

The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple  
The Library, Ashley Building  
Middle Temple Lane  
London EC4Y 9BT



# History of the Library

## Introduction

Welcome to Middle Temple Library— we hope you enjoy your visit. The Library provides a legal reference service to members of the four Inns of Court throughout the year.

The Library currently contains over 250,000 volumes covering the whole range of British, Irish, EU and US legal research resources, including law reports, journals, textbooks, loose-leafs, e-books and databases.

It provides academic researchers access to a collection of over 9,000 early printed books and 300 manuscripts and is home to the Molyneux Globes and to a collection of Prime Minister portraits dating from the 18th to 21st centuries.

The Library was founded in 1641 with the Robert Ashley bequest. This guide provides information on the founding and subsequent development of the Library.



## PAST BENEFACTORS TO THE LIBRARY

Robert Ashley  
Elias Ashmole  
W.R. Bisschop  
Sir William Blackstone  
Francis Maseres  
Sir Francis North  
Sir Richard Pepys  
William Petyt  
Sir Walter G.F. Phillimore  
William Scott, Baron  
Stowell  
Sir Bartholomew Shower  
Paul Treby (manuscripts  
of Sir George Treby)



## A Scholarly Library

Middle Temple Library is primarily a legal reference library. However, closer inspection reveals a host of materials covering biography, history and literature amongst others. This is due to the fact that the Inns of Court ('the third university') were originally law schools which also provided a generalist education. However, as Sir John Baker notes: "study facilities were minimal".

Members had to rely on "small private libraries" and the only communal meeting places were Temple Church, the garden or the Hall. Members pursued gentlemanly pursuits during the Inn's early history, such as fencing, dancing and tennis. As such, the library's holdings reflected a wide range of learning well up to the twentieth century.

*The Library's founding collection contained over 4,000 books on a variety of subjects, including esoterica, religion and science.*

### Collection Highlights

One of the most significant donations made to the library is the 1270 manuscript *De Legibus*, donated by Elias Ashmole in 1677. This manuscript was the first treatise to describe the whole of English law in a rational manner.

In 1658, Sir Richard Pepys's donation of £50 was used to purchase books such as *Rerum Moscoviticarum*, an early book about Russia; William Camden's *Britannia*; and Thomas Stanley's *History of Philosophy*, which is featured in the illustration above.

In 1759, Sir William Blackstone donated his *Great Charter and Charter of the Forest*.

### Early History of the Library

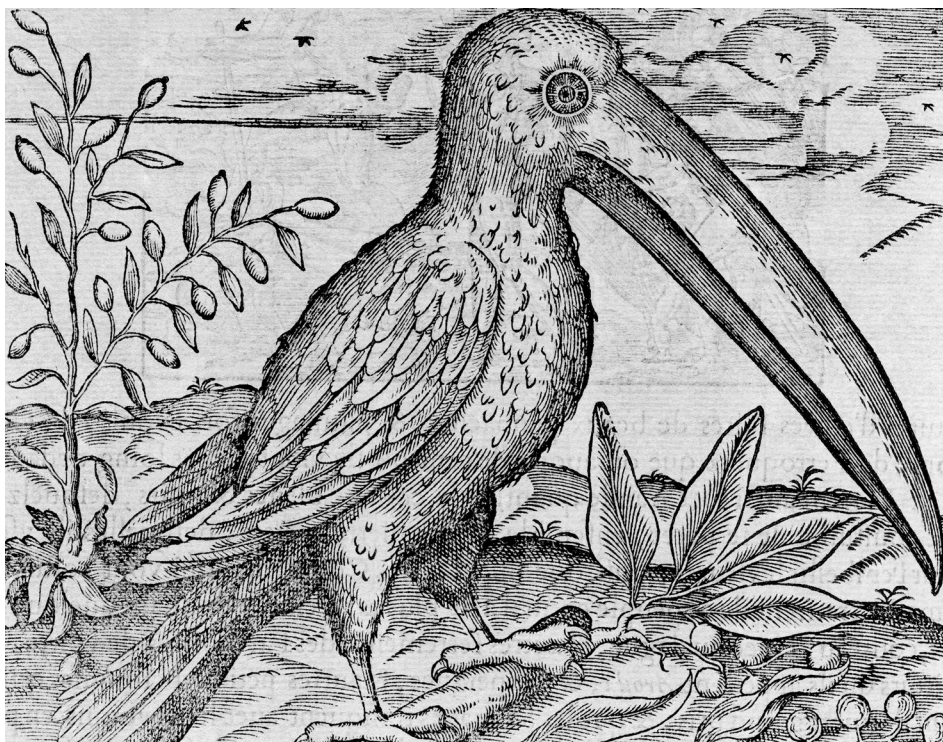
A manuscript in the British Library describing the Inn during the time of Henry VIII states that there was "a simple library in which were not many bookes besides the law and that library by meanes that is stood always open, and that the learners had not each a key unto it, it was at last robbed of all the bookes in it."

