John Wildman and Rushworth's *Historical Collections*: An Editor Identified?

by Daniel German

For almost three hundred years the collection of documents relating to the English Civil War known as Rushworth's Historical Collections has been credited to the editorial talents of John Rushworth, a supporter of Parliament in that conflict. A note, found in the margin of a book held by the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of McLennan Library, suggests that some of the credit for the editorship of these volumes actually belongs to the republican politician, John Wildman. An examination of the information contained in the note reveals an inherent validity to this claim. The fact that a republican, rather than a Parliamentarian, was responsible for part of the selection and preparation of documents should thus be considered in all future use of these documents.

The English Civil War is a matter of great interest to historians, and one of the most important printed resources available for research has been the collection of documents commonly known as Rushworth's Historical Collections. This body of papers, generally held to have been edited with a Parliamentary slant, has been the main source of printed documents on the period leading to the war. The accuracy of these volumes has been generally accepted, and the reputation of John Rushworth, the putative editor of the original documents, has increased accordingly. It is suggested though, that some of this credit rightfully belongs to the republican, Sir John Wildman, according to information contained in a note written in the margin of a book held by the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of McLennan Library. A recent study of the Restoration historians and their treatment of the Civil War explained how this is possible:

The Third and Fourth Parts of the *Historical Collections*, appearing after his [Rushworth's] death, carried on their titlepages the assurance that they had been 'Fitted for the Press in his Life-time,' but Rushworth's prefaces, which had been the most intimate of his contacts with the reader in the previous parts and included his interesting reflections on historical method, were now continued without distinction by some anonymous hand or hands. The absence of Rushworth's own prefaces casts some doubt on whether he really did wholly prepare these volumes for the press...

The marginalia in question is found at the bottom of a page in John Nalson's *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of*
John Wildman and Rushworth's Historical Collections

State (London, 1682-83) comparing Nalson's version of a document with Rushworth's treatment of the same paper. The note was apparently written to support Nalson's assertion that Rushworth's copy was inaccurate:

Fri'd 25° May 1714. I was in Company with M' Sawbridge the bookseller and M' Hoskins a printer/ who printed part of Rushworths Collections for Mr Chiswell [and] who assured me that Mr Rushworths' Copy was corrected by Major Wildmans hand who in Severall places cancelld [or] crossed out what/ made for the King and in other places altered ['altered' crossed out in original] made such Alterations as reduced them to nonsence/ that the book was printed accordingly and that this manuscript so altered was in his Custody till it/ was unfortunately burnt so that it Seems Rushworth himself was not partial enough [or] how ingeniously even this first vol: was published appears above

C Hornby

An examination of this note does not show any readily isolated inaccuracies; most of the individuals mentioned in it can be identified, and the facts as stated are not opposed to verifiable history. Such an examination supports the identification of Major Wildman as one of the unknown editors.

The author of the note, C. Hornby, was interested in English history, was a Royalist, and was probably resident in or around London in 1714. In a study of various compilations of biographical material one man was found who fitted these criteria. In 1730 and 1738 Charles Hornby, described as "a sour and ill-natured pedant, secondary of the Pipe Office," published two critical works concerning Sir William Dugdale's Baronage of England. Hornby died in 1739 having apparently been a member of the Civil Service for some time and his presence in London in 1714 was therefore possible. The topic of his two publications indicates both his interest in some aspects of English history and his Royalist sympathies. This tends to support the proposition that Charles Hornby was the man responsible for the marginalia.

The two men with whom Hornby had his conversation, the source of the information, can also be identified to some extent. The first mentioned, Mr. Sawbridge, is called "the bookseller" as if further description is unnecessary. An examination of the pertinent sources does not provide the name of any bookseller whose business was extant in 1714, however, a former book seller, if prominent enough to the trade, could be an alternative. If this is accepted, it is probable that the bookseller mentioned in the marginalia was George Sawbridge the Younger, who retired from the book trade in 1711 after almost twenty years in Little Britain, the center of the London book trade. Such an important figure to the book trade would need relatively little identification. Although Sawbridge was merely a witness to the information, his presence adds verisimilitude to the account.

Mr. Hoskins, the second man Hornby spoke to, and the actual source of the information, does not appear to have been either as important or as recognizable. He is described as "a printer who printed part of Rushworths Collections for Mr Chiswell" and the identity of Mr. Hoskins revolves around that of Mr. Chiswell, the man for whom he claimed to have worked. Mr. Chiswell also serves as a clue as to the portion of Rushworth's Historical Collections referred to in the marginalia.

"Mr. Chiswell" was Richard Chiswell (1639-1711), called by Dunton "the metropolitain bookseller in England, if not of all the world." A famous publisher, Chiswell owned an important book shop in London's St. Paul's Churchyard, and it is a matter of record that he was one of the publishers of the Historical Collections. He was not however, the only publisher involved in this undertaking.

Rushworth's Historical Collections was published in four parts, in a total of seven volumes, over a period of more than forty years. The first part was printed in 1659 by Thomas Newcomb for George Thomason, and was
Portrait of John Wildman by Wenceslaus Hollar. (Hollar Collection, P 1697, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.)
reprinted in another edition in 1682 by J.A. for Robert Boulter. It is obvious that this could not have been the part Wildman is claimed to have edited. The second part was printed in 1680 by J.D. for John Wright and Richard Chiswell, during the lifetime of John Rushworth. The last two parts of the Historical Collections were issued following the 1690 death of Rushworth. Two years after his death, the third part of the Collections was printed for Richard Chiswell and Thomas Cockerill, while the fourth, and last, part of the Historical Collections was printed in 1701, also for Richard Chiswell and Thomas Cockerill.

With the first part of the Historical Collections eliminated, the portion mentioned in the note may be further isolated through an identification of Major Wildman, the suggested editor. Sir John Wildman, a noted republican politician of the Restoration period, was usually called Major Wildman, the rank he gained during the Civil War. Wildman was knighted in 1692, the same year the third part appeared, and died in 1693 at the age of seventy-two. Since the fourth part did not appear until eight years after his death, it is probable that Wildman was not its editor. Wildman's editorial possibilities are thus limited to the second and third parts of the Historical Collections, both of which were published by Richard Chiswell.

If Major Wildman did edit one of the parts of the Historical Collections, it would seem unlikely he worked on a volume while Rushworth himself was alive and able to do so. Rushworth did not die until ten years after the publication of the second part of the Historical Collections, and it is known that Rushworth had worked on this material. Records exist which show he consulted with Secretary of State Coventry over papers which have been found in the second part. It is Royce MacGillivray's assertion that it was with the publication of the third part of the Historical Collections that a difference in style became noticeable. MacGillivray assumes Rushworth edited the second part, because, among other reasons it is similar in style to the first part. This would leave the third part to the editorial talents of Major Wildman.

John Rushworth had died in poverty in Southwark on 12 May 1690 following several years in the King's Bench Prison, during which period he is believed to have continued to work on his history. It is probable the arrangement of the papers was not completed at the time of his death, since the third part was not published until 1692. It was at this time, shortly after the death of Rushworth, that Wildman became available to act as the editor.

Between 12 April 1689 and the end of February 1691, Wildman served as the Postmaster-General of England. At the end of that period Wildman was dismissed from his post following complaints that he was using his position to discredit political opponents through the use of fictitious letters he pretended to intercept. From the end of February 1691 until his death on 2 June 1693, Wildman was available to serve as the new editor of the Historical Collections.

