

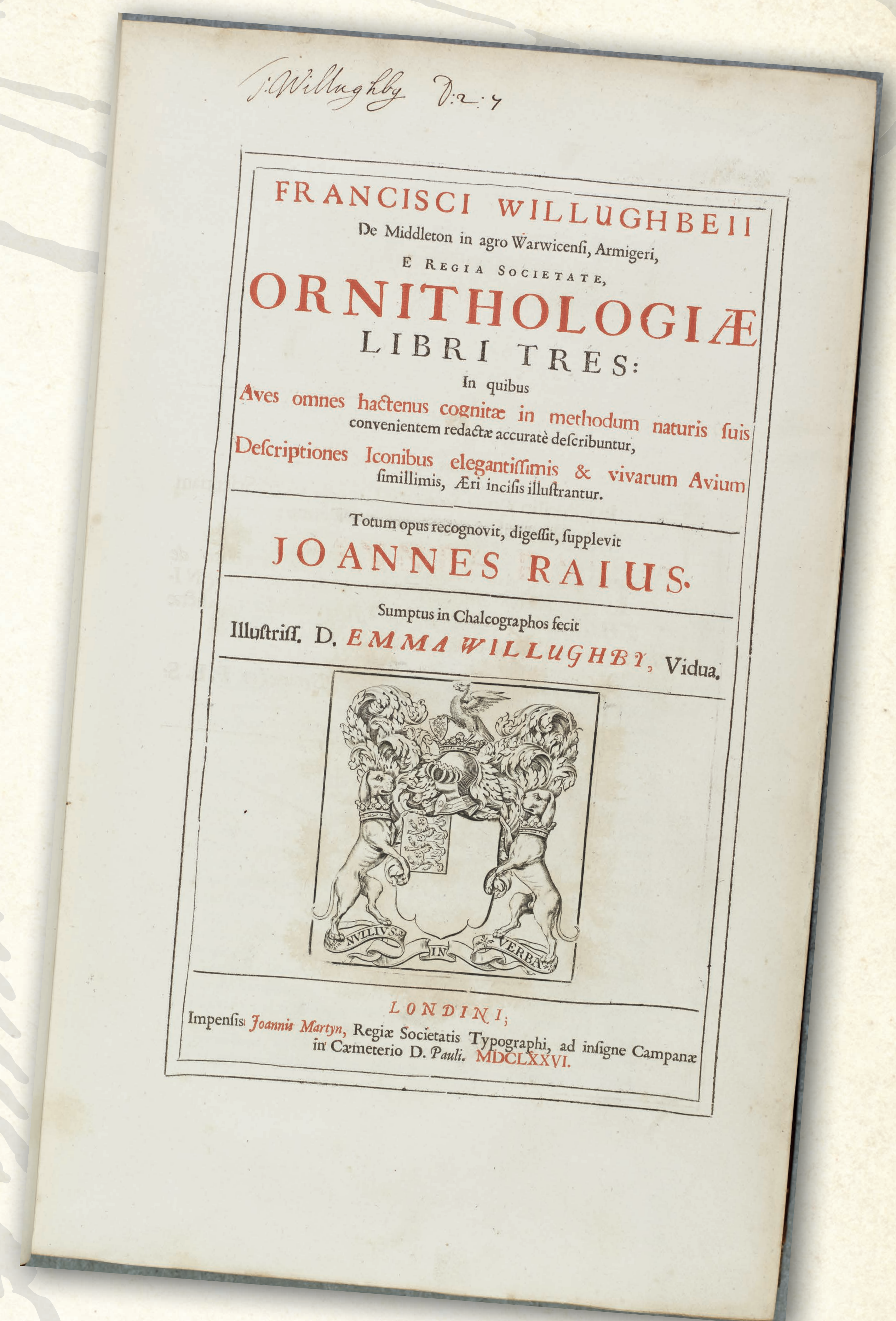
A Natural Historian and his Collections

Francis Willughby

(1635-72)



Oil portrait of Francis Willughby, attributed to Gerard Soest, c1660



Francis Willughby, *Ornithologia*, edited by John Ray (London, 1676). An English edition of the *Ornithology* (1678) remains Francis Willughby's best-known work.

Middleton Collection, Mi LP 38

Francis Willughby is known to historians of science mainly through pioneering studies of birds and fishes which were published after his death by his friend, John Ray. References to him generally follow the spelling that was common in his day, 'Willughby', rather than the more usual form of the family name, 'Willoughby'.

Willughby was the only son and heir of Sir Francis Willoughby of Middleton Hall, Warwickshire. With income from sizeable estates and Nottinghamshire coal mines, Francis could pursue a life of travel and scientific research. Soest's portrait shows him as a young man, with a book in his hand revealing his early enthusiasm for scholarship. It may have been painted when he was studying at the Inns of Court in London in the late 1650s after graduating from Cambridge.

Little more than 13 years after leaving university, Francis died

aged only 36. He had worked with enormous energy – reading, collecting, experimenting, dissecting and exchanging views on new theories with like-minded enthusiasts.

Our knowledge of Francis Willughby's personal life draws on an account written years later by his only daughter Cassandra, Duchess of Chandos. With her younger brother Thomas, who in 1711 was elevated to the peerage as the 1st Baron Middleton, she helped to preserve what remained of her father's collections.



Cassandra, Duchess of Chandos (1670-1735), after Godfrey Kneller; probably painted c1713 when she married her cousin James Brydges, later Duke of Chandos.

This exhibition draws primarily on the Middleton Collection at The University of Nottingham. It has been jointly curated by Dr Dorothy Johnston and Manuscripts and Special Collections at The University of Nottingham. The curators are grateful to many colleagues and particularly thank Lord Middleton for his interest and support, and The Leverhulme Trust, which awarded an International Network Grant to Professor Tim Birkhead at the University of Sheffield. The display is informed by the network's research, accessible in T Birkhead (ed), *Virtuoso by Nature: The Scientific Worlds of Francis Willughby* FRS (2016).



The Leverhulme Trust

Manuscripts
and Special
Collections

NOTTINGHAM
LAKE
SIDE
ARTS



The University of
Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA