

The Boyle Correspondence: Some Unnoticed Items

by
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The editors of Boyle's *Correspondence* have performed their task with exemplary thoroughness: in addition to printing all the known surviving letters, they have also recorded those non-extant letters of which some record has been preserved.¹ In some such cases, the evidence indicates (if only partially) the nature of the contents of the letter. Five examples in that category are presented here, together with a sixth which had previously been quoted and discussed by Michael Hunter but was not separately noted in the *Correspondence*; one other letter, printed in the *Works* but with its author unidentified there, is assigned here to the physician and natural philosopher Pierre Guisony; and the text of one letter is published here for the first time. They are presented here in chronological order; the hitherto unpublished letter, which is of course the most significant item here, appears as item V.

I

John Beale to Samuel Hartlib, for Boyle, early April 1657

Summarized by Beale in a letter to Hartlib, from Hereford, 18 April 1657: Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers, 62/15/1B (original, in Beale's hand)

In early April 1657 John Beale sent to Boyle, via Hartlib, a text which he later described as 'a full answer to M^r Boyle'. This text was probably a section of Beale's letter to Hartlib, which has not survived; our knowledge of it comes from a summary of its contents which Beale included in a subsequent letter to Hartlib, written on 18 April 1657. That summary of the 'full answer' was quoted by Michael Hunter in the introduction to *Robert Boyle by Himself and his Friends* (1994); Hunter commented on the substance of Beale's remarks and on the possibility that the 'full answer', which gave information about Boyle's family, survived into the eighteenth century and was seen by Thomas Birch, who cited what may have been this document in the 'Life' of Boyle prefixed to his edition of Boyle's *Works* (1744).² In Beale's letter, this summary is preceded by a sentence noting a previous part of the contents of his lost letter to Hartlib: 'Allso I gave a full answer to your most oblieging letter of Aprⁱ 2. Therein a reply of respects to M^r

¹ Michael Hunter, Antonio Clericuzio, and Lawrence M. Principe (eds.), *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, 6 vols. (London, 2001). See also the 'Supplement', available at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/boyle/researchers/works/correspondence/boyle_correspondence.htm.

² Michael Hunter (ed.), *Robert Boyle by Himself and his Friends* (London, 1994), pp. xxiii and lxxxiv, nn. 64-6.

Potters lettere.’³ It is followed by a further sentence which may also relate to the material intended for Boyle: ‘Many other matters, & motions Concerning publique accomodation by a way of bearing the charge & givinge the encouragements of fit rewards to the Agents by the result of the Worke.’⁴

II

Boyle to Samuel Hartlib, 2 April 1659

Summarized (in part) in a letter from John Beale to Hartlib, from Hereford, 7 October 1659: British Library, Add. MS 15948, fol. 80 (extract, in a scribal hand)

And M^r. Boile there gives his judgement conc[erning] the Instrument to catch & condense the sun beames, that though /fo. 80v/ Hee knewe not well how to beleve there can bee such a thing, yet hee dares not peremptorily deny the possibility of it, bec[ause] an ingenuous & candid frind of his has severall times, & of late very seriously, protested to him, That without salt or other magnet, but only by the shape, & contrivance of his glasses hee has made a pretty quantity of liquor out of the sun-beames, & could make none when the sunn shined not very hot, & that this liquor is a very powerfull Menstruum & by evaporation affords a pretty quantity of insipide salt. This to you Apr. 2.

Beale introduced this passage (and another, from a letter from Oldenburg to Hartlib) with the words, ‘To prevent your trouble in searching for it I transcribe it’. We may therefore assume that his summary was quite faithful to the original, merely altering it from first person to third. Boyle’s letter of 2 April may have been the same as the one from which Hartlib quoted a passage when writing to John Worthington on 20 April; Hartlib did not specify the date of that letter, but it can be dated to before 4 April.⁵ In his reply to Boyle, written on 5 April, Hartlib wrote: ‘Concerning the instrument of catching and condensing the sun-beams, I have a promise of a large account from Mr. *Morian*’.⁶ Evidently this

³ This refers to William Potter, an inventor (and currency reformer) who lived in Coventry; his inventions and projects are frequently mentioned in Hartlib’s ‘Ephemerides’ during the 1650s.

