

Bishop Morley and his Library

The Morley Library has been an impressive feature of Winchester Cathedral since the late seventeenth century. It is housed on the first floor of the south transept and, while retaining its unique status, is now part of the cathedral's new Kings & Scribes Exhibition which occupies all three floors of the transept. At the heart of the library are the books bequeathed to the cathedral by George Morley in 1684.

Morley was Bishop of Winchester from 1662 to 1684. He had been a don at Christ Church Oxford for some twenty years before the English Civil Wars. He took the royalist side and when the king, Charles I, lost the wars – and his head – Morley went into exile on the continent. There he acted as chaplain in noble and royal households, including those of Edward Hyde, future Chancellor (in effect Prime Minister of England) and the exiled king (Charles II). With the Restoration of 1660 Morley rose rapidly in the Church becoming, first, Bishop of Worcester, and then, after eighteen months, Bishop of Winchester. He was, by this time, sixty-four but still apparently with enough energy to administer the diocese and to play a part in national politics until old age caught up with him in the late 1670s. Morley was a bachelor who lived mainly at Farnham Castle (one of his three remaining palaces), where, according to a contemporary, he led an ascetic life, rising at 5 a.m., doing without a fire even in winter, and eating one meal a day.¹

For all this, Morley was distinguished for his generosity. He had no immediate family ties (though he had a large 'hinterland' of friends and relations) and this, together with his spartan lifestyle, may help to explain his largesse. He was receiving, moreover, as Bishop of Winchester, the revenues of a duke or an earl. His benefactions were certainly extensive: from cathedrals and (bishops') palaces to scholarships for students and provision for clergy widows. Wolvesey Palace and Morley College, both within a stone's throw of the cathedral, survive to this day as monuments to the scale of his generosity.

The gift of his library to the cathedral is yet another example of Morley's singular generosity. In his will, Morley left 'all my Bookes which I shall dye possessed of... to... the Cathedrall Church of Winchester'.² The medieval monastery cum cathedral had

¹ Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses, 1500-1695*, London, 1721, vol. 2, col. 771.

² TNA, Morley's will, PCC, 1684, Prob 11, 377.

an extensive collection of (hand written) manuscripts and the Winchester Bible – now centerpiece on the ground floor of the Exhibition – would surely have been the finest of them; but the Reformation took its toll and those left were dispersed during the upheavals of the Civil Wars.³ Some went to Winchester College in the 1650s and these – about 200 volumes – the College returned to the cathedral in 1669.⁴ Proposals for expanding the cathedral library appear to have begun well before Morley's death and even before Winchester College restored its cathedral books. Correspondence with the Dean and Chapter in December 1667 reveals Morley remarking 'I wish you had a Library too' and suggesting 'a convenient Receptacle for such books as will probably from tyme to tyme be bestowed upon you. I am sure you are likely to have (i.e. to receive in due course) all or most of mine...'⁵

His will, drawn up in July 1684, clinched it and when he died the following October, promise was duly fulfilled. The books must have been brought in cartloads from Farnham and housed in the current chamber (which may once have been the office of the sacristan) in the south transept. They are in the original presses (bookshelves) which were put up in 1684-85 and which may have come with the books from Farnham. His will also laid out a detailed scheme for the library's operation, including the hours of opening and the stipend of the librarian. The books were to be available to the cathedral clergy, of course, but Morley also expressed the wish in his will that the local parish clergy – 'Country Parsons Vicars and Curates of my Dyocese as have not a sufficient stock of Bookes of their own, nor of money to buy them' – should have access to them as well.

Visitors entering the library will first be struck by the length of the library with two parallel rows of shelves facing each other, crammed with mainly darkish volumes, and stretching into the middle distance. Before going any further they should turn round and view the portrait of



³ See N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries in Great Britain*, London, 1941 for many other books known to have been in the medieval library which are now elsewhere.

⁴ More precisely, 126 titles in 175 volumes, plus 16 volumes of manuscripts; for sources, Winchester College Fellows Library, MSS 202, 215 (number of books), MS 202, f. 43r (return of books); I owe all this information to Dr Richard Foster, Fellows' Librarian of Winchester College.

⁵ *Documents Relating to the History of the Cathedral Church of Winchester in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. W.R.W. Stephens and F.T. Madge, Winchester, 1897, p. 141.

Bishop Morley above the door. The portrait is attributed to the studio of Charles II's court painter Sir Peter Lely.⁶ It shows a somewhat austere figure in his gown as the Prelate of the Order of the Garter and his stern gaze acts as a reminder to readers to redouble their efforts.

Morley's bequest was a huge addition to the surviving 'skeleton' of 200 books already at the cathedral and eight or nine catalogues have been devised over the centuries. The catalogue presented to the Dean and Chapter on the 28th day of November 1682 and presumably compiled in the preceding months (and years?) is the closest to the transfer in 1684.⁷ It may not list 'all my Bookes' as some were left in his will to the Master of St Cross and there may have been more in the residue of his estate which went to a nephew. It lists, in round figures, just short of 1800 titles and 24 volumes of pamphlets which were to go to the cathedral and, with likely changes (losses or additions) between 1682 and 1684, it is safest to conclude that the library comprised about 2000 books after the arrival of his bequest in 1685.

