

# The Gertrude Clarke Whittall Collection

Library of Congress, Washington DC, USA

## The *Castelbarco* violin and cello

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In 1935 the US Library of Congress (LoC) collection of Cremonese string instruments was initiated by Gertrude Clarke Whittall (Mrs Matthew John Whittall). According to a LoC web-page Mrs Whittall ‘enlisted the aid of famed violinist Louis Krasner who was able to locate no fewer than five excellent instruments by Antonio Stradivari [...]’<sup>1</sup> Mrs Whittall’s gift to the LoC eventually consisted of three violins, a viola, and a cello, together with five bows made by François Tourte (1747-1835) and a fund to support the maintenance of the items (which would be seen and heard in public concerts); all the instruments and bows would be displayed in the purpose-built Whittall Pavilion (1939).

The five instruments were:

The *Castelbarco* cello (1697?)

The *Castelbarco* violin (1699?)

The *Ward* violin (1700)

The *Betts* violin (1704)

The *Cassavetti* viola (1727)

Within the archives of the Library of Congress is the formal certificate which was issued by the Librarian, Herbert Putnam, to Mrs Whittall, dated 30<sup>th</sup> December 1935, indicating receipt of ‘the items noted on the attached sheet’ – the *Castelbarco* violin and cello, the *Betts* violin, and the *Cassavetti* viola, together with two François Tourte violin bows (known as the *Baillet* and the *Russian*) and two unnamed Tourte bows, one for the viola, the other for the cello. On 10<sup>th</sup> February 1936 Mrs Whittall issued an additional condition to her gift, which H Putnam outlines:

“That no one who has ever been employed by ... [you] be permitted to play on the instruments or use the bows without [your] ... permission in writing.” – cf. your supplementary letter of February 10, 1936.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for Mrs Whittall’s rule with regard to her previous employees – Krasner? – is unknown.

In 1937 Mrs Whittall donated the *Ward* violin and, in January 1938, a purpose-made case for carrying all three violins and the viola. The date on which she donated a fifth Tourte bow (for the *Ward* violin) is unknown.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.loc.gov/rr/perform/guide/instru.html>. Louis Krasner (1903-1995) commissioned Alban Berg’s *Violin Concerto* and gave the first performance in 1936; he also gave the first performance of Arnold Schoenberg’s *Violin Concerto* in 1940.

<sup>2</sup> Putnam’s text is reproduced here exactly as typed by him (including his editorial insertions). Library of Congress documents were shared with the present author by Carol Lynn Ward-Bamford (Curator of Musical Instruments); photographs of these documents were provided by Carla Shapreau (Curator, Salz Collection of String Instruments, University of California, Berkeley, USA).

A short monograph about the Whittall instruments was written by William Dana Orcutt – *The Stradivari Memorial at Washington, the national capital* – and published in 1938 by the Library of Congress in partnership with the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation. The monograph was designed by William Dana Orcutt ‘and printed at the Plimpton Press under his personal supervision.’

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### The *Castelbarco* violin

William Dana Orcutt begins his descriptive account of the *Castelbarco* violin (p.35 of his monograph) by quoting from a letter, dated 8<sup>th</sup> May 1931, sent by Alfred Hill<sup>3</sup> to ‘Mr [J C] Freeman’ of The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co., New York:

The history of the Castelbarco “Stradivari”, dated 1699, certificate for which, made out in the name of Mrs Renton and dated April 1907, accompanies this letter, is as follows [...].

The violin is mentioned in our *Life of Stradivari* on page 48.<sup>4</sup> When the book was written (in 1902) the figures on the label were 1701, an anachronism I long ago detected, for, although the label was genuine, the [original?] figures had been badly bungled [altered by being inked over?], the correct date [i.e. the original date?], in my opinion, being 1698 or '99, so, when the violin came into our possession [in 1906-07; see below] I decided to right matters and inscribed therein, once and for all, what I believe to be the original date, namely 1699. [...] Its beauty of workmanship and appearance are apparent to all, and its state of purity is beyond criticism.

The accompanying certificate – a copy of that which was originally issued to Mrs Renton on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1907 – has ‘Duplicate’ hand-written at the top and states:

We certify that the violin in the possession of Mrs Renton [...] was made by Antonio Stradivari whose original label dated Cremona 1699 the instrument bears. [...].

In his letter Alfred Hill defines the sequence of ownership for the *Castelbarco* violin:

1862 J-B Vuillaume / Dr Tesse / 1872 J-B Vuillaume / D Laurie / 1873 R Wagner, D Laurie, W E Hill / 1875 John Mountford / 1906 W E Hill / 1907 Mrs Renton / 1928 sold and exported to the USA.

Thus, when Alfred Hill writes ‘when the violin came into our possession’ he seemingly could be referring either to a date in 1873 or in 1906; however, since Alfred was born in 1862 his text-annotation inside the violin must date from 1906-07.

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The Library of Congress web-page for their *Castelbarco* violin specifies the date of the violin as ‘1699’ and states that the violin contains an internal annotation, ‘inscribed in the top [?on the underside of the top plate] in the lower bout on the treble side’ (but this annotation apparently does not include Alfred Hill’s ‘once and for all ... 1699’ dating):

“The ‘*Castelbarco*’ Stradivari / for many years in possession / of John Mountford Esq. / A. Hill.”

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In their 1902 monograph (p.45) the Hill brothers commented on Stradivari’s ‘long pattern’ violins:

The existence of fresh designs in 1698 undoubtedly shows that Stradivari was restless; and this, coupled with the fact of our having possessed another violin dated 1699, which, while preserving the “long Strad” width, is of the ordinary fourteen-inch length, tends to fore-shadow Stradivari’s return to the pre-1690 proportions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> (of the London violin dealers W. E. Hill & Sons)

<sup>4</sup> *Antonio Stradivari: his life and work (1644-1737)*, London (1902).

<sup>5</sup> Present writer’s underscore; cf. first quotation overleaf.

The brothers' concluding comment is re-used in Alfred Hill's aforementioned letter of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1931:

[...] namely 1699. I have always had a great admiration for this particular fiddle. It fore-shadows the end of the period during which the "Long Stradivari" was the instrument of the Master's predilection.<sup>6</sup> Its beauty [...]

On p.48 of their monograph the Hill brothers write:

Fine examples of the "long Stradivari" are those in possession of –  
[...]

Mr. J. Mountford, 16--, and ----.<sup>7</sup>

The latter is a most charming specimen, though unfortunately its original date has been altered to 1701.

This 'latter' violin – which had been the object of Alfred Hill's long-term 'great admiration' and was a 'most charming specimen' – is clearly John Mountford's violin, with Stradivari's label glued inside but with Stradivari's '1699' numerals 'badly bungled' to show as '1701'. The violin, 'of the ordinary fourteen-inch length', was Lot 6 at the *Castelbarco* auction in 1862 (see later).<sup>8</sup>

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In Appendix III of their monograph (p.293) the Hill brothers provide measurements of notable violins; their measurements of Upper Bout and Lower Bout widths, together with the Length, are here converted to millimetres; note that the Hills do not provide measurements of centre-bout widths. The Hills state (p.295) that their measurements 'were all taken with a rule over the modelling – *i.e.* exterior to the instruments' (therefore, it is assumed, *not* with a flexible tape lying on the instrument's surface):

	UB	LB	Length
1690 'Typical long pattern'	163.5mm	204.8mm	363.5mm
1694 'Typical long pattern'	163.5mm	203.2mm	363.5mm
1699 [J Mountford's violin]	163.5mm	203.2mm	355.6mm

These dimensions confirm Alfred Hill's assessment: '... while preserving the "long Strad" width, is of the ordinary fourteen-inch length [= 355.6mm].'

Jost Thöne specifies calliper measurements (front/back) of the LoC *Castelbarco* violin as:

162/160mm 201/199.5mm 358/358mm.<sup>9</sup>

A Library of Congress web-page specifies the (back plate?) measurements of their violin as

159mm 197.8mm 358.5mm<sup>10</sup>

and states: 'The "Castelbarco" [violin] is among the last of these long-form instruments – slightly longer in body length but also narrower across the bouts.'

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<sup>6</sup> One might conclude that Alfred Hill, while writing his letter, had p.45 of the Hill monograph open in front of him.

<sup>7</sup> These two incomplete datings are also found in the 1909 second edition of the Hill monograph despite Alfred Hill's claim to have added date-correcting text to Mountford's violin in 1906-07. Alfred Hill's 1931 letter states that J Mountford owned two violins: the 1699 Stradivari and 'a fine Guarneri del Gesù'.

<sup>8</sup> Within the Cozio Archive of the Tarisio.com website the *Castelbarco* violin (ID 40117) is dated '1699' in the web-page title but is also identified as having an 'original label, dated 1696, but changed to 1701.'

<sup>9</sup> Jost Thöne and Jan Röhrmann (eds.), *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. II, p.72; the measurement data is presented on an accompanying DVD. Measurements of the life-size photograph (p.75) of the back plate are: 160.5, ---, 199.7, and 357.5mm.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200155589/> (accessed May 2017). The violin's body-length is actually displayed as '355.5mm' but this is surely a typographical mistake.

Cesare Pompeo, Il Conte Castelbarco-Visconti-Simonetta, was born on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1782 and died on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1860. Alfred Hill's aforementioned letter to J C Freeman refers to the auction of Count Castelbarco's instrument collection:

In 1862, the Count decided [posthumously!] to sell his Collection, which, accompanied by an Italian agent of the name of Pietro Bozzolo, was sent to London for that purpose.

The sale of 'The Superb Collection of Cremona Instruments of the late Count Castelbarco, of Milan' took place on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June 1862 'at three o'clock most punctually' at the London offices (47 Leicester Square) of the auctioneers Puttick & Simpson (P&S).<sup>11</sup> It is significant that on the same afternoon, and at the same location, the Castelbarco auction was preceded by two other auctions:

The first began 'at one o'clock most punctually' and consisted of 'A Small Collection of [printed] Music' (waltzes, quadrilles, piano duets, etc.).

The second, comprising Lots 122-249, began 'at half-past One precisely' and consisted of pianos and harmoniums, flutes and clarinets, miscellaneous items, and some string-family instruments including specimens identified as having been made by Stradiuarius, Guarnerius, Rugerius, Amati, Jacobus Steiner, Lupot, Fendt, etc. According to the P&S auction ledger, two individuals – 'G Lott' and 'J Lott' – successfully bid for sixteen items; these included:

**Lot 152:** 'A Tenor' [viola], which was bought by J Lott for seven shillings.

**Lot 191:** 'A Violin by AMATI', was bought by G Lott for £1.11.0 (one Pound, eleven shillings).

**Lot 212:** 'A fine Violoncello by LEOPOLD WIDHOLM [1747-1806], formerly the property of Mr. Lindley',<sup>12</sup> was bought by G Lott for £17.10.0 (seventeen Pounds, ten shillings).