In 1641 a highly respected member of the Inn, Robert Ashley (1565-1641), bequeathed his own personal library in order to re-establish a library at Middle Temple. His library was notable for its size (over 4,000 volumes) and breadth, covering a wide range of subject matter including esoterica, languages, politics, religion, science and many other topics.

From 1641, the Inn rapidly developed the library further through purchase and donation. Some early significant acquisitions include the 1270 Bracton manuscript, *De Legibus*, donated by Elias Ashmole in 1677; £50 donated by Sir Richard Pepys in 1658, used to purchase fifty books; Sir Robert Barnard's donation in 1661 of ten sets of nominate law reports; and William Petyt's 1698 donation of seventy-three volumes of tracts and forty-four individual titles.

The focus of acquisition was not strictly legal, however and the Inn continued to acquire important works on history, literature and politics, in order to respond to the broad informational needs of barristers.





Woodcut illustration of a toucan from André Thevet's *La cosmographie universelle*

## Robert Ashley's Library

Robert Ashley was born in Damerham in 1565 and was educated at Southampton, Salisbury and Oxford before being called to the Bar in 1595. As he himself states, a legal career was noted for its “ebbes and tydes” and thus he spent a large amount of time acquiring, reading and translating books, amassing a library of over 3,700 volumes by the time of his death in 1641.

Ashley translated six works from French, Italian, Latin and Spanish into English. His interest in languages is reflected by his library's holdings in these foreign tongues, and a wide range of dictionaries and general works on language.

Ashley was interested in a variety of topics, but particularly medicine, science and foreign lands. His library contains a variety of works on Canada, Peru and Vietnam as well as atlases and cosmographies such as that illustrated above.

Ashley was also interested in collecting works owned by famous writers of the day, acquiring books that once belonged to John Donne, Ben Jonson and John Dee amongst others.

Ashley's books contain a large number of cross-references to books within the collection, as well as references to works in other collections, most notably the Bodleian Library, which was established in 1602. In 1618 Ashley visited the wondrous Escorial Library in Spain, perhaps drawing some inspiration there for his own collection.

## Book Provenance

Books tell a story— not just within the text itself, but in the clues left behind by previous owners.

The books in Middle Temple Library show a wide range of ownership detail— from bookplates to inscriptions, underlining, marginal notations and distinctive bindings.

The library is noted for having the largest holdings of John Donne's own personal library, containing seventy-nine works in all. It also has five works owned by Ben Jonson; four owned by John Dee; and thirty-nine belonging to the Doctors' Commons.

Interesting examples of bookplates in the collection include those belonging to Sir John Anstruther, Charles Pierre Claret, comte de Fleurieu and the Earl of Macclesfield.

Some of the books with interesting bindings include armorial ones belonging to Sir Christopher Hatton; William Petyt; Rachel Bouchier, Countess of Bath; and Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor. Many of the sixteenth and seventeenth century books are bound in paper or parchment manuscript waste leaves, which are two styles typical of the time.

## Keepers of the Library

1642-1655 William Cox  
1655-1658 Thomas Manley  
1658-1665 James Fitzgerald  
1665-1683 Daniel Kerry  
1683-1688 Pawlett Barrow  
1688-1696 Benjamin Godwin  
1696-1700 Sampson S Broughton  
1700-1708 Walter Williams  
1708-1728 John Troughton  
1728-1742 John Hele  
1742-1750 William Moore  
1750-1752 Charles Hopkins  
1752-1767 John Fleming  
1767-1776 James Horsfall  
1776-1776 John Price  
1776-1817 Charles Cotton  
1817-1827 James Gordon  
1827-1837 John Bray  
1837-1861 John H Rowlatt  
1861-1880 Richard G Smith  
1880-1909 John Hutchinson  
1909–1922 Cyril EA Bedwell  
1922–1963 Herbert AC Sturgess  
1963-1974 Charlotte Lutyens  
1974-1989 Ella McNeill  
1989-2000 Janet E Edgell  
2000-2015 Vanessa Hayward

## Inn Librarians

Librarians at the Inn were originally given the title Keeper of the Library. The first Keeper was William Cox, the executor of Robert Ashley's will. Until the 19th century, most of the Keepers were members of the Inn.

Being an Inn librarian was not always easy. In 1653 William Cox had to petition his employers for a fireplace in the Library and help with sweeping it, due to his advanced age. Until the late 17th century, the Keeper had

to sign a bond in order to ensure the security of the collection; any missing items had to be reimbursed from this bond.

Sampson S. Broughton fared better, albeit in a different field altogether, becoming King's Attorney General of the province of New York in 1700. James Horsfall became Treasurer of the Royal Humane Society in 1774 and was a Fellow of the Royal Society.

