps added 58 per cent of the titles.³¹ These figures indicate just how much of an influence Sir Francis had on the collection at Tabley. His influence was not one of disruption but a continuation of traditional family interests of Tory politics and loyalty to the crown and the Church of England.³² He continued, to borrow a phrase from Manguel, ‘a conversation across time and space’³³ between his own and previous generations’ reading and collecting.

One particular title had an almost spiritual resonance for his grandparents and parents. Sir Peter Leicester owned a 1649 edition of *Eikon Basilike*, the work supposedly written by Charles I, and John Earle’s Latin translation of the *Eikon Basilike* (The Hague, 1649). In addition, he had a copy of Milton’s *Eikonoklastes* (1650) ‘a base booke’, and the response to it by Joseph Jane, *Eikon aklastos* (London, 1651).³⁴ He also had Richard Perrinchief’s *Basilika: The Workes of King Charles the Martyr* (London, 1662). To these Sir Francis added Edward Symmons’s *A Vindication of King Charles I* (London, 1693) and Perrinchief’s *The Life and Death of King Charles the First ... Together with Eikon Basilike Representing His Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings* (London, 1693). Later in life, he added *Memoirs of the Two Last Years of the Reign of that Unparallell’d Prince, of Ever Blessed Memory, King Charles I* (London, 1702).³⁵ For a royalist family like the Leicesters, these were almost talismanic books, and the latter’s fragile condition would seem to indicate that it was read frequently. It had more immediate and emotional appeal than other commemorative sermons on the same subject that are in pristine condition.³⁶

Sir Francis also acquired works that added depth and context to the collection’s coverage of the Civil War period, in which his family had fought and suffered for Charles I. Sir Peter had acquired the first folio volume (in two parts), for the period 1618–29, of John Rushworth’s *Historical Collections*, ‘a documentary history of the civil wars beginning in 1618’.³⁷ The later volumes were published after Sir Peter’s death, but Sir Francis added them to his library. He listed them in his

final catalogue on page 40 as ‘Rushworths Collections 8 Vol besides the 1st Vol twice’. The duplicate was his grandfather’s original purchase and an heirloom, but Sir Francis completed the set.

Interest in the Stuarts’ lives found a reflection in his other purchases too. He bought the anonymously issued *Memoires of the Family of the Stuarts, and the Remarkable Providences of God towards them* (London, 1683). Although no author was given, Sir Francis wrote across the title page ‘I fancy by Watson’. The English Short Title Catalogue confirms that he was correct: John Watson was the author. He added three different biographies of Mary Stuart. He bought James Freebairn’s *The Life of Mary Stewart, Queen of Scotland and France* (Edinburgh, 1725) and Eliza Haywood’s *Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots* (London, 1725). Both were versions of the same French source, and they were competitors in the marketplace.³⁸ Leicester also purchased an impressive two-volume folio set of Samuel Jebb’s *De vita et rebus gestis Mariae Scotorum reginae* (London, 1725) rather than the English version. The copy of *A Relation of the Death of David Rizzi, Chief Favorite to Mary Stuart* (London, 1699) would have appealed to his grandfather as it was a primary source written by ‘Lord Ruthen one of the principal persons concerned in that action’. He acquired the earliest biography of Charles II’s sister, *Histoire de Madame Henriette d’Angleterre* (Amsterdam, 1720) by Madame de la Fayette — Sir Peter had a biography of her sister Mary of Orange. The *Life of James II Late King of England* (London, 1705) by David Jones found a place at Tabley too. He added all eleven volumes of *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne* (London, 1703–23) by Abel Boyer ‘digested into annals’, and, after her death, he added Thomas Salmon’s *The Life of her Late Majesty Queen Anne* (London, 1721).

Aside from contemporary or near-contemporary events, Sir Francis was fascinated by earlier history. His forebears had owned first and second editions of Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. The second edition of 1587 was subjected to severe censorship on the orders of the Privy Council. Leicester later purchased *The Castrations of the Last Edition of Holinshead’s Chronicle* (London, 1723) in folio. What was interesting was that his final catalogue recorded that he kept these separate, while other contemporary collectors interleaved the facsimiles into original volumes.³⁹ He thus maintained the integrity of his ancestors’ reading. He inherited Camden’s *Annals of Queen Elizabeth* in Latin (1615) and in English (London, 1635), and then added Thomas Hearne’s *Guilielmi Camdeni annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elizabetha* (Oxford, 1717). While his antecedents owned Camden’s *Britannia* and Ralph Brooke’s criticism of it published in 1599, Sir Francis added a reprint of Brooke’s *A Discoverie of Certaine Errours Published in Print in the Much Commended Britannia* (London, 1724). While Sir Peter had traced and transcribed original sources himself, Sir Francis bought printed editions instead.⁴⁰

On one occasion, his regard for his grandfather’s literary legacy and his own collecting were joined together. In April 1736, Sir Francis bought at least twelve items from the London bookseller Thomas Osborne.⁴¹ His bill included a pamphlet *The Defence of Amicia* (London, 1673), which had cost him 1s. 6d. This pamphlet had been written by a cousin of his grandfather, Sir Thomas Mainwaring of Peover (1623–1689), in response to *Historical Antiquities*, where, as the pamphlet’s title page explained, ‘Sir Peter Leicester [...] hath without any just ground declared the said Amicia to be a bastard’.⁴² They had both written pamphlets to argue over the legitimacy or otherwise of their twelfth-century ancestress. In buying his copy, Sir Francis filled a gap in his collection.

Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford, was also interested in this arcane dispute, and he exchanged letters with Sir Francis on the matter. Lord Oxford could not find a copy of one of the pamphlets and asked, 'If you have a duplicate of this book I shall be extremely glad of it, for it is not to be had but with you.'⁴³ Whether Sir Francis was able to help with this particular request is not revealed in the archive. However, for a collector of Lord Oxford's importance, he was prepared to break the prohibition against loans from Sir Peter's collection. In fact, Sir Francis went much further and offered his distinguished correspondent 'one of the MS books of Sir Peter Leicester', and Lord Oxford took this as 'a very particular favour and shall value it extremely'.⁴⁴ Their knowledge of each other must have been derived from their Tory politics or their books.

Elite access

While much is known about what was in the libraries at Dunham Massey, Lyme and Tatton, little is known about whether such books were admired by and shared between their owners. There seems to have been little contact between George Booth, second Earl of Warrington of Dunham Massey, and Sir Francis, but then one was a Whig and the other a Tory.⁴⁵ Books featured more prominently than has been allowed in the correspondence between Sir Francis and his great friend, fellow Tory and political patron Peter Legh XII of Lyme.⁴⁶ Interestingly, both men had married women who read and owned books.⁴⁷ They both inherited books, although the collection at Lyme was in a parlous state according to Peter Legh. He wrote to Sir Francis in 1729 that 'My little Book of Armes was given me by Sir Roger Bradshaw, but that and (perhaps) more Writings belonging to my Family have been mislaid.'⁴⁸ It was during Peter Legh's lifetime that the Lyme Caxton was rediscovered, and they perhaps discussed it given that Sir Francis owned several Caxtons.⁴⁹ Mr Legh was proud of the reorganization of his collection and the creation of the space that housed it. He wrote to Sir Francis in 1728, 'I have just finished my library, was in hopes of Shewing you my designe. Mr Chomley passed a complement upon it.'⁵⁰