**Lot 213:** 'A violoncello case and a bow by Dodd', was also bought by G Lott (for eleven shillings). In the auction ledger for both Lot 212 and Lot 213 the clerk has written the name 'Hudson' against that of G Lott – it seems that the latter was acting as an agent for the former; further identification of 'Hudson' has not been located.

**Lot 214:** was a violin, the first of a set of instruments which had been owned by 'a deceased Baronet'. The violin is described in the catalogue as 'A Violin by NICOLAS AMATI, grand pattern, double purfled, and jewelled, *very beautiful and perfect*'. In the auction ledger the clerk has identified the purchaser as 'J Lott (Vuillaume)'. The price paid was £60 (60 UKPs).<sup>13</sup>

**Lot 216:** 'A violin bow by Tourte, *gold and tortoiseshell mounted*', was bought by G Lott for £3.

**Lot 235:** a 'Double mahogany case', was also bought by G Lott, for sixteen shillings.

**Lot 236:** 'A very fine old Tenor [viola], full size', was bought by J Lott for £1.18.0 (one Pound, eighteen shillings).

In addition:

**Lot 246:** 'A fine old DOUBLE BASS by KENNEDY', was bought by 'Hill' (assumed to be William Ebsworth Hill) for £6.10.0 (six Pounds and ten shillings). This Double Bass is the only instrument listed by the ledger-clerk as having been bought by Hill, who, it is assumed, was standing in the P&S Auction Gallery at the very end of this second auction. If this assumption is

<sup>11</sup> All the P&S auction documents and ledgers are archived at the British Library in London. James Coover, *Music at Auction*, Harmonie Park Press (1988), p.183, mistakenly dates these auctions to 16<sup>th</sup> June rather than 26<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Lindley (1776-1855) was a celebrated English cellist.

<sup>13</sup> This violin is very likely the 1656 Amati which has double purfling on both plates and fleur-de-lys designs at the corners; the designs have previously been identified as being enhanced with jewels. Information from the Smithsonian Institution, [http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_763853](http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_763853) (accessed August 2017), indicates that the 'jewels' are made of glass.

correct it is implausible that Hill (likewise George and John Lott) would have left the Gallery before the Castelbarco auction started, a few minutes later, at 3.00p.m.

Within the somewhat murky world of violin-copying during the nineteenth century in England the name of John Frederick (II) Lott (1804-1870), a.k.a. 'Jack', stands above all others; his brother, George (1801-1869), also made copies of violins but with less panache and flair. John Lott's copies of Guarneri *del Gesù* violins, in particular, have been described as 'original fakes' so well did Lott capture the 'careless' constructional character of the originals. Lott spent many years travelling and working in Europe and, as a result, could speak French; when Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume visited London it was John Lott who acted as his translator and agent.

Clearly, both George and John Lott were present at the second P&S auction on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June 1862: George bought on behalf of 'Hudson' while John bought on behalf of Vuillaume (who may, or may not, have been standing by his side in the Auction Gallery). If, as is stated by Alfred Hill (see pp.6, 7, and 14 of this account), Vuillaume *was* present at the Castelbarco auction, and bought instruments via an agent, he would surely have used John Lott in that rôle. However, the P&S ledger for the third auction of the afternoon – the Count Castelbarco auction – does not contain the names of J Lott, G Lott, or J-B Vuillaume (see the tabulation later in this account). A further consideration might be: would Vuillaume have thought it worth his time and effort to travel from Paris to London in order to bid through a local agent? – a simple letter of instruction to John Lott would surely have sufficed. Indeed, Vuillaume could have bid for the Amati violin (and any other instruments) through Puttick & Simpson themselves:

*Gentlemen who cannot attend the Sale may have their Commissions faithfully executed by their obedient Servants, PUTTICK AND SIMPSON.*<sup>14</sup>

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There were 31 Lots (of which 13 were bows and cases) in the Castelbarco auction; there was also 'An Autograph Letter of Antonio Stradiuarius, 12 Agosto 1708'.<sup>15</sup> The Stradivari instruments being auctioned were described in the catalogue as:

Violins:	1685	'yellowish red varnish, in the most perfect preservation' [Lot 8]
	1699	'large pattern, fine yellowish red varnish, highly preserved' [Lot 2]
	1701	'brilliant red varnish, in the highest preservation' [Lot 6]
	1712	'large pattern, rich red varnish, in fine preservation' [Lot 1]
	1713	'the back of one piece, slab wood, yellowish red varnish, highly preserved' [Lot 9]
Viola:	1715	'the back in one piece, rich red varnish' [Lot 5]
Cellos:	1687	'reddish brown varnish A rare and important Instrument' [Lot 28]
	1697	'grand pattern, red varnish, in the most perfect preservation An Instrument of the highest degree of rarity' [Lot 26].

With respect to the LoC *Castelbarco* violin, the aforementioned Hill certificate of 1907 specifies varnish of a 'golden-orange colour', as does W D Orcutt. Ernest Doring identifies 'a rich golden-orange color',<sup>16</sup> as does William Henley.<sup>17</sup> Such a colour is confirmed by the high-quality photographs of the LoC violin which are provided by Jost Thöne; Thöne's historian defines the varnish as 'a dark orange

<sup>14</sup> Puttick & Simpson Conditions of Sale.

<sup>15</sup> James Coover (*op. cit.*) reproduces (pp.185-188) the auctioneer's annotated catalogue for the Castelbarco auction as well as the relevant pages from the P&S accounts ledger.

<sup>16</sup> *How many Strads*, p.100.

<sup>17</sup> *Antonio Stradivari: His Life and Instruments*, Amati Publishing (1961), p.34.

colour over a golden ground.’<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to reconcile the Puttick & Simpson description of the 1701 Lot 6 violin – ‘brilliant red varnish’ – with the general agreement that the LoC violin has ‘golden orange’ varnish.

The golden-orange varnish colour of the LoC violin seems to connect more convincingly with the 1699 Lot 2 violin – ‘yellowish red’ – rather than the 1701 Lot 6 violin – ‘brilliant red’.

Charles N E Gand, in his *Catalogue descriptif des Instruments de Stradivarius et J. Guarnerius* (p. 89) describes a 1699 Stradivari violin (present writer’s translation):

1879: Monsieur Gentil, Paris

Antonio Stradivari violin, 13 *pouces 2 lignes* [356.4mm], year 1699 (*Amatisé*)

The back plate is made from two pieces; tight/narrow flames, almost straight, gently descending. The ribs are made from very similar wood [as used for the back plate], the ribs of the lower bout having been pushed inwards; the rib of the hand [upper treble-side] has been broken, and the other rib [upper bass-side?] also [broken] next to the [neck?] block. The front plate is made from two pieces, having a lot of splits and doublings. The varnish is golden yellow. The head was made by [Jean-Baptiste] Vuillaume, the varnish being more red [than on the rest of the instrument].

2,800 [francs]

*ex Castelbarco.*

In his business ledger for December 1879 Gand lists a 100-franc repair to M. Gentil’s violin; clearly, Gand penned his descriptive text at the time of the repair.

Any thoughts regarding a connection between Gand’s violin and the present-day *Castelbarco* violin are entirely negated by noting that the LoC violin has a one-piece back plate with irregular ‘woven’ curls.

According to the P&S auction ledger the 1699 Lot 2 violin was bought by ‘Bennett’ for £56 (56 GBPs). Bennett also bought the 1687 cello (Lot 28) for £115 and the 1740 Guarneri *filius* violin (Lot 21) for £19. The name ‘Bennett’ is unlikely to refer to the collector Richard Bennett (b.1848) of Southport, Lancashire; it is not plausible that he would have been buying instruments at a London auction house at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Further identification of ‘Bennett’ has not been achieved.

Arthur Hill’s 1931 letter identifies J C Freeman’s *Castelbarco* violin as the Lot 6 instrument:

The instruments were put up for auction in Puttick & Simpson’s sale-room, and, in my Father’s [copy of the auction] catalogue, I find this violin enumerated under lot 6 and described as “a violin by Antonio Stradivari dated 1701: in the highest state of preservation”.<sup>19</sup> It was bought by an agent named Jordan, on behalf of Vuillaume, who came from Paris to attend the sale, for £135: he [Jordan or Vuillaume?] also purchased several other of the best instruments.<sup>20</sup>

The name ‘Jordan’ does not appear anywhere in the P&S accounts ledger for the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1862 auctions; Vuillaume’s name does not appear anywhere in the ledger for the third auction of the afternoon – the Count Castelbarco auction.

In a subsequent letter, dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 1934 (concerning the 1697 *Castelbarco* cello; see later in this account), Alfred Hill reiterates his statement that Vuillaume was present at the 1862 auction and also places his father, William Ebsworth Hill, at the same auction:

<sup>18</sup> Alessandra Barabaschi writing in Thöne/Röhrmann, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. II, p.72, but note that Barabaschi identifies the future LoC *Castelbarco* violin as the 1699 Lot 2 violin which, she states, was bought by Vuillaume for £56.

<sup>19</sup> It is curious that Alfred Hill does not convey the catalogue’s identification of the violin’s ‘brilliant red varnish’.

<sup>20</sup> It is assumed that William Ebsworth Hill must have entered Jordan’s name into his personal copy of the auction catalogue since this information was then used 70 years later by Alfred Hill in his 1931 letter to J C Freeman. Alfred Hill had no personal knowledge of the 1862 auction: he was born in the same year. His older brothers, Henry and Arthur, were born, respectively, in 1857 and 1860.

Prior to his death[!], the Count [Castelbarco] decided to sell his Collection, for which purpose, the instruments were sent to London in 1862. My Father was present at the Sale<sup>21</sup>, a catalogue of which is actually in our possession. [...]. Vuillaume, who came from Paris to attend the Sale, negotiated the purchase of most of the good instruments [...].

With respect to the statements that Vuillaume 'purchased several other of the best instruments' and/or 'negotiated the purchase of most of the good instruments' see the tabulations below and overleaf.

According to the P&S ledger the 1701 Lot 6 violin was bought by 'Charlesworth' for £135; 'Charlesworth' did not buy any other instruments at the auction; further identification of 'Charlesworth' has not been achieved.