## Inn Librarians and Other Staff

During the nineteenth century the Library Keepers continued to develop an expanding law library collection. Two early 20th century Keepers, CEA Bedwell and HAC Sturgess each authored and edited a number of works. The first qualified librarian to be hired was Charlotte Lutyens, in 1963.

The library also had a succession of library porters who were all from the same family called Ing. Supposedly, John Ing, the last of this line of porters, used to feed the ducks swimming in the Thames by throwing crumbs from the old library's oriel window, which faced directly onto the Thames.

## Stop Thief!

Despite the fact that the library served the upstanding citizens of the Bar, book theft was a common problem throughout the library's history. Library books were first chained in 1693. These were removed, presumably at some point in the 18th century.

Despite this, in 1736 a member of the Inn, Henry Justice was sentenced to seven years' transportation as he was found in his chambers with a large number of books stolen from the Inn library and that of Trinity College Cambridge. In 1756/7 the Inn paid £70 to prosecute Isaac Bromley for the theft of books.



## Library Catalogues

The first library catalogue was compiled in 1655 by Henry Moodyman, who was paid £25 for his work. This original catalogue no longer exists, but a multi-volume one compiled in 1683-4 by two unnamed booksellers still resides in the Archive.

The first printed catalogue appeared in 1700, produced by Sir Bartholomew Shower, who was Treasurer of the Inn at the time. This was succeeded by a 1734 catalogue which was more helpfully arranged by author and title.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, catalogues were published in 1845, 1880 and 1914, with supplements issued up to 1925. A card catalogue was introduced and updated until the late 20th century, when a computer catalogue took its place.



*Sir Edward Maufe designed the libraries at Middle Temple and Gray's Inn and was responsible for overseeing building works at the Inn after World War II.*

## The Library's location through the years

Over the centuries, the library has been housed in different locations at the Inn. During the Civil War, Ashley's books were kept in presses until May 1650, when the chambers of Master Eltonhead, located over the kitchens, were fitted up to use as a library.

During the 18th century the library books were chained to their presses, and the library was housed in a building on Middle Temple Lane.

In 1824 the library was moved into what is now the Inn's Parliament Chamber, with an entrance via a staircase from the garden. This room quickly became inadequate, leading to the building of a new library on the river front. In 1861 this gothic revival library was

opened by the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII.

During World War II, despite being bombed and damaged, the library continued to be used. In 1946 the Queen opened a temporary library in Brick Court, as the gothic building was by then damaged beyond repair. It was replaced in 1958 with the current building, designed by Sir Edward Maufe, who also designed Guildford Cathedral.

The strength of the walls and floors of Maufe's design allowed a new floor to be created in the attic in 2007, which now houses the Inn's archives and the rare book and manuscript collection in a secure, environmentally stable storage facility.





## Molyneux Globes

One of the Inn's treasures is a pair of celestial and terrestrial Molyneux Globes, the first globes made in England, the only known surviving pair (by Molyneux) and the largest printed globes of this date.

Emery Molyneux, the globes' master creator, was a mathematician and maker of mathematical instruments based in Lambeth. He was assisted in compiling

information for the terrestrial globe by various contacts, including Richard Hakluyt and Sir Walter Raleigh (a member of the Inn). Edward Wright assisted with plotting the coastlines.

The gores were engraved by Jodocus Hondius, in exile in London at the time, and were highly praised by contemporary geographers and mathematicians.

*The Molyneux Globes are one of the Inn's greatest treasures*

### Who was Molyneux?

Emery Molyneux came from a humble background and was presented to the Stationers' Company as William Cooke's apprentice in October 1557. He accompanied Francis Drake on his circumnavigation of the globe in 1577-80.

Despite his relative success in England because of the globes, he moved to Amsterdam in 1597, as that was the centre for globe and map making in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The plates for the globes went with him.

He died in relative poverty in Amsterdam in 1598, leaving a wife but no children.

## Molyneux Globes

The globes originally date from 1592, but the terrestrial globe was modified in 1603 to show the latest geographical discoveries. Their patron, William Sanderson dedicated them to Queen Elizabeth I, as seen on the terrestrial globe which also bears his coat-of-arms.

The terrestrial globe is significant for being the most geographically up-to-date globe for this time period. It highlights Drake and Cavendish's circumnavigations (including Drake's voyage along the North American coast), Cabot's discoveries, Arctic discoveries made by Frobisher and Davis and Raleigh's doomed Virginia colony. The 1603 revision adds discoveries made by Barents in the Arctic in 1596 and Raleigh in Guiana in 1595/6.

According to the Dictionary of National Biography, the globes were unusual for their time due to their flour-paste (i.e. paper mâché) construction and in that they were "constructed so as to be unaffected by humidity at sea".

