1706
Corbett
Violin

Provenance

c.1710	William Corbett, London
–	Chetwode family, Stafford *(according to Hill)*
–	Rev. H.E. Brooke, Limerick
1887	W.E. Hill & Sons, London
1888	Emily Beatrice Cheetham (*later* Mrs Dremel *and* Mrs Wimbush), Taunton
1921	*Deposited with* W.E. Hill & Sons, London
1954	*Estate of Wimbush*
1965	W.E. Hill & Sons, London
1968	Robert Davie Boyd, Durham
1974	Sotheby's auction, London
1974	Franz Peschke *on behalf of* Sören Nordemalm, Bremen
1975	Mr Probat, Munich *for* Joseph Suk, Prague *(sale denounced)*
c.1975	Sören Nordemalm, Bremen
1981	Jacques Français, New York
1982	*Young-Uck Kim family*
c.2008	Private owner
2013	Giovanni Accornero
2014	Private owner

Label
(Beare)
Original label

Dendrochronology
(Topham)
Treble 1694 | Bass 1679

Dimensions
(Beare) (T)
355mm | 168mm | 109.5mm | 208mm
'P' form (MS. 44)

Certificates
Hill, 7 Feb 1968
Beare, 15 May 1981
Hill, 21 May 1981
Beare, 17 Oct 2008
Beare, 4 Feb 2014

Players
William Corbett (b.1680–d.1748)
Joseph Suk (b.1929–d.2011)
Young-Uck Kim (b.1947)
So-Ock Kim (b.1982)

Sources
Beare archive | Hill (1902) pp.250-252 | Hill archive | Sotheby's catalogue 6 June 1974 | The Strad Mar 1892 | The Strad Dec 1970 | Thöne (2010) Vol. II pp.264-271

The Corbett is one of the few Stradivaris that can conceivably be traced back to the maker himself. It is named after its first recorded owner, William Corbett (1680–1748), a distinguished English violinist and composer. Despite being a member of the Royal Orchestra from 1709, his name is absent from the roll of the orchestra from 1710 until 1716, during which time he travelled in Italy. He is supposed by some to have been acting as an agent for the crown, keeping an eye on the continental movements of James Stuart, the 'Old Pretender' to the throne of England, then living in exile. When Corbett returned to London, he had acquired a collection of fine violins which he put up for sale in 1724, advertised in the Daily Journal of May 16th as 'Mr Corbett's Choice collection… to be sold at the Nags Head Inn Orange Court … Instruments by the famous Amatus, and 'Old Stradivarius of Cremona', by Gio. P. Maggini, Gaspar da Salò of Brescia; the noted Albani and Stainer of Tyrol…' The specific reference to 'Old Stradivarius' is taken by the Hills to mean that Corbett had actually met the man, who would have been 66 in 1710, and already known in Cremona as 'Il vecchio Stradivari'. It is not clear whether this Stradivari was sold in 1724, however in his will he bequeathed his remaining instruments, specifically noted as those by Amati, Stainer and Albani, to Gresham College, a free university in Holborn, London. While a Stradivari is not mentioned, Corbett's initials branded on the lower rib of this 1706 violin are similar to those found on a 1574 Andrea Amati violin, now in the Shrine to Music Museum in South Dakota, and a Girolamo II Amati of 1693, both of which were part of this bequest to Gresham College. The college, however, was not able to support the bequest, and these instruments were put to public auction in 1751.

The Stradivari disappears from the record at this point, until bought by the Hills from the Reverend H.E. Brooke of Limerick in 1887. He informed them that it had previously been in the possession of 'an old baronetcy of the name of Chetwood', the family of Baronet Sir John Chetwode (1666–1733) of Oakley, Stafford, whose son Sir Philip Chetwode (1700–1764) may have purchased the Corbett at the 1724 sale. Hills sold the violin in 1888 to Emily Cheetham, and later noted that the violin was brought to them 'by her disgruntled second husband, who didn't like her playing'. It was deposited with them for safe keeping in 1921 and remained there until she died in 1954. The Hills finally succeeded in buying it from her estate over a decade later. In 1968, it was sold to Robert Davie Boyd of County Durham, and auctioned at Sotheby's in 1974, where it was purchased by Sören Nordemalm, a violin maker of Bremen. Franz Peschke, who bought the violin on behalf of Nordemalm, resold it to a Mr Probat of Munich without the consent of Nordemalm. Probat bought the instrument for the violinist Josef Suk, however Nordemalm denounced the sale and the Corbett returned to his possession soon after. In 1981 Jacques Français of New York bought the violin and sold it a year later to the brother-in-law of the violinist Young-Uck Kim. Since then the Corbett has changed hands in 2008, 2013, and 2014, on each occasion to private owners.

The Corbett is a characteristic example of the period. Although the last digit of the original label is partially illegible, the date of 1706 is unchallenged. Its point of origin is the 'PG' form (MS. 21, Museo del Violino, Cremona). The back is a superb single piece of deeply flamed maple matched by the ribs. The front is of very fine grained and perfect spruce. The scroll has an interesting history. When the violin was first seen by the Hills they noted that it had a head made by Guersan of Paris, but they were later able to refit the original Stradivari head made for the violin. This has an unusual extended pegbox, some 6mm longer than usual, and was designed to accommodate five pegs (the original fifth peghole is filled, but can be seen between the D and E positions). Corbett had other five-stringed violins in his collection; examples by Amati and Stainer with '5 holes' are listed in his testament. The only other Stradivari instrument known to have been made for five strings is the General Kyd cello of 1684 (see Vol. 1).













