

Richard Robinson, ‘A Briefe Collection of the Queenes Maiesties most High and most Hounourable Courts of Recordes’, etc.

1 (fols. 1r–24r = pp. A1–M3) (Address:) To The Right Honorable Sir John Puckering Knight Lord Keeper of the Great Seale of Englande : / Unto whose honorable Patronage & protection I Humbly Submitt mee & this my poore travell to the publike Vtilitye of my Prince and Native Cuntrye. . . . Diligently Collected by R: Robinson Cittizen of London: Julij: 10<sup>o</sup> ANNO: DOM: 1592. A Briefe Collection of the Queenes Maiesties most High and most Hounourable Courts of Records — And sendeth this description for Nisi prius. / [six verses, concluding] Radiantem Solem nemo restringat *per me Richardum Robinson* /

Richard Robinson, ‘Briefe collection of the Queenes Maiesties most High and most Hounourable Courts of Records’: ed. from this manuscript by R. L. Rickard (assistant librarian of New College), in *Camden Miscellany Vol. XX*, Camd. Soc. 3rd ser. 83 (1953), item 1; R. B. McKerrow, ‘Richard Robinson’s “Eupolemia, Archippus, and Panoplia” (1603)’, *Gentleman’s Magazine* 3000 (1906), 277–84; George McGill Vogt, ‘Richard Robinson’s Eupolemia 1603’, *Studies in Philology* 21 (1924), 629–48; W. W. Greg, ‘Richard Robinson and the Stationers’ Register’, *Modern Language Review* 50 (1955), 407–13; W. H. Bryson, ‘A Note on Robinson’s Brief Collection of . . . Courts of Records’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 6 (1972–6), 181–87; R. C. Leitch, ‘Richard Robinson and the Literature of the City of London, c. 1576–1603’, unpublished MPhil diss. (University of Cambridge, 1997).

The ‘Briefe collection’ of Richard Robinson, freeman of the Leathersellers’ Company and professional copyist, is an amplified adaptation of Alexander Fisher’s manuscript ‘Description of the courts of Justice in England’, of which the earliest copy is dated 1576 (for Fisher see *History of Parliament: Commons 1558–1603*). The textual evolution is complex: the initial work was by Alexander Fisher, but over successive recopyings Robinson augmented the text significantly. Bryson discusses seventeen surviving copies of the Fisher-Robinson tract in various textual states, of which six are in Robinson’s own hand. ‘Sometime between July 1588 and July 1592 Robinson enlarged this tract by adding a great deal of material to the section on Parliament. The new matter gives a bit more information as to the procedure in Parliament, and it lists the lords and representatives of the Commons who were entitled to sit. The New College MS . . . was made during the reign of James I, but it is a copy of a manuscript which Robinson made on 10 July 1592.’ For this iteration, Robinson adjusted the title and reorganized the order in which the different courts were discussed (Bryson, p. 185). The iteration prior to the text as represented by the New College copy is BL MS Harley 1741 (no date); the iteration subsequent to it is London, Inner Temple, MS Barrington 29, fols. 675–86 (dated 30 September 1592), in Robinson’s hand (Bryson, pp. 185–86). The tract was substantially in print after 1589, when it was used to augment, without notice or attribution, the sections on the Courts of Record in the third posthumous edition of Sir Thomas Smith’s *De republica Anglorum*. The dedicatee of ‘A Briefe collection’, Sir John Puckering (1543/4–1596), Lord Keeper of the Great Seal (on whom see *ODNB*), also received the dedication of one of Robinson’s many printed translations, *A Second Proceeding in the Harmony of King David’s Harp* (London, 1592).

2 (fols. 24v–30r = pp. M4–P3) An abstracte of the particuler Charges defrayd within diuers Courtes of Recordes for h. Maiestie at the Common Lawes of the Land very necessarye & needfull for all young praticioners & studentes at the Lawe / as also for suitors in the said Courtes. — vntill the parties do pay publication . / Finis.

Text otherwise unidentified.

