A COLLECTION’S PROGRESS
The Lewis Walpole Library, 2000–2014

An exhibition at The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University
14 April through 3 October 2014
Curated by Margaret K. Powell, W.S. Lewis Librarian & Executive Director

Yale University Library
Yale University’s Lewis Walpole Library is the happy result of the life’s work of two collectors who lived several centuries and a broad ocean apart: Horace Walpole (1717–1797) and Wilmarth Sheldon (“Lefty”) Lewis (1895–1979).

Horace Walpole, the third son of Sir Robert Walpole, the powerful Whig politician often called the first “prime minister,” was a collector of note. Strawberry Hill, his “little gothic castle” outside London in Twickenham, was stuffed full of all manner of books, manuscripts, ceramics, paintings, prints, and curious objects. He was an instigator of the Gothic revival in architecture (Strawberry Hill) and fiction (The Castle of Otranto), a memoirist, and an early historian of British art. He served in Parliament and was an admirer of America. He was also a remarkably prolific and self-conscious correspondent; some of his epistolary relationships endured for more than forty years of his long life and give us an extraordinarily broad yet intimate picture of the world he inhabited.

W.S. Lewis grew up in northern California, where, he writes in several autobiographical accounts, even as a young boy he was an enthusiastic collector of stamps, coins, and butterflies. But, he writes, “My first collection was of house flies. It was kept in a discarded cigar box that was thrown out one day without my knowledge or consent. A year later, at the age of six, I collected shells at Santa Cruz, California. This collection was also thrown out without my knowledge or consent. It was thus brought home to me early on that one must be on one’s guard against non-collectors” (Collector’s Progress, 1). He came east to attend Yale, and it was during his undergraduate days (he was Class of 1918) that he started to collect books, but in those early forays he was quite indiscriminate. Not until his late twenties, after a brief fling with the works of John Masefield, did he encounter what would become the lifelong object of
through a great sale in 1842 that went on for a month; catalogs for that sale exist in six editions and in many copies, some annotated and some even extra-illustrated. Lewis hunted down association copies and items with significant provenance, material relating to Walpole’s friends and associates, and anything connected to the refashioning and “gothicizing” of Strawberry Hill. In the mid-1950s, relatively late in the game, he and Annie Burr set an ambitious program to acquire eighteenth-century satiric prints as well as engraved portraits and topographical views from the period.

As the years went by, Lewis embraced the implications of his initial commitment to Walpole, in his bibliographic enthusiasm even embarking on what he referred to as “Lewis’s Folly”: a plan to acquire every book published in Britain between 1751 and 1800 not already in the Yale Library. This ambitious scheme was modified after several years to exclude books on subjects already strongly represented at Yale; he did allow himself, however, to acquire “little-known books that throw light on the daily lives of eighteenth-century men and women and that are particularly needed for the study of Horace Walpole” (Collector’s Progress, xviii–xix). He also went beyond strictly “library” materials (books and manuscripts) to gather up other “Bits of the True Cross”: paintings, prints, furniture, and decorative objects from Strawberry Hill, and even the front door from Walpole’s London town house in Berkeley Square. (Characteristically, Lewis just happened to be on the spot when the building was being demolished in the 1930s to make way for modern offices.)

This collection, the house and its furnishings, the extensive grounds and related historic buildings, and endowment funds to support that gift were all left to Yale as the Lewis Walpole Library with the expectation that the University would accept the gift and realize the Lewises’ vision...
This exhibition provides a selection of the materials acquired by the LWL in the fourteen years since 2000. Its display cases suggest the surprising number of Walpole’s books and letters captured in those years; provide a representative sample of the variety and scope of the many additional printed books, manuscripts, and ephemera that document the “daily lives” of Walpole’s contemporaries; and show off several volumes of significant visual interest and importance. On the walls are prints and drawings that similarly demonstrate a collecting strategy that builds on strengths such as visual satires, supports programs such as exhibitions and master classes, and moves to develop parts of the collection that had not before been a particular focus. This rather routine description does not do justice to the objects themselves, each of which speaks to us of another time and of the men and women who lived then. Together they demonstrate a committed continuation of Lewis’s “hot pursuit,” his determination to keep his library alive and growing. As Geoffrey Waldegrave, the twelfth earl, wrote to Lewis in 1955: “I do see how this collecting business can be the most exciting thing in the whole world and beat detective stories into a cocked hat.”