Sir Francis regarded Mr Legh so highly that again he broke his grandfather's injunction and loaned out inherited books. In 1729 Peter Legh thanked him for lending him Sir Peter's copy of Daniel King's *The Vale-Royall of England* (London, 1656) and another unidentified book. In return, Mr Legh

sent a small Vellum Book [with] a loose paper in it, which will show you My Pedigree in writing from that Sir Robt Legh, that was Fther both to Adlington & My Family, by which you may compare it with yours. Theres likewise a small Vellum Book with my Coats of Armes and there Etymologies. At your leasure be pleased to return them. And if you will give me leave to see your Book of Pedegrees, I'le take a Copy of it.⁵¹

On another occasion, Mr Legh requested Sir Francis to 'look into Sir P. Leicester's Book' so that they could discuss certain passages.⁵² They also exchanged lighter material, for example, in December 1731, an astrological almanac by John Partridge. Mr Legh assured Sir Francis, 'I will endeavour to find some way, to return your Partridge Almanack, hee's a rare Spark.'⁵³

Their correspondence continued as they aged; they shared family news, local and national politics, and their suffering from the dreaded gout. In January 1740, Sir Francis confessed, 'News I have none', so instead he described his daily routine in January:

I get up in a morning to sit by the fire side all day, & so to bed at night again, & read

sometimes a little, but my head this weather being a little hazie, will not bear it much, nor can I stir out the cold is so piercing to mee.⁵⁴

At the end of his letter, he informed Mr Legh, ‘The Spanish Manifesto is a very [indecipherable word] one as far as is come out yet, in the *Holland Gazette*, and I doe not find it is yet printed in English.’⁵⁵ Although he protested that he was reading little, he was still searching out information and pamphlets and buying books.

While Mr Legh called his creation a library, when Sir Francis created his own space for his burgeoning collection, he dubbed it his study. This suited the old-fashioned manor house he occupied and his rather conservative habits. It also reflected the waxing and waning of the terms themselves in the eighteenth century. The study’s appearance at his death was recorded in the 1742 inventory, where it was described as ‘The New Library’ — by the man who wrote the inventory, never by Sir Francis. This distinguished it from ‘The Old Library’ (again the inventory-taker’s decision), which could possibly have been the room that Sir Peter Leicester had used for his books. The new space contained:

One large ovall table
 One writing table
 6 cane chirs
 2 step ladders
 1 fireshovel, tongs and brush⁵⁶

The number of chairs would indicate the maximum number of people the room was meant to take comfortably: five people with Sir Francis as the sixth. The large oval table would have been suitable for heavy folios while the stepladders indicated that the shelving was above an average man’s height and reflected the size of his collection. Sir Francis wanted to share his books and his study, and on one occasion he wrote to Mr Legh, ‘but what I long [for is?] to talk an hour or two’.⁵⁷ The evidence of the inventory indicated a room similar to other contemporary libraries, ‘relatively subfusc, private, upstairs rooms’, and reminiscent of the old-fashioned library created by Lord Warrington at Dunham Massey.⁵⁸

This was probably where Sir Francis entertained his fellow members of the Cheshire Club. They were ‘the county’s leading [Tory] gentlemen in the early 1700s’,⁵⁹ and, aside from Mr Legh, he was especially friendly with Amos Meredith of Henbury (1688–1745), John Warren of Poynton (1679–1729), and Robert Cholmondeley of Holford (1652–1722). The latter three took part in a crucial meeting of the Cheshire Club in 1715, when its members discussed whether they would support the new Hanoverian establishment or side with James Francis Edward Stuart, the Old Pretender, and join the Jacobites. Sir Francis was in London when this meeting took place, and his friends and neighbours voted decisively against joining the rebellion.⁶⁰ However, the echoes of their discussions can be found in the volumes of bound pamphlets at Tabley. Although Sir Francis had inherited a partiality and loyalty to the Stuarts, the pamphlets he preserved were anti-Jacobite.

More Memoirs: or, The Pretender what he Really Pretends to be: Some Explications of his Birth Reviv’d: and Reasons for Questioning his Title Set Aside (London 1713), by Frances Shaftoe, was a sensational retelling of the notorious allegations about the Pretender’s birth. In contrast, the anonymous *Characters of the Court of Hanover: With a Word or Two of Some Body Else, which No Body has Yet Thought On* (London, 1714) was more rational. It compared ‘the difference between a

Protestant Prince, and indisputed Heir, and a Popish Pretender, disputed by all Law and Justice'.⁶¹ Sir Francis also acquired Daniel Defoe's *A View of the Real Dangers of the Protestant Succession* (London, 1714). *The Second-Sighted Highlander* (London, 1715), attributed to Daniel Defoe, 'prophesied' defeat for Britain's enemies and difficult times for the kingdom ahead, but all would be well with George I. *Dialogue between an Oak and an Orange-Tree* (London, 1716) was a debate between the symbols of protestant British royalty established by Charles II and William of Orange. Yet while he bought *Bold Advice: or, Proposals for the Entire Rooting Out of Jacobitism in Great Britain* (London, 1717), he had also acquired at some point in his life *The Catholique Apology* (Antwerp, 1674). This included a list of loyal Catholics who had fought for Charles I, and he preserved a copy of the Duke of Lorraine's letter to Queen Anne in which he praised the James Francis Edward Stuart.⁶² His loyalty to the Hanoverians was not in doubt, but he was fully aware of how complicated and compromised loyalties often were.⁶³

The members of the Cheshire Club celebrated their support of the winning side, and their own survival, by having their portraits painted. These eventually all came to be displayed at Tatton Park. Sir Francis had his pamphlets bound, entered in his book catalogue, and protected in his will, and this ensured that they are probably the only collection still extant and associated with this group of local power brokers.⁶⁴

Scholarly access

Sir Francis would perhaps cavil at the description 'scholarly access' and the attempt to view scholars, or those men whose primary occupation was research, writing, and publishing, as a class apart. Sir Peter Leicester was both a published scholar and a landowner, and Sir Francis regarded himself as a scholarly gentleman. A crucial difference is that the scholars considered here were not Sir Francis's natural social peers, part of that wide network of elite men he had known since early manhood. For an early eighteenth-century gentleman who was serious about his book collection, granting scholarly access to his library was a natural adjunct to his collecting.⁶⁵ Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1689–1742), made the Harleian collection 'available to a generation of scholars, including William Stukeley',⁶⁶ while Sir Richard Ellys (1682–1742) of Nocton in Lincolnshire assembled his library to support his biblical scholarship and 'was a keen patron of learning'.⁶⁷ However, Purcell cautions that 'to suggest that all private libraries were open to outsiders' would be unwise.⁶⁸ Some indication of Sir Francis Leicester's attitude can be found using the evidence of his book catalogues, his scholarly networks, and his correspondence.

The earliest surviving catalogue was a subject catalogue, rather untidily handwritten by Sir Francis in about 1720.⁶⁹ It was a record of his own collection; he recorded bibliographical details and prices that he had paid. No pressmarks were assigned, which implied that anyone granted permission to use his books would necessarily have had to ask for his help. He probably began his final catalogue in the mid-1730s, and added to it throughout his life; its last entry date was 1742. The evidence of this catalogue indicated that his ideas about his books had developed beyond the merely personal and that he envisaged that other people would consult his collection. These potential users needed a different type of catalogue.