When and how Morley built up the collection – by gifts or purchasing – is by no means clear. The catalogue does not give dates but, leaving aside the pamphlets, more than ten per cent of the books were published between 1500 and 1599 – the earliest in 1502 – about 40 per cent between 1600 and 1660 and a further quarter after the Restoration.⁸ His teaching stipend at Oxford in the 1620s/30s would have been miniscule and Oxford had libraries.⁹ His income in exile in the 1650s was even more perilous. His writings show, for example £50 debt, £20 left, and 'I know nothow to subsist'; but he claimed to have returned to England with more than the £130 he took with him in 1649.¹⁰ He was certainly purchasing at that time and he even sent some 'books of devotion' to a friend in England.¹¹ As Bishop of Winchester he certainly had

⁶ There are apparently many portraits. Spurr lists a number at the end of his article in *ODNB* – National Portrait Gallery, Christ Church Oxford; Walters Art Gallery at Baltimore, Rousham House Oxfordshire; Farnham Castle, Oriol College Oxford; Pembroke College Oxford, The Charterhouse; but he seems to have missed Winchester Cathedral, Winchester College, and Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire.

⁷ HRO, DC/F5/1/2; the order of events, from surviving documents, is somewhat confusing: the catalogue was completed and presented to the cathedral by 28 11 1682, it mentions Morley's will but this was only written 12 7 1684 and proved 31 10 1684; so either there was an earlier will (now lost) or there is something wrong with the note in the catalogue.

⁸ There are even half a dozen books with dates after 1684 – one as late as 1697! – which must cast more doubt on the validity of the catalogue.

⁹ Christ Church Oxford, xii.b.85.

¹⁰ A.Thomson, *Bishop Morley of Winchester 1598-1684: Politician, Benefactor, Pragmatist*, Winchester, 2019, pp. 27-8.

¹¹ Thomson, *Bishop Morley*, p. 28.

the means, with an income of £7,000 p.a.,¹² not only to buy books published in the 1660s, 70s, and 80s, but many of the books going back to the 1500s.

Well over half the books in the catalogue are in Latin, over a third in English, under a tenth in either French or Italian, and none in German or Spanish. Foreign languages – and the size of the collection – raise questions about Morley's reading pattern. Latin was the *lingua franca* of the academic world in the seventeenth century and Morley's time mainly in the Netherlands but venturing into France and 'Germany' is likely to have meant some acquaintance with those languages. Time and health must have got in the way of much reading. He ought to have had time at Oxford and in exile but from 1660 he would have been pushed for time. He had a large diocese to run, involving, for example, ordinations and appointments of parish clergy. With his duties as bishop came work in the House of Lords where he was a regular attender and sat on 280 committees. On top of all this he had persistent eyesight problems.¹³ He mentions 'spectacles' as early as the 1650s and by the 1670s/80s a veritable cascade of ailments began pouring from his correspondence – 'dimness in my left eye... the light of another ...quite gone', in one letter and 'loss of sight of one of mine eyes wholly and decaying of the other' on a separate occasion.¹⁴ The spirit was there but the challenge is likely to have proved too great for an ailing bishop in his eighties.

Classification of titles in the catalogue, without having read them – and even when one has – must be subjective; but the array of subjects, if within seventeenth century parameters, is impressive. Missals and bibles, though small in numbers, were – and are – fundamental. Likewise over numbers, and perhaps less obviously for an episcopal library, are works of geography, astronomy, medicine, and natural history. Books of poetry rise to 16 and there are between 30 and 40 books apiece on politics and law. They were all underpinned by a contingent, nearly 30 strong, of grammars and dictionaries. Drawing a distinction between theology and philosophy is particularly difficult but there are nearly 50 books with 'philosophy' in their title. A much larger subject is history – over 170 books – not far short of ten per cent of the total. Overwhelmingly, however, with at least 760 books – 45 per cent of the original library – is theology – topped by a further 40 volumes of sermons.

¹² Thomson, *Bishop Morley*, pp. 82, 124.

¹³ R. Paley and B. Adams, 'Morley' in *House of Lords 1660-1715*, ed. R. Paley, Cambridge, 2016.

¹⁴ Thomson, *Bishop Morley*, p. 115.

