

James Hughes Anderdon's *Collectanea Biographica* An Extraordinary Collection in the Keeper's Office

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My contribution is made with gratitude to Antony Griffiths and it concerns print collecting, a subject which has greatly benefited from his research in recent decades. In the British Museum, two custom-made cabinets in the Keeper's Office in the Department of Prints and Drawings contain a series of leather-bound and gilt-tooled volumes titled *Collectanea Biographica*, an ambitious project of the British collector James Hughes Anderdon (1790–1879),¹ and this article is intended as an introduction to it.

Anderdon accumulated a vast collection of paintings, books, prints, autograph letters and drawings, mostly kept in one of his extra-illustrated or 'grangerized' series of biographies and catalogues.² The *Collectanea Biographica* was sold to the Museum in 1881 for the nominal sum of £50 by the executors of Mrs Campbell Robertson, who lived at the same address as Anderdon.³ Before its acquisition, Anderdon had presented three extra-illustrated series to the British Museum between 1867 and 1869: *Royal Academy Catalogues*

1769–1849, *Society of Artists Catalogues 1760–1791* and *Edwards Anecdotes of Painters*.⁴ During those same years, he had also donated 1,000 individual prints and drawings, mainly by contemporary British and late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian, Dutch and Flemish artists.⁵

The foundation for the *Collectanea* was an extra-illustrated biographical dictionary of 1823 compiled by Gérard Jacob in 38 volumes.⁶ Jacob used French excerpts from the *Biographie Universelle* and other biographical works and illustrated these texts with engravings and letters.⁷ This series was bought by Anderdon in 1833 and expanded over the next 40 years until his death; he had it bound in 1853 in 105 large octavo albums with blank sheets to accommodate additions.⁸ Anderdon describes their content in the first volume: 'more than 10,000 scraps of art and autographs, some of which are most minute & refined in execution, and of surprising excellence & beauty'.

The biographical entries are alphabetically arranged and include real people, fictional characters and alle-

1. J. H. Anderdon, *Collectanea Biographica, Being an Historical and Pictorial Biography of Illustrious, Celebrated and Remarkable Persons of all Ages, Nations and Professions; Princes, Potentates, Philosophers, Poets, Printers, Painters & Physicians, Sculptors & Engravers, Commanders by Sea & Land, Warriors & Statesmen, Antiquaries & Historians, Divines & Lawyers, Authors & Actors; founded on a work undertaken by Mons. Jacob under the Title of Biographie Universelle; which since 1833 the Collector of these Materials has Laboured to illustrate by Autograph Documents and Correspondence, Frontispieces and Title Pages of Printed and Engraved Works of all Periods and Nations, with Portraits of Distinguished Persons of Every Profession and all Ages, Together with Painters' Monograms, Printers' Devices, Rebuses & Mottos; by Scraps of Magazines, Journals and Reviews, and by Notabilia and Memoranda, Drawn from all Sources. Bound by Henry Massey of Park Street, in 105 Volumes; Interleaved to Admit of Further Illustrations*, London 1853.
2. See also A. Griffiths and R. Williams, *The Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: User's Guide*, London, 1987, pp. 56–58.
3. The illustrations bear a British Museum stamp designed for the Anderdon collection on the verso (Lugt 13), accompanied by the volume and object number. The 105 volumes were registered as 1881,0709.631–735; the 24th object in the first volume can therefore be referred to as 'Anderdon *Collectanea* 1-24' and '1881,0709.631.24'. Anderdon's collections of paintings and literary documents were sold after his death, Christie's, 30–31 May 1879; his British portrait prints were passed on to his heirs and

- sold by the widow of his cousin Alexander Anderdon Weston, Christie's, 15–16 March 1904.
4. Resp. register numbers 1867,1109,1.1–6985 (a second set was presented to the Royal Academy in 1875); register numbers 1869,1224,603.1–2105; register numbers 1869,1224,604.1–591. This last one is based on E. Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters who have Resided or been Born in England*, London, 1808.
 5. Prints and drawings presented to the British Museum by Anderdon include 1868,0612.473–475; 1868,0612.2006–2203; 1872,0511.987–1296; 1872,0608.448–563; 1873,0510.3530–3658; 1873,0614.209–216; 1873,0809.1458–1492; 1874,0110.431–463; 1875,0410.150–207; 1878,0914.37–78.
 6. G. Jacob, *Galerie historique et chronologique des hommes les plus illustres de toutes les époques et de toutes les nations, avec leurs portraits; enrichie d'un recueil des plus complets et des plus précieux de lettres et pièces autographes, ainsi que des fac-similes de leur écriture; augmentée de notices biographiques* ..., Reims, 1823.
 7. *Biographie universelle, ancienne ou moderne, ou Histoire par ordre alphabétique, de la vie publique et privée de tous les hommes qui se sont fait remarquer par leurs écrits, leurs actions, leurs talents, leurs vertus ou leurs crimes*, Paris, 1811–25.
 8. Anderdon paid £84 for Jacob's series and by 1853 he had spent a further £200 on purchases. The first volume contains the receipt from Henry Massey for the sum of £145 for the binding; Anderdon thus spent a total of £429.



