

New College Library for that (and subsequent) years. They are clearly dated 1650 (LC/2), 1654 (LC/3), 1729 (LC/10) and 1754 (LC/OS/1). Both the 1650 and the larger, much more extensive, catalogue from 1654 list two titles by Apuleius, an *Opera* published in Venice in 1493 and *Aureus Asinus cum annot. Beroaldi* from Venice in 1510. The 1654 book adds copies of *De virtutibus Herbarum* variously 1529, 1543 and 1547. The entries in the 1729 catalogue exactly match those in 1654, only the shelfmarks have changed.

The pages of the even larger, and generally more unwieldy, 1754 book are divided in two, the original entries in this catalogue arranged down the inner column; the outer was left blank for the recording of later additions. The main Apuleius entries match those from 1654 and 1729 but in the outer column, alongside these originals, is the later addition: *Apuleius Opera accedit Alcinoi ad Platonis dogmata introductio*, 12mo. Aldus with shelfmark V.2.16.

Initially, there are two plain inscriptions, quite possibly in the same hand, one on the reverse of the title page reading: Anno Dmi. 1559 and the other at the top of the first page of the preface: Liber N[?]eoh[n?]. 1558. [Indecipherable] It is, however, not possible to say who this scribe may have been.



New College Library, Oxford, BT1.135.16

The signature of Robert Dow (1553-1588) appears in two places, including the title page. He was the eldest of five sons born to Lettice Bull and Robert Dow (1523-1612). His father was a citizen of London and member of the Merchant Taylors' Company, one of the twelve City Livery companies dating from medieval times (otherwise known as the Guilds). As collector of tonnage and poundage (customs duties and taxes levied on imports and exports) for the port of London, Robert Dow senior was a man of some influence. Robert junior may well have attended the Merchant Taylors' School, evidence for this as full registration records were not kept until Robert senior instigated the school in 1574 for his B.A. degree (his supplication was 12 October 1573), the evidence for this coming from three letters he wrote to the Lord Burghley in 1573, and marked Oxoniae in Collegio Corporis Christi. Dow was attempting to be admitted to a Probationary Fellowship there. At the same time he was teaching calligraphy, with Robert Sidney, brother of Sir Philip Sidney and future Earl of Leicester, among his pupils. On 14 January 1577 he was finally admitted to All Souls University as a student of laws. Dow supplicated for a B.C.L. degree in March 1582 and was admitted the following April. His collection of verse included a contribution to a collection of verse in honour of Sir Philip Sidney and a trip to Poland, and a Yuletide interests. Robert Dow died, aged 35, on 10 November 1588. An inventory of his belongings, which was presented at a meeting of the Merchant Taylors' Company, amongst which were his set of music partbooks which are now resident at Christ Church College and regarded as an important source of Elizabethan music. The inventory probably also included the book currently under discussion.

1: cf. Z. f. h. y. f. j. b. z. f. a. u. j. b. c. b. h. y. a. y. f. w. l. b. h. u. m. c. f. g. n. 7. c. a. d. u. b. m. see <<http://www.merchant-taylors.co.uk>>.

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Research by David Mateer³ has indicated it was Tomson (Thomson, Thompson or Tompson) who owned the Christ Church partbooks, which have the initials *EG.T.* (his father's initials) and his death. Born in 1553, biographers conflict over the name and profession of his father (Giles or Edward Tomson, who was respectively either a London grocer or a mercer). Whereas there is certainly no evidence that Tomson's father certainly did, being admitted on 3 March 1564. He entered University College, Oxford in 1571, graduating B.A. in 1575 and M.A. three years later. Like Dow, he was elected to a Fellowship at University College in 1589. Having been appointed one of Queen Elizabeth I's chaplains in the late 1590s, he became Dean of Windsor in 1603, a position he held until his death in 1612. For the last year of his life he was also Bishop of Gloucester, having been consecrated on 9 June 1611.⁴

As Dow and Tomson were both born around the same age, it does seem quite probable that they knew each other. The assumption is that the partbooks were acquired by Tomson, and, presumably, after the inventory was produced in 1589. It is known that two books which formerly belonged to Dow passed to the Library of St. George's, Windsor, and that the partbooks include music written by John Baldwin, a singing-master at Windsor. As a direct consequence, it is believed, that Tomson was Dean of Windsor.