⁴ Michael Hunter has suggested to me, however, that this sentence may equally refer to a part of the lost letter to Hartlib that was not related to Boyle. My assumption that it is connected with the Boyle-related material is based on two points. The first is that the phrase ‘many other ... motions’ here seems directly to pick up on the use of the word ‘motion’ in the passage which is explicitly related to Boyle: ‘A motion, How they [sc. Boyle’s family] may reinvest themselves of their ancient demesnes at reasonable rates’ (Hunter, *Robert Boyle by Himself*, p. xxiii). The second is that that ‘motion’ and the ‘many other ... motions’ seem also to form part of a continuous train of thought (if Boyle’s income could be raised, he would be enabled to increase his activities as a patron; otherwise, or in addition, some other methods of funding for Hartlibian projects might be devised). But neither point is, of course, conclusive.

⁵ Boyle, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 325: Hartlib received it on 4 April.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 326.

topic had been discussed by Hartlib with several of his correspondents: on 12 April he enclosed, in another letter to Boyle, a description he had received from Oldenburg in France of a device ‘to draw a liquor of the beams of the sun’.⁷ Hartlib had apparently received Oldenburg’s account at some time between 5 and 9 April; on the latter date he sent a letter to Beale in which he included both Oldenburg’s description and the material summarized here from Boyle’s letter of 2 April.⁸

The origins of this discussion in the Hartlib circle have been traced to the account given by Johann Moriaen in letters to Hartlib in the summer of 1658, describing how flints could be impregnated with sunlight, which turned them into ‘magnets’ to attract a ‘salt of nature’ from the night air.⁹ Boyle, on the other hand, referred to a method that made no use of such ‘magnets’, relying on a special arrangement of ‘glasses’ (lenses or mirrors) instead. Something similar had been described by Sir Kenelm Digby in 1644: ‘I remember a rare experiment that a noble man of much sincerity, and a singular frind of mine, told me he had seene: which was, that by meanes of glasses made in a very particular manner, and artificially placed one by an other, he had seene the sunne beames gathered together, and precipitated downe into a brownish or purplish red powder ... it must be in the hoat time of the year; else the effect would not follow.’¹⁰

III

Samuel Hartlib to Boyle (enclosing material by John Beale), before August 1659

Mentioned in a letter from John Beale to Hartlib, from Hereford, 7 October 1659: British Library, Add. MS 15948, fol. 80r (extract, in a scribal hand)

I waite for something more of the spirit of the world. You have formerly received & communicated to M^r. Boyle my raptures in descants upon the Cartesians Aer coelesti[s]ⁱⁱ

Hartlib’s letters to Boyle during this period made frequent mention of Beale’s letters to Hartlib, and sometimes contained extracts from them.¹¹ The date at which Hartlib

⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 333.

⁸ Beale cites this letter of 9 April on fol. 80r of the letter quoted here.

⁹ See the discussion in J. T. Young, *Faith, Medical Alchemy and Natural Philosophy* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 170-1. The key letters from Moriaen are in Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers 31/18/29B-30A and 31/18/40B-41A. Cf. also undated texts on this topic from Moriaen and Nicolaus Mercator: Hartlib Papers 26/29/32; 56/1/135-136 (a letter in Mercator’s hand, of which the final section is also copied in a scribal hand in BL, MS Add. 15948, fo. 81); and 60/4/214.

¹⁰ Sir Kenelm Digby, *Two Treatises* (Paris, 1644), p. 51.

¹¹ See Boyle, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 332, 336, 338-9, 345-7, 351.

transmitted Beale's 'raptures' is, however, hard to assign. Beale also commented in this letter to Hartlib of 7 October that 'The late troubles interrupted our Conference [*sc.* conferring, by correspondence]': those 'troubles' were presumably the Royalist risings of August 1659. Elsewhere in the letter he cited correspondence from March, April, and May 1659; but the term 'formerly' might refer to an even earlier period. Hence the open-ended dating, 'before August 1659', adopted here.

Beale's 'spirit of the world' here was (as the rest of his letter makes clear) the 'salt of nature' which could allegedly be extracted from sun-beams, or from the air.¹² His phrase 'the Cartesians Aer coelesti[s]' possibly referred to a discussion of early theories about 'aether' by the prominent Dutch Cartesian Johannes de Raey, in his *Clavis philosophiae naturalis* (1654). De Raey compared the theories of several Greek philosophers: Hippocrates had argued that there was a 'celestial matter' or 'aether' which had life and understanding; Democritus had said that there was something in the air which we draw in with our breath, and which conserves our life; and Aristotle had suggested that the 'seed' of living creatures contained something that was different from the four sublunary elements, and analogous to the fifth element of the celestial world. De Raey went on to connect these theories with Descartes's account of 'subtle matter'.¹³ Beale presumably made connections between these early theories and the concept of a 'spirit of the world' or 'salt of nature'.