This was again a subject catalogue of his own devising, and he carried over many of the classes from the 1720 catalogue. In the final catalogue, there were twenty-one classes, which were recorded

at the front of the catalogue:

Introductions to Histories, Geography and Chronologie, Roman Writers, Foreign Writers, Manuscripts, Ecclesiastical History, On Odd and Particular Subjects, Old Histories, More Modern Historians, Memoirs and Essays, Heraldry, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Lives of our Kings, Lives of Particular Persons of Distinction, Particular Countys, Cities and Places, Parliamentary Affairs, Law, Miscellanys, Pamphletts bound[.]⁷⁰

This catalogue was the work of two people, Sir Francis and an unidentified amanuensis who wrote it out.⁷¹ It was thus on the page that Sir Francis revealed his interest in and knowledge of his collection, in written asides taken down by his amanuensis. These included his comments on the physical condition of books and his opinions of the quality of some titles. Via the written page, he shared them with potential users of his catalogue and readers of his books. For example, Sir Henry Spelman's *Reliquiae Spelmannianae* was printed on 'Ro[man]: paper'. He commented that his quarto 1508 edition of Geoffrey of Monmouth was 'a fine one'. His William of Malmesbury (in the catalogue *Chronicon Guilielme*) had a note saying 'title lost'. Beneath the entry for Dupin's ecclesiastical history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries he wrote, 'the last volume is not come out yet of the 17th Cent [by the year] 1734'. *Guilielmi Camdeni annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elizabetha* (Oxford, 1717) merited eleven lines of contents and a comment that the preface by the author, Thomas Hearne, 'is a good and learned one'.⁷² There were also his own rarer handwritten interpolations. These were necessitated because, while his clerk was comfortable with the many Latin titles in the catalogue, he had no Greek. Thus Sir Francis took up his pen and transcribed the Greek titles himself.

The folio size of this catalogue, bound in vellum, made it less easy to handle, but it was a more useful and seemingly public document. Page numbers were employed but the prices of the books were absent, while bibliographical information was organized in three columns across the page. All books were given pressmarks.⁷³ Pamphlets had by this time been bound together in volumes, usually like with like. Each volume was numbered and that number stamped in gold on the spine. The title of each pamphlet was entered into the relevant subject class of the catalogue, and then again in the 'Pamphletts bound' subject class. The increased organization and professionalism of his catalogue would seem to indicate that Sir Francis expected that other people would want to use his library.

Another indication that Sir Francis had scholarly users in mind was in his treatment of particular works of 'the English history especially', to quote Stukeley. He gave special emphasis, in both the 1720 and final catalogues, to works by the antiquarians Henry Wharton and Thomas Hearne. By the time his last catalogue was created, Sir Francis regarded Henry Wharton's *Anglia sacra* (London, 1691) as the most important work he owned, and thus he listed all its contents even before the catalogue proper began with its first subject class. It was a book set apart. Wharton's first book 'consisted of histories, written by monks, of the monastic cathedrals'.⁷⁴ To reach the contents pages in *Anglia sacra*, a reader had to bypass Wharton's fifty-page preface first. Thus Sir Francis Leicester's almost perfect facsimile of the original printed volume's 'index historiarum' made it much easier for a person to find what was required before he or she took each heavy volume from the shelves. The seriousness of the catalogue was not so unexpected as Sir Francis considered his books of a quality suitable for a college library. In a draft will of 1716, written in anticipation that

his whole family would be extinguished, he had bequeathed his books to his alma mater, St John's College, Cambridge, for the benefit of the scholars there.⁷⁵

The evidence of how many scholars Sir Francis knew is rather slight. It was his financial support, rather than books, that was crucial for the minor historian Thomas Browne (1654?–1741). When he published *The Story of the Ordination of our First Bishops in Queen Elizabeth's Reign at the Nag's-Head Tavern in Cheapside, Thoroughly Examined* (London, 1731) it was 'humbly dedicated' to Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1689–1741), whose library he had used. By contrast, there was more likelihood that the relationship between Sir Francis and the Rev. Peter Lancaster (d. 1763) had been founded on access to the Tabley books. Lancaster was the incumbent of St Mary's, Bowdon in Cheshire, the local parish church and burial place of the Booths of Dunham Massey.⁷⁶ He presented a copy of his *A Chronological Essay, on the Ninth Chapter of the Book of Daniel* (London, 1722) to Sir Francis. It has an inscription, written by Sir Francis, 'Sum Francisci Leicester ex dono Authoris'. There is a copy in the Dunham Massey library too, and it seems likely that this was presented to the family by Peter Lancaster. According to the COPAC record, this copy bears the ownership inscription of Lady Mary Grey, née Booth (1704–1772), daughter of George Booth, second Earl of Warrington (1675–1758). The absence of any note of donation in the Dunham Massey copy, and its presence in the Tabley copy could perhaps indicate a closer relationship between Sir Francis and the author.

Another scholar of more note did know of the Tabley collection. The historian Thomas Carte (d. 1754) approached Sir Francis Leicester's son-in-law Sir John Byrne with a request in December 1733.⁷⁷ He was at the final stages of publishing a life of the first Duke of Ormond.⁷⁸ However, he seems to have wanted to consult material owned by Sir Francis either for this or in readiness for his proposed history of England. He hoped for 'an opportunity of getting to a sight of the collection of Frith Tracts which Sir Francis Leicester bought of Payne & which I intreated you to borrow of him for me'.⁷⁹ The purchase of the tracts would appear to be close to the date of the letter, although there is no mention of the Frith collection in the final catalogue. These particular pamphlets are not easy to identify either in the book catalogues or with any certainty on the shelves at Tabley. Sir Francis listed individual pamphlet titles and the volumes they were bound in but not their provenance. Given Carte's interest, the most likely candidates are a group of mid-seventeenth-century pamphlets still at Tabley.⁸⁰ Carte wrote that 'Sir Francis has a very curious collection of books', and he included a list of books he hoped would be there. They were primarily works of Irish history during the Civil War period. If Sir Francis owned copies of them, then Carte hoped he would 'lend me any of them, for I have never met with them except in libraries or such places where I could only make extracts of them'. He guaranteed to 'be careful to use & return any book Sir Francis will do me the favour of lending'. Unfortunately, no response has survived, and neither Sir Francis nor his library was mentioned in any of Carte's published works.

One undated document, written by Sir Francis, has survived, and this was directly related to research questions that an unknown correspondent wanted answering.⁸¹ There was a question about the Mainwaring family of Peover, Cheshire, and one about what occupied the site of Chester Cathedral before its foundation. To answer the latter, Sir Francis consulted *The History of the Antient Abbeys, Monasteries, Hospitals, Cathedrals and Collegiate Churches* (London, 1722–23) by John Stevens, and Samuel Lee's *Chronicon Cestrense*, published within King's *The Vale-Royall*

of England (London, 1656). Sir Francis then moved on to the third question about the Earls of Chester, as this had made him ‘look amongst my own books and what I have found, you have here faithfully copyed’. What he produced was ‘An Account where the Earls of Chester were buried extracted out of Authors by mee F. Leicester’. It was a detailed chronology from 1102 until 1237; it referred to pages in published works, books he did not trust, and manuscripts he owned. The printed works numbered at least fourteen separate titles, and he also added that ‘In the Cotton Library are 2 MSS perhaps worth looking into [...] when I goe to London perhaps if I have time I will look into them.’ There are no clues to the identity of this correspondent or why these questions were asked, although the subject matter would seem to indicate a Cheshire enquirer. The reply Sir Francis composed must have taken many hours of research, and he was not afraid of criticizing his enquirer: ‘I found the account you sent mee was only out of Sir PL [Peter Leicester’s] book and Brooks.’⁸² What this document demonstrated was that Sir Francis Leicester’s library could provide comprehensive answers for those who enquired.

