

A JOHN PLAYFORD ADVERTISEMENT

A Letter from Miss Margaret Dean-Smith, F.S.A.
To the Editor: RMA Research Chronicle

Sir,

Will you allow me to make three historical amendments to Miss Lenore Coral's article 'A John Playford Advertisement' in RMA Research Chronicle No.5?

1) Although Miss Coral repeats, from respectable sources, that 'Playford lived over his shop in the Temple' the records of the Inner Temple show this to be almost certainly a mistake.¹ In, or shortly before, 1593 the then Clerk to the Temple Church, Richard Baker, built at his own expense a 'Clerk's House' and a number of shops; he then sold his Clerkship to one Middleton for £20. An enquiry into this sale was held by the Benchers on May 27th 1593 and, under certain conditions, the Clerk was allowed a life-estate in 'the little house Richard Baker had built adjoining the Church and the shop used with it'. What, if anything, was decided about the other shops we do not know, nor is there any certainty that the shop 'used with' the Clerk's 'little house' was of one structure with that house, nor that it was the same shop which Playford rented at £2 p.a. more than 50 years later. The account books show this rent paid 1646-1648 (whether O/S or N/S is not clear), and although Indeswick proposes that Playford became a tenant of the Inn at some time between 1642 and 1646, Playford could not have set up in business as a stationer until he was admitted a Freeman of the Stationers' Company on April 5th, 1647.²

Renting a shop variously described as 'next', 'in' or 'over-against' the Church porch did not entitle Playford to occupy the Clerk's House (if it were still standing by the dilapidated church). He was not appointed Clerk until 1653 (Oct.29th); by that time he is believed to have married Hannah Allen, and is described in the Temple records as living 'with his wife near the Church'. The Hearth Tax Records of 1653 show him as resident in Three Leg Alley, Fetter Lane, the address in the imprint of his Catalogue

¹See my MGG article, 'Playford'. Mr E.J. Nicol, who collaborated in much of my own Playford work, was enabled to examine and photograph relevant records more than 15 years ago.

²See Registers of Indenture, etc., of The Worshipful Company of Stationers (original documents).

of ... Music³, while the registers of St. Dunstan's Church record the burial of a son, Samuel (godfather Sam Pepys?) in January 1654/5. It was a vital condition of the life-estate in the Clerk's House that 'no family' should reside there, and no traceable record states that Playford ever occupied the Clerk's House, still less that alone or with his wife he lived over the shop 'in' the church porch, which one suspects of resembling the classic 'small wooden structure for sitting in' rather than a solid building.

2) Miss Coral proposes that Thomas Harper printed for Playford 'from 1650-1655'. No books were published by Playford in 1650. The refutation of this reiterated mistake has been made often enough for it to be merely referred to here⁴.

3) In such a periodical as the Research Chronicle bibliographical details should be precise. Harper printed music for Playford from 1651 to 1655, but he printed other works for him, chiefly of a seditious character, from 1647. Harper, himself something of an enigma, is too important a figure in the 'hidden years' of Playford's career, and in the history of music-printing⁵, to be treated cursorily; but that, as Tchehov would say, is another story.

³Playford entitles this list of music books A Catalogue, not an 'advertisement', and separates it from the advertisement of his publications printed below. He also accords it an imprint.

⁴See my recension of The English Dancing-Master, 1651 (Schott, 1957) and the article in Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1943, containing the quotation from a letter from the late Arundell Esdaile on idiosyncrasies of redating his collection of tracts by George Thomason, The English Dancing-Master included; also the list of works in the MGG article already cited.

⁵It is necessary here to have some acquaintance with the powers of the Stationers' Company, as guardians against sedition, with the restrictions in the granting of printing licences, and with the acquisition of printing-businesses and copyrights by purchase, bequest or marriage with an inheriting widow.