**3** (fols. 30r–31v = P3–Q2) What a Testament or Last Will is, and how many kindes of testamentes ther be. A testament being vnderstood in a generall sence — Theis things may be done without damage. /

An extract from Henry Swinburne, *A Briefe Treatise of Testaments and Last Wills*: pr. London 1591 (STC 23547); pr. London 1611 (STC 23548), &c.; last pr. London 1803; J. D. M. Derrett, *Henry Swinburne (?1551–1624): Civil Lawyer of York* (York, 1973); J. H. Baker, 'Henry Swinburne, B.C.L. (†1624)', *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 3 (1993) 5–9. The present text is a reduction into continuous prose of Swinburne's opening tables (C1r–C3v in the first edition), with a short interpolation on 'The end of a will' (30v).

fol. 31v Two lists of legal rates, unconnected to the previous item, the first commencing 'A spetiall Livery', and the second headed 'In the Court of wardes'.

**4** (fols. 32r–39r = Q3–[T5]) Cases hors del Curia Wardorum. . . . Agnes Chittwoode le vidua et Richard Chirkwood fuit seise in fee — the xxxjth day of January in the xliijth yeare of our Raigne / Tho: Kerrey:

The reports, written in Law French and almost all dating from the reign of Elizabeth, commence with the case of Agnes Chittwoode, widow of Richard Chickwoode [sic]; subsequent cases are those of Sir Jhon Thynne (i.e. Sir John Thynne (1512/13–1580), estate manager and builder of Longleat); Thomas Moore; Richard Jacob and his son Robert; William Woolriche and Thomas Poyner; Madame Woodhouse; Richard Pattenham; Sir William Devereux; Henry, Duke of Lancaster. The extracts are not in chronological order, however; the latest is dated Pasch. 24 Eliz. = Easter Term 1581, probably therefore the *terminus ad quem* of the original compilation. However, the last, separate extract, in English and headed 'A processe out of the Requests' is dated 'the xxxjth day of January in the xliijth yeare of our Raigne' = 31 January 1600/1.

**5** (fols. 40r–57v) A true Collection as well of all the kings maiesties offices and fees in any the Courtes at Westminster: as of all the offices and fees of his Maiesties honourable howsehold: Together with all fees apertaineinge to Captaines, and souldiors haueinge charge of Castells, Bullwarkes, and fortresses, within the Realme of England: And Likewiese the offices and fees of his highness honorable howses, parkes, forrestes, and chases, within the saied Realme — Stoke keeper of the parke fee 6<sup>li</sup> 2.0<sup>d</sup> [...] Finis record.

Other versions of this text include Bodl. MSS Ashmole 792, part VI, fols. 12r–31v (datable to in or after 1608); Ashmole 821, part I, fols. 1r–23v (dated 1615); Ashmole 824, part XXII, fols. 217v–240v (dated 1612); BL MSS Harley 829, item 10, fols. 99r–110v; Add. 29888, datable to between 1603 and 1616; Add. 35848, fols. 3r–39v, datable to between 1605 and 1607. A transcript from a manuscript dated 1606 was published by Sir Joseph Banks in *Archaeologia* 15 (1806), 72–91. These other versions are datable because some current incumbents of offices are named; the present text is unusual in stating only offices and salaries, without any named incumbents.

Fol. 57v Some notes and doodles on 57v by the same scribe as this final item in the manuscript, which was originally a separate booklet, stitched to the present manuscript.

Paper folio, 57 fols. *Dimensions*: 295 × 195 mm, with a ruled writing space in fols. 1–39 of, with some variation, 235 × 105 mm. The scribe of items **1–4** has paginated fols. 1–38 using an alphabetic system, A1–T4. *Collation*: 2<sup>o</sup>: 1–25<sup>2</sup> (fols. 1–50).

*Watermarks*: common pot, single handle, quatrefoil (in centre of most folios).

*Script*: **1–4** the autograph of Richard Robinson, using a neat secretary, with italic for display and emphasis, and italic marginal headings. **5** neat secretary with chancery influences.

*Binding:* stab-stitched in five stations into a parchment cover with the mark '1602' on the upper front cover; the parchment has had a previous life as a binding, as there are piercings at four points for a previous stitching structure.

*Provenance:* the manuscript was bequeathed by Thomas Philpot, DD, fellow of the college 1609–24, along with many other printed books and four further manuscripts: see Benefactors Book, pp. 121–23, under 1677, including 'Robinsons Court of Records. M.S.' Philpot became rector of Akeley, Bucks., and of Turweston, Bucks. He was imprisoned at the beginning of the civil war, and died in 1671 (see Rickard).