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William Euing [*sic*] (1788-1874) was an insurance broker based in Glasgow. During his life he amassed an extensive collection of books and music which he eventually donated to the University of Glasgow; included is Euing's copy of the 1862 Castelbarco auction catalogue,<sup>22</sup> on the pages of which are noted the prices at which the instruments were sold together with the names of the successful bidders. Disconcertingly, the names do not always agree with those which were entered into the P&S auction ledger despite the inked annotations in Euing's catalogue clearly being the handwritten work of the ledger-clerk who was sat next to the auctioneer on the afternoon of 26<sup>th</sup> June 1862. As shown below (with respect to the 1701 Lot 6 violin) the auction-ledger name of 'Charlesworth' changes to 'Jordan' in the Euing catalogue.

Perhaps Euing could not travel from Glasgow to London to attend the auction, but, wanting to know what had happened, wrote to Puttick & Simpson requesting a copy of the catalogue and asking if a member of the P&S personnel could annotate the catalogue with the outcome of the bidding for each instrument; evidently Euing's request was fulfilled – but at an unknown date after the auction.

It is difficult to imagine that the P&S auctioneer (or his clerk) would have made mistakes in registering the buyers' names, especially when large sums of money needed to be promptly and accurately collected from the successful bidders, and payments distributed, just as promptly and accurately, to the vendors:

	<u>P&amp;S auction ledger</u>	<u>William Euing catalogue</u>
Lot 1 Stradivari violin, 1712	Holloway £70	Bennett £70
Lot 2 Stradivari violin, 1699	Bennett £56	Holloway £56 <sup>23</sup>
Lot 5 Stradivari viola, 1715	<del>Pearson</del> £100, Plowden £120 <sup>24</sup>	Pierson £100
<b>Lot 6 Stradivari violin, 1701</b>	<b>Charlesworth £135</b>	<b>Jordan £135</b>
Lot 8 Stradivari violin, 1685	Piatti £135	Piatti £135
Lot 9 Stradivari violin, 1713	Pearson £90	Pearson £90
Lot 26 Stradivari cello, 1697	Holloway £210	Holloway £210
Lot 28 Stradivari cello, 1687	Bennett £115	Bennett £115

<sup>21</sup> (a statement which supports the proposition that it was W. E. Hill who bought the Kennedy double-bass; see p.4)

<sup>22</sup> Archived as 'Special Collection, C.d.46'.

<sup>23</sup> The reversal of the names of 'Bennett' and 'Holloway' seems likely to have been a simple error of transcription.

<sup>24</sup> The situation with the 1715 viola appears to have been as follows: 'Pearson' was the successful bidder, at £100, but a dispute ensued and the viola was immediately re-auctioned; C H C Plowden then out-bid Pearson at £120. Such a situation is covered by Puttick & Simpson's Conditions of Sale: 'The highest Bidder to be the Buyer; and if any dispute arise between two or more Bidders, the Lots so disputed to be immediately put up again and resold.'

'Plowden' is certainly C H C Plowden who was a collector (d.1867), and 'Piatti' is certainly the cellist Alfredo Piatti (1822-1901). 'Pearson'/'Pierson' appears to have been the owner (prior to 1890) of the 1710 *Lord Dunraven* Stradivari violin and also (around 1895) the *Ashburnham* violin of 1718.

'Holloway' was possibly Thomas Holloway (1800-1883) a Victorian manufacturer of patent medicines who became immensely wealthy and, as a philanthropist, funded the founding of a sanatorium at Virginia Water, Surrey, England, and Royal Holloway College at Egham, Surrey, England. According to G C Boase (who contributed the entry on Thomas Holloway for the *Dictionary of National Biography*) Thomas, as a child, had violin lessons with a Danish teacher named 'Lawrance'. In a biographical essay<sup>25</sup> – *Thomas Holloway, Victorian Philanthropist* – the author, Anthony Harrison-Barbet, reflects on Holloway's purchases of Victorian fine art:

Thomas also started to buy fine paintings – again as an investment rather than for any intrinsic aesthetic merit they may have possessed; we have no reason to suppose that he was in any way a connoisseur.

If 'Holloway', at the 1862 P&S auction, was Thomas Holloway (as above), perhaps his purchase of instruments was also a matter of investment. It is noticeable that 'Holloway' bought three violins and a cello (see tabulations) costing £338, a total which represents slightly more than 25% of the entire sale proceeds from the Castelbarco auction. Such an outlay would barely register with someone who, in 1864, spent £40,000, world-wide, advertising his pills and ointments.<sup>26</sup>

A possible alternative identification of 'Holloway' is as Thomas Holloway who was a music publisher with premises in Hanway Street, London (just north of Oxford Street at the Tottenham Court Road intersection). However, this identification is countered by noting that Holloway retired from business in 1864 and 'about two thousand engraved music plates embracing valuable copyright works, forming the stock of Mr. T. Holloway' were auctioned by Puttick & Simpson on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1864. It seems most unlikely that, two years before his retirement, 'Mr. T. Holloway' would be spending £338 on four Cremonese string instruments.

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The non-Stradivari instruments at the auction were bought as follows:

	<u>P&amp;S auction ledger</u>	<u>W. Euing catalogue</u>
Lot 12 Nicolas Amati violin, 1674	Statham £40.19.0 <sup>27</sup>	Statham £40.19.0
Lot 13 Andreas Amati violin, 1701[!]	Holloway £37.16.0	Holloway £37.16.0
Lot 16 Nicolas Amati violin, 1647	Pearson £25	Wilson £25
Lot 17 Nicolas Amati violin, 1658	Holloway £21	Holloway £21
Lot 20 Joseph Guarnerius 'son of Andrew' violin, 1766[!]	Calthorpe £22	Calthorpe £22
Lot 21 Joseph Guarnerius 'son of Andrew' violin, 1740	Bennett £19	Bennett £19
Lot 30 Nicolas Amati cello, 1687[!]	Gordon £130	Gordon £130

Unless multiple errors were made when P&S were typesetting their auction catalogue at least three of Count Castelbarco's instruments contained fraudulent labels: Andrea Amati was born c.1505 and died in 1577; Nicola (or Niccolò) Amati was born in 1596 and died in 1684; Giuseppe Guarneri *filius Andreae* was born in 1666 and died in 1740.

<sup>25</sup> Published by Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey, 1994. Thomas Holloway's violin lessons are reported on p.14 of the essay.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>27</sup> Forty pounds, nineteen shillings, no pence (i.e. 39 guineas).



No further identification has been located for 'Statham', 'Wilson', or 'Gordon', but they surely cannot all have been agents acting for Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume; if they were agents why did the ledger-clerk not enter Vuillaume's name against theirs as he had done earlier that afternoon with respect to the purchase by John Lott of the £60 Amati violin?<sup>28</sup>

'Calthorpe' may have been the politician Frederick Gough-Calthorpe, 5<sup>th</sup> Baron Calthorpe (1826-1893).

With just two exceptions, the remaining Lots comprised bows and cases; the two exceptions were a 'Jacob Steiner' viola (Piatti, £25) and the Stradivari letter of 12<sup>th</sup> August 1708 which was bought by 'Fite' for £8.

Regrettably, the movement of the bought instruments immediately after the conclusion of the 1862 auction is a mystery; the identity of the instruments which, it is claimed, passed into Vuillaume's possession cannot be demonstrated with certainty.

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The Castelbarco auction was reported in *The Times* newspaper on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 1862; the report does not identify any of the purchasers:

A collection of fine Cremona instruments was on Thursday brought to the hammer by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson of Leicester Square. Prominent among them were the well-known instruments of the late Count Castelbarco, of Milan. [...]. The following were the more remarkable lots, with the prices at which they sold:

Lot 1, a violin by Stradiarius, date 1712, £70

Lot 2, ditto, 1699, £56

Lot 5, a tenor, ditto, 1715, £100

Lot 6, a violin, ditto, 1701, £135

[...]

Lot 29 [26], a violoncello by Stradiarius, 1697, £210

Lot 28, ditto, 1687, £115

[...]

The 17 articles of this collection produced the large sum of £1,239. 15s[hillings].<sup>29</sup>

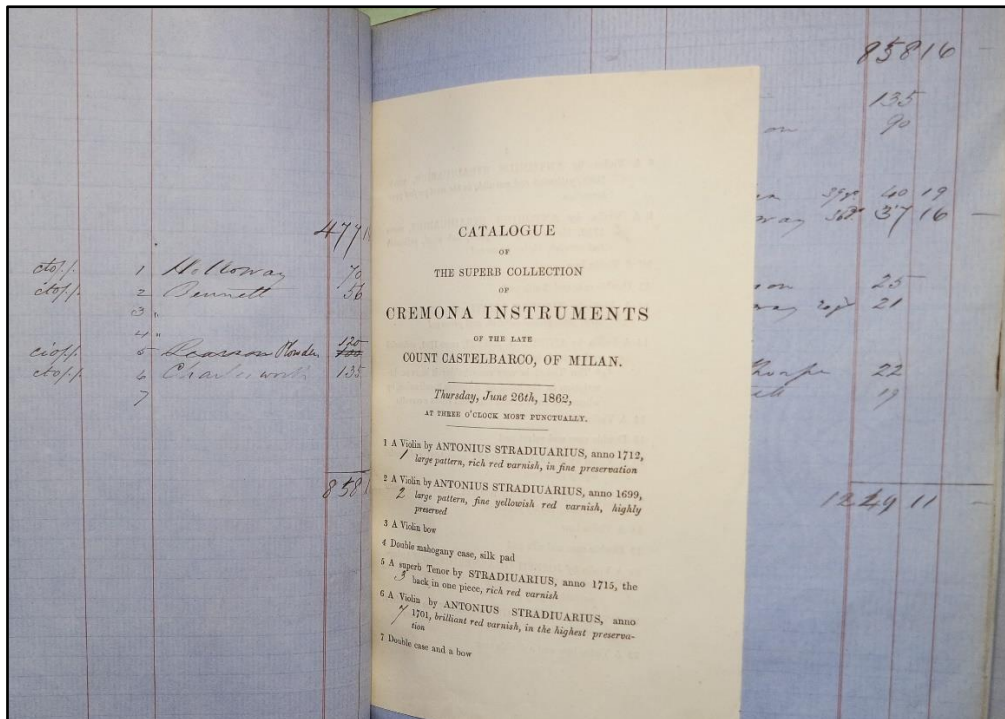
The Hills also report on the Castelbarco auction in their 1902 monograph (p.273):

1862 At the sale of the collection of instruments formed by Count Castelbarco, of Milan, held in London in 1862, the highest prices paid for Stradivari instruments were: A viola, transformed from a viol, dated 1715, £120; a violin dated 1701, £135; another dated 1685, £135; two violoncellos, dated respectively 1687 and 1697, were sold for £115 and £210.