243. Biographical entry of Pieter van der Aa in vol. 1, *Anderdon Collectanea* 1–24, ### x ### mm (London, British Museum).

gorical personifications. Entries are typically illustrated with extracts from English and Dutch printed books and sometimes have a short biography handwritten by Anderdon on light-blue paper.⁹ Related prints such as engraved portraits, and the occasional drawing, were added to the relevant sections in addition to autograph letters and other archival documents. There is no index

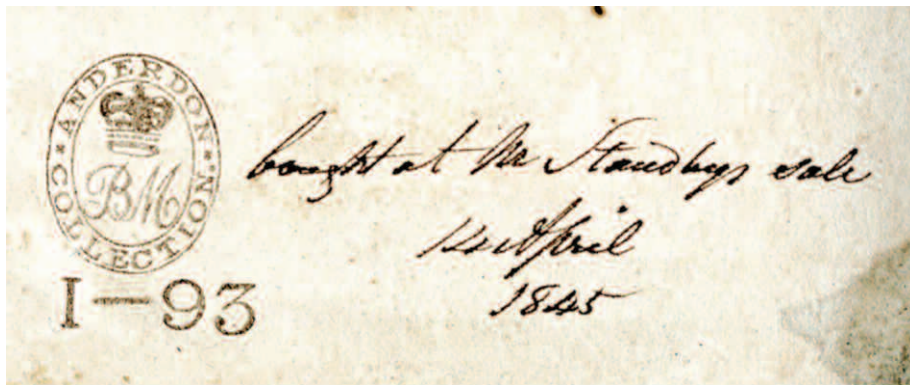
and sometimes it is not clear why an illustration was appended to a biography. For instance, an illustration from Johan de Brune's *Emblemata of Zinne-werck* (Amsterdam, 1624), published by Jan Evertsz. Cloppenburgh, is inserted for no obvious reason with the very first biography of the series, that of the Dutch publisher Pieter van der Aa (1659–1733; fig. 243).¹⁰ Portraits are usually added

9. Including extracts from C. de Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet van de Edel vrij schilderconst*, Amsterdam, 1661 and H. J. Rose, *The New General*

Biographical Dictionary, 12 vols, London, 1848.
10. See *Anderdon Collectanea* 1–24.



244. Acquisition note by Anderdon on the verso of 'Aer' after Jacob de Gheyn II, regarding Duke of Buckingham's sale in 1834, *Anderdon Collectanea* 1–159 (London, British Museum).



245. Acquisition note by Anderdon on the verso of a trade-card of the publisher Rudolph Ackermann, regarding Standly's sale in 1845, *Anderdon Collectanea* 1–93 (London, British Museum).

under the sitter's name, but title-pages are more difficult to locate and are inconsistently found under the author, the publisher and the engraver or sometimes the subject's name. Although Achilles himself is not depicted, the frontispiece to the print series *Life and Death of Achilles* is found under 'Achilles'.¹¹ The small size of the volumes means that larger prints and documents have often been folded.

Although most of the extra-illustrations in the *Collectanea* are eighteenth- and nineteenth-century engraved portraits and French letters, there is some exceptional material. Browsing through the volumes

has revealed not only a number of hitherto unpublished drawings, but also autograph letters and many wonderful series of old master prints not yet recorded in the Museum's collection.¹² These include the *Four Elements (Aer, Aqua, Ignis and Terra)*¹³ after Jacob de Gheyn II, dated around 1595/97, and 53 engravings showing Dutch and Flemish nobility by Christoffel van Sichem I from Edward Grimeston's *A General Historie of the Netherlands* (London, 1608).¹⁴ These prints are spread over several volumes and appear under their titles or the names of the figures portrayed.

The sources of Anderdon's collections are still to be

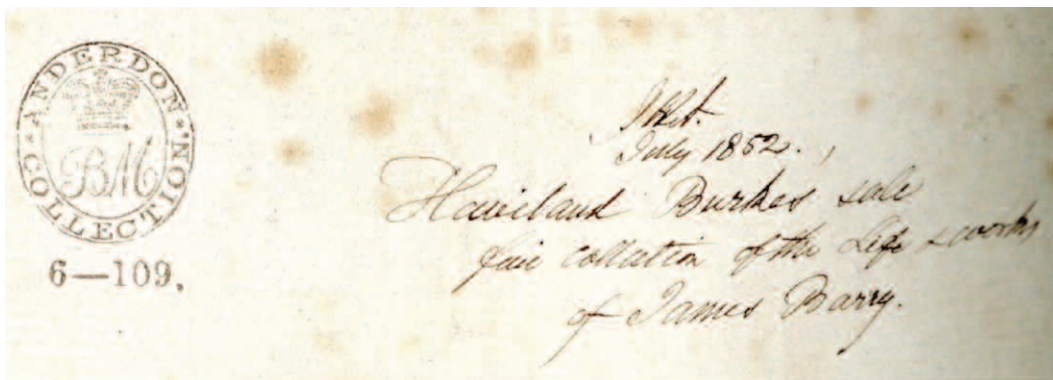
11. See *Anderdon Collectanea* 1–85.