Further reading


**Exhibition checklist**

**CASE ONE**

*The English Baronage from William I to James I* [detail: cover]
Seventeenth or eighteenth century
Folio 49 3499

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England: With Lists of Their Works.* The second edition, corrected and enlarged
London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley..., and J. Graham..., 1759 [i.e., 1758]. Two volumes
49 2978B

Andrea Palladio (1508–1580)
*The Architecture of A. Palladio; in Four Books… Revis’d, Design’d, and Publish’d by Giacomo Leoni* [above]
The third edition, corrected. With notes and remarks of Inigo Jones
Two volumes
Folio 49 3593

*Picturesque Views of the Principal Seats of the Nobility and Gentry, in England and Wales*
London: Harrison & Co. No. 18, Paternoster Row, 1786–88
Quarto 49 3849

William Melmoth (1710?–1799)
*Letters on Several Subjects by the Late Sir Thomas Fitzosborne, Bart.*
London: Printed for R. Dodsley, 1748–49. Two volumes
49 1442

John Beale (1608?–1683)
*Herefordshire Orchards, a Pattern for All England: Written in an Epistolary Address to Samuel Hartlib, Esq.*
London: Printed by Roger Daniel, 1657
Quarto 49 3081

Lucan (39–65)
*M. Annaei Lucani Pharsalia cum notis Hugonis Grotti, et Richardi Bentleii…*
Strawberry Hill: Strawberry-Hill Press, 1760
Quarto 33 7 Copy 12

George Herbert (1593–1633)
*The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations by Mr. George Herbert… Together with His Life with Several Additions*
London: Printed by W. Godbid, for R.S., 1674
496 2013

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra
(1547–1616)
*Les principales avantures de l’admirable Don Quichotte, représentées en figures par Coypel, Picart le Romain, et autres habiles maitres: avec les explications des XXXI planches de cette magnifique collection, tirées de l’original espagnol de Miguel de Cervantes*
A La Haie [The Hague]: Chés Pierre de Hondt, 1746
Quarto 49 590

John Dryden (1631–1700)
*Fables Ancient and Modern; Translated into Verse, from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, and Chaucer; with Original Poems. 2d ed.*
London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1713
49 1849

Aeschines Socraticus (4th century B.C.)
*Aeschini Socratici dialogi tres: Graece et Latine, ad quos accessit quarti Latinum fragmentum vertit et notis illustravit Joannes Clericus. Cuius & ad calcem additae sunt Silvae Philologicus, cum omnium indicibus necessariis*
Amstelodami [Amsterdam]: Apud Petrum de Coup Bibliopolam, 1711
49 2207.3

Thomas Smith (1638–1710)
*Vitae quorundam eruditissimorum et illustrium virorum: Quorum nomina exstant in pagina sequenti*
Londini [London]: Apud Davidem Mortier in via dicta de Strand ad insigne Erasmi, 1707
49 860

Sir William Dugdale (1605–1686)
*The Baronage of England, or, An Historical Account of the Lives and Most Memorable Actions of Our English Nobility…*
London: Printed by T. Newcomb, 1675–76. Three volumes in two
Quarto 49 590

Thomas Weaver (1616–1662)
*Songs and Poems of Love and Drollery*
London: Printed in the year 1664
49 1992
Thomas Cox (1655/6–1734)
*Magna Britannia et Hibernia, antiqua and nova. Or, a New Survey of Great Britain,*… Collected and composed by an impartial hand
London: In the Savoy, printed by E. Nutt, and sold by M. Nutt [etc.], 1720–31
One volume only, identified on the spine as “Maps to Magna Britan”