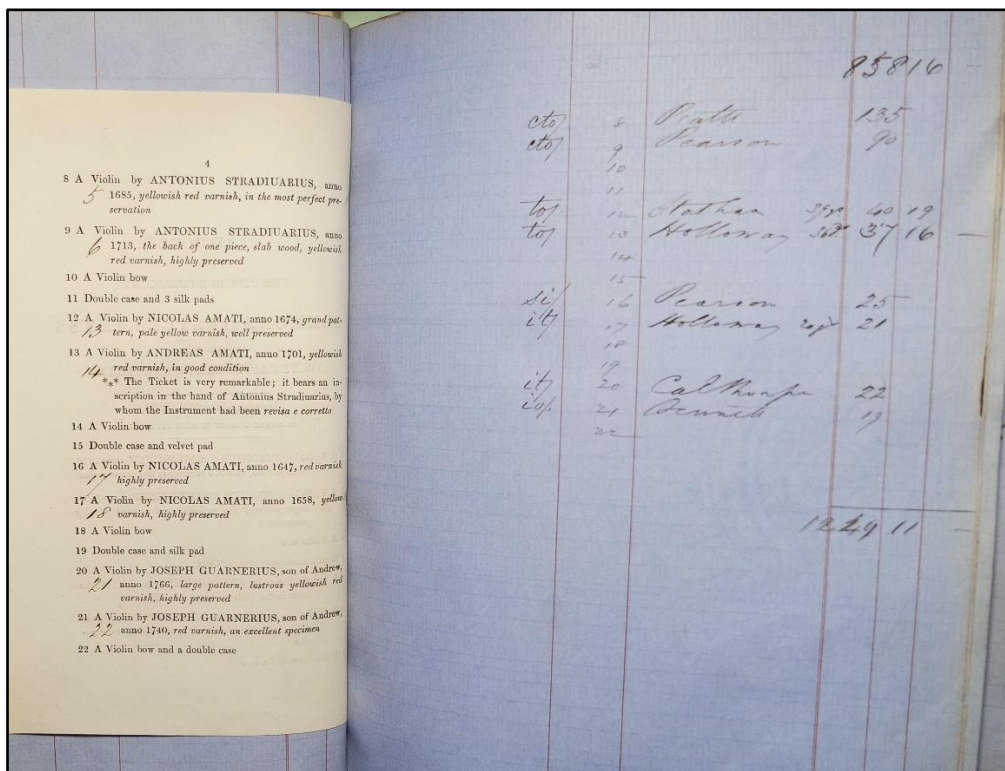
(continued overleaf)

<sup>28</sup> The name 'Statham' also appears in the P&S auction ledger as the successful bidder for Lot 121, 'a single-barrel Jacob rifle, by [George] Daw, Threadneedle Street, with extra barrel for Government ammunition.'

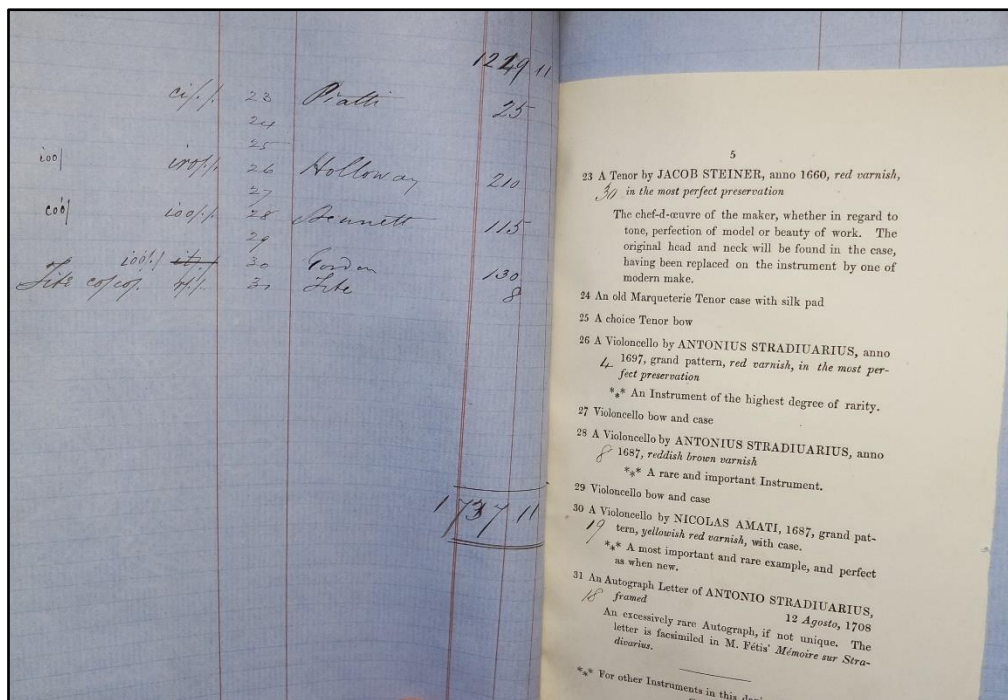
<sup>29</sup> The 'large sum' of £1,239 and 15 shillings reflects the 1715 viola being bought at £100 rather than at £120.



Castelbarco auction catalogue p.3 bound into the P&S accounts ledger (British Library, London).



Castelbarco auction catalogue p.4 bound into the P&S accounts ledger.



Castelbarco auction catalogue p.5 bound into the P&S accounts ledger.

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Alfred Hill's aforementioned letter to J C Freeman (earlier, p.2) continues: 'Within a short time, he [Vuillaume] sold it [the 1701 violin] to Dr Tesse of Douai, a passable amateur, who, after retaining it until 1872, sold it back to Vuillaume.' The next owner was David Laurie who sold the violin to the composer Richard Wagner.<sup>30</sup> Alfred Hill writes:

[Wagner's] peace of mind being disturbed by the doubts cast upon the authenticity of the instrument by some of the German experts Laurie forthwith rescinded the purchase – a fact related to me by Laurie himself,<sup>31</sup> who, bringing the violin to London, sold it to my Father for £270.

Alfred Hill does not identify the German experts and it is noticeable that he does not reject their doubts concerning the violin's authenticity; perhaps he expected J C Freeman to conclude that since William Ebsworth Hill bought the violin from David Laurie the German doubts were not valid.

The next owner of the 1701 violin, in 1875, was John Mountford, 'a modest amateur' who 'kept a tavern in the Edgware Road'.<sup>32</sup> Mountford 'numbered amongst other well known visitors, Joachim, Piatti, Strauss, Ries and Lady Halle, to which galaxy of talent, I would add the names of my Father and his three sons!'<sup>33</sup> Mountford sold the violin back to the Hills in 1906 and the Hills then sold it to Mrs Renton in 1907. Alfred Hill writes:

This lady parted with the fiddle in 1928, when it was taken to the States: its subsequent history is known to you.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Richard Wagner is not mentioned in Laurie's autobiographical *Reminiscences of a Fiddle Dealer*. More than 20 scholarly books about Wagner have been checked by the present writer; not one has any reference to a Stradivari violin.

<sup>31</sup> In 1874 Alfred Hill was twelve years old.

<sup>32</sup> If Dr Tesse sold his Stradivari violin back to Vuillaume in 1872, and if by 1875 the violin was in the hands of John Mountford, then the sale of the instrument by J-BV to Laurie, Laurie's sale to Wagner, the return of the violin from Wagner, Laurie's sale to W E Hill, and the Hill sale to J Mountford – all these transactions took place within three years.

<sup>33</sup> It is quite out of character that W E Hill and his three sons, exemplars of sobriety and rectitude, should patronise a tavern.

<sup>34</sup> i.e. known to J C Freeman of The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co.

Alfred Hill's phraseology clearly indicates that it was not to J C Freeman that Mrs Renton sold her violin; according to Ernest Doring the purchaser was the collector Nathan E Posner, of Beverly Hills, California.<sup>35</sup> It would seem that Posner, perhaps early in 1931, consigned the violin to the Wurlitzer company in New York prompting J C Freeman to write to Alfred Hill for historical information and a duplicate certificate – hence Hill's reply of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1931.<sup>36</sup>

The Library of Congress owns a letter sent by J C Freeman to Mrs Whittall's agent – Louis Krasner – on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1934. Freeman writes: 'With reference to insurance on the Castelbarco Violin and also the Castelbarco Violon-Cello, both of which were formerly in our collection, my opinion is that you should have coverage as follows. [...].' A few days later (3<sup>rd</sup> March 1934) the *Castelbarco* violin was sold by Posner to Mrs Whittall; the LoC owns a 'payment received' document – seemingly an entirely plain sheet of white paper – on which is written:

March 3, 1934; Sold to Mrs. Matthew J. Whittall one Antonius Stradivarius violin dated 1699 known as the "Castelbarco" for the sum of thirty five thousand dollars (\$35,000.00). Payment received. N. E. Posner.

The duplicate certificate supplied by the Hills to J C Freeman displays an annotation written along the left-side margin:

The violin designated in this certificate is now the property of Mrs Matthew John Whittall of Boston, U.S.A., July 21st, 1934.

It is not clear whether the word 'now' was intended to indicate that it was only on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1934 that Mrs Whittall became the full owner of the violin or whether 21<sup>st</sup> July 1934 was simply the date on which the annotation was written – probably the latter.

The rather ornate handwriting of the annotation is found again at the end of the aforementioned Hill-Freeman letter of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1931; at that location the unknown annotator has repeated, exactly, the side-margin text which is found on the duplicate certificate. In both locations the annotation is counter-signed, in ink, 'W. E. Hill & Sons', which demonstrates that the two annotated documents were sent back to Bond Street, London, to be counter-signed by a representative of the firm.<sup>37</sup>

Alfred Hill's letter of 1931 appears to have been a principal source for the historical narratives which are provided by W D Orcutt (1938), Ernest Doring (1945), William Henley (1961), and the web-pages of the LoC.

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Unknowns within the commonly understood history of the LoC *Castelbarco* violin include:

1. who were 'Charlesworth' and 'Jordan'? – and if the former was not a Vuillaume agent how did Vuillaume, apparently, acquire the violin which Charlesworth had bought (initially)?
2. the movement of the 1699/1701 violin immediately after the 1862 auction.
3. what were the reasons for the doubts expressed by the (unidentified) German violin experts?
4. should the present-day investigator assume that because William Ebsworth Hill subsequently bought Wagner's violin from Laurie the German experts must have been mistaken?