The first pair of globes to be made by Molyneux were presented to Queen Elizabeth I in July 1592. They cost £20 each, which of course was a vast sum in Elizabethan times. The globes are referenced by Shakespeare in *The Comedy of Errors* and by Thomas Dekker in *The Gull's Hornbook*.





A close-up view of the terrestrial globe, depicting ships and India

## Molyneux Globes

Various theories have been put forward as to how and when the Middle Temple acquired the globes. Unfortunately no records exist recording their provenance.

The first published account of the globes was made by Richard Hakluyt in the first edition of his *Principal Navigations*, 1589, where he announced their imminent publication.

The earliest reference to them in the Inn Records appears in a repair bill dated 11 April 1717, which is when they may have acquired their yellow patina through varnishing. They were repaired again in 1818 and re-varnished in 1930. They would not have originally been varnished, as Dekker describes them in 1609 as “washed over with whites of eggs”.

Given that the globes are made of paper and flour-paste, they have survived remarkably well. During the Second World War they were sent to Beaconsfield and stored with part of the Wallace collection at Hall Barn in the care of Lady Burnham, thus surviving the bombing of the Victorian library. They returned to London in 1945 .

In 1953, *Vogue*, in its Coronation issue, used a photograph of the globes to accompany a colour page feature on Queen Elizabeth I.

When the current library building was opened in 1958, the globes were placed in the position in which they now stand.

## Tales of the Library in the eighteenth century

The earliest reference to the Globes being in the library appears in the eighteenth century, by which time the library had been well established.

John Bagford mentions the Inn’s “considerable library” in his survey of English libraries in 1707.

Edward Hatton mentions the library in his ‘A new View of London’, 1708: “Here is a good library near the back steps of the Hall, to which Sir B. Shore [i.e. Shower] and several others have contributed books, it is open for all person about 6 hours in a day, the subjects are chiefly law, history and languages.”

Z.K. von Uffenbach mentions in 1710 that the library: “is in a small room and has [thousands of] volumes, all chained. Above and below hung blue lacquered tablets, on which should be placed the names of the Benefactorum ... Among the books there were still tolerably good works, and, moreover, of all faculties.”

William Maitland, in 1739 says: “Tho’ this library be none of the largest, yet I am persuaded that it is of more use to the inhabitants of this great city and suburbs than all the other publick libraries put together”. He mentions that there are 3982 books in the library.

## Specialist Collections

Middle Temple has longstanding links with the United States and the library has collected American legal materials since the nineteenth century. A donation by the Carnegie Foundation of US law reports in the early twentieth century contributed to what is now one of the largest collections of American legal materials outside of the United States.

The library also has a substantial EU collection which originated in 1972, as the UK entered the Common Market in 1973. The collection provides EU legislation and case law, along with materials for all 28 member states.

The library works with the other three Inns to ensure that we collectively provide access to a full range of subjects and jurisdictions.

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## How has the library changed since 1641?

As to be expected, the library has changed immensely from its inception as a gentleman's scholarly library to a library befitting the needs of the Bar in the twenty-first century.

As the founding bequest was lacking in many law books, members of the Inn started donating these materials to the Inn during the seventeenth century. The acquisition of legal texts slowed in the early eighteenth century however, and in 1731 members petitioned the Inn to acquire books of "law history and antiquities, as may render our Library ... usefull to every gentleman in the Law" and "a catalogue alphabetically". They also petitioned for longer opening hours, and better pay for the Librarian.

This lack of collection development is partly explained by the fairly poor and conservative nature of the legal printing trade. From the sixteenth century, there was a monopoly on legal publishing that started to crumble soon after the revolutionary publication of Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries* in 1765. Blackstone's work also had a profound influence on the American Constitution and the US legal system.

By the nineteenth century, the collection had increased from 4,000 volumes to well over 15,000. This coincided with the publication of *The Law Reports*. For the first time in legal history, lawyers could consult an official, collated and indexed set of case law reports. Prior to this they relied on 'nominate reports' which were individual publications with no cohesive indexing or consolidation. Legal publishing also started to offer a wider range of authoritative legal textbooks on individual subjects such as contracts, highways, insurance and trusts amongst many others.

By the early twentieth century the library had reached over 40,000 volumes, and retained the bulk of these through the Second World War. Despite the library being heavily bombed twice during the war, the books remained relatively intact tucked away amongst the library shelves.

Up until the late twentieth century legal research was still reliant on printed law reports, textbooks and journals.

Although computers are ubiquitous to legal research now, it was not until 1989 that a computer was introduced into the library, providing access to a library catalogue /database. In 2000, a full network of computers providing fuller access to legal databases and a more sophisticated library catalogue was installed. A new version of the online catalogue was introduced in 2014. E-books on iPads were integrated into the collection in the same year.