IV

Pierre Guisony to Boyle, between June and October 1659

Extract (translated by Boyle) printed in Louis de Bills, *The Copsy of a Certain Large Act ... Touching the Skill of a Better Way of Anatomy of Man's Body*, trans. John Pell (London, 1659), pp. 13-15

This extract, from a 'French Gentlemans Letter', is printed in Boyle's *Works*, and need not be reprinted here.¹⁴ However, the editors there have not been able to identify the author, and the letter has not been noticed in Boyle, *Correspondence*. In his dedicatory epistle (to Hartlib) of the work by de Bills, dated 13 October 1659, Boyle explained that he had received the original printed Dutch text from

¹² The letter in Mercator's hand cited above (n. 9) uses both terms: 'spiritus mundi' and 'sal naturae'.

¹³ J. de Raey ['de Raei'], *Clavis philosophiae naturalis seu introductio ad naturae contemplationem, aristotelico-cartesiana* (Leiden, 1654), pp. 125-37 (esp. pp. 127 (Hippocrates), 128 (Democritus), 130-2 (Aristotle)). If, on the other hand, the phrase 'the Cartesians Aer coelesti[s]' referred not to an individual Cartesian but to Cartesians in general, the reference may simply have been to Descartes's account of the substance which filled interplanetary and interstellar space, a liquid matter composed of very small spherical particles: see *Principia philosophiae*, iii. 24, 52. But this would have been of no particular relevance to the 'salt of nature'.

¹⁴ Michael Hunter and Edward B. Davis (eds), *The Works of Robert Boyle*, 14 vols. (London, 1999-2000), vol. 1, p. 49.

a French Gentleman whose Testimonie may well be considerable in matters of this nature; for he is one of that select Society of *Parisian* Philosophers of which You and I have sometimes discoursed, and you will finde a celebrating mention made of him in the life of *Gassendus*, (whose Friend and Disciple he was.) And his curiosity leading him to imitate divers of the old Greek Philosophers, who travail'd through many Countreys only to enrich themselves with what knowledge they could meet with in them, he went purposely to visit *Monsieur de Bils*, soon after he had left *England*; which he lately travers'd, and in his passage honour'd me with severall of his visits.¹⁵

The only person who fits all three points of this description (member of the Parisian 'Society'; friend and disciple of Gassendi, mentioned in the biography of him; and traveller through 'many Countreys', including England in 1659) is the somewhat obscure physician Pierre Guisony, who was originally from Cavaillon (near Avignon). He attended gatherings of the group of natural philosophers, physicians, and mathematicians which met in the house of Louis Habert de Montmor in Paris: Jean Chapelain recalled an 'address on vegetation' given by him there, and by 1659 he was well acquainted with two of that group's leading members, Samuel Sorbière and Abraham du Prat.¹⁶ In the biographical account of Gassendi which Sorbière wrote as a preface to Gassendi's *Opera omnia*, Guisony was named as one of his friends, and described as 'a young man extremely skilled in philosophy and mathematics'.¹⁷ Little is known of Guisony's visit to England, but a letter survives which he wrote to Hobbes, from Oxford, on 15 May 1659, in which he explained that 'I had no more important aim in my English journey than to have the honour of doing homage to the ingenious people who live there'.¹⁸ His subsequent travels took him to Austria and Italy.¹⁹ It is not known when he left England in 1659; had it been immediately after writing his letter to Hobbes, he could scarcely have crossed to Holland, visited Middelburg, and spent a week in Rotterdam (as described in his letter to Boyle) before the end of May. Hence the dating of the letter given above: between June and October (when Boyle sent the Dutch text by de Bils to Hartlib, to be translated by their mutual friend John Pell).²⁰

¹⁵ Louis de Bils, *The Coppy of a Certain Large Act*, sigs. A3v-A4r; Boyle, *Works*, vol. 1, pp. 43-4.

