A Mathematical Chaplain: The Books of Richard Bestwick

A contribution to our celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the Savilian Professorships in Geometry and Astronomy

One of the largest early donations of mathematical and astronomical books to New College came in the late seventeenth century from the chaplain Richard Bestwick, a man about whom we know almost nothing.

The original statutes had stipulated seventy fellows for the college, and alongside them were to be ten chaplains. These chaplains were ranked as fellows for the purposes of commons (i.e. board) and livery (i.e. clothing), and received a salary of £2 13*s* 4*d*. But we know very little about them other than what can be gleaned from surviving college accounts. If we are lucky, a chaplain may have successfully pursued academic work, and so his degrees and their dates might be recorded. If we are very lucky, a chaplain may even have published, for instance Anthony Hodges, a New College chaplain who in 1638 published an English translation of the second-century AD Alexandrian writer Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*. This was accompanied by a fine engraved title-page and around a dozen commendatory poems, including one by the Cavalier poet Richard Lovelace; Hodges was evidently a rather well-connected clerical *literatus*.[1] Chaplains also occur as book donors to the college—James Terry (1640) and Robert Grebby (1654) have been mentioned in another Note in this current edition (see 'The Two Euclids of Daniel Appleford'). We may add to these John Phillips, MA, who in 1622 gave three books including a manuscript missal; William Hasket, MA, who in 1633 presented a set of interesting vernacular works; Edward Searle, MA, who bequeathed books in 1635; and Thomas Shephard, MA, who in around 1682 gave a manuscript bible. In all, these seven men are the only ones named in the library benefactors' register specifically as book-donating chaplains in the seventeenth century.

The most significant is certainly Bestwick. He is recorded under 1697 and then again under 1699 in the register, where he is described as 'Vicarius de Carlton in Com: Wilts, et hujus Collegij quondam Capellanus' ('Vicar of Charleton in the county of Wiltshire, and sometime chaplain of this college'). He had matriculated at Exeter College in 1660 as a poor scholar, took his BA from that college in 1663, but then his MA from New College in 1666, where he had become a chaplain. After his MA he seems to have returned to Exeter as a chaplain, becoming ordained in 1664.[2] (If he donated books to Exeter, no evidence of this has been recovered.) In 1670 he was fleetingly the headmaster of Highgate School (then the 'Free Grammar School of Sir Roger Cholmeley, Knight at Highgate'), for the Governors' Minutes for 26 September 1670 read:

> It is ordered . . . That Mr Richard Bestwick, Master of Arts and fellow of Exeter College in Oxon was Elected and chosen schoolemaster of the freeschoole of Highgate; he the said Mr. Bestwick observing and performing the Statutes of the said schoole in the place of Mr. Gwillym, the former schoolemaster lately Deceased.

But on only 5 December following it was recorded:

[1] See Falconer Madan, *Oxford Books*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1895–1931), no. 879.

[2] C. W. Boase, *Register . . . of Exeter College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1879), p. 118, under 'Beswick'; Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714* (Oxford, 1891, online at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714)>, under 'Bestwick'; Clergy of the Church of England database (<http://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>), record ID 7692.

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> That Mr. Ellis Price, Batchelor of Arts of Brasenose College in Oxon, was Elected and chosen for schoolemaster . . . in the place of Mr. Richard Bestwick who hath resigned his place.[3]

Bestwick resigned because he had been appointed vicar of Westport in Wiltshire—not a particularly rich living—where he remained until his death in 1705.[4] It seems, therefore, that Bestwick came to New College to study for his MA on a chaplaincy between late 1663 and late 1666. All we know about his academic time at New College is one crucial detail from the library's fragmentary borrowing register, from March 1666: 'D^{s} Bestwyke habet Theodosij Sphæram cu*m* clavio:'.[5] This is the Jesuit Christopher Clavius's 1586 Rome edition of Theodosius of Bithynia's *Sphaerics*, itself the gift of an earlier New College student, John Cooth, in 1621, one of a number of mathematical books given by Cooth, the first man to be appointed a lecturer in mathematics in the college.[6] So we can be fairly confident that Bestwick's mathematical interests were genuine and pursued in the college, and that his books reflect this.

What of his donated books themselves? First, Bestwick was unfortunately not an annotator, nor did he sign any of the books he eventually donated, so we do not have much to go on here in terms of marks of use and ownership. Some of the books listed below must reflect his leisure reading long after his time in Oxford, notably his non-mathematical books in French, two of which were published in the 1670s. The mathematical and astronomical core itself is predominantly early, however, and chiefly in Latin. In the 1697 set of books, the centre of gravity in terms of publication dates is the 1650s and '60s, with a handful (five, one in Italian) of books from the 1640s or earlier, and none earlier than Bestwick's copy of Kepler's 1609 *Astronomia nova*. In Bestwick's 1697 set, a more generically and linguistically varied offering, we have a mathematical book of 1647, an astronomical one of 1653, and another earlier Kepler text, this time the 1619 edition of his *Harmonices mundi*. The astronomical text, the Jesuit Johannes Baptista Riccioli's massive *Almagestum Novum*, is notable for the addition to our copy in its fly-leaves of an engraving of an eclipse observation carried out in Oxford in 1654 by John Wallis, the young Christopher Wren, and the engraver himself, Richard Rawlinson of Queen's College. Rawlinson printed off a quantity of these images to be distributed as single-sheet gifts to friends and interested scholars, and this is one of them. Bestwick commenced his studies in Oxford in 1660, and Rawlinson remained at Queen's

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[3] Highgate Governors' Minutes, 26 September, 5 December 1670. I am extremely grateful to Julia Hudson, Archivist and Records Manager of Highgate School, for supplying me with these minutes and confirming this identification. See also P. Hughes and I. Davies, eds., *Highgate School Register 1833-1988*, 7th ed. (Somerset, 1989), p. 79. Thomas Hinde, *Highgate School: A History* (London, 1993), p. 21, addresses the school in these years.

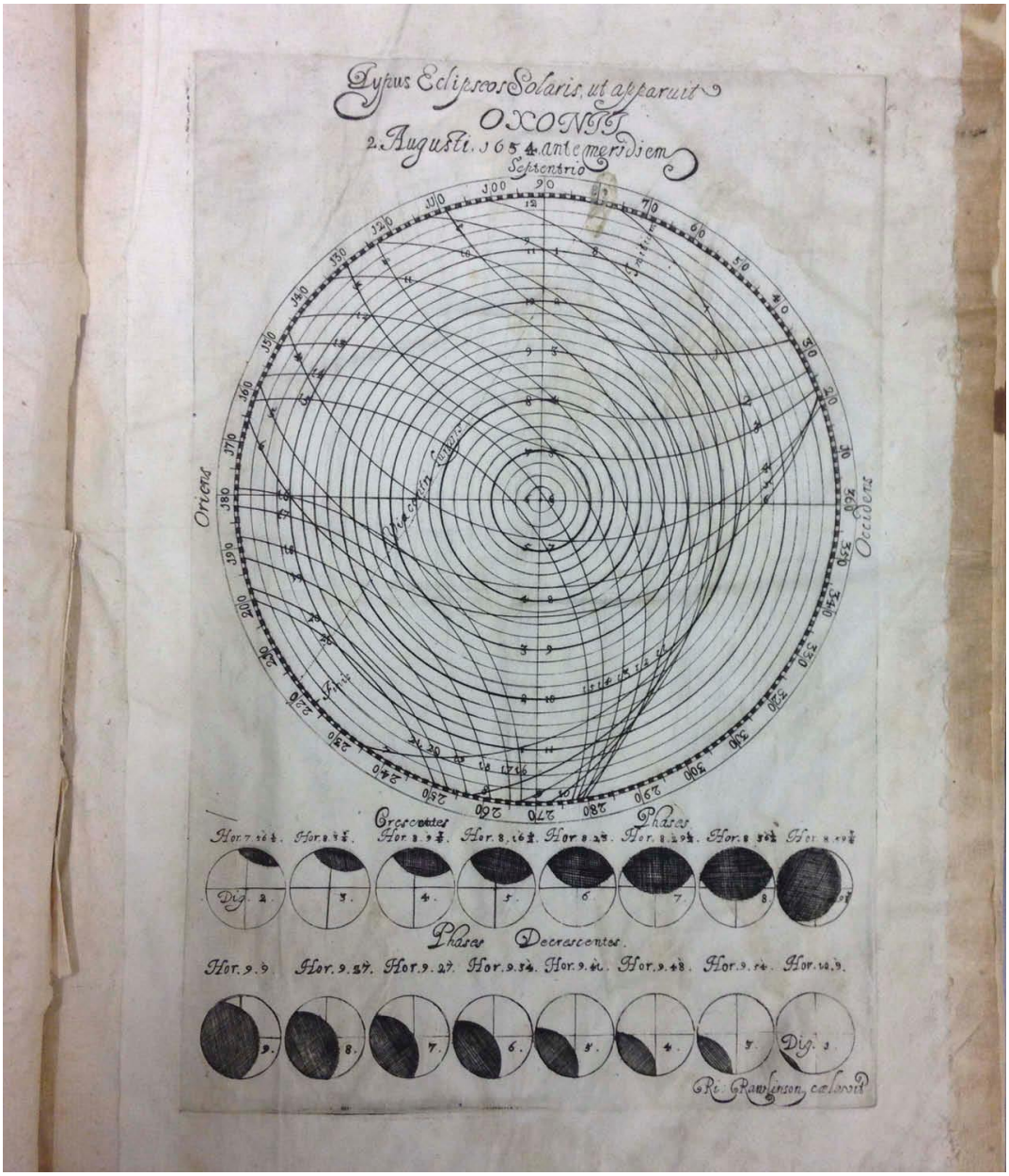
[4] Bestwick's appointment was to 'Westport cum Charlton et Brokenborow', hence the seeming Westport/Charleton ambiguity; Charleton was technically a chapel of Westport, 'and, presumably because the glebe was at Charlton where several vicars lived, Charlton was often mistaken for the mother church' (*Victoria County History*: *Wiltshire*, vol. 14, s.c. 'Charelton'). Sir Thomas Phillipps, *Monumental Inscriptions of Wiltshire*, ed. Peter Sherlock (Trowbridge, 2000), under Charlton, records a stone in the chancel bearing: 'Richard Beswick, M. A. hujus Ecclesia Oniensis [sic; presumably for Ox*o*niensis] Vicarus [sic]. Primo die mensis Novembris 1670, A.D. vicesimum secundum . . 1700.' However, Bestwick certainly died in 1705, as his will confirms (Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, P3/B/1041, made 18 May, proved 1 June; scribal, with a very shaky autograph). In his testament, apart from various monetary bequests, Bestwick left to 'Mr Birom' of Stanton St Quintin his 'long since promisd' copy of Paulo Sarpi's *History of the Council of Trent*. Birom was then entreated to purchase the rest of Bestwick's books at a reasonable price, £5 of which was to go to the poor of the parish of Charleton. (For this Byrom (1648-1717), a correspondent of the antiquary John Aubrey, see John Edward Jackson, ed., *Wiltshire: The topographical collections of John Aubrey, F.R.S., A.D. 1659-70, with illustrations* (London, 1862), p. 290.) The annual stipend of the vicar of Charleton in the period was £6 15*s* 6*d*, at the lower, if not quite bottom, end of the scale regionally (*A Book of the Valuations of all the Ecclesiasticall Preferments in England and Wales* (London, 1680), p. 347).

[5] Edited in William Poole, 'Book Economy in New College, Oxford, in the Later Seventeenth Century', *History of Universities* 25 (2010), pp. 56-137.

[6] It is now BT 3.181.3. For John Cooth (BA 1616, MA 1620) and his lectures, see William Poole, 'Teaching and Learning in Jacobean New College: The Foundation of the Lake Lectureships', *New College Notes* 9 (2018), no. 5, pp. 4, 7. For his books see the Benefactors' Register, p. 65.

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until the mid-1660s, and so it is possible that they became acquainted, Rawlinson gave Bestwick one of his old engravings, and Bestwick pasted it into an appropriate book.[7] Otherwise we are looking at a book with an Oxonian life prior to its ownership by Bestwick.



Richard Rawlinson's engraving of 1654 Eclipse
New College Library, Oxford, BT3.154.9

Bestwick's second set of books is also notable for its Arabic interests. His first shipment had included the Savilian Professor of Astronomy John Greaves's 1649 Oxford Persian grammar with a short appended text on Persian astronomical sigla, and his second shipment added to this oriental flavour Thomas Erpenius's edition of the Pentateuch in Arabic (1622), as well as Jacobus Golius's edition of Ibn 'Arabshāh's *Life of Timur* (1636), two major Leiden Arabicist publications.[8]

[7] See William Poole, 'A Royalist Mathematical Practitioner in Interregnum Oxford: The Exploits of Richard Rawlinson (1616–1668)', *The Seventeenth Century* 32 (2018).
[8] Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning*, pp. 46, 49.

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It is reasonable to suppose that the use of most of these mathematical and oriental books dates from Bestwick's time studying in Oxford, although of course he may have continued his work privately in Wiltshire. Indeed, he must have done so, because a few of his mathematical and astronomical books were only published in this later period, namely his copy of Maginus (i.e. the astronomer Giovanni Antonio Magini, who proposed a version of the geocentric model) and the last volume of his Renaldinius (this man is Carlo Renaldini, friend of Galileo). At some point Bestwick had at least slight medical interests too, as his copy of the sixteenth-century Dutch physician Petrus Forestus, 'the Dutch Hippocrates', attests. But the bulk of this collection, if we may call it that, is the working library of a highly engaged mathematical student of the 1660s, comprising a roll-call of the major names in mathematics and astronomy of the age—Harriot, Cavalieri, Kepler, Boulliau, van Schooten, Riccioli, and others. It is unusual to be able to see so clearly a contained specialist interest pursued for the undergraduate degrees by an Oxford student in the period, and it is all the more unusual that this student was not a college fellow, but a college chaplain.

William Poole
Fellow Librarian
New College, Oxford

Appendix: Edited transcript from the Benefactors' Register:

[1697]

RICHARDUS BESTWICK Vicarius de Carlton in Com: Wilts, et hujus Collegij quondam Capellanus DD libros quj sequuntur.

Artis Analyticæ Praxis p*er* Tho: Harriotum.

> Harriot, Thomas. *Artis analyticae praxis, ad æquationes algebraïcas nouâ, expeditâ, & generali methodo, resolvendas*. London: Robert Barker and the heirs of John Bill, 1631. 2°.
> BT3.151.16. Near contemporary boards, once chained; rebacked, modern front end-papers. Pricecode on title-page. Printed waste from some printed English sermons, running heads 'The Second Sermon', 'Ad Magistratum'; 'The Fifth Sermon', 'Ad Populum' (i.e. by Robert Sanderson). Errata corrected by hand and some other marginalia, e.g. p. 45.

Astronomia nova, de motib*us* Stellæ Martis p*er* Jo: Keplerum

> Kepler, Johannes. *Astronomia nova Aitiologētos, seu Physica coelestis, tradita commentariis de motibus stellæ Martis, ex observationibus G. V. Tychonis Brahe*. [Prague]: s.n, 1609. 2°.
> BT1.48.5(1). Eighteenth-century binding, once chained. Waste (pasted text inwards), from 'A Grateful Mention of Deceased Bishops', i.e. by Clement Barksdale.

Ismaelis Bullialdj Astronomia Philolaica

> Bullialdus, Ismael. *Astronomia philolaica: opus novum, in quo motus planetarum per novam ac veram hypothesim demonstrantur*. Paris: Simeon Piget, 1645. 2°.
> BT3.183.13. Near or contemporary boards, once chained. Heavily deleted inscription on first front end-paper; price in registration line on title-page. Fairly copiously marked with pencil dashes and hashes throughout; very occasional further annotation, e.g. pp. 315, 406.

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Pappj Alexandrinj Mathematicæ Collectiones. Bononiæ 1660

> Pappus of Alexandria. *Mathematicae collectiones*, ed. and trans. Federicus Commandinus. Bologna: H. de Ducci, 1660 [colophon 1658]. 2°.
> BT3.194.2. Contemporary boards, once chained. Price-code on half-title.

Carolj Renaldinj Ars Analytica Mathematum. 3 vol. viz 1ma pars Florentiæ 1665 2da Patavij 1669 3tia Patavij 1684.

> Renaldinius, Carolus. *Ars analytica mathematum*. 3 vols. Florence and Padua, 1665-1684.
> BT3.184.5-7. Vol. 1: contemporary boards, once chained; rebacked, modern end-papers. Vol. 2: ditto. Vol. 3: ditto, but with probably eighteenth-century boards. Vol. 3 has 'Renaldini Mathemat.' on first front end-paper, and a price-code.

— De Resolutione & compositione Mathmaticâ.

> Renaldinius, Carolus. *De resolutione, & compositione mathematica*. Padua: heirs of Paulus Frambottus, 1668. 2°.
> BT3.184.8. Contemporary boards, once chained.

Apollonij Pergæj Conicorum librij. cum Com*m*ent: Claudij Richardij. Antwerp 1655.

> Apollonius of Perga. *Conicorum libri IV*. Ed. Claudius Richardus. Antwerp: Hieronymus & Joannes Baptista Verdussen, 1655. 2°. Eighteenth-century boards, once chained; front end papers cut away. Price-code in registration line.
> BT3.207.11.

M. Meibomius de Proportionibus.

> Meibomius, Marcus. *De proportionibus*. Copenhagen: Melchior Martzanus, 1655. 2°.
> BT3.207.12(2).

Ptolomæus de Analem*m*ate cum Com*m*ent: Fredericj Commandinj, & ejusde*m* Com*m*andinj Horologiorum descriptio.

> Ptolomaeus, Claudius. *Liber de analemmate* [ed. Commandinus] . . . *Eiusdem Federici Commandini Liber de horologiorum descriptione*. Rome: Paulus Manutius, 1662. 4°.
> BT3.179.23. Contemporary boards, once chained, with some gold-tooling on spine and edges. Defective: commences on A; no title-page.

Francisci a Schooten Exercitationes Mathematicæ.

> Schooten, Franciscus à. *Exercitationum mathematicarum libri quinque*. Leiden: Elzevier, 1657. 4°.
> BT3.179.21. Near contemporary boards, once chained; rebacked, modern front end-papers. Printed waste from Schegkius on the Predicamenta (front) and *Peri hermeneias* (back).

Bonaventura Cavalierj de Sectionbus Conicis, Italicè Delle Settionj Coniche

> Cavalieri, Bonaventura. *Lo specchio ustorio overo Trattato delle settioni coniche*. Bologna: Clemente Ferroni, 1632. 4°.
> BT3.180.18. Original boards, once chained, some gold-tooling. Earlier *ex libris* on first front end-paper, 'ex libris Petri […]'.

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Jo: Ant: Maginus nova Cælestium orbium Theoricæ.

> Maginus, Johannes Antonius. *Novæ coelestium orbium theoricae congruentes cum observationibus N. Copernici*. Venice: Damianus Zenarius, 1689. 4o.
> BT3.181.4(1). Eighteenth-century binding, now bound with Galileo, *Istoria e Dimostrazioni intorno alle macchie solari* (Rome, 1613), donated by Thomas Tanner.

Joh: Grevius Elementa Linguæ Persicæ, et de Siglis Arabum et Persarum Astronomicis.

> Greaves, John. *Elementa linguae Persicae . . . anonymus Persa de siglis Arabum & Persarum astronomicis*. London: Cornelius Bee, 1649. 4o.
> BT1.133.1(2).Middle of three formerly dissociated library items bound together in the eighteenth century; former shelfmark S.13.2. MS corrections in Persian to latter text, p. 7.

Ant: Lalovera. Quadratura Circulj, et Hyperbolæ Segmentorum. Tolosæ 1651.

> Lalovera, Antonius. *Quadratura circuli et hyperbolæ segmentorum*. Toulouse: Petrus Bosc, 1651. 8o.
> BT3.179.1. Near contemporary boards, once chained; printed waste from a Civil War pamphlet containing the king's answer to the petition of Parliament of 1642 (text identical with that in Rushworth and Clarendon).

[1699]

RICHARDUS BESWICK Vicarius de Carlton in Comitatu Wilts & hujus Collegij olim Capellanus, præter Libros pag. 145 memoratos. Dedit etiam Hos qui sequuntur. (viz)

Joh: Bapt Ricciolij Almagestum Novum. Bon, 1653.

> Riccioli, Johannes Baptista. *Almagestum novum*. Bologna, 1653.
> BT3.154.9. Contemporary boards, once chained. Price in registration line. 1654 Oxford eclipse engraving of Richard Rawlinson pasted in on second front end-paper (for this see Poole, 'Royalist Mathematical Practitioner').

Gregorij a Sto Vincentio Opus Geometricum De Quadraturâ Circuli & Sectionib*us* Conicis. Antw. 1647.

> Gregory of St Vincent. *Opus geometricum quadraturæ circuli et sectionum coni decem libris comprehensum*. Antwerp: Joannes and Jacobus Meursius, 1647. 2o.
> BT3.184.9(1). Contemporary boards, once chained.

Les Recherches De France per Steph. Pasquier. folo.

> Pasquier, Etienne. *Les recherches de la France d'Estienne Pasquier*. Paris: Jean Guignard fils, 1665. 2o.
> BT3.156.13. Contemporary boards, once chained; rebacked. An early reader has added the odd 'NB' and underline.

Historia Tamerlanis. Arabicè. 4o.

> Ibn ʿArabshāh, Ahmad ibn Muhammad. *Ahmedis Arabsiadæ vitæ & rerum gestarum Timuri, qui vulgo Tamerlanes dicitur, historia*. Ed. Jacobus Golius. Leiden: Elzevier, 1636. 4o.
> BT3.204.2. Near-contemporary boards, spine badly damaged; once chained (from lower back board). Printed waste from an English bible. Price of 2*s* on final back end-paper; price-code on half-title.

Pentateuchus Mosis. Arabicè per Tho: Erpenium. 4to.

> *Pentateuchus Mosis Arabicè*. Ed. Thomas Erpenius. Leiden: Johannes Maire, 1622. 4o.
> BT3.206.15. Near-contemporary boards, somewhat repaired; once chained (from upper front board).

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Harmonices Mundi Libri V. p*er* Joh: Keplerum. 4to.

> Kepler, Johannes, *Harmonices mundi libri V*. Linz: Godofredus Tampachius, 1619. 2^{o}.
> BT1.39.7(1). Near-contemporary boards, repaired, modern end-papers; once chained. Bound with Kepler's *Mysterium Cosmographicum* (Frankfurt, 1621).

Vita Mareschalli Gassion. in 4 tomis. gallicè. 8^{o}.

> Pure, Michel de. *La vie du mareschal de Gassion*. Paris: Guillaume de Luyne, 1673. 12^{o}.
> BT3.177.16. All four vols. in matching contemporary boards with gold-tooled spines.

Philippi II Hispaniarum Regis Memorabilia. gallicè. 8^{o}.

> *Recueil des actions et parolles memorables de Philippe second, roy d'Espagne, surnommé Le prudent, traduit de l'espagnol.* 'Cologne': 'Pierre Marteau' [fictitious imprint], 1671. 12^{o}.
> BT3.172.2. Original calf, once chained from upper back board, with some gold-tooling on spine and edges.

Margaritæ Reginæ Navarræ Memorabilia. gallicè. 8^{o}.

> Presumably a copy of the autobiographical *Memoires de la reyne Maguerite*, many editions from Paris, 1628, but none present in New College library.

Ducis de Rohan Historia. gallicè. 8^{o}.

> [Fauvelet du Toc, Antoine.] *Histoire de Henry duc de Rohan, pair de France*. Paris: Chales de Sercy, 1666. 12^{o}.
> BT3.177.2. Original calf, once chained from upper front board, with some gold-tooling on spine and edges. Slight underlining; annotation (in English) on p. 6. ' C/P' on back paste-down.

Pet: Foresti Opera Medico-chirurgica. 2. vol. fol^{o}.

> Petrus Forestus, *Observationum et curationum medicinalium ac chirurgicarum opera omnia*. Frankfurt: Johannes Andrea & the heirs of Wolffgang Endterus Jr, 1660. 2^{o}.
> BT3.232.1. Near-contemporary calf, once chained; modern pastedowns. Matching deleted (English) inscriptions to the front endpapers of both volumes.

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