

The 1685 Mackenzie violin

© Nicholas Sackman

www.themessiahviolin.uk

2022

Lewis Mackenzie was born in 1849 at Tiverton, Devon, and died in 1942; he was a surgeon, a Justice of the Peace, an alderman, and coroner for the borough of Tiverton where he lived for almost the whole of his long life. He was a talented violinist, very well known in the area.¹

On 26 June 1862, at Puttick & Simpson's rooms in Leicester Square, London, the collection of instruments formed by Cesare Pompeo, Il Conte Castelbarco-Visconti-Simonetta (1782-1860), was auctioned. There were 31 Lots of which 13 were bows and cases. The Antonio Stradivari instruments were described in the auction catalogue as follows (the descriptive texts are reproduced as were printed):

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

The P&S auction ledger² states that 'Piatti' was the successful bidder for Lot 8, the 1685 violin, at £135 (UKPs).

William Euing (1788-1874) was an insurance broker based in Glasgow. During his life he amassed an extensive book collection which he donated to the University of Glasgow; included in his bequest was a large collection of musical items. Within the University's archived holdings is Euing's copy of the 1862 Castelbarco auction catalogue.³ On his copy of the catalogue Euing noted the prices at which the instruments were sold and the names of the purchasers.

Lot 8 Stradivari violin, 1685 *Piatti* £135

There is thus no doubt that Alfredo Piatti (1822-1901, principally a cellist but also a teacher and composer) bought the 1685 Stradivari violin.

Ernest Doring writes of a 1685 violin:⁴

1685 *ex* Castelbarco. One of the instruments of the Castelbarco collection sold in 1862 at auction.
The violin fetched £135 at the sale [...].

¹ This identification of Lewis Mackenzie was prompted to the present writer by Jason Price at Tarisio Fine Instruments & Bows.

² Archived at the British Library, St Pancras, London.

³ Archived as 'Special Collection, C.d.46'.

⁴ *How many Strads?* p. 49.

W Henley (whose information is often simply copied from previous writings by others) offers:⁵

1685 ex Castelbarco

Owned by Count Castelbarco of Milan and sold by auction in London, 1862, realising 130 guineas.⁶

Question: is the 1685 Stradivari violin which Alfredo Piatti bought in 1862 that which is now known as the 1685 *Mackenzie*? Puttick & Simpson's minuscule description – which does not even define the construction of the back plate – is too vague to correlate robustly with the physicality of another violin.

On 19 June 1882 a Stradivari violin of 1685 was sold by W. E. Hill & Sons to Lewis Mackenzie; the business records do not explain whether the violin was being sold on someone else's instruction or came from the Hills' own stock.⁷ It cannot be determined if the violin bought by Lewis Mackenzie had any connection with Alfredo Piatti and/or the *Castelbarco* auction of 1862.

In 1902 the Hills wrote of early-period Stradivari violins 'in the possession of the following':⁸

[...]

Baron Erlanger, 1687

Mr C Oldham, 1687

Mr L Mackenzie, 1687

Mr Jan Kubelik, 1687

Mr Carl Derenberg, 1688

[...]

In the 1909 second edition of their monograph the equivalent listing appears on p.39 as:

[...]

Baron Erlanger, 1687

The late Mr C Oldham, 1687

Mr Haslam, 1687

Mr Jan Kubelik, 1687

Mr Carl Derenberg, 1688

[...]

The label-date of 1687 against the name of Mr L Mackenzie can be accepted as a simple error, but it is curious that the alteration of 'Mackenzie' to 'Haslam' in the second edition did not prompt a correction of the violin's date.⁹

The March 1982 issue of *The Strad* included a *Mackenzie* 'colour pull-out' with a commentary written by Daniel Draley who states:

On their certificate dated 10 July 1908 Hills explain, "Owing to a printer's error the date is given as 1687".

Hill certificates which have been seen by the present writer always show a *hand-written* date, e.g. 'We certify that the *violin in the possession of ...name... of ...address... was made by Antonio Stradivari whose original label dated xxxx the instrument bears.*'

⁵ *Antonio Stradivari, Master Luthier*, p. 23.

⁶ 130 guineas is equal to 136 Pounds and 10 shillings.

⁷ This information shared with the present writer by Jason Price at Tarisio Fine Instruments and Bows.

⁸ *Antonio Stradivari* (1902), p. 38.

⁹ The reason why Lewis Mackenzie sold his Stradivari violin back to the Hills at a date between 1902 and 1908 is unknown.