¹⁶ Christiaan Huygens, *Oeuvres completes*, 22 vols. (The Hague, 1888-1950), vol. 2, p. 468: 'vn Discours de la vegetation'; Noel Malcolm (ed.), *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1994), vol. 1, p. 501.

¹⁷ Pierre Gassendi, *Opera omnia*, 6 vols. (Lyon, 1658), vol. 1, sig. i3v: 'PETRVM GVISONIVM Cauallionensem, iuuenem in Philosophicis & Mathematicis versatissimum'.

¹⁸ Hobbes, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 501: 'Je n'ay point eu de plus principal dessein dans mon voiage d'angleterre, que d'auoir l'honneur de faire la reuerance aux habiles gens qui y viuent'.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 838-9.

²⁰ See Boyle, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 376-7.

V

Boyle to an unnamed person (John Fell?), 22 October 1669

Robert Boyle (letter), 22 October 1669, Ferdinand Julius Dreer collection, collection #175, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (in scribal hand E, signed by Boyle)²¹

Oct. 22th 1669 In hast

Sir

His Majesty haveing last weeke commanded the Governor of the *East India*-company here to recall a couple of ministers complaind of by the Factor's there, for haveing no other then Presbyterian Ordination, & refusing to officiate according to the way of the Church of England, the Governor desird those Gentlemen that with him have the Direction of the Affairs of that Company, & particularly recommended it to me, that we wouldⁱⁱⁱ severally as each of us had opportunity make inquiry after some *Religious Learned, & sober*^{iv} *Conformists* that are legally ordaind, & will be willing to goe in their ships /1st leaf, verso/ to the *East-Indys* to be ministers or Chaplains to the company's Factorys there.²² Hereupon some Persons have been already namd to the company, but not solemnly proposd, nor was I willing they should be so, till I had tryd whether *your University* (to which I have so long been a Servant) will not supply us with Persons somewhat worthy of itselfe. The Encouragement that the Company has given of late years to the Chaplains they have sent over, some to one part, & some to another, of the Indies to stay three year at the least, has been £50 *per annum* certaine, & when they have behavd themselves well, (as all have done save one or two) £50 more per annum by way of Gratuity. Their Diet also has not been denyd them at the Table of the Agent, or cheife Factor of the Place of their Residence: And for their Cloaths such as are worne in those hot Countries cost very litle; which Advantages together with the opportunity of seeing such remote & noble Parts of the World, & if they be charitable, of *converting Infidells*, besides some other things that may fall in upon the by, has from time to time invited /2nd

²¹ I am very grateful to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for permission to publish the text of this letter. A note on the final page of the letter records that it was acquired from Ellis and Elvey (a London firm of dealers in books and manuscripts) in 1890. The hand is identical with that of the letter of c. 18 October 1665 reproduced in plate XVII in R. E. W. Maddison, *The Life of the Honourable Robert Boyle F.R.S.* (London, 1969), described there as 'Boyle's mature letter-hand', but identified as hand E in Boyle, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 560.

²² The two ministers were William Thompson, minister at Fort St George, Madras, and Walter Hooke, chaplain at Masulipatam; both had been appointed in January 1668. On 13 October 1669 representatives of the East India Company were summoned to a meeting of the Privy Council, at which they were instructed to recall the ministers, and to send in their place two lawfully ordained ministers approved by the Bishop of London: see E. B. Sainsbury (ed.), *A Calendar of the Court Minutes etc. of the East India Company, 1668-1670* (Oxford, 1929), pp. 2, 16, 255.

leaf, recto/ severall Ingenious Persons to offer themselves to a society that has^v (& indeed justly) the Reputation of being very kind to those they imploy. If therefore there be any deserveing Person, whom upon your owne Knowledge you can recomend to us as Qualifyd for, and desirous of such an Imployment you will obleige me, & perhaps the Party, to give me as early notice as you can of his Name & Age together with what Character you can impartially send of him: & this Speed I am reduc'd to desire, bec[ause] being surprizd by the *Kings*^{vi} *Command*, we have no time left us to provide ourselves in but about three weekes: The 10th, or at furthest the 15th of the next month being the day whereon we have appointed that our ships shall (God permitting) begin their Voyage to our *Fort St George* on the *Coast of Coromandle* in the^{vii} *great Gulfe of Bengala*, to which we are now sending four good ships together with our new Governor and Agent, (an Ingenious Gentleman Sir /2nd leaf, verso/ *Will[iam] Langherne*)²³ And to make the shortnes of time lesse uneasy for the Ministers that are to goe, the Company allows each of them twenty pound to make such Provision as they shall think fit for the voyage, during which they are as the Companys Chaplains to have in the Ships they goe & officiate in, good Accommodation, & Dyet at the Companys charge. Haveing thus layd before you my Request & the Occasion of it, my hast permits me not to add any thing to inforce it, save that thereby you may doe a good worke as well as lay a seasonable Obligation upon