Local readers

Barker asserts that men such as Sir Francis considered the provision of books for household members and local communities when he bought books.⁸³ However, Purcell cautions that whether ‘the books were a shared resource as well is more problematic’ and that only ‘occasionally do little scraps of evidence survive which imply that agents, chaplains [...] and even senior household servants’ had access to these libraries.⁸⁴ Within the Tabley archive there is some indication that all Purcell’s candidates were granted access to Sir Francis Leicester’s books.

The strongest evidence for this proposition comes from Thomas Jackson (1622–1707), who had his own private collection of books.⁸⁵ He was ‘one of the most respected solicitors and land surveyors in north Cheshire’;⁸⁶ he had been employed by the Leicesters since 1649 and had thrived under the family’s patronage. Although there is no evidence that he borrowed material from Sir Francis, he owned a copy of Sir Peter Leicester’s *Historical Antiquities* (annotated by its author), and both he and Sir Francis owned copies of a pamphlet called *The Penitential Declaration of Ralph Lowndes of Middlewich* (for taking the Oath of Allegiance). In 1692, he had lent a dictionary to Mr Pigott, the step-grandfather of Sir Francis. He loaned his copy of *The Golden Grove* by Jeremy Taylor in June 1705 to either Meriel, Lady Leicester (1638–1707), or her daughter-in-law Frances, Lady Leicester (1683–1716). This is tantalizingly close to Sir Francis and his books.

Barker suggests that a local doctor or clerk would have had access to such libraries. Sir Francis employed a local surgeon, Richard Middleton Massey (d. 1743), to purchase at least one book for him in London in 1734. While gossiping about Sir Hans Sloane, Massey assured Sir Francis, ‘I have heard nothing yet of the other volume of Rymer’s *Foedera*. Yours is lapt up as I brought [it] home, unopen’d.’⁸⁷ This was a professional relationship that seems to have evolved in to a closer acquaintance.⁸⁸ There was no evidence of a clerk having been given access, aside from the anonymous amanuensis who wrote the final catalogue. Barker also identifies another likely reader, a ‘parson looking for texts for a sermon’,⁸⁹ and Heale and Holmes wrote of ‘the companionate connection’ between the gentry and clergy.⁹⁰ Sir Francis employed a chaplain for his own chapel, and at his death this was Thomas Watkis who lived in the Hall. He had one room with a writing desk; additionally he must have slept in ‘the Parson’s Room’, which contained ‘2 reading desks’.⁹¹ He would have needed access to at least the many sermons Sir Francis acquired, as he specified in

his will that St Peter's Chapel (his private place of worship, adjacent to Nether Tabley Hall) had to have a 'preaching Minister'.⁹²

Although Barker imagines that 'a bright lad at the village school who might go far with encouragement' could have access to such a library,⁹³ at Tabley there is more circumstantial evidence about a schoolmaster's access.⁹⁴ Sir Francis had played a part in the appointment of Joseph Allen to the mastership of the nearby Lower Peover School. To make the position more attractive, Sir Francis had given Allen the perpetual curacy of St Oswald's, Lower Peover, which was in his gift.⁹⁵ According to Cox, the school had been designed for 'the benefit of poorer inhabitants [...] whose children were to be instructed in the English language only'.⁹⁶ Cox calculated that between 1714 and 1719, Allen sent about six pupils to Trinity College, Cambridge, and he was perhaps aided in his teaching by access to the Tabley library.⁹⁷ Aside from his work in the school, Allen would have been an ideal companion for Sir Francis, who admired him. This interpretation would extend the 'companionate connection' of Heale and Holmes between gentry and clergy to other professions. R. M. Massey and Thomas Jackson were working men and thus distinct from their gentry employers and patrons who sought their professional advice. However, they also had a somewhat similar educational background to those who patronized them. Thomas Jackson knew a little Latin (he owned a Latin Bible) and something of the law, while Allen had a university education. Although they were separated by rank, their bookish interests and Sir Francis's opening of his study to interested, middle-class men perhaps cemented friendships across social class.⁹⁸

Conclusion

Sir Francis Leicester's book collection, his 'good library', had a variety of purposes. It was a depository of family memory; he inherited books from his grandfather the historian Sir Peter Leicester; and he acquired books that had belonged to his parents and his wife. The books of his wife Frances add another serious reader to the small group of known female gentry readers in Cheshire. The traces in the archive indicate that Sir Francis shared his books with at least one contemporary, Peter Legh of Lyme, and perhaps other friends and neighbours. The anti-Jacobite and pro-Hanoverian pamphlets he preserved take us tantalizingly close to the secret discussions of the Cheshire Club. There are slight indications that local clergymen, a physician, a family steward, and possibly a schoolmaster knew of, and had access to, the Tabley books. Underpinning all of this was his own pleasure in acquiring, preserving, arranging, cataloguing, and, perhaps above all, reading his books. Sir Francis described himself in the memorial he composed himself as having 'a liberal education at home and abroad and as a linguist and a determined student of history, there was no area of enlightened studies of which he was ignorant. These were the delights of his leisure.'⁹⁹

In 1742, Sir Francis 'was above Sixty-seven years of Age, and infirm, and in a declining State of Health and continued so till the Time of his Death'.¹⁰⁰ However, books were probably still arriving at Tabley. His last discernible purchase emphasized his care for inherited books, his intergenerational reading, and his interest in 'English history especially'. Sir Francis had subscribed to the seven-volume *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe* (London, 1742).¹⁰¹ This was a work that looked back to that turbulent period when the Leicesters had suffered for their loyalty to the Stuarts. It was the last of his 'vast [...] addition[s] to his ancestor's store'. Yet another work of 'English history especially' had found its place in Sir Francis Leicester's 'good library'. It is there

still.

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Notes

¹ For Dunham Massey, see E. Potten, 'The Bookplates of the Grey and Booth families of Dunham Massey and Enville Hall', *Bookplate Journal*, 2.2 (2004), 100–14; E. Potten, "'A great number of useful books": The Hidden Library of Henry Booth, 1st Earl of Warrington (1652–1691)', *Library & Information History*, 25.1 (2009), 33–49; J. Rothwell, 'Dedicated to Books', in *National Trust Historic Houses & Collections Annual* (London: Apollo, 2010), pp. 56–61; M. Willes, *Reading Matters: Five Centuries of Discovering Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). For Lyme, see E. Potten, and J. Rothwell, 'William Caxton's 1487 Missale ad Usum Sarum: The "ewe-lamb" of Lyme Park Library', in *National Trust Historic Houses & Collections Annual*, ed. by D. Adshead (London: Apollo, 2009), pp. 42–47; For Tatton, see E. Potten, 'The Bookplates of the Egerton and Tatton Families of Tatton Park and Wythenshawe Hall', *Bookplate Journal*, 3.2 (2005), 75–95; E. Potten, "'Bound in vellum and lettered": The Tatton Park Library', in *National Trust Historic Houses and Collections Annual*, ed. by D. Adshead (London: Apollo, 2013), pp. 4–11. All three libraries are considered in M. Purcell, *The Country House Library* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

² For a history of Nether Tabley Hall see S. Webb, "'A noble specimen of architecture": A History of Tabley Old Hall', *Cheshire History*, 52 (2012–13), 45–73.