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<sup>35</sup> *How many Strads?*, p.99.

<sup>36</sup> What had happened to the original certificate which the Hills had issued to Mrs Renton on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1907?

<sup>37</sup> See later in this account for information relating to the certificate and letter issued for the LoC *Castelbarco* cello.

### The *Castelbarco* cello

The history of this cello is even more problematic than that of the 1701 violin since it is tangled together with another Stradivari cello which is known as the *Fau*.

The difficulties begin on the Library of Congress web-pages for their *Castelbarco* cello where they identify it as having been made in 1699;<sup>38</sup> its label-date is actually 1697 (i.e. it is apparently the cello which was Lot 26 at the 1862 Puttick & Simpson auction). As shown earlier, the Lot 26 cello was bought for £210 by 'Holloway', this name being specified both in the P&S ledger and in William Euing's annotated copy of the auction catalogue:

[Lot] 26 A Violoncello by ANTONIUS STRADIUARIUS, anno 1697, grand pattern,  
*red varnish, in the most perfect preservation*  
An Instrument of the highest degree of rarity

As already indicated (on p.9) the Hill brothers state that 'two violoncellos, dated respectively 1687 and 1697, were sold [at the Castelbarco auction] for £115 and £210.' The Hills do not suggest that the physicalities of the two violoncellos are in any way inappropriately represented by their label-dates.

The P&S descriptive comment – 'grand pattern' – would suggest that the Lot 26 cello was of large proportions. Supportive of this interpretation is William D Orcutt who states that the *Castelbarco* cello 'bears the Stradivari date of 1697 and was one of the three violoncellos of its period [i.e. pre-1700] which have not been reduced in size.'<sup>39</sup> The two un-cut cellos (in addition to the *Castelbarco* cello) are the 1690 *Medici* (Florence) and the 1696 *Lord Aylesford*, but the 1701 *Servais* can also be included; these three are of near-identical size but that size is very much larger than the 1697 'grand pattern' *Castelbarco* cello:

	UB max. width	CB min. width	LB max. width	Body length
<i>Medici</i>	364mm	249	467	792.5 <sup>40</sup>
<i>Lord Aylesford</i>	362mm	255	461	794 <sup>41</sup>
<i>Servais</i>	363mm	245	466	791.5 <sup>42</sup>

Measurements of the *Castelbarco* cello from the LoC and from Thöne/Röhrmann are:

	UB	CB	LB	Body Length
LoC:	355mm (back/calliper)	no measurement	452.2 (back/calliper)	774 (back/tape)
Thöne:	356.7mm (back)	241.2 (back)	453.6 (back)	772.1 (back) <sup>43</sup>

William Orcutt's information (above) is clearly sourced from the Hills' *Stradivari* monograph (pp.116-7) where the brothers specifically identify the *Medici* cello and the *Aylesford* cello (but not the *Servais*):

Both these [pre-1700] instruments are of quite exceptional interest, for we see them as left by the maker as regards form and dimensions. We know of but one other in a similar state – the [smaller] violoncello dated 1697 owned by the Marquis de Piccolellis, which was originally in the Castelbarco Collection.

<sup>38</sup> <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200155598/default.html> (accessed May 2017).

<sup>39</sup> *The Stradivari Memorial*, p.43.

<sup>40</sup> Thöne/Röhrmann, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. V. p.260; (DVD-supplied measurements). The Hills' own measurements (1902, Appendix V, p. 297) specify 368.3mm, 469.9mm, and 796.9mm.

<sup>41</sup> [Tarisio.com/Cozio](http://Tarisio.com/Cozio) Archive ID 40267. The Hills' measurements are 365.1mm, 473.0mm, and 793.7mm

<sup>42</sup> Thöne/Röhrmann, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. II. p.132. The 95% DVD measurements have been recalculated to 100%.

<sup>43</sup> Thöne/Röhrmann, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. I, p.314. The 97% DVD measurements have been recalculated to 100%. The Hills do not provide any measurements for the 1697 *Castelbarco* cello.

Note that the smaller size of the *Castelbarco* cello is still larger than the later *forma B* cellos for which the usual measurements were approx. 340, 228, 435, and 758mm).

In the aforementioned letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 1934 (see pp.6-7 of this account) from Alfred Hill to Louis Krasner (who had just bought the 1697 *Castelbarco* cello from the Hills and would subsequently sell it to Mrs Whittall), the former writes:

[...] the [Castelbarco] instruments were sent to London in 1862. My Father was present at the Sale, a catalogue of which is actually in our possession. The above violoncello figures therein as Lot 26, and was bought in for £210 (two hundred and ten pounds). Vuillaume, who came from Paris to attend the Sale, negotiated the purchase of most of the good instruments, amongst which was this "Stradivari" [cello]. In 1863 he [Vuillaume] sold it to an Italian amateur of the name of Egidio [Egisto] Fabbri, then residing at Rome [...].

It is not known why Alfred Hill should write that the Lot 26 cello was 'bought in' at the auction (i.e. the cello did not reach its reserve price and therefore was withdrawn from the auction and returned to the vendor). The P&S ledger (likewise William Euing's annotated copy of the auction catalogue) clearly indicates that the cello was sold to 'Holloway' for £210; the *Times* newspaper report states that the cello was sold for £210 (see p.9 of this account); the Hills, in their 1902 monograph, also state that the cello was sold for £210 (*ibid.*). Alfred Hill's use of the word 'in' (as in 'bought in') may have been simply a slip of the fingers on the typewriter keys but it is disconcerting that the resultant contradiction with his next sentence was not observed before he posted his letter.

As stated earlier, Vuillaume's name does not appear anywhere in the P&S documentation for the auction of the Castelbarco instruments. It is not known how the 'grand pattern' Lot 26 cello, dated 1697, which was bought by 'Holloway', was subsequently obtained by Vuillaume (according to Alfred Hill).

In citing 'Egidio Fabbri' Alfred Hill has confused two identically-named members of the same family. **Egisto Paolo Fabbri** was born in 1828 and died in 1894; his younger brother, **Ernesto Giuseppe** (1830-1884), was father to a son, also named **Egisto Paolo**, who was born in 1866 in New York and died in 1933 in Florence. If Vuillaume sold the 1697 cello in 1863 then the sale was to the first Egisto Paolo Fabbri. Within his 5<sup>th</sup> January 1934 letter Alfred Hill refers to an obituary for Egisto Paolo Fabbri which had just appeared in *The Times* newspaper (28<sup>th</sup> December 1933); the obituary was actually for the second-named Egisto Paolo Fabbri, nephew to the first.

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Alfred Hill's historical information is expanded on a Library of Congress web-page:

[The 1697 cello] later came into the possession of [Fabbri's] son-in-law, the Marchese Giovanni de Piccolellis and then went into obscurity.

The web-page further indicates that the cello was subsequently discovered in New York, was taken to London, but returned to New York, and then passed to Mrs Whittall in 1934.<sup>44</sup>

Alternatively, Philip Kass states (not entirely accurately):

Conte Cesare Castelbarco's quartet[?] had been sold to Vuillaume in 1862 [not auctioned?] and subsequently separated. Vuillaume sold the cello to Egidio Fabbri, related by marriage to the Marchese de Piccolellis [...]. The Marchese's son was a cellist, a pupil of Servais, and he used the instrument throughout his life. On his death it was returned to the Fabbri family [...] and in the 1920s it was stored in their New York home.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200155598/default.html> (accessed May 2017).

<sup>45</sup> 'National Treasure', in *The Strad*, November 2006, pp.58-63.

Factually, Alice Luisa Fabbri (1869-1939) was a daughter of the aforementioned Ernesto Giuseppe Fabbri. She married Ottavio Antonio de Piccolellis (1861-1928) in 1891. Ottavio Antonio was the son of Marchese Giovanni de Piccolellis (1839-1912) the author of *Liutai Antichi e Moderni* (pub. 1885). Ottavio's cello teacher at the Brussels Conservatoire was not Adrien-François Servais (d.1866), as might be assumed from the reference by Kass to 'Servais', but Joseph Servais (1850-1885), Adrien's youngest son. If 'on [Ottavio's] death [the 1697 cello] was returned to the Fabbri family' that restitution must have taken place in 1928, possibly 1929. In his 5<sup>th</sup> January 1934 letter to Louis Krasner Alfred Hill states to have bought the 1697 *Castelbarco* cello from a member of the Fabbri family in 1930:

I first became acquainted with it about 1900, when, on a visit to Florence, I happened to call upon an old friend, the Marquis [Ottavio Antonio] de Piccolellis, a son of the author of a book on violins entitled "Liutai Antichi e Moderni", [...].<sup>46</sup> On the death of the Marquis de Piccolellis, some ten years ago [1924? – actually 1928], the 'cello passed back into the possession of the Fabbri family from a member of which I purchased it in 1930.

Thus, in 1930 the 1697 *Castelbarco/Piccolellis* cello was apparently in London with W. E. Hill & Sons; shortly thereafter, however, the cello was apparently being inspected and evaluated by Ernest Doring at a New York mansion; regrettably Doring does not provide a date for this event:

A telephone call brought me to an imposing edifice in an exclusive residential section [of New York] to pass on the merits of an old violoncello regarding which, it was explained, there was a question as to the advisability of carriage to Europe, whither the owner was shortly journeying. When I was ushered into a room in which a variety of articles such as trunks and appurtenances of travel were stored, as well as a 'cello case of the usual heavy wood construction in common use abroad, the latter was placed before me with the request that I examine the instrument enclosed within. I opened the case, to be struck with amazement at seeing a magnificent top, obviously the front of a masterpiece, in fresh, unblemished state. Further examination confirmed my first impression; here was a real gem, one of first magnitude, stored away in a New York mansion, apparently without knowledge of the owner that it was an object of great value. [...] For it was a Stradivari, long a possession of noble Italian families and the subject of especial notice in the Hill work as being one of only three of the master's early (pre-1700) 'cellos remaining in their original state – this being the one of 1697, originally in the Castelbarco collection at Milan which, as an heirloom, had found its way to New York.<sup>47</sup>

Doring does not explain what his advice was with respect to sending the cello to Europe, but in view of his comment that 'if, while thus sequestered, some mishap had overtaken it, or it might have been destroyed [...]' it seems likely that the cello did not journey to Europe. Perhaps, instead, it was consigned to the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company which would explain how Wurlitzer could include a photograph of the cello in his 1931 *Rare Violins* catalogue<sup>48</sup> and would also explain how J C Freeman, in his 'insurance' letter to Krasner (27<sup>th</sup> February 1934; see p.12 of this account) could identify the *Castelbarco* cello as having been 'formerly in our collection'. If the cello seen in New York by Doring was the same cello as had been bought by Alfred Hill in Florence, in 1930, then the cello evidently travelled to New York very soon after arriving in London, and having arrived in New York it was now

<sup>46</sup> In 1900 the Marchese was Giovanni de Piccolellis; his son, Ottavio Antonio, only became the Marchese on the death of his father in 1912.