A plotter of unparalleled ability, Wildman was involved in many of the conspiracies of the Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration. A committed republican, he opposed Charles I, Cromwell, Charles II, James II, and William III, as each became a power in Britain. An experienced writer, with first hand knowledge of the events recorded in the Historical Collections, he would have been an excellent replacement for Rushworth. Wildman's last known pamphlets were published in 1688-89 and a biography of Wildman is quite reticent as to his activities during the period following his dismissal from government service. Wildman is known to have become Deputy-Lieutenant of Middlesex in 1692, and his knighthood followed soon on the heels of that appointment. It is possible that Wildman occupied himself during this period as the editor of those papers Rushworth left unarranged.

This possibility is supported by Wildman's need to regain the credibility lost with his dismissal. He had advanced his position by the Revolution of 1688, due partly to the pamphlets he had written in support of William III, and it is plausible that he undertook the editorship of the Historical Collections in order to restore this influence. The
Historical Collections expressed a bias against the autocratic Stuart rule, the same autocratic form of government which the Glorious Revolution claimed to have ended and the publication of the third part, at this time, tends to indicate the government was not adverse to this message. According to MacGillivray the third part is studiedly neutral towards the events recorded, but the suggestion that Wildman was the editor could force a new interpretation of the selection of documents.\(^{19}\)

The publication of these documents has provided thousands of students of history the materials they have needed to examine the issues which led to the English Civil War and Interregnum. Without these documents our understanding of these events would have been greatly damaged; a large debt is therefore owed to the men responsible for their preparation and publication. However, in order to properly assess the value of these documents, it is necessary to determine the bias of the editor. Knowing that John Wildman may have edited the third part of Rushworth's Historical Collections does not deprive the documents contained therein of value, but lacking that knowledge does deprive the historian of an understanding of the methodology employed in their selection and presentation.

As a result of the possibility of Wildman's involvement, the third part must be examined for indications that his republican beliefs influenced his selection. It is possible that the neutrality referred to in MacGillivray is the result of a decision of a republican editor not to include documents selected by, or commentary prepared by, the Parliamentarian supporter, Rushworth. It is equally valid to suggest that Wildman may have altered these documents, not only those that "made for the King," but also those which supported his Parliamentary opponents. These possibilities suggest the true importance of this marginalia; the note not only assigns credit for the editorship, it also assigns blame for alterations. All future use of these documents must be made with these suggestions in mind.

Notes

2. Sir Charles Firth in his biography of Rushworth in the DNB (London, 1959-69), XVII: 421, states that Rushworth owed his fame to this history.
4. The note is written on the bottom of page vii of the preface to volume I (Acc. no. 748) of McLennan Library's copy of John Nalson's *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State, From the Beginning of the Scotch Rebellion In the Year MDCXXXIX. To the Murther of King Charles I. Wherein The first Occasions, and the whole Series of the late Troubles in England, Scotland, & Ireland, Are faithfully Represented. Taken from Authentick Records, and Methodically Digested* (London, 1682-83).
7. This information is found in the entries for George Sawbridge the Younger and Thomas Sawbridge, in Henry Plomer's *A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers Who were at Work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668 to 1725* (Oxford, 1922), 263. It is an interesting sidenote that Thomas Sawbridge, the father of George Sawbridge the Younger, was one of the publishers of Nalson's *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State*.
8. See note 3 above.
9. Cited in the entry for Chiswell in the DNB (London, 1959-60), IV: 265. Other information regarding Chiswell may be found in this entry.
10. The above information is taken from the title-pages of the volumes in question, and was confirmed in the entry for John Rushworth in Donald Wing's compilation of

11. The information for the two volumes which comprise the fourth part is taken from their title-pages, and was confirmed by consulting Edward Arber’s The Term Catalogues, 1668-1709 AD (London, 1906), III: 132.

12. Charles Firth’s entry for Sir John Wildman in the DNB (London, 1959-60), XXI: 232-236, contains this information, as well as a discussion of Wildman’s part in the Putney Debates and his later political career. A more complete treatment is found in Maurice Ashley’s John Wildman (London, 1947).


15. MacGillivray, 107; Firth, “Rushworth,” 421.


17. Firth, “Wildman,” 235; Ashley, 281-300.

18. Ashley, 277-279.