Sir
your very Affect[iionate] Friend & very humble servant

[*signed:*] Ro: Boyle

[1st leaf, recto, *postscript:*] Perhaps I need not tell you after what I have already intimated that I desire not the Person you recommend, should come up himselfe till you hear a Returne of my Letter. But I must no longer forget to tell you, that I hope this will <be> but a *beginning of a good worke* that may probably be by Gods Blessing capable of imploying divers hopefull scholars, & bringing many *proselites to Christianity*, the Company haveing many other Factorys, which tho not by these ships, are within a year or two to be supplyd with ministers.²⁴

The person to whom Boyle sent this letter seems to have responded with alacrity. At a meeting of the Court of the East India Company on 29 October it was recorded that 'M^r William Richards being recommended by the honourable Ro: Boyle esquire as a person

²³ On 20 October 1669 the Company decided that Sir William Langhorne, Bt (c.1634-1715), the son of an East India merchant, should travel to Madras, and should succeed the Agent there (George Foxcroft, father of Boyle's correspondent Nathaniel) on the latter's departure; Langhorne arrived in Madras in June 1670, and remained there until 1678 (see Sainsbury (ed.), *Calendar 1668-1670*, p. 259, and the entry on Langhorne in the *Oxford DNB* by T. Seccombe, revised by A. Grout).

²⁴ In this transcription italics are used for underlinings, though these are probably not original; I am grateful to Dr R. A. Friedman, of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, for the information that they are in a lighter ink than the letter itself.

duly qualified to serve the Company as a Minister in India; the Court were pleased to Elect him into their service at the salary of £50 per Annum & £50 per annum gratuity; & that he be allowed £20 for his fresh provisions for the voyage; & M^r Boyle is desired to write to him to be with the Court on Wednesday next'.²⁵ At a subsequent meeting a Mr Durham was also elected; but he later withdrew, and a Mr Bill was chosen in his place.²⁶ On 26 November a letter from Boyle (see item VII, below) explained that Richards was too ill to travel; so on 6 December it was finally decided that the two new ministers would be 'M^r Tho: Bill upon the recommendation of M^r Ironside Warden of Wadham College & M^r Grigg Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of London; & likewise M^r Edward Newcome upon the recommendation of the Lord ArchBishop of York & M^r Dan: Sheldon'.²⁷

The addressee of this letter was evidently someone holding a position at Oxford ('*your University* (to which I have so long been a Servant)'). Given Boyle's long-standing connection with Oxford, this means that the field of potential addressees is a large one (though one of his most regular correspondents there, John Wallis, may perhaps be excluded, in view of his own earlier record as a prominent Presbyterian). One possible candidate might be the oriental scholar Thomas Hyde, at Queen's College; two years later, when a similar need arose for someone to be nominated to an East India Company chaplaincy, Hyde was the person with whom Boyle corresponded about it.²⁸ However, what little can be established about William Richards (see below) does not suggest any connection with Hyde or his college. Another candidate might be Gilbert Ironside, the Warden of Wadham. The fact that Ironside nominated Thomas Bill shows that he had been consulted; yet there is no clear evidence to suggest that it was Boyle who consulted him. The only other possible contact between Ironside and Boyle came twenty years later, when the Bishop of Bristol (either Ironside or his predecessor in that office) wrote to Boyle; but that letter was a piece of diocesan business concerning the rector of Stalbridge, and implied no previous personal friendship.²⁹ Moreover, the East India Company records described Bill as having been recommended by Ironside in his own right, whereas both Richards on this occasion and the person recommended to Boyle by Hyde in 1671 were described as recommended by Boyle.³⁰

Identifying Richards might help to narrow the field. There were two young Oxford academics called William Richards or Richardes: one matriculated at Trinity College in

²⁵ British Library, India Office Records, MS B/30, p. 569; summarized in Sainsbury (ed.), *Calendar 1668-1670*, p. 265.