12. For instance a pen-and-ink drawing ascribed to Polidoro da Caravaggio (*Anderdon Collectanea* 82–40) and a black chalk study placed under Johann Zoffány (*Anderdon Collectanea* 105–141). Also a letter from Samuel Johnson dated 16 February 1772 (*Anderdon Collectanea* 53–63), see B. Redford, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, Princeton, 1992–94, I, p. 385, and one by Pietro Testa dated 1637 (*Anderdon*

Collectanea 97–249), see G. Bottari, *Raccolta di Lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*, Milan, 1822, I, no. 146.

13. *New Hollstein: The de Gheyn Family*, no. 131; see respondent *Anderdon Collectanea* 1–159, 3–176, 52–24 and 97–235.

14. *Hollstein XXVII*, nos. 73–128; originally published in Jean-François le Petit, *La Grande Chronique ... jusques à la fin de l'an 1600*, Dordrecht, 1601 (see 1849, 1208.228–287).



246. Acquisition note by Anderdon on the *verso* of a print after James Barry, regarding Burke-Haviland's sale in 1852, *Anderdon Collectanea* 6–109 (London, British Museum).

investigated. Few of the prints and drawings in the *Collectanea* bear stamps from previous collectors.¹⁵ Luckily Anderdon was a conscientious collector and not only do some prints bear his own stamp (Lugt 50), he also inscribed his acquisitions on the *verso* in his easily identifiable handwriting: usually with his initials and sometimes with the acquisition date and place, for example 'JHA Vienna Aug. 1829'.¹⁶ Occasionally he added more detailed provenance notes which provide insights into how his collection was shaped and exactly when the *Collectanea* were expanded. They reveal that Anderdon (mostly through an agent) bought large lots of prints at the great auctions in the first half of the nineteenth century, for example from the collections of Richard Grenville, 1st Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, in May 1834, Horace Walpole in June 1842, Henry Peter Standly in April 1845 and Thomas William Aston Burke-Haviland in June 1852. Sometimes extracts from the sale catalogues are inserted with the purchased objects. Jacob de Gheyn's *Four Elements* are inscribed with 'Duke of Buckingham's Sale May 1834' and can be traced in the sale catalogue (fig. 244).¹⁷ Some trade-cards of printmakers and print-sellers inscribed 'from Mr Standly's Sale' were bought

directly by Anderdon in April 1845 according to the annotated sale catalogue (fig. 245).¹⁸

In 1868 Anderdon presented the Museum with its largest acquisition of drawings and prints by and after James Barry (1741–1806), while others were inserted in the *Collectanea* and the *Royal Academy Catalogues*. He had bought them as a large portfolio at the sale of Thomas William Aston Haviland-Burke in 1852 (fig. 246).¹⁹ Similarly, almost twenty prints by the de Passe family can be found in the *Collectanea* while a substantial group was presented separately by Anderdon in 1868.²⁰ Inscriptions ('from Strawberry Hill 1842' and 'OA') reveal that these were originally bought by his elder brother Thomas Oliver (1788–1856) at the sale of Horace Walpole's collection.²¹

In this brief discussion of the contents and the provenance of the *Collectanea*, it becomes clear that there is still much to be discovered in these volumes. One can only look forward to the thousands of items being catalogued after the main series of prints have been entered on the database. Not only will many interesting objects surface, but the *Collectanea* will also provide a valuable insight into the history of extra-illustration and the formation and dispersal of collections.

15. A rare example is George Hibbert's stamp (Lugt 2849) on a copy of Rembrandt's *Polander Standing with Stick* (1873,0809.1461), sold at Hibbert's sale (T. Philipe, 2 May 1809, lot 132).

16. Lugt 1424a and 1470; Fondation Custodia, 'James Hughes Anderdon' in *Les Marques de Collections de Dessins & d'Estampes* [online], available from www.marquesdecollections.fr (accessed January 2011).

17. Phillips's, 12 May 1834, lot 919; according to an annotation in the British Museum copy of the sale catalogue it was bought for 12s by the dealer Walter Benjamin Tiffin, who probably sold it to Anderdon.

18. For examples see *Anderdon Collectanea* 1–93 and 1872,0608.543 (Christie and Manson's, 14 April 1845, part of lots 130 and 132; each bought by Anderdon for £1.6).

19. See 1868,0612.2137–2203 (Christie and Manson's, 26 June 1852, lot 1387*; sold for £21: '82 Engravings, Etchings, Original Drawings, Autographs, Letters, and Other Matters Relating to this Great, but Eccentric Artist').

20. For the 132 engravings presented by Anderdon in 1868, see 1868,0612.473–475 and 1868,0612.2006–2135.

21. Robins's, 22 June 1842, lot 1218 ('640 prints, the works of John, Jerome and Anthony Wierix, Crispin Passe and other eminent German and Flemish engravers'); according to an annotation in the British Museum copy of the sale catalogue it was bought for £15 by the agent Adamson, who probably sold it to Oliver Anderdon. Anderdon expressly mentions in vol. 78 that his brother collected most of the de Passe prints which he then inherited in 1856.