49 621

Doubtfully attributed to Charles Leslie (1650–1722)
*Memoirs of the Lord Viscount Dundee, the Highland Clans, and the Massacre of Glencoe: with an account of Dundee’s officers after they went to France.* By an Officer of the Army
London: Printed for Jonas Browne, 1714
49 1565

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*Letter to Charles Lyttelton* [right, top]
King’s College, [Cambridge], 22 May 1736

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*Letter to Thomas Pitt*
Strawberry Hill, 5 June 1764

James Granger (1723–1776)
*Letter to Horace Walpole*
Shiplake, [England], 24 July 1764

Catherine Douglas, Duchess of Queensberry (1701–1777)
*Letter to Horace Walpole*
Monday, 177[?]  

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*Letter to Sir William Hamilton*  
[detail: right, bottom]
Arlington Street, 18 February 1776

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*Letter to Charles Burney*
Strawberry Hill, 6 July 1786

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*Letter to Lady Diana Beauclerk*
Written between 1782 and 1790

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*Letter to Hannah More*
Strawberry Hill, 17 August 1788

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*Letter to Joseph Walker*
Strawberry Hill, 4 April 1791

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)
*Letter to Bertie Greatheed*
Berkeley Square, 22 February 1796
CASE 2

List of persons needing assistance, Pottergate, Narrowgate, and Balegate, Winter of 1795 [detail: above]
Eshott Papers, LWL Mss 2 Box 14, Folder 12

A selection of eight receipts from 1810 for a variety of goods
Eshott Papers, LWL Mss 2, Box 59, Folder 4

The “Royal Briton” Ship’s Book 1762–85
LWL Mss Vol 197

Catalog of Pictures at Raynham Hall 1771[?]
LWL Mss File 28

A True and Perfect Inventory of [the] Goods, Shattells, Rights and Credits of Sam. Twissell… Weaver
Bisley, [England], 27 March 1728
LWL Mss File 111

A True and Perfect Inventory of the Goods and Chattles of Robert Clark… Blacksmith
Arlingham, [England], 26 September 1738
LWL Mss File 95

A True and Perfect Inventory of All and Singular the Goods and Chattels, Rights and Credits, of Richard Clark… Yeoman Frampton-upon-Severn, [England], 1 November 1765
LWL Mss File 92

William Harris
To the worthy inhabitants of the Parish of All Soul’s District, Marylebone: we the regular dustmen of this parish… make humble application to you for a Christmas box… [above]
London: Beckett, Printer, 45 Marylebone Lane, 1823
Handbill
File 63 823 H317

Seven Bills from a Collection of Twenty Printed Bills from English and Welsh Inns 1784–1804
LWL Mss File 85

Joseph Shepperd
John Andrews’s Circulating Library Calcutta: The Library, 1774
Bookplate
File 66 774 J65

Mrs. Newsham the White Negress
London, 1795
Copper token
3 cm (Diam.)
File 66 795 M94

Foundling Fields 1795
London: J. Burton, 1795
Copper token
3 cm (Diam.)
File 66 795 F771
Sieur Legros (active 1760s)
The Ladies Toilet; or the Art of Head-Dressing, in Its Utmost Beauty and Extent
[above, left]
By the Sieur Le Groos, the inventor, and most eminent professor of that science in Paris...
London: Printed for George Bickham, 1768
657 768 L44

A Lecture on Wigs Illustrated by a Man Who Does Not Wear One: Addressed to All the Wig Wearers and Wig Makers in the United Kingdom [above, right]
London: Gold and Walton, 1818
657 818 L43