³ On the death of Lt Col. John Leicester Warren in 1975, the house and estate were bequeathed to the National Trust.

The bequest was reluctantly refused, and his executors were empowered to offer the gift to an educational charity. They chose the University of Manchester, which paid the taxes due on the Tabley estate. A boys' boarding school then occupied the house but closed in the mid-1980s. Cygnet Health Care was granted a lease of Tabley House in 1988 and opened a nursing home, while the public rooms on the first floor were opened as a museum run by the Tabley House Collection Trust in 1990. See P. Cannon-Brookes, *Paintings from Tabley: An Exhibition of Paintings from Tabley House* (London: Heim Gallery, 1989) and P. Cannon-Brookes, *Tabley House*, rev. edn (Nantwich: Tabley House Collection Trust, 2006).

⁴ Sir Peter's collection has been considered by E. M. Halcrow, *Charges to the Grand Jury at Quarter Sessions, 1660–1667* (Manchester: printed for the Chetham Society, 1953).

⁵ E. Cruickshanks, 'Leicester, Sir Francis, 3rd Bt. (1674–1742), of Tabley, Cheshire', in R. Sedgwick, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715–1754* (London: published for the History of Parliament Trust by HMSO) <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/leicester-sir-francis-1674-1742>> [accessed 25 May 2015]

⁶ Details of his Grand Tour can be found in E. Leighton, the Hon. Lady Leighton Warren, *Tabley Miscellany* (Knutsford: privately printed, 1903), section entitled 'Sir Francis Leicester', p. 10. She includes a transcription of what must have been a communal estate diary kept by his steward Thomas Jackson and then continued by his servant Hugh Lawton.

⁷ Leighton, section entitled 'Sir Francis Leicester', p. 26.

⁸ Cruickshanks.

⁹ E. C. Legh, Baroness Newton, *Lyme Letters 1660–1760* (London: William Heinemann, 1925), p. 232.

¹⁰ E. M. Halcrow, *Charges to the Grand Jury at Quarter Sessions, 1660–1667* (Manchester: printed for the Chetham Society, 1953), p. xx.

¹¹ R. Holme, *The Academy of Armory, or, A Storehouse of Armory and Blazon* (Chester: printed by the author, 1688), p. 677.

¹² The Tabley copy has a spine tooled in gold and internally, it contains a note, possibly in Sir Francis Leicester's hand, about the type of leather to be used to bind the book.

¹³ H. Booth, Earl of Warrington, *The Works of the Right Honourable Henry Late L. Delamer, and Earl of Warrington: Containing his Lordships Advice to his Children, Several Speeches in Parliament, &c.* (London: printed for John Lawrence at the Angel, and John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry, 1694), pp. 17–20.

¹⁴ Among other early books could be *The True Conduct of Persons of Quality Translated out of French* (London, 1694) given to Sir Francis as 'The gift of Mrs Jane Harrison'. Mrs Harrison lived at Tabley according to 1666 poll tax information but she was not a servant. This book contained bite-sized pieces of advice on polite behaviour for busy men. Sir Francis acquired a copy (when is uncertain) of *The Dublin Scuffle being a Challenge Sent by John Dunton, Citizen of London, to Patrick Campbel, Bookseller in Dublin* (London, 1699), revealing an interest in booksellers and the bookselling business.

¹⁵ William Stukeley, *Itinerarium curiosum. Or, an Account of the Antiquities and Remarkable Curiosities in Nature or Art, Observ'd in Travels thro' Great Brittain* (London: printed for the author, 1724), p. 54.

¹⁶ Sir Peter Leicester's seventeenth-century book catalogue can be found in the Leicester Warren Family of Tabley Records, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Chester, DLT/B92. This is bound in one volume with Sir Francis Leicester's earliest surviving book catalogue (thus with the same reference number). This was an incomplete subject catalogue handwritten by Sir Francis probably about 1720. His final catalogue DLT/B91 was begun in either 1734 or 1735 and was added to over the rest of his life with a last entry date of 1742. Given the uncertainty over the date of its commencement, it is referred to throughout this research as Sir Francis Leicester's final book catalogue. [All subsequent materials cited with 'DLT' references are located in the Leicester Warren Family of Tabley Records, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Chester.](#)

¹⁷ M. R. M. Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750–1820* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 31.

¹⁸ D. Lundberg and H. F. May, 'The Enlightened Reader in America', *American Quarterly*, 28.2 (1976), 264.

¹⁹ A Mr Booth wrote in about 1774 to Catherine, Lady Leicester, the widow of Sir Peter Byrne Leicester (1732–1770), the grandson of Sir Francis. Mr Booth assured her that he would 'take care to look up all the Books he has belonging to Tabley [...] It is so long since he had them'. This letter is preserved in Catherine, Lady Leicester's Private Accounts, 1768 (Tabley House Collection, 120.13 B099 S103). In DLT/D461/5, Lady Leighton Warren noted that Sir Peter Leicester's copy of Daniel King's *The Vale-Royall of England* (London, 1656) had been given by Sir John Fleming Leicester to Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758–1838) of Stourhead and it had been later sold from Stourhead.

²⁰ R. Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*, (1990), quoted in Towsey, p. 24.

²¹ Purcell, *The Country House Library*, p. 226.

²² Towsey, p. 24.

²³ F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500–1700* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 280.

²⁴ Sir Peter Leicester's 1667 will, quoted in Leighton, section 'About Sir Peter Leicester Being Taken Prisoner', p. 30.

²⁵ S. West, 'An Architectural Typology for the Early Modern Country house Library, 1660–1720', *The Library*, 14.4 (2013), 441–64.

²⁶ E. Forness, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Honorable Sir Robert Leicester of Tabley, Bar'. At Great Budworth in the County Palatine of Chester, July 11. 1684* (London: printed for Peter Swinton, 1684), p. iii.

²⁷ It was perhaps this Meriel who signed one of the back pages of Robert Sanderson's *Episcopacy ... Not Prejudicial to Regal Power* (London, 1673) with 'Meriel Leycester hir Booke 1682'. What was important about this particular copy was Sir Francis Leicester's response. A note, possibly in his hand, recorded inside, 'There is another of this got up in E num 18', and this referred Sir Peter's copy. The signature does not match any surviving examples of Lady Leicester's signature but these all date from much later in her life. A Bible survives at Tabley probably associated with Meriel, Lady Leicester. In itself, it is a rare survival as it is bound in green velvet with silver clasps and a central cartouche. Sir Francis recorded its presence in his final book catalogue (DLT/B91, p. 19v) as 'A great Bible bound in Velvet, covered with wrought Silver plate, in a bag it lyes amongst the MSS, 4^o'.