Ernest Doring¹⁰ confirms the Hills' sale of the *Mackenzie* violin to R Humphrey Haslam and quotes from the Hill certificate dated 10 July 1908:

1685*¹¹ The *Mackenzie*. Mentioned in the Hill book as then in the possession of Lewis Mackenzie. The date as it there appeared was 1687; 1685 is correct as stated in a certificate when R Humphrey Haslam, of Altringham,¹² purchased the instrument from W E Hill & Sons, July 10, 1908. Other remarks include that the violin "was made by Antonio Stradivari of Cremona, whose original label dated 1685 the instrument bears ... [Doring's ellipsis]. A characteristic example of the period in a fine state of preservation. The back in one piece of wood cut on the slab. The side of wood of faint curl, head plain. The belly-wood of prominent grain. The varnish of a light orange-yellow colour." The violin passed to the possession of Hamma & Company and is illustrated in their work on the Italian violin makers. In the late 1920s it was purchased by Nathan E. Posner and brought to this country.

Doring's three photographs of the *Mackenzie* violin (*How many Strads?*, p.50) are copies of Emil Herrmann's photos (see below).

At an unknown date, but probably while the *Mackenzie* violin was in the hands of Nathan E Posner, the violin was inspected by Emil Herrmann in New York. The web address below will take the reader to the group of Herrmann certificates (Smithsonian Institution) which includes that for the *Mackenzie*:

https://edan.si.edu/slideshow/viewer/?eadrefid=NMAH.AC.0872_ref506

There are three photographs of the violin: back, front, and bass-side ribs. The front-plate photo shows a collection of black scuff marks just above the leading edge of the tailpiece, also two noticeable black marks just below the lower eye of the treble *f*-hole; the photo also shows the ripple in the growth rings at the treble-side C-bout upper corner. The neck shows vivid flames.

The bass-side ribs show: Upper Bout: faint flames, *slightly* sloping towards the tailpin
 Centre Bout: faint upright flames
 Lower Bout: very faint upright flames

The photo of the one-piece back plate shows rippling flames which interweave across the plate.

For the back plate Herrmann writes: *one piece, half slab, med. curl, orig. button, splendid condition*

For the front plate: *med. grain, choice spruce, fine cond.*

For the ribs: *med. curl, fine*

For the scroll: *plain, sharp[?], partly bushed*

Varnish: *orange golden yellow orig.*

Label: *1685 orig.*

Specimen: *la, pure & fine, prime condition*

Guarantee: *Hill 7/10/08 to R H Haslam*

[Provenance]: *1890 [1882] Lewis Mackenzie England*

1918¹³ sold by Hill to R Humphrey Haslam of Altringham [see fn.12]

1920 Hamma & Co

1929 acquired by Nathan E Posner of Brooklyn and sold by him in

1950 to [no further text]

¹⁰ *How Many Strads?*, p. 51.

¹¹ The asterisk indicates Doring's personal inspection of the violin.

¹² R Humphrey Haslam was born in 1882 in Altrincham (a suburb of Manchester); there is no 'Altringham' in England.

¹³ Herrmann has seemingly managed to confuse himself with the date, probably as a result of the contrary UK/US methods of setting out date-numeral abbreviations: Herrmann initially wrote *1910*, then altered the *0* to *8* but forgot to alter the second *1* to *0*.

In Fridolin Hamma's *Meisterwerke Italienischer Geigenbaukunst*, p. 267, there appear front and back photos of an otherwise-unidentified Stradivari violin of 1685. The various markings on the violin make clear that this is the *Mackenzie* violin. Front and back photographs of the *Mackenzie* violin also appear in Walter Hamma's subsequent publication of 1993, *Meister italienischer Geigenbaukunst*, p. 603.

On 29 October 1976 the *Mackenzie* violin was auctioned in New York by Sotheby Parke Bernet:

Lot 97	Property of Frederick Apfelbaum, M.D. 'THE MACKENZIE STRADIVARI' ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1685
Bearing the original label, <i>Antonius Stradiuarius, Cremonensis / Faciebat Anno 1685</i> ; the handsome one-piece back of maple cut on the slab, the ribs of somewhat faint irregular curl, the head of almost plain wood, the table of distinct medium grain broadening toward the flanks, the varnish of golden-brown colour.	
<i>Length of back 14 1/16 inches (35.6 cm.)</i>	
<i>Certificates:</i>	
W. E. Hill & Sons, London, July 10, 1908	
Rembert Wurlitzer, New York, December 20, 1960	
Jacques Francais, New York, July 28, 1976 ¹⁴	
<i>Provenance</i> [the names are presented in the auction catalogue in the following random order]	
Cerf * Haddock* [see p.5, §] Hamma & Co. W. E. Hill & Sons R. Humphrey Haslam Nathan E. Posner David W. Young* Lewis Mackenzie	[Note that there is no mention of Count Castelbarco, Puttick & Simpson, or Alfredo Piatti.]
* as listed in Goodkind ¹⁵	
<i>Literature</i>	
Goodkind, Herbert; <i>Violin Iconography of Antonio Stradivari</i> , ill. p.198 (erroneously captioned as the 'Castelbarco') ¹⁶	
Doring, Ernest N.; <i>How Many Strads?</i> p. 51. ill. p. 50	
Hamma, Fridolin; <i>Meisterwerke Italienischer Geigenbaukunst</i> , ill. p. 267	
Hamma, Walter; <i>Meisterwerke Italienischer Geigenbaukunst</i> , ill. p. 603	
Jalovec, Karel; <i>Italian Violin Makers</i> , ill. p. 344 ¹⁷	
Hill & Sons, W. E.; <i>Antonio Stradivari, His Life and Work</i> , p. 38 (erroneously dated as 1687) [see earlier]	
Henley, William; <i>Antonio Stradivari and His Instruments</i> , pp. 23 & 24.	

¹⁴ The present writer has not been able to obtain access to the certificates from Wurlitzer and Francais.

¹⁵ Were Sotheby's doubtful about Goodkind's information?

¹⁶ Sotheby's firm identification of Goodkind's 'erroneous caption' suggests that when Frederick Apfelbaum presented his *Mackenzie* violin to the New York auction house there was no accompanying documentation showing that the violin had any connection with the *Castelbarco* collection of instruments auctioned by Puttick & Simpson in London on 26 June 1862.

¹⁷ The first edition of Jalovec's book was published in 1957 by Anglo-Italian Publication Limited (London). Photographic illustrations (front and back plates) of a 1685 Stradivari violin (no soubriquet) which, through its markings, can be identified as the *Mackenzie* violin, are provided on p. 344 and again on p. 346. Jalovec's 'revised edition' of 1964 was 'designed and produced by Artia for Paul Hamlyn Ltd.'; in this edition there is only text on page 344, no illustrations. However, on p. 362 there are two photographs (ill. no. 337) of a 1685 violin (no soubriquet), the images being sourced from 'Hamma & Co'. The violin's back plate has flames descending from left to right and therefore this is not the *Mackenzie* violin.

The Sotheby's auction catalogue shows photographs of the violin's front and back plates as well as the treble side of the scroll/pegbox. The front-plate photo shows the black scuff marks and the ripple.

The front cover of *The Strad*, March 1982, showed a full-page colour photograph of the front plate of the *Mackenzie* violin (identified as such on the Contents page); the colour of the varnish on the front plate is golden yellow with a few areas where an orange/reddish tinge can still be seen, namely (1) around the purfling, (2) between the end of the fingerboard and where the 'leading edge' of the tailpiece would be found, and (3) to the left of the fingerboard. A central collection of black scuff marks can be seen, as well as the two black marks below the treble *f*-hole and the ripple at the upper treble corner. This front plate is clearly from the same violin as was photographed by Herrmann and illustrated by Doring and by Fridolin and Walter Hamma. It is also the same violin as appears in the Sotheby's 1976 auction catalogue but there the varnish colour is much darker – almost a dark brown/red – as if the violin has been re-varnished (or the photographic representation of the varnish colour was particularly deficient).

§ George Haddock, of Newlay Hall, Bramley, Leeds, was born in 1823 and died in 1907. He was a talented violinist who had lessons both with Henri Vieuxtemps and with Bernhard Molique. He was chiefly responsible for the creation of the Leeds College of Music which opened in 1894. During his long life he amassed an enormous collection of violins some of which are described in the 'Appendix No.1' which appears towards the end of his autobiographical *Some Early Musical Recollections of G. Haddock* (1906),¹⁸ this descriptive text having been written by T H Hardman.¹⁹ Hardman identifies the following instruments: a 'Francisco Rugerius' of 1673; a 'Baptista Rugerius'; an 'Antonius Amati' of 1615 (the *Drummond*) and another of 1648; 'several examples' of 'Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu' violins, specifically of 1736, 1739, and 'another'; two violins by 'Joseph Guarnerius *filius Andrae*'; three 'Stradivarius' violins, of 1692, 1714, and 1715 (the *Emperor*).