The presence on the New College Apuleius of the full signatures (as opposed to merely initials) of both Dow and Tomson mean that it is reasonable to say that it also passed to Tomson. The fact that the partbooks were found on the New College volume to indicate it ever went to a Windsor ownership. Perhaps Giles Tomson kept it for his own personal library and passed it on or sold it separately. His will, proved in July 1612, indicates that he passed to the Chapter Clerk Gregory Baker all my songe bookes and made him one of the executors of his estate. In turn, when Baker died in December 1637, his son Giles was made his executor and received all my song bookes and other bookes not particularly given before. Did this include the Apuleius or had it already passed on to another owner? It could

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The other name found on the Apuleius is Thomas Bramston. Research brings two names to the attention of anyone searching for New College-related alumni: Thomas Berney Bramston (1733-1813) of Skreens, Essex and Thomas Gardiner Bramston (1770-1831) also of Skreens, Essex.

Thomas Gardiner Bramston was Tory MP for Essex for a short period in 1830. Bramston was descended from a distinguished line, the family based at Skreens in Essex since 1635 when his direct ancestor, Sir John Bramston, who was Lord Chief Justice in 1635-42 under King Charles I, initially bought the estate. One of his great-grandfathers, also Sir John, was a lawyer and MP for the county at the Restoration in 1660 and for Maldon in 1679; his grandfather, also Thomas, *and* his father, Thomas Berney Bramston were both MPs, again for Essex. Crucially, however, both Thomas Berney and Thomas Gardiner took their degrees at New College, in 1751 and 1788 respectively.⁵

As a point of interest, it should also be noted that the manor of Skreens

autobiography of the second Sir John Bramston, he appears to have been in this position by 1690. He was apparently a frequent visitor to his ~~Zu\YfjZa]mYgUy'UHG_fYYbg"~~ In later life, he became MP for Maldon in 1712, remaining in the post until about 1727 when it appears his cousin and namesake Thomas Bramston of Skreens, took over the seat. This latter Thomas, who seems to have been born in around 1690, inherited the manor of Skreens in 1722. While not outside the bounds of possibility, it would appear to be too late for him to be considered a candidate for authorship of the signature. He was, however, the grandfather of Thomas Gardiner Bramston.

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With the style of handwriting of the signature believed to date from no later than the mid-seventeenth century, does the fact that Thomas Bramston of Waterhouse was not born until 1658 rule him out as a possible candidate? Evidence has been found that suggests this may *not* be the case. A published reproduction⁷ of a Petition for Reprieve dated 1682, around the time Thomas seemingly became a clerk in Chancery, reveals a distinctive ligature between the letters ~~BÑ~~ and ~~Ñ~~ in the word ~~BhallÑ~~ on the last official line. This detail is very similar to that displayed between the letters ~~BÑ~~ and ~~Ñ~~ in ThomasÑsurname. This suggests that writing styles may linger in use longer than might be expected, especially when taking into consideration the legal or official nature of the ~~g V^Wj k cf_]b[`Ybj]fcba Ybhfcf`Yj Yb]b`H\ca UgÑWjz\]gZa]mVUW[fci bXÉ"~~

It is conceivably possible that Thomas Bramston of Waterhouse came into the possession of the book that is now Ne

The above summary is speculative, but Robert Dow and Giles Tomson, at least, are linked from evidence left elsewhere in Oxford. ~~F cVYfh 8 ck~~ ~~U~~ther and his contemporary John Bramston were both professionally involved in London trade and commerce (Bramston being a mercer); their sons, Robert and Roger respectively, both studied law, with Roger Bramston being the father of the first Sir John.⁸ The study and practice of the law was therefore common to Robert Dow and to several generations of Bramston. The New College connection with not only the parish of Roxwell, where the Bramston family estate was located, but also specifically two subsequent members of the Bramston family is undeniable and appears unlikely to be coincidental. Amongst documents in the college archives for Roxwell is a set of correspondence ~~about~~ exchanges of land with Mr Bramston and T.J. Hearn~~dated~~ 1851-52, ~~Mr~~ Bramston~~probably~~ ~~VY]b['H\ca Uj; UFX]bYf~~ ~~gcb~~ and inheritor, Thomas William.⁹ Why was the donation or gift left unrecorded at New College? Perhaps it was nothing more than a simple oversight~~l~~ purely a case of human error, one book missed amongst the many. The truth