²⁸ Leighton, section 'Stray Notes', p. 13. Lady Leighton Warren called the transcription 'Memoriall. From Steward Jackson (a stray leaf).'

²⁹ Collier (1650–1726) was a Nonjuring bishop in the Church of England, and his *Dictionary* was a translation from Louis Moréri's 1674 *Grand dictionnaire historique* but also contained new material on English church history. See E. Salmon, 'Collier, Jeremy (1650–1726), Anti-Theatrical Polemicist and Bishop of the Nonjuring Church of England', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn May 2006) (hereafter *ODNB*) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5917>> [accessed 30 May 2017].

³⁰ M. Purcell, 'The Country House Library Reassess'd: or, Did the "Country House Library" Ever Really Exist?', *Library History*, 18.3 (2002), 160. Unlike other owners, Sir Francis kept his inherited books overwhelmingly in their original bindings, eschewing the desire to rebind. While reasons of economy probably played a part, his conservation of old-fashioned bindings ensured that his grandfather's books, at least, were (and are) easily discernible on the shelves with their dark calf bindings.

³¹ DLT/B91, Sir Francis Leicester's book catalogue.

³² For his involvement in county politics, see S. W. Baskerville, P. Adman, and K. F. Beedham, "'Preferring a Whigg to a whimsical": The Cheshire Election of 1715 Reconsidered', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 74.3 (1992), 139–68.

³³ A. Manguel, *A History of Reading* (London: Flamingo, 1997), p. 49. Manguel was paraphrasing St Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) on the relationship between readers and authors. Sir Francis added books his grandfather would have approved as Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford, continued the library he inherited from his father the first Earl. See D. Stoker, 'Harley, Edward, Second Earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1689–1741)', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12337>> [accessed 29 May 2017].

³⁴ For Sir Peter's comment on Milton's work, see E. M. Halcrow, *Charges to the Grand Jury at Quarter Sessions, 1660–1667* (Manchester: printed for the Chetham Society, 1953), p. 120.

³⁵ This work was printed for Robert Clavell, and besides 'the character of that blessed martyr', it also contained 'the death-bed repentance of Mr. Lenthal, Speaker of the Long-Parliament'. Clavell had printed Sir Peter Leicester's *Historical Antiquities* in 1673.

³⁶ For example, *Form of Prayer with Fasting* (London, 1685) issued by James VII and II 'to be us'd yearly upon the 30th of January, being the day of the martyrdom of the blessed King Charles the First' (bound pamphlets stamped 12 in bookcase C2, on shelf 1 in the picture gallery at Tabley House). There are similar sermons for the same occasion from 1712, preached before Queen Anne, and 1719 preached before the House of Commons (bound pamphlets stamped I, spine label 66 in bookcase C2 shelf 2 in the picture gallery at Tabley House).

³⁷ J. Raymond, 'Rushworth, John (c.1612–1690), historian and politician', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24288>> [accessed 25 May 2017].

³⁸ P. Spedding, 'Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots' <<http://patrickspedding.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/mary-stuart-queen-of-scots.html>> [accessed 20 May 2017].

³⁹ C. S. Clegg, 'Holinshed, Raphael (c.1525–1580?), Historian', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13505>> [accessed 25 May 2017].

⁴⁰ His *Historical Antiquities* (1673), according to the title page, had 'annexed a transcript of Doomsday-book, so far as it concerneth Cheshire, taken out of the original record'.

⁴¹ DLT 4996/32/38, Osborne's receipt for books, 7 April 1736.

⁴² Through Amicia's father Hugh of Cyfeiliog, fifth Earl Chester (1147–1181), the Leicesters and Mainwarings could claim royal descent from an illegitimate son of Henry I, Robert, Earl of Gloucester. See T. F. Tout, 'Hugh [Hugh of Cyfeiliog], Fifth Earl of Chester (1147–1181), Magnate', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14059>> [accessed 25 May 2017].

⁴³ DLT/D461/4, copy of a letter from Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, to Sir Francis Leicester, 22 August 1738.

⁴⁴ DLT/D461/4, copy of a letter from Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, to Sir Francis Leicester, 19 October 1738. The item given away by Sir Francis was possibly listed in vol. II of R. Nares, *A Catalogue of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts, in the British Museum* (London, 1808). Manuscript 2060 was described as 'A Book in folio wherein are contained very ample Collections chiefly relating to the History & Antiquities of Chester and Cheshire written perhaps by the Hand or Order of Peter Leicester Esq' (vol. II, 426).

⁴⁵ Interestingly, they occasionally subscribed to the same publications. They both subscribed to the smaller version of *Bishop Burnet's History of his Own Time* (London, 1724–34), printed for Thomas Ward.

⁴⁶ E. C. Legh, Baroness Newton recorded in *The House of Lyme: From its Foundation to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London: William Heinemann, 1917), p. 377, that '[s]eldom did a week go by without some communication passing between Lyme and Tabley. Messengers were constantly sent from one house to the other with a "how do" and a haunch of venison or other token of goodwill, although the distance between the two places is fully twenty-five miles by road.'

⁴⁷ The books of Frances Legh of Bruch (1670–1728), Mrs Peter Legh XII, can be found in the COPAC catalogue records of the Lyme library, see <<http://copac.jisc.ac.uk/about/libraries/national-trust.html>> [accessed 6 November 2017].

⁴⁸ DLT C35/73, Peter Legh to Sir Francis Leicester, July (?) 1729.

⁴⁹ Potten and Rothwell, pp. 42–47. Sir Francis had inherited family copies of Caxton's *The Mirror of the World* (1480), *Polycricon* (1480), and *Aesop's Fables* (1482). To these he added, presumably through purchase although there is no indication in the archive of how he acquired it, Caxton's *Morte d'Arthur* (1485). He also owned a 1515 copy of Wynkyn de Worde's *The Chronicles of England*. The *Mirror of the World* was still at Tabley in about 1861–63, when the Caxton bibliographer William Blades (1824–1890) examined it. When Seymour de Ricci compiled *A Census of Caxtons* (Oxford: printed for the Bibliographical Society at the Oxford University Press, 1909), there was no mention of any Tabley Caxtons.

⁵⁰ DLT C35/67, Peter Legh to Sir Francis Leicester, 19 December 1728. Seymour Cholmley (or Cholmondeley) of Vale

Royal Abbey was another Cheshire gentleman involved with Sir Francis and his books. See Mr Bedford's receipt to Seymour Chomley for a book, March 1730/32, DLT 4996/32/29. The book purchased was Thomas Hearne's 1730 *Vindiciae antiquitatis academiae Oxoniensis contra Johannem Caium Cantabrigiensem* (Oxford, 1730). It cost Sir Francis one guinea.

⁵¹ DLT C35/74, Peter Legh to Sir Francis Leicester, 24 July 1729.

⁵² DLT C35/79, Peter Legh to Sir Francis Leicester to Sir Francis Leicester, 18 August 1730.

⁵³ DLT C35/84, Peter Legh to Sir Francis Leicester, 26 December 1731.

⁵⁴ DLT DLT/D461/4, copy of a letter from Sir Francis Leicester to Peter Legh, 19 January 1740.

⁵⁵ Sir Francis appears to have been referring to matters relating to the War of Jenkins' Ear.