²⁶ British Library, India Office Records, MS B/30, pp. 581, 583, 586; summarized in Sainsbury (ed.), *Calendar 1668-1670*, pp. 270, 271, 274.

²⁷ British Library, India Office Records, MS B/30, p. 598; summarized in Sainsbury (ed.), *Calendar 1668-1670*, p. 281.

²⁸ Boyle, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, pp. 221, 238-9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 289.

³⁰ Cf. E. B. Sainsbury (ed.), *A Calendar of the Court Minutes etc. of the East India Company, 1671-1673* (Oxford, 1932), p. 111.

1659 and became a Fellow and MA there in 1666, while the other matriculated (as a Bible Clerk) at All Souls College in 1660 and became Chaplain and MA there in 1666. Both subsequently had clerical careers, becoming rectors of parishes in 1675.³¹ Boyle had friends in both colleges: the physician John Mayow, who was a Fellow of All Souls, and the physician, divine, and ‘virtuoso’ Ralph Bathurst, who was President of Trinity. The latter’s position as a head of house seems more appropriate for the task which Boyle entrusted to the recipient of this letter.³²

However, there is one other candidate for whom a very plausible case can be made: John Fell, who was at this time Vice-Chancellor of Oxford.³³ Fell had a particular interest in the propagation of the gospel in south-east Asia; in 1677 Boyle would record a conversation with him about this, in which Fell complained that the East India Company ‘seemd unwilling to send able men thither for Ministers’.³⁴ If we assume that Fell was the recipient, it also becomes possible to construct a scenario about the subsequent history of the letter which accounts for the underlining of various names and key words in the text. These underlinings are similar to those found in three letters from Boyle to Samuel Clarke; apparently it was Clarke’s habit to mark letters in this way as he read them.³⁵ A distinguished scholar of oriental languages, Clarke was also ‘architypographus’ (supervisor of the University Press) and thus in frequent contact with Fell. The likely scenario is that Fell passed Boyle’s letter to Clarke in the hope that Clarke would know of suitable candidates who had an interest in learning the languages of the Indian subcontinent; Clarke marked the letter in his usual way; and at the time of his death (27 December 1669) it was still in his possession and was treated as part of his collection of papers, which appears subsequently to have been scattered.³⁶ There is, admittedly, no

³¹ Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1891-2), vol. 3, p. 1255. The Trinity William Richards seems to have been the more lively of the two. He was the author of a book of model declamations (*The English Orator* (London, 1680)), a comic playlet (*The Christmas Ordinary* (London, 1682)), and a burlesque travelogue (*Wallography: Or, The Britton Describ’d, being a Pleasant Relation of a Journey into Wales* (London, 1682)): see Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. Philip Bliss, 4 vols. (London, 1813-20), vol. 4, col. 678. As a future non-juror (see Foster, *loc. cit.*) he was also unlikely to have been suspected of Presbyterian tendencies.

³² One further consideration might strengthen the case for Bathurst: at some time (certainly before the mid-eighteenth century, though the starting-date is unknown) the custom developed of entrusting the education of All Souls Bible Clerks to tutors at Trinity. (I am very grateful to John Davis, Warden of All Souls, for this information.) This could mean that Bathurst knew, or knew of, both these William Richardses.

³³ For this identification, and for all the evidence that follows here in support of it, I am indebted to Michael Hunter.

³⁴ Boyle, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 437; cf. also p. 469. Fell also took an interest in Boyle’s plans for the propagation of the Bible in Irish: see Michael Hunter, ‘Robert Boyle, Narcissus Marsh and the Anglo-Irish Intellectual Scene in the late Seventeenth Century’, in Muriel McCarthy and Anne Simmons (eds), *The Making of Marsh’s Library* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 51-75, esp. pp. 62-3.

³⁵ See Boyle, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, pp. 491 (11 July 1668, n. 1), 493 (8 Aug. 1668, n. 3), and the letter from Boyle to Clarke of 20 January 1666 in the ‘Supplement’ (cited above, n. 1). Cf. n. 24 above.