If Haddock also owned a 1685 Stradivari – the latter-day *Mackenzie* – would it not have been mentioned by Hardman?

The Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com (accessed December 2021) identifies the following violins as having been owned by George Haddock:

Antonio Stradivari violins of 1697, 1703, 1715, and 1732
Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù* violins of 1734, 1730-34, and one other
One Francesco Rugeri violin of 1694 and one Carlo Testore violin of 1695.

The contradictions between Hardman's label-dates and the Tarisio label-dates are puzzling.

T H Hardman then refers to further violins in Haddock's collection by Gagliano, Guadagnini, Steiner, Lupot, 'etc.'. George Haddock informs Hardman that he does not know exactly how many violins he has but the total 'must exceed eighty'. Some of George Haddock's instruments passed to his son, Edgar Augustus (b. 1860), also a violinist. In May 1930, following Edgar's death in 1926, his widow, Hilda (née Sykes, b.1877), married Alexander Mackenzie, an architect:

After [Edgar's] death his widow remarried, and, as Mrs Mackenzie, was a visitor to America; some of the fine bows which were in the collection of George Haddock and passed to Edgar were in her possession and found ready buyers.²⁰

¹⁸ To clarify: Although Haddock's 'early recollections' of musical life in Leeds (as opposed to Bradford) conclude in the year 1858 when Leeds Town Hall was opened, his remaining text includes documentary evidence which could not have been penned until 1905 (see p. 127).

¹⁹ Haddock identifies Hardman's article as having been originally published in 'one of the journals issued in 1890'.

²⁰ Doring, pp. 33-34.

Herbert Goodkind (*Iconography*, p. 726) lists the following violins and owners; note that Goodkind's lists are alphabetical, not chronological:

1685 <i>Castelbarco</i>	Mackenzie, K. S. Muir, ²¹ Puttick & Simpson auction [note that Goodkind makes no mention of Alfredo Piatti]
1685 <i>Mackenzie</i>	Cerf, Haddock, Hamma, Haslam, Hill, Posner, Young. [What was the evidence on which Goodkind built George Haddock's ownership of the 1685 violin?]

Arranging Sotheby's list of owners into a 'best-guess' chronological order for the *Mackenzie* violin (assuming that the violin is not that which was bought by Alfredo Piatti at the 1862 P&S auction) produces the following sequence:

<1882	George Haddock (but doubtful ownership)
1882	W. E. Hill & Sons; sold to Lewis Mackenzie
1908	W. E. Hill & Sons; sold to R. Humphrey Haslam
1920	Hamma & Co.
1929	Nathan E. Posner
1949	Raymond Cerf ²²
1954	David W. Young
???	Frederick Apfelbaum
1976	Sotheby's auction

The Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com lists the following sequence of owners for the 1685 *Mackenzie* violin:

until 1862	Count Cesare Castelbarco
in 1862	sold by Puttick & Simpson
from 1862	Alfredo Piatti
until 1882	W E Hill & Sons
...	...
in 1902 [1882]	Lewis Mackenzie
until 1908	W E Hill & Sons
in 1909 [1908]	R Humphrey Haslam
...	...
from 1920	Hamma & Co.
1929-1949	Nathan E Posner
1949-1954	Raymond Cerf
from 1954	Rembert Wurlitzer Inc.
from 1954	Dr David Young
until 1976	Dr Frederick Apfelbaum
in 1976	Sotheby Parke Bernet
1981-2001	Elsie McKenzie Taylor Lard
from 2001	current owner.

November 2011; the *Mackenzie* violin was loaned to the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, USA.

²¹ K S Muir is seemingly not Kenneth Augustus Muir Mackenzie, 1st Baron of Delvine, Perth (1845-1930). However, with the typewriter letters 'S' and 'A' being adjacent to each other it is just possible that Goodkind's 'S' was a slip of a finger. As can be seen, Kenneth Augustus Muir Mackenzie is not mentioned in the Sotheby list of owners. Peter Davidson (*The Violin, its construction ...*, 1895, p.138) identifies a 'Mr. Muir, of Leith, [who] possesses a Violin made by this illustrious artist [Antonio Stradivari], which was formerly the esteemed instrument of the celebrated Violinist Viotti.'

²² Raymond Cerf (1901-1978) taught at the University of Kansas.