CASE 3
Ebenecer Forrest (1700?–1793)
An Account of What Seemed Most Remarkable in the Five Days Peregrination of the Five Following Persons, viz. Messieurs Tothall, Scott, Hogarth, Thornhill, and Forrest...
[right, top]
London: Printed for R. Livesay, 1782
Folio 75 H67 782 Copy 2

Sir Henry Edward Bunbury (1778–1860)
Omnium Gatherum [right, bottom]
ca. 1815–52
LWL Mss Vol 194
James Gillray (1756–1815)
Visiting the Sick
London: Published by H. Humphrey,
28 July 1806
Etching and aquatint, hand-colored
29 x 41 cm (mount)
806.07.28.01+

Charles Williams (active 1797–1830)
A Great Stream from a Petty Fountain;—
or—John Bull swamped in the Flood of
new-T axes: Cormorants Fishing in the Stream
[above]
London: Published by S.W. Fores,
May 1806
Etching and aquatint, hand-colored
29 x 41 cm (mount)
806.05.00.09+

North Wall
William Dent (active 1783–93)
French Flight, Or, the Grand Monarque
and the Rights of Kings Supported in a
Sublime and Beautiful Manner
London: Published by William Dent,
26 June 1791
Etching, hand-colored
39 x 12 cm (plate), 48 x 25 cm (sheet)
791.06.26.01+

Robert Cruikshank (1789–1856)
Reflection. To be, or not to be? [right]
London: Published by S.W. Fores,
11 February 1820
Etching, hand-colored
34 x 23.3 cm (plate)
820.02.11.01

Arthur Pond (1701–1758)
Soixante et dix estampes qui imitent
les desseins [above]
London: Publié par Jean Boydell,
graveur, rue de Cheapside, à Londres,
[after 1773?]
Folio 724 734P

John Pearson (1777–1813)
Sketchbook of Views, Landscapes, Ruins,
Castles
Yorkshire, England, between 1799
and 1804
Folio 75 P359 805
EAST WALL

Robert Cruikshank (1789–1856)
The Flying Privy, from Westmoreland [right]
London: Published by G. Humphrey, June 1827
Etching, hand-colored
34.5 x 23 cm (sheet)
827.06.00.06+

C. J. (Charles Jameson) Grant
(active 1830–52)
Quite Unbearable [left, bottom]
London: Published by S. Gans, 1831
Lithograph, hand-colored
29.2 x 37.5 cm
831.02.00.11+

C. J. (Charles Jameson) Grant
(active 1830–52)
The Striking Likeness
London, between 1830 and 1852
Pen and ink with wash
27.9 x 21.7 cm (sheet)
Drawings G761 no. 1 Box D123

SOUTH WALL

Artist Unknown
The French King’s Scheme for an Invasion
London: Sold in May’s Buildings Colour’d, 1756
Engraving
22 x 33 cm (image), 23 x 38 cm (sheet)
756.02.00.01
Antwerp School

The Rest on the Flight into Egypt  [p. 22]
Netherlands, first half of seventeenth century
Oil on copper
62.2 x 85.5 cm (frame)
Art Object 1

Henry William Bunbury (1750–1811)

Scene from the Merry Wives of Windsor, Act 4, Scene 2
England, ca. 1790?
Pencil and pen and ink with watercolor
51.6 x 64 cm (frame)
Drawings B87 no. 1
Acknowledgments

Many collaborations have made progress possible at the Lewis Walpole Library over the last fourteen years. I am grateful to the following colleagues whose particular contributions to the work and life of the LWL are represented in the descriptive labels they generously agreed to write at very short notice for a number of objects in this exhibition. My thanks for their participation in this collaborative project will serve, I hope, as a modest payment on large debts owed.

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Michael Snodin, Chairman, Strawberry Hill Trust
Susan Odell Walker, Head of Public Services, LWL

Antwerp School, The Rest on the Flight into Egypt
Netherlands, first half of seventeenth century
Cover: Detail, *The English Baronage from William I to James I*, seventeenth or eighteenth century

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