<sup>47</sup> Doring, *How many Strads?*, pp.25-26. The present writer wonders how Doring was able to define, precisely, the cello's identity – was the cello accompanied by dealer-paperwork and certificates (of which the owner was totally ignorant)?

<sup>48</sup> The cello (front view only) is photographed in the catalogue on p.178, where it is dated '1697' and identified as 'ex Castelbarco'. The caption to the photograph also states 'See Part II, Wurlitzer Catalogue' which 'will contain descriptions and illustrations of our finest instruments'; Part II was never published. Perhaps, in 1930-31, Wurlitzer only had a photograph of the cello, not the instrument itself, but the then owners of the cello had promised to consign it to his company and this delivery took place around 1932-33 after Doring's (negative?) travel advice had been received.

being considered for a return trip across the Atlantic as part of the owner's baggage – an owner who, extraordinarily, knew nothing of the instrument's history or its significance.

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If, in 1900, a member of the Picoellis family – or, in 1928-29, a member of the Fabbri family – showed Alfred Hill documentation which demonstrated the cello's secure provenance dating back at least as far as the 1862 P&S auction, then Alfred, in his January 1934 letter to Louis Krasner, makes no mention of it. If such documentation existed one would expect it to have accompanied the cello (1) when Alfred Hill bought the instrument in 1930, (2) when Hill sold the instrument to Louis Krasner in 1934,<sup>49</sup> (3) when Krasner sold it to Mrs Whittall, and (4) when Mrs Whittall, in 1935, passed the cello to the Library of Congress.

The movement of the 'grand pattern' 1697 *Castelbarco* cello between 1862 and 1934, and the sequence of ownership during that period, is uncertain, to the point of being a complete mystery – e.g. who was it that took the cello from New Bond Street to New York? – who was the unaware owner?

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Unlike the certificate for the *Castelbarco* violin the 1934 certificate made out by Alfred Hill to Louis Krasner for the 1697 cello is not a duplicate:

January 6<sup>th</sup> 1934: We certify that the violoncello sold by us to Louis Krasner Esq. of Boston, Mass., U.S.A. was made by Antonio Stradivari, whose original label dated 1697 the instrument bears. The wood of the back, sides, and head is of poplar, that of the table, of vigorous pine, the grain of which is well defined; the varnish being of an orange-brown colour, and the whole instrument in an exceptionally pure and fine state. W. E. Hill & Sons.

Like the violin's certificate this cello certificate contains, along its left margin, effectively the same hand-written annotation as previously described:

The violoncello designated in this certificate is now the property of Mrs Matthew John Whittall of Boston, U.S.A., July 21st 1934.

As before, this annotation also appears at the end of Alfred Hill's 5<sup>th</sup> January 1934 letter. The certificate's annotation is counter-signed 'W. E. Hill & Sons' while the letter's annotation is counter-signed by Alfred Hill.

Alfred Hill evaluates Krasner's cello:

I have always regarded it as a remarkable example of Stradivari's work, both on account of its beauty of form and its wonderful state of preservation – if only the back, sides and head had been of handsome maple, it would have been the ne plus ultra of perfection! I would furthermore add, I know of no other existing Stradivari violoncello in such remarkably fine condition, for it is practically free from restoration. Its dimensions are as left by the maker, the cutting of the sound holes and the carving of the head, superb! and I repeat that, taken as a whole, it is amazing to think that the instrument should have preserved its present pristine state from the year 1697.

High-quality photographs of the LoC *Castelbarco* cello reveal that the back plate is made from plain wood, with some sweeping grain lines running longitudinally, particularly noticeable on the left side and at the upper-right.<sup>50</sup> This plainness serves to accentuate the drama of three dark brown knots in the centre of the lower bout; two of the knots are contiguous and occupy an area of 40×20mm. These

<sup>49</sup> Cf. the quoted statement from Alfred Vidoudez (see later, p.21) that the Hills sold the cello in 1930 to Mr J C Freeman, 'the Manager of Wurlitzer & Co. in New York.'

<sup>50</sup> See Thöne/Röhrmann, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. I, pp.314-325.



distinguishing marks are unmistakable and one might expect any written description of the 1697 *Castelbarco* cello to mention them. One might also expect that any description would mention the remnant of a suspension pin in the upper centre of the back plate and the small drops of wax(?) which are still attached to the back of the peg-box. The front plate is made from two pieces of spruce, with the pieces arranged, as usual, with wide growth-rings at the edges, narrow rings towards the centre-joint. The varnish is orange-brown, with a deeper, more intense colour on the plates than on the ribs; the varnish on the scroll is nearer to yellow-orange. At the 1862 auction the varnish of the 1697 cello was described as 'red'.

A further distinguishing feature of the LoC cello can be found in the upper rib on the treble side where there is a straight (but lying at a slight diagonal) worm-track running round the rib quite close to its joint with the back plate. A good photograph of this track is available on the LoC website;<sup>51</sup> the photograph can be enlarged, and the track observed to extend almost all the way from the treble side of the cello's neck to the C-bout upper-corner joint. Note that there is no sign of any worm tracks in the central and lower sections of the treble-side rib.

Another distinguishing feature of the cello can be seen (in both the LoC and the Thöne/Röhrmann photographs) at the outer edge of the scroll on the bass side: a segment of wood, approximately 6×6mm, has broken off from the edge and a replacement piece neatly slotted into the resultant cavity.

Alfred Hill's letter to Louis Krasner concludes: 'The label it bears is as clean as if inserted yesterday and it is particularly instructive to note the mis-spelling of the name Antonius ['Antonins'] and the way in which the printed figures have been written over.' The Hill certificate simply states that the cello bears an 'original label dated 1697'.

**NB:** The lettered text on the *Castelbarco* cello's label is curiously thin and 'fragile'. The label-date shows a printed 'I' (Roman font) followed by three further numerals: the first is a 6 which has been inked over, with the upper 'tail' extended by a blurred inked line which curls backwards, to the left; the second is a 9 which is thickly inked, also blurred, completely covering the original numeral; the fourth and last numeral is a 7 which, again, is thickly inked with no sign of the original; nonetheless, the shaping of this numeral does correspond to Stradivari's normal calligraphy, i.e. the 'top' line drawn with a slightly rising stroke of the pen from left to right.

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William Henley describes a cello which he identifies as the 1697 *Castelbarco*:

1697. The Castelbarco.

One of the two specimens owned by the Count Castelbarco. Realised 200 guineas [£210] in London, 1862. Found its way to America, 1928. Perfect state of preservation. Wine-red varnish. One-piece back and ribs of poplar wood, rather plain material, but acoustically fine. [...] Period 1707-1710, according to Hill & Sons, the instrument being falsely dated 1697. Presented to the Whittall Foundation, Library of Congress, Washington, by Mrs Gertrude Whittall.<sup>52</sup>

Henley has erroneously conflated the 1697/grand-pattern/red varnish/£210/P&S cello with an entirely different instrument, a cello defined by the Hills as:

M. Fau, *ex Castelbarco*, falsely dated 1697, approximately 1707-10.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ihas.200154818.2> (accessed May 2017).

<sup>52</sup> William Henley, *Antonio Stradivari: His Life and Instruments*, Amati Publishing (1961), p.93

<sup>53</sup> Hill (1902), p.129. If M. Fau's cello was made between 1707 and 1710 – and was originally labelled thus – it is difficult to understand why anyone would alter (or replace) the original label to show a false '1697'; no commercial advantage could possibly accrue.

M. Fau's 'falsely-dated 1697' cello cannot be the *Castelbarco* 1697 'grand pattern' cello since the Thöne/Röhrmann measurements (callipers, back plate) of the *Fau* cello are:

UB width 341.5mm; CB width 227.5mm; LB width 439.5mm; Length 758mm,

and, as shown earlier, the Thöne/Röhrmann measurements of the 1697 'grand pattern' LoC cello are:

UB width 356.7mm; CB width 241.2mm; LB width 453.6mm; Length 772.1mm.

Henley then confuses matters still further by identifying another *Castelbarco* cello which he also dates to '1707-1710':

1707-10. The Castelbarco, No. 2.

Of normal proportions, was in the possession of Vuillaume<sup>54</sup> who sold it to Mr. Fau [...]. In a very fine state of preservation, with wonderful red varnish. It remained in the Fau family and about 1940 came into the possession of the late Alfred Vidoudez from whom it passed to Werro of Berne.<sup>55</sup>

Ernest Doring also writes of the 'Fau, *ex Castelbarco*' cello but not through any personal experience of the instrument:

1707 The FAU, *ex Castelbarco*. Another violoncello once in the possession of Count Castelbarco has been recorded [earlier in Doring's publication] as a work of 1697 [i.e. the 'real gem' cello]. Oddly, both of these magnificent instruments have their backs and sides fashioned of poplar wood. Also a peculiar circumstance, the label of the example here noted [i.e. the *Fau*] had been altered to read 1697. Hill attributes it to the period 1707-10.<sup>56</sup>

Doring does not identify the pre-alteration date on the label, nor the source of his knowledge of a label-date alteration; Doring does not provide any descriptive information for the *Fau* cello.

Doring's information should be treated with caution; Henley's mis-information can be ignored.

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A description of a cello belonging to Pierre Fau appears in the *Jacques Francais Rare Violins Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records*.<sup>57</sup> The date of the description suggests that it was written by Albert Caressa. Pierre Fau was the great-nephew of Eugène Fau, a collector to whom, in 1865, Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume had offered his *Le Messie* violin for 10,000 francs; Eugène Fau declined to buy.

1937: Pierre Fau, à Mazamet

Basse de A. Stradivarius, vers 1705

Gros trou de ver à l'éclisse de la main, non-rebouché; la tête a été cassée, bien réparée; fond et éclisses en peuplier, beau vernis rouge; vu la basse en 1929; demandait 1 million; possède un alto superbe de Goffriler, vernis rouge vif; le croit de del Gesù; demandait 500,000<sup>f</sup>, vaut 30,000.