Critical subjects and famous authors adorn the collection: Galileo, the astronomer, for example, Lindwood the lawyer, Raleigh the historian, Donne and Milton the poets, Aristotle, Plato, Ockham, and Hobbes the philosophers. Theology displays – inevitably – a truly impressive range: from Augustine and Origen among ‘the fathers’ of the Church to the lives and works of Lancelot Andrewes, Robert Sanderson, and Seth Ward (Andrewes a predecessor at Winchester, the other two contemporaries at Lincoln and Salisbury). The Reformation features strongly with the works of Luther (four volumes), Calvin (six), and their distinguished disciples – Melancthon, Bullinger, and Beza. To balance that are several works on the Catholic Council of Trent; but Morley made sure there was at least one defence of the Church of England. He opposed, vehemently both Catholicism and the Presbyterianism in equal measure;¹⁵ works by Richard Baxter (leader of the Presbyterians) are in the collection and so is Morley’s own collection of attacks on ‘popery’. Morley was centrally involved in the revision of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) in 1662. This Prayer Book, still in use today, includes a clause which stressed the Protestant view that the bread and wine were symbols and not the actual body and blood of Christ. There appears to be no surviving record of who said what in the revising committee and it is difficult to attribute the insertion of the clause to a particular bishop. All that can definitely be said is that Morley was an important member of the main revising committee. The rest is speculation: he may have consulted, if only to reject, the Catholic missals in his possession and he may have been the driving force behind the insertion of the clause in the BCP.¹⁶

Relating the books to Morley’s interests is an intriguing line to pursue, however briefly. The books on geography and astronomy can be linked to his bequest of money to finance the new globes for the library. Those on medicine may have had some bearing on his health concerns. Law is there in spite of his modesty about command of the subject and his aversion to sitting in his own consistory court.¹⁷ Politics, recalling the upheavals he lived through, his negotiating role at the Restoration, and his activities in the House of Lords, is a less surprising subject area. Least surprising of

¹⁵ Thomson, *Bishop Morley*, p. 59 (for his hatred towards Catholicism); pp. 46-7, 77-80 (for confrontation with Baxter).

¹⁶ Thomson, *Bishop Morley*, pp. 46-9; the ‘committee’ was set up by Convocation (predecessor of today’s Synod) in 1661.

¹⁷ Thomson, *Bishop Morley*, p. 111.

all is the preponderance of theology: not counting exile, he was a university teacher for 20 years and a bishop for another 20.

There are some surprising omissions from the catalogue of 1682. There is no Shakespeare among the poets and no Hooker among the defenders of Anglicanism. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, first published in 1563, so prominent on the shelves and so vivid in its account of the burnings of Protestants, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, under Mary Tudor, is missing from the catalogue and must have been acquired later; likewise the philosophy of Descartes and Pascal. Other famous authors, such as Gilbert White, the naturalist, are on the shelves but they were writing after Morley's time, their books are additions to the library, long after Morley's catalogue was compiled.

There is not much information to show how the library fared after the arrival of Morley's bequest. Borrowing and lending records ought to provide evidence of the degree to which the library was used – the scale of borrowing and the something about the borrowers. Early records have long since been lost but one distinguished user in the years soon after Morley's death was Joseph Bingham, rector of Headbourne Worthy, who wrote his ten volume *Antiquities of the Christian Church* between 1708 and 1722 and who acknowledged his debt to the library.¹⁸ The first surviving lending book begins in 1728, a second lending book was begun in 1862, and the two continued in parallel, listing borrowings to modern times (James Atwell's is the last signature to date in the first volume).¹⁹ It shows that over 25 years, from 1728 to 1753, there were more than 300 transactions (about 12 or 13 a year). 'Transactions' should not be confused with borrowers, some of whom borrowed many times, or with books, some of which were borrowed more than once. There are problems deciphering titles and, even more, of classifying subject areas. Many subjects – philosophy, prayer books, sermons, and poetry - all feature over the 25 years but history appears to have been most popular, theology next, bibles third.

Some entries are incomplete and names have been missed but, taking these into account, it would seem that about 45 people borrowed from the library between 1728 and 1753. Most, by far, were cathedral clergy. Even here, over the 25 years, the record is rather mixed. The two bishops during that time (Willis and Hoadly) never

¹⁸ J. Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticae or Antiquities of the Christian Church*, London, 1843, vol. 1, p. xxxi.

¹⁹ HRO, DC/F5/2/1.

appear in the lending book and only Robert Lowth among the five archdeacons. Of the four deans, Charles Naylor borrowed two books while dean in the 1730s, one was returned, after nine years, at his death, and it is not clear what happened to the other. His successor, Zachary Pearce, on the other hand, borrowed – and returned – over 30 books during his nine years in the deanery. Half the canons do not seem to have borrowed anything; but the other half (16) makes up the bulk of borrowers. Canons Morgan and Nash managed 37 and 46 books apiece; but the prize goes to Arthur Ashley Sykes for borrowing no less than 67 books in his 16 years as a cathedral canon. Morley had stressed in his will the need for access by the local parish clergy and, overcoming identification challenges, at least six of them can be found among the borrowers, together with one layman.

There can be no doubt about the importance of Morley's bequest. Scale of use is somewhat more problematic. His books were borrowed by noteworthy numbers of canons. Other readers sat in the library, no doubt, though there appears to be no systematic record of numbers. Its very erudition most likely explains the 'less than exceptional' use to which the library appears to have been put, overall, during the centuries following Morley's death.

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Photograph

Portrait of Bishop Morley by school of Sir Peter Lely in the Morley Library, Winchester Cathedral.
Photograph by John Crook.