⁵⁶ There are several versions of the inventory, DLT 4996/59/5/14, DLT 4996/59/5/15, and DLT 4996/59/5/10. Lady Leighton Warren amalgamated several of these in her printed version in the *Tabley Miscellany*, section entitled 'Sir Francis Leicester', pp. 3–43.

⁵⁷ DLT/D461/3, copy of a letter from Sir Francis Leicester to Peter Legh 'Tabley Friday night', no year but before 1716.

⁵⁸ S. Jervis, 'The English Country House Library', in *Treasures from the Libraries of the National Trust Country Houses*, ed. by N. Barker (New York: Royal Oak Foundation & The Grolier Club, 1999), p. 19.

⁵⁹ C. Schofield and E. Pownall, *Tatton Park* (Crewe: Cheshire East Council, 2010), p. 44.

⁶⁰ This meeting must have taken place between 26 August 1715 when John Erskine, Earl of Mar, 'raised the Jacobite standard at Braemar in the highlands' and 13 November 1715 when 'the crushing government victory at Preston completely extinguished any immediate hope of a rising in northern England'. See E. Gregg, 'James Francis Edward [James Francis Edward Stuart; Styled James VIII and III; Known as Chevalier de St George, Pretender, Old Pretender] (1688–1766), Jacobite Claimant to the Thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14594>> [accessed 28 May 2017].

⁶¹ *Characters of the Court of Hanover: With a Word or Two of Some Body Else, which No Body has Yet Thought On* (London: printed for J. Baker at the Black-Boy in Pater-Noster-Row, 1714), p. 5.

⁶² Within a collection of early seventeenth-century papers, DLT/B56, there is a manuscript copy of a letter from Leopold, Duke of Lorraine, to Queen Anne, c. 1713 or 1714.. It is in an unknown hand and annotated by Sir Francis as 'A letter from Lorrain about the Pretender'.

⁶³ Sir Francis wrote and asked Peter Legh about his brother Francis Legh's welfare, as he had taken part in the battle at Preston. Sir Francis Leicester to Peter Legh, 'Tabley Wed morning', no year but 1715 (DLT /D461/3). Francis Legh escaped from England, was proscribed by the government, and spent the rest of his life in exile and died in 1737. See E. C. Legh, *Baroness Newton's Lyme Letters 1660–1760* (London: William Heinemann, 1925), pp. 293–310.

⁶⁴ Each member of the Cheshire Club probably owned a library. The Earl of Barrymore certainly had one by 1745 as he fled from it according to Wilbraham Egerton, Earl Egerton of Tatton, in his *The Cheshire Gentry in 1715: Drawn from the Ashley Hall Portraits at Tatton* (Cheshire: privately printed, 1909), p. 13. The father of Amos Meredith of Henbury left a collection of books worth £10 in 1670 (Inventory of the goods of Sir Amos Meredith of Henbury 1670, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Service, WS 1670). Meredith directed in his own will that his books (and other goods) were to be sold to settle his debts from stock jobbing (Will of Amos Meredith of Henbury (1688–1745), 23 November 1727, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Service, WS 1745).

⁶⁵ J. Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation: Five Great Patrons of Eighteenth-Century Art* (London: Hamilton, 1962).

⁶⁶ D. Stoker, 'Harley, Edward, Second Earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1689–1741), Book Collector and Patron of the Arts', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12337>> [accessed 1 October 2014].

⁶⁷ M. Honeybone and Y. Lewis, 'Ellys, Sir Richard, Third Baronet (1682–1742), Book Collector and Biblical Scholar', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8729>> [accessed 3 October 2014]. See also G. Mandelbrote and Y. Lewis, *Learning to Collect: The Library of Sir Richard Ellys (1682–1742) at Blickling Hall* (London: The National Trust, 2004).

⁶⁸ Purcell, 'The Country House Library Reassess'd', p. 161.

⁶⁹ This book catalogue is bound with one of Sir Peter Leicester's catalogues, DLT/B92.

⁷⁰ DLT/B91, Sir Francis Leicester's final book catalogue.

⁷¹ The most likely candidate for the amanuensis would seem to be Sir Francis Leicester's servant Hugh Lawton. Lawton had signed the appraisal of the books and inventory of the goods of Francis Pigott (DLT/D33/1), the step-grandfather of Sir Francis on his mother's side, who died in 1694. The handwriting of the catalogue of Mr Pigott's books does not match that of Hugh Lawton although he was undoubtedly involved with it. Examples of Lawton's handwriting exist; see for example DLT 5524/38/12, notes concerning court rolls signed H. Lawton (16 October 1721), extract from the register of Bowdon church. However, Sir Francis Leicester's book catalogue is such an excellent production that the fine handwriting effectively disguises any identification of the writer.

⁷² For his comment on Spelman, see DLT/B91, p. 28. For comments on Geoffrey of Monmouth see DLT/B91, p. 36 verso; for William of Malmesbury, see DLT/B91, p. 35; for Dupin, see DLT/B91, p. 26; and for Thomas Hearne, see DLT/B91, p. 61.

⁷³ Sir Francis employed some idiosyncratic pressmarks. Those books in the class 'Lives of Particular Persons of Distinction' had a variety of pressmarks which included letters from the English alphabet, a cross, two squares, a trident, a cross, a heart shape, and the Greek letters delta, phi, and psi. They indicated particular presses and were necessary because Sir Francis coped with two collections, his grandfather's and his own. Sir Peter had already used the English alphabet for his pressmarks. No instructions by Sir Francis on how and where a user would find a particular book have apparently survived.

⁷⁴ O. Laird, 'Wharton, Henry (1664–1695), Church of England Clergyman and Historian', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29167>> [accessed 26 May 2017]

⁷⁵ This was a clause repeated in every version of his will until his death in 1742. See draft will of Sir Francis Leicester, 25 July 1716, DLT/34/8; will of Sir Francis Leicester, 30 October 1719, DLT/D34/7; will of Sir Francis Leicester, 11 May 1724, DLT/D34/10; and a copy of Sir Francis Leicester's 1741 will, DLT/D445/13.

⁷⁶ According to Sir Peter Leicester's *Historical Antiquities*, the patronage of St Mary's lay with the Bishop of Chester. The living was seen as generous and Sir Peter recorded, 'Our common proverb is, *Every man is not born to be Vicar of Bowdon.*' See D. King, *The History of Cheshire: Containing King's Vale-Royal Entire, Together with Considerable Extracts from Sir Peter Leycester's Antiquities of Cheshire; and the Observation of Later Writers, Particularly, Pennant, Grose &c.* (Chester: John Poole, 1778), II, 682

⁷⁷ DLT/C5/61, letter from Thomas Carte to Sir John Byrne, December 1733. All subsequent quotations in the main text referring to Carte's request are taken from this one letter. Sir John was married to Meriel Leicester, the only daughter and heir of Sir Francis. She was the widow of Fleetwood Legh of Bank Hall, Lancashire, who died in 1726. Fleetwood Legh had been the heir of Peter Legh XII of Lyme until his early death. Although of Irish extraction, Sir John Byrne was descended from Warrens of Poynton in Cheshire.

⁷⁸ S. Handley, 'Carte, Thomas (bap. 1686, d. 1754), Historian', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4780>> [accessed 27 May 2017].