³⁶ Prof. Hunter notes that the surviving letters from Boyle to Clarke are in a variety of locations, which makes it seem that Clarke’s collection was scattered at some stage.

known connection between Clarke (or Fell) and either of the William Richardses; but since almost nothing is known of the latter two, this need not surprise us. The possibility may also be considered that this letter was written in the first place to Clarke, with whom Boyle did occasionally correspond; however, as Professor Hunter has pointed out, it reads as if it is addressed to a more influential figure than Clarke, and there could be no more suitable person to whom to send a general request to nominate Oxonians than the Vice-Chancellor of the University.

VI

Boyle to William Richards, on or shortly after 29 October 1669

Reported in the Court Book of the East India Company, minutes of 'Court of Committees' meeting, 29 October 1669: British Library, India Office Records, MS B/30, p. 569, summarized in E. B. Sainsbury (ed.), *A Calendar of the Court Minutes etc. of the East India Company, 1668-1670* (Oxford, 1929), p. 265

M^r William Richards being recommended by the honourable Ro: Boyle esquire ... M^r Boyle is desired to write to him to be with the Court on Wednesday next

For the context of this item, see item V, above; 29 October was a Friday, so 'Wednesday next' was 3 November.

VII

Boyle to the East India Company, shortly before 26 November 1669

Reported in the Court Book of the East India Company, minutes of 'Court of Committees' meeting, 26 November 1669: British Library, India Office Records, MS B/30, p. 591, summarized in E. B. Sainsbury (ed.), *A Calendar of the Court Minutes etc. of the East India Company, 1668-1670* (Oxford, 1929), p. 277

A letter was this day read from the honourable Rob: Boyle esquire intimating that M^r Richards cannot proceed in the Company's service this voyage, in regard of his continued sickness

For the context of this item, see item V, above.

VIII

John Aubrey to Boyle, between September and December 1672

Reported in a letter from Aubrey to Anthony Wood, from London, 27 January 1673:
Bodleian Library, MS Wood F 39, fol. 195r (original, in Aubrey's hand)

I sent M^r R. Boyle and [*sic*] account <from Kent> of fine things, very serviceable to him, & humbly desired him in Exchange & pro bono publico, to be pleased to send to Lees (the Countesse of Warwick is his niece) to q[uaere] about A. Wilson: I told him I would have his servant doe it: I lately spoke with him & whereas I thought it had been sent long ere this: 'tis yet undonne: so I have dunnd him again. I wonder ingeniose men should be so slowe as to saye a word speaking, or sending 2 lines.^{viii}

Aubrey's other letters to Wood in this volume of manuscripts show that he was in London on 19 August 1672 (fol. 183r), then in Kent (at Hothfield) on 22 August (fol. 185r), on 6 September (fol. 188r), and on 22 October (fol. 190r); he was in London again on 18 January 1673 (fol. 192r). On 6 September 1672 he had written a letter to Boyle, telling him (as if for the first time) about Wood's biographical researches and asking on Wood's behalf for information about the life of Sir William Sanderson.³⁷ When he wrote that letter, Aubrey was under the impression that Boyle was staying at Leese, the residence of his brother-in-law, Charles, fourth Earl of Warwick ('where ... I understand you now are'); however, Boyle was in fact in London. Since the letter referred to here asked Boyle to 'send to Lees' for information, it would seem that by the time Aubrey wrote it, he had received some response to his letter of 6 September, correcting his misunderstanding. And just as the previous letter enquired about Sanderson, this one asked for information about Arthur Wilson.³⁸ The playwright and historian Arthur Wilson (1595-1652) had been a member of the household of Robert Rich, second Earl of Warwick. His *The History of Great Britain* (London, 1653) was an account of the reign of James I; Sanderson wrote a book on the same subject, *A Compleat History of the Lives and Reigns of Mary Queen of Scotland, and of her Son and Successor James ... the First* (London, 1656), in which he criticized Wilson's work.

³⁷ Boyle, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, pp. 319-20.

³⁸ Aubrey also discussed Wilson in his letter to Wood of 7 April 1673 (Bodl., MS Wood F 39, fol. 199r: 'Arth: Wilson').

Textual notes

ⁱ Followed by a deleted number.

ⁱⁱ The final letter of *coelestis* is cut off by the edge of the page.

ⁱⁱⁱ Altered from *should*.

^{iv} Followed by a deleted word.

^v Followed by a deleted word.

^{vi} Followed by a deleted word.

^{vii} Followed by *Baye of* deleted.

^{viii} The word *as* in this sentence seems redundant, and was perhaps a slip of the pen.