Inst<sup>ts</sup> achetés autrefois chez J. B. Vuillaume.

1937: Pierre Fau, from Mazamet [southern France]

Antonio Stradivari cello, around 1705

<sup>54</sup> Alessandra Barabaschi (writing in Thöne/Röhrmann, Vol. II, p.288) states that the '*Castelbarco, Fau*' cello '*c.1707-10*' was bought by Vuillaume at the 1862 auction, 'apparently for the sum of £115, although the Hill brothers, who recorded the results of the auction, listed this amount as having been paid for a cello with the improbable date 1687.' Why a cello dated 1687 (made when Stradivari was approximately 38 years of age) should be 'improbable' is not explained.

<sup>55</sup> Henley (1961), p.94.

<sup>56</sup> Doring, *How many Strads?*, (1945), p.131.

<sup>57</sup> *The sales ledgers 1845-1938*, Box 55, Folder 2, p.126; National Museum of American History (Archives Center), Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA. The present author's 300-page transcription and translation of the ledgers (with an historical commentary on each instrument) is free-to-read at [www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk).

A large worm track in the rib of the hand [treble side], not plugged. The head has been broken [but] well repaired. The back plate and the ribs are made of poplar wood. Beautiful red varnish. We saw the cello in 1929; [Pierre Fau] wanted 1 million [French francs] for it.

He has a superb viola by [Matteo] Goffriller, the varnish bright red; [He] thinks it is by *del Gesù*; he wanted 500,000 francs for it; it is worth 30,000.<sup>58</sup>

These instruments bought in the past from J B Vuillaume.

Evidently Albert Caressa was mistrustful of the cello's label, simply offering 'around 1705' as the date when the cello was made.

Four details within Caressa's descriptive text are of importance:

1. the non-repaired worm track in the treble-side rib
2. the well-repaired breakage in the head
3. the specification that the *Fau* cello's back plate and ribs were made of poplar wood
4. the identification of the cello's 'beautiful red varnish'.

The *Fau* photographs provided by Thöne and Röhrmann<sup>59</sup> reveal worm tracks along almost the entire length of the treble-side rib, and it can clearly be seen that the 'chin' at the rear of the peg-box has been replaced; this is probably the repair to 'the head' as identified by Albert Caressa. The two-piece back plate of the present-day *Fau* cello is made from plain wood which displays only a few longitudinal grain lines.

Was Caressa's 1937 description written because Pierre Fau (perhaps with one eye on political and military events in Germany) had brought his cello to Paris for a second time, hoping to sell it for a huge sum of money – money which, unlike a cello, could be hidden away from inquisitive eyes and marauding hands? The tone of Caressa's description suggests that he did not buy Pierre Fau's cello; such a refusal might explain why the cello, in 1939, was apparently in the hands of Alfred and Pierre Vidoudez, father (1879-1943) and son (1907-1994), violin-makers and dealers in Geneva.

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In 1940 Alfred Vidoudez published a brochure (200 copies): '*Un Violoncelle de Stradivarius*'. There are photographs of the front plate, bass-side ribs, back plate, and bass-side *f*-hole of a cello; the instrument shown is that which is now known as the *Fau*.<sup>60</sup>

The brochure's Foreword paraphrases the Hills' *Antonio Stradivari* text with regard to the superiority of Stradivari celli above all others, and continues:

A happy combination of circumstances brought to our 'maison' during 1939 one of these instruments, created by the grandmaster of Cremona.

The main text of the (unpaginated) brochure begins:

The Stradivari cello which is the subject of this notice carries a label dated 1697. It is one of a group of twenty celli mentioned in the Hill book (p.135)<sup>61</sup> as representing the most typical specimens [...].

<sup>58</sup> The Goffriller viola is almost certainly that which was sold by Vuillaume to Eugène Fau in 1874, the instrument falsely identified by Vuillaume as a unique Guarneri *del Gesù* viola; the price paid by Fau was 4,000 francs. The viola had been falsified by John Lott; see J Dilworth, 'Faking it', *The Strad*, September 2002, pp.968-975.

<sup>59</sup> *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. II, pp.288-299.

<sup>60</sup> At no point in his booklet does Vidoudez specifically mention the name 'Fau' (an omission also noted by Ernest Doring in *How many Strads?*, p.132).

<sup>61</sup> i.e. p.135 of the 1907 French edition of the Hills' monograph = p.129 of the 1902 English edition.

On p. 129 of their 1902 *Antonio Stradivari* monograph the Hills write:

Of the twenty known examples [of celli dated between 1707 and 1736], the majority are notable instruments. Among the foremost stand (1) the "Duport", dated 1711, (2) the "Batta", 1714, and (3) the "Piatti", 1720. The others are those in the possession of –  
4. M. Fau, *ex Castelbarco*, falsely dated 1697, approximately 1707-10  
[...].

Vidoudez presents a contradictory commentary in which his cello apparently dates not only from the end of the 'large instruments' period (i.e. 1697) but also dates from the later period (1707-1736) which encompasses the 'perfect examples' of Stradivari's smaller design of cello:

This date of 1697, and in particular the instrument to which we are devoting these lines, appears to us to mark (one or two exceptions aside) the period of the abandonment of the large instruments by the master and the starting point for those celli which make up this collection of [1707-1736] masterpieces. The modelling of these instruments represents the perfect example of the cello in all respects.

Vidoudez is silent with respect to the Hills' identification of the 1697 label's falsity, and proposes the following justifications for his historical opinion:

1. the 'authority' of Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume; '*nous nous appuyons tout d'abord sur l'autorité de Vuillaume*' ('we ourselves rely, above all else, on the authority of Vuillaume')
2. the 'Amatisé' character of the head of the *Fau* (but there is no photograph of the head included in the brochure)<sup>62</sup>
3. the 'Amatisé' character of the *f*-holes (but the 'Amatisé' character is neither defined nor illustrated)
4. the identical materials used both in the *Fau* and in another cello (authentically dated 1697), both instruments owned by Vuillaume (see his letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1863 on p.22 of this account).

Vidoudez proposes that the reason why both celli have the same label-date but are of different sizes and proportions is because Stradivari, in 1697, was experimenting to see if he could achieve improved sonority and projection from a smaller, more user-friendly cello, i.e. a type of cello which could play an active and soloistic part in performances rather than just being a reinforcement for Baroque bass lines already played by the left hand of a keyboard player. It was for reasons of comparison that Stradivari used the same wood for the back plate and the ribs of both celli. A flaw with Vidoudez's reasoning lies in the Hills' dating of the *Fau* cello to 1707-10, thus creating a ten-year manufacturing gap between the two cellos.

Into this tangled historical environment one can insert the following text from the Hill brothers:

If we give credence to the following statement of our ancestor, Lockey Hill, Stradivari as early as 1690 made an instrument [cello] of the smaller pattern. He [Lockey Hill] left on record that Frederick William, King of Prussia, who played the violoncello and was a pupil of Duport *ainé*, consigned for sale to Betts, of the Royal Exchange [London], in the year 1806, a Stradivari cello. That it was an instrument of the first rank is evidenced by the fact that Betts requested Lockey Hill to take the necessary patterns and make some copies of it. These ['smaller'] patterns are still in our possession, and the outline bears an inscription in Lockey Hill's writing: "King of Prussia's Stradivarius, 1690." It seems that the price asked – £500 – was a prohibitive one, and Betts, failing to find a customer, returned the instrument to its Royal owner. Whether or not Lockey Hill correctly recorded the date is the pith of the whole matter. Such an instrument, so dated, is quite opposed to our experience. We may add that all efforts on our part to trace its present whereabouts have hitherto proved unavailing.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> For photographs see Thöne/Röhrmann, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. II, pp.290, 298, and 299.

<sup>63</sup> Hill (1902) p.126.

'Duport *ainé*' ('Duport the elder') was Jean-Pierre Duport (1741-1818) who, in 1773, entered the service of Frederick the Great (1712-1786; King of Prussia 1740-1786). Jean-Pierre subsequently became the cello teacher to Frederick's nephew, Prince Friedrich Wilhelm (1744-1797; King of Prussia 1786-1797). The King of Prussia in 1806 was Friedrich Wilhelm III (1770-1840).

If Lockey Hill's inscription is believed (and it is difficult to imagine that he saw, for example, a label-date of '1708', but wrote down '1690') then the possibility exists that 'smaller-pattern' celli were being built in the Stradivari workshop long before the end of the seventeenth century. The aforementioned proposition – that the Puttick & Simpson Lot 28 cello, dated 1687, was of normal dimensions and proportions – thus acquires some support.<sup>64</sup>

To return to the Vidoudez brochure: Alfred states that Count César de Castelbarco owned 'several quartets' made by various luthiers, as well as five violins, a viola, 'and these two celli, [all] made by Stradivari.'

As we have seen, the two celli were part of the collection of Count César de Castelbarco, Italian nobleman, one of the most experienced enthusiasts of his time [...].

In 1862, the Count – anxious to sell his collection before his death – sent his instruments to London, in that same year, to be auctioned.

Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume came specially from Paris to be present at this sale from which he returned to France with the best pieces and, notably, the two celli. In 1863 Vuillaume sold the cello of large size to an Italian music-enthusiast, Signor Egidio Fabbri, who kept the cello until the day when his daughter married the Marquis de Piccolellis, a cellist, who thus became the proud owner. At the death of the Marquis (1928) the instrument passed to the hands of Messrs. Hill & Sons who, in turn, sold it in 1930 to Mr J. C. Freeman, the Manager of Wurlitzer & Co. in New York.<sup>65</sup> Subsequently the cello was acquired by Mrs M. J. Witthall [*sic*] and donated to the Library of Congress at Washington – surely its final resting place.

At this point Vidoudez includes a footnote:

The Marquis de Piccolellis was the son of the author of the oft-cited book on *lutherie*, "Liutai Antichi e Moderni". The notes relating to the Piccolellis-Fabbri cello were kindly communicated to us by our colleague J. C. Freeman who received them from our common friend Alfred Hill whose father was present at the Castelbarco auction in 1862.

This movement of historical information – from London to New York – from New York to Geneva – from W E Hill to Alfred Hill, to J C Freeman, to Alfred Vidoudez – has the character of a game of Chinese whispers.