⁷⁹ This was perhaps the bookseller John Payne (d. 1787). See O. M. Brack, 'Payne, John (d. 1787), Bookseller', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21646>> [accessed 30 May 2017]

⁸⁰ There are some bound volumes of pamphlets (in bookcase C.2 at Tabley House) with the signature 'R. Whorwood' and they all date from the 1650s. In this instance, Frith must surely have been a later owner. It is uncertain whether these are the pamphlets Carte wanted to use.

⁸¹ DLT 5524/38/5/1, Sir Francis Leicester, Notes on burial places of the Earls of Chester. As Sir Francis mentions the Cotton Library, presumably this letter predates the fire of 1731.

⁸² These titles were Sir Peter Leicester's *Historical Antiquities* (London, 1673) and either a 1598 edition (the ESTC recorded the date as 1599) or a 1724 edition of Ralph Brooke's *A Discoverie of Certaine Errours Published in Print in the Much Commended Britannia, 1594*. Sir Francis owned both editions according to his final catalogue.

⁸³ *Treasures from the Libraries*, ed. by Barker.

⁸⁴ M. Purcell and N. Thwaite, *The Libraries at Calke Abbey* (London: National Trust, 2013), p. 8.

⁸⁵ S. Webb, 'Mr Jackson's Nooks', *Cheshire History*, 53 (2013–14), 182–89.

⁸⁶ C. Foster, *Seven Households: Life in Cheshire and Lancashire, 1582–1774* (Northwich: Arley Hall Press, 2002), p. 88.

⁸⁷ Rymer had been appointed historiographer to William III, and this was a government-sponsored project to publish alliances and treaties. It was obviously a project that appealed to Sir Francis. See A. Sherbo, 'Rymer, Thomas (1642/3–1713)', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24426>> [accessed 28 May 2017].

⁸⁸ Massey lived in nearby Rostherne, about nine miles from Nether Tabley. Sir Francis kept a copy of Massey's 1690 diploma from Aberdeen, enabling him to practise as a doctor of physic, in his papers (now part of DLT 5524/38/12). Sir Francis had a long-standing interest in medicine, and while at Cambridge, he had apparently acquired a cadaver to dissect. Lady Leighton Warren in the *Tabley Miscellany*, section entitled 'Sir Francis Leicester', p. 8, quoted his steward Thomas Jackson's diary: 'Mar. 30 [1694] 2 Men were hanged at Cambridge, one my Mr and other bought to dessect [dissect]'. Sir Francis kept medical pamphlets and at least one book bill, Fletcher Giles's receipt for books, March 1730/31 (DLT 4996/32/29) recorded his purchase of William Salmon's *Collectanea medica, the Country Physician: or, A Choice Collection of Physick* (London, 1703).

⁸⁹ *Treasures from the Libraries*, ed. by Barker, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Heal and Holmes, p. 343.

⁹¹ Leighton, section entitled 'Sir Francis Leicester', p. 39.

⁹² DLT/D34/10, will of Sir Francis Leicester, 11 May 1724. The details of all the Tabley chaplains are contained in the Tabley Chapel Book (Tabley House Collection, 95.7 B156.S045). After his startling purchase of twenty-six titles by the controversial natural philosopher and theologian William Whiston (see DLT 4996/32/29 for Fletcher Giles's receipt for books, March 1730/31) he surely needed people like the Rev. Thomas Watkis or the Rev. Peter Lancaster of Bowdon to discuss them.

⁹³ *Treasures from the Libraries*, ed. by Barker, p. 3.

⁹⁴ There is one intriguing piece of evidence that has proved impossible so far to disentangle but it could just be one of Barker's 'bright lads'. In his final catalogue, Sir Francis recorded in the manuscript class 'A paraphrase on the 13th part of the 119th Psalm by Tom Hulse's Grandson marble paper cover' (DLT/B91, p. 39 recto). This manuscript still survives in the Leicester Warren family records as one of the miscellaneous manuscripts in DLT/F13. It is bound in thick patterned paper. Although it has proved impossible to find a suitable candidate, it is possible that Tom Hulse was a tenant of the Nether Tabley estate or somehow distantly related to it, but it would be unwise to speculate further.

⁹⁵ W. J. Harper, *'Old Sandbach' and Neighbourhood, with Addenda on Holmes Chapel, and Old Little Peover* (Sandbach: W. J. Harper, 1894), p. 49, and Raymond Richards, *Old Cheshire Churches: With a Supplementary Survey Relating to the Lesser Old Chapels of Cheshire*, rev. and enlarged edn (Manchester: E. J. Morten, 1973), p. 204.

⁹⁶ The school took pupils, according to M. Cox, *A History of Sir John Deane's Grammar School Northwich, 1557–1908* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p. 127, from families 'with property of less than £10 a year or holding a farm worth less than £30 a year'.

⁹⁷ Although there was no evidence that such pupils had access to the Tabley library, Sir Francis took an interest in what the pupils read. He preserved 'A list of the charity scholars of Lower Peover school 1725 and 1726', which detailed the books awarded to them, Bibles, Testaments, psalters, primers, and books of Common Prayer. This is contained in DLT 5524/31/2/4.

⁹⁸ A few other potential readers of more ephemeral matter can be inferred from the fact that Sir Francis ordered at least several newspapers every few days, but only one copy of *The Evening Post* has survived at Tabley, bound in a volume of pamphlets. The absence of any other preserved newspapers could argue that they were shared with his household and other readers, who did not have their own means of acquiring newspapers. The premise that Sir Francis ordered several newspapers or news-sheets is based on the price of *The Evening Post*. According to copies available through the online *17th and 18th Century Burney Collection* database, it was priced at 1d. in 1710 and was issued several times a week.

John Cooke itemized 'Pd [paid] for news [...] 0: 0: 3' for 19 January 1730 (DLT 4996/32/29), which would indicate more than one copy or title. This pattern was repeated in other bills by Cooke (26 February 1730, 15 March 1730 in DLT 4996/32/29), and one described as Tom's bill of April 1736 (DLT 4996/32/38). Sir Francis bought newspapers for himself and his son-in-law Sir John Byrne from a London seller called Green in the 1730s (see Nicholas Kent accounts, DLT 4996/32/26).

⁹⁹ This is in Sir Francis Leicester's own handwriting and is contained within 'Memorials — Leicester correspondence: Six separate sheets showing proposed inscriptions for the tombs of Sir Robert Peter Meriel etc., also translations and sketch designs' (Tabley House Collection, 109.9(06)(12).TT [tin trunk].S092). The former Chairman of the Tabley House Collection Trust, Mr Donald McLeod, generously provided a modern translation of Sir Francis Leicester's memorial.

¹⁰⁰ *Bill to Enlarge the Time Limited by the Will of Sir Francis Leicester, Baronet, dec. for sale of the real estate late of Sir John Byrne, Baronet, dec. in the Kingdom of Ireland, until 23 Jan 1755 and also to enable Sir Peter Byrne, Baronet and his issue to take and use the surname of Leicester only, pursuant to the said will*, DLT 5524/33/6, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ The *Proposals for printing by subscription a collection of the state papers of John Thurloe Esq; secretary, first, to the Council of State, and afterwards to the two Protectors, Oliver and Richard Cromwell* (London, 1739), by Thomas Birch, had been issued in 1739. Sir Francis was listed in the final published work as a subscriber.