It is noticeable that Vidoudez's description of Count Castelbarco, his mis-identification of the life-span of the Count, his statement that Vuillaume was present at the 1862 auction, and his statement that Vuillaume purchased 'the best pieces' – all of this information very closely echoes that which is contained in Alfred Hill's 8<sup>th</sup> May 1931 letter to J C Freeman regarding the *Castelbarco* violin, as well as the information contained in Alfred Hill's 5<sup>th</sup> January 1934 letter to Louis Krasner regarding the *Castelbarco* cello. The Tarisio.com/Cozio Archive website for the *Fau* cello (ID 41465) cites, in its 'Certificates & Documents', a 1939 letter from W. E. Hill & Sons 'to Vidoudez', but, upon enquiry, the present writer was informed that Tarisio.com 'do not have a copy of this letter.' It is likely that the 1939 Hill-Vidoudez letter was a copy of the 1934 Hill-Krasner letter.

<sup>64</sup> While the P&S catalogue describes the Lot 26 1697 cello as being of a 'grand pattern' the 1687 cello is not so described:

[Lot] 28 A Violoncello by ANTONIUS STRADIUARIUS, anno 1687,  
*reddish brown varnish. A rare and important Instrument*

<sup>65</sup> But Alfred Hill states that he bought the cello from a member of the Fabbri family in 1930 and in 1934 sold it to Louis Krasner (see earlier, pp.15-16 of this account).

In his brochure Alfred Vidoudez writes:

The cello which occupies us here was passed in the same year, 1863, by the master luthier [Vuillaume] to a French music-lover and collector, this person also being the owner of several beautiful Cremonese instruments from which he was never separated. It was to this person<sup>66</sup> that J-B Vuillaume offered, for 10,000 francs, the famous Stradivari [violin] dated 1716, known today by the name of "Le Messie", an instrument from the Master appearing amongst us in its brand-new condition.

Alfred Vidoudez then reproduces a three-page letter written by Vuillaume. The name of the intended recipient is not indicated, but the date – 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1863 – fits with the information from Vidoudez regarding 'a French music-lover' and therefore it is all but certain that the letter was intended for Eugène Fau.<sup>67</sup> Vidoudez introduces the letter with:

We reproduce below the interesting letter, dated 1863, in which J. B. Vuillaume has written his report on the two cellos, highlighting their merits and noting the interest they aroused among the artistes and music lovers of that period.

Monsieur,

I have moved quickly to respond to your letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month; if, as I am hoping, the details I am about to give you about my two celli are those you desire you will have reason to benefit from this favourable opportunity.

They are both entirely made by Stradivari and both date from **1697**.<sup>68</sup>

The varnish on both celli is yellow-red, slightly brown.

The larger one is [as] new, with no interior patching and no cracks apart from a small imperceptible break in the front plate at the left *f*-hole; [the break] is not at the sound-post nor at the bass-bar; it is hardly worth mentioning but I owe you the truth.

This is the only small thing [i.e. defect] that I could find while setting it up. Therefore, I have not had to do anything other than to put in a new bass-bar, fingerboard, pegs, and a bridge. The interior is superb and nothing has been altered.

The front plate is of the most beautiful spruce, beautiful arching, and the large thicknesses which are characteristic of the Master [i.e. Stradivari]. The back plate and the ribs are made from plain *albeira* wood, commonly but incorrectly called poplar or grey poplar [*'grisard'*]. The wood is neither one nor the other; *albeira* is harder and similar to maple in its sonorous qualities. This is the only aspect [of the cello] that leaves [anything] to be desired – this *albeira* wood is plain and not as attractive as flamed maple.

The back plate is in one piece, the scroll is also made with the same wood; all in all it is a beautiful instrument.

[measurements made with a flexible tape?]

[Castelbarco cello; J Thöne/callipers]

Length of the back plate: 774 mm

772.1mm

Width of the lower bout: 460mm

453.6mm

Width of the upper bout: 360mm

356.7mm

Height of the ribs: 116mm

[Freely-vibrating] string length 711mm

<sup>66</sup> Eugène Fau.

<sup>67</sup> The present author would like to thank Bastien Terraz for his help in translating Vuillaume's letter-text as well as other parts of the Vidoudez brochure.

<sup>68</sup> The underscores are as they appear in Vuillaume's document; Vuillaume emboldens the date numerals. If both cellos were dated 1697 then neither could be the 1687 cello which was Lot 28 at the 1862 Castelbarco auction (unless P&S printed the wrong date in their catalogue, which, given the prestige and international importance of the auction, seems unlikely).

As for the sound, it is superb; distinguished, clear, and very 'forward'. The 4<sup>th</sup> string [the C string] has tremendous power and a beautiful sonority. Tonally, I do not think that one could ask for anything more; moreover, it [the cello] is of excellent workmanship and appearance.

The E and the F [below 'middle C'] require care to ring out [i.e. those pitches are 'wolf' notes] as is the case with all the best cellos.

The non-negotiable price is 8,000 francs.

From Vuillaume's identification of just one flaw – a 'small imperceptible break' in the front-plate wood which was 'hardly worth mentioning' – it could be concluded that Vuillaume did not see a worm track which today is found in the upper-treble rib of the LoC cello, nor did he see an inserted segment in the outer rim of the scroll (bass side).<sup>69</sup> Vuillaume makes no mention of any back-plate knots.

Vuillaume continues his letter with information about his smaller 1697 cello, also with 'yellow-red, slightly brown' varnish:

The other [cello] is slightly smaller and is built on the same mould and dimensions as the [*Duport*] *Franchomme* cello. The back plate and the ribs are also made from 'albeira'. The back plate is in one piece [actually in two pieces] and the ribs have a 'watery' appearance; the scroll is made from beech; the front plate, although not as attractive as the other [cello] is nonetheless made from beautiful spruce; the growth-rings are wider in the centre than at the flanks.<sup>70</sup> There are no cracks but there are some worm tracks which have been well repaired. Like the other [cello] this has [Stradivari's] substantial thicknesses [of wood]; neither has any cracks or reinforcing patches at the soundpost. The interior of this cello is entirely intact; nothing has been touched. [...] The ribs have two or three small splits, well repaired and invisible. The instrument has been played a fair amount and does not look new, as does the other one. [...]

The price is 5,000 francs.

The sound is very beautiful and sonorous; it is as distinguished and as flexible as one could hope for. 'Wolf' notes exist but ring out very easily.

Vuillaume specifies the smaller cello's essential measurements as:

UB width 346mm, LB width 446mm, Length 761mm

The Thöne/Röhrmann calliper measurements of the present-day *Fau* cello are:

UB 341.5mm, LB 439.5mm, Length 758mm.

Vuillaume concludes his letter:

That is all I can tell you about these two instruments, which were well-known in Milan where they had a great reputation, having been played many times at the *la Scala* theatre where they always created a powerful impression.

These two Stradivari celli were owned by a Milanese nobleman, Count César de Castelbarco, who was proud and honoured to own them [...].

At this point Vuillaume adds a curious comment:

*Si vous prenez la peine de venir, vous trouverez une reproduction de chacun de ces deux instruments que vous pourrez choisir en même temps pour l'instrument que je vous doit.*

If you take the trouble to come here [i.e. Paris], you will find a reproduction of each of these two instruments which you can choose at the same time for the instrument that I owe you.

Vuillaume appears to be acknowledging that he is in debt to M. Fau (?because of an unsatisfactory earlier transaction?) and as recompense (and assuming that M. Fau buys one of the two Stradivari cellos

<sup>69</sup> It is possible that both of these 'features' have come about since 1863.

<sup>70</sup> Examination of the 28 Stradivari celli which are illustrated by Jost Thöne (Vols. I-VIII) and which date from the period 1688-1732, reveals that the *Fau* cello is the only one with this 'reversed' arrangement of the front-plate growth rings.

described in his letter) he (Vuillaume) will gift M. Fau whichever copy-cello he would like to add to his purchase (Vuillaume's workshop personnel presumably having made a copy of each cello).

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Despite Vuillaume's identification of 'yellow-red, slightly brown' varnish on both of his 1697 celli Alfred Vidoudez concludes his 1940 brochure by referring to the 'magnificent plum-red' varnish found on the smaller 1697 cello.<sup>71</sup> Vidoudez seemingly reconciles the discrepancy in colour by suggesting that Vuillaume was not as detailed in his description as he might have been:

We have nothing to add to the description given by the master luthier [i.e. Vuillaume] for the "Castelbarco" cello which we received in the condition in which it was sold [by Vuillaume to Eugène Fau?]. It would, however, be remiss of us not to highlight in more detail than he [Vuillaume] has done, the beauty and quality of this inimitable Stradivarius varnish which is of a magnificent plum-red colour, with golden reflections; it is abundant and intact and covers the entire instrument. All that is missing is the gleam of maple wood for it [the *Fau* cello] to appear equal to the Stradivari *Duport/Franchomme* cello, for which it [the *Fau*] is the model<sup>72</sup> – and the *Duport/Franchomme* cello is without doubt the most beautiful cello made by the Master of Cremona.

The Vidoudez brochure leaves confusion trailing in its wake, particularly through its usage of Vuillaume's letter, a letter which describes two 1697 celli yet is presented by Vidoudez as if it contained only one such description.

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Only if one allocates the worm-track and the scroll-edge insertion which are found on the present-day LoC *Castelbarco* cello to a date post-1863 can Vuillaume's 'yellow-red, slightly brown' cello, with nothing more than a 'small imperceptible break at the left *f*-hole', be associated with the cello which today is in Washington DC, USA.

The present-day *Fau* cello can only be associated with the 1862 Puttick & Simpson auction if it is assumed that clerical mistakes were made by P&S and/or by J-B Vuillaume.

The uncertainty which surrounds the international movement of these two cellos might be resolved if access to the Hills' business records and diaries was permitted but such access is constantly refused.

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<sup>71</sup> The Hills (1902, p.121) refer to the 'rich plum-red colour of the varnish covering the "Cristiani"' cello. Photographic comparison (in Thöne, Vol. II) between the colour of the *Cristiani* (p.90) and the colour of the *Fau* (p.290) is instructive.

<sup>72</sup> **Back-plate measurements of the *Fau* cello (Thöne) are:** **341.5 / ----- / 439.5 / 758mm**  
 Back-plate measurements of the 1711 *Duport* cello (Hill (1902), p.298) are: 346.1 /----- / 441.3 / 758.8mm  
 Back-plate measurements of the 1710 *Gore-Booth* cello (*ibid.*) are: 346 / ----- / 441.3 / 758.8mm  
 Back-plate measurements of the 1714 *Batta* cello (*ibid.*) are: 346 / ----- / 441.3 / 755.6mm  
 Back-plate measurements of the 1720 *Piatti* cello (*ibid.*) are: 346 / ----- / 438.1 / 758.8mm.