



Christ's College, University of Cambridge

Past Masters:

An Exhibition Celebrating Five Centuries of
Leadership at Christ's College, Cambridge



John Covel, 15th Master
(1688-1722)

John Peile, 26th Master
(1887-1910)

The Lord Todd, 32nd Master
(1963-1978)

17 June to 15 November 2013
Old Library, Christ's College

Open to the public, 8 October to 15 November 2013
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Introduction

In 1505, Christ's College was refounded by the mother of the Tudor dynasty, Lady Margaret Beaufort. The man she chose to lead her fledgling academic institution into an uncertain future was John Syclyng, who was duly awarded the office of Master of Christ's College.

More than 500 years on, and 37 Masters later, the position endures. The Fellowship has swelled from 12 humble Doctors of Divinity to over 100 academics of wide-ranging learning, and the student body has expanded from 47 poor scholars to several hundred undergraduates and postgraduates. Nevertheless, the community of Christ's College to this day remains led by one man: the Master.

Past Masters is a celebration of this most enduring of positions. From the intriguing process by which Masters assume office, to their varied roles as shepherd of the student flock, magisterial scholar of deep learning, and guardian of the College's purse, liberties and interests, this exhibition offers an insight into the history of this most fascinating of roles, and of the inspirational men who have filled it.



The Master's Lodge in First Court

1st Master

John Syclyng (1505-1507): The final Proctor of God's-house (the fifteenth-century precursor of Christ's College), Syclyng was chosen personally by the Foundress, Lady Margaret Beaufort, to assume the Mastership of Christ's College in 1505. One of only two Masters of the College never to have acquired a higher university degree, it seems likely that it was Syclyng's financial and administrative acumen which Lady Margaret rated so highly. He would appear to have been a feisty character, if he were indeed the "Magistro Suclyng" recorded as having been fined 20 shillings for breaking the peace in the early sixteenth century. He was the first Master to be buried in the College Chapel, though his premature death meant he did not live to see the building's completion.



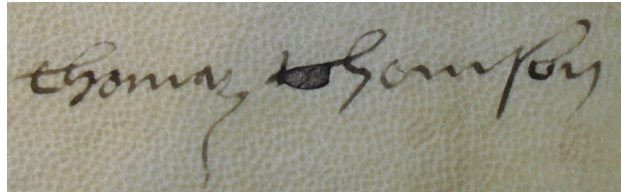
2nd Master

Richard Wyatt (1507-1510): Wyatt's short tenure would have been taken up with the construction of the College, which was still in progress upon his departure from Cambridge in 1510 to take up the Precentorship of York Minster. He was also surveyor of the building work taking place at Great St Mary's at that time.



3rd Master

Thomas Thompson (1510-1517): A Master of little note, Thompson retired from the position more than 30 years before his death. To the College he left lands at Malton, as well as the nearby 'Brazen George' inn, a property thereafter used for student accommodation.

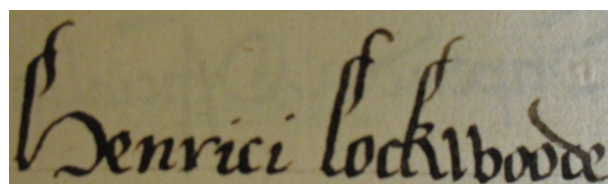


4th Master

John Watson (1517-1531): A Humanist and close friend of the Dutch scholar Erasmus, upon whose translation of the New Testament he offered comments, Watson was a well-travelled man, even undertaking a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1515. He was a conservative in religion, and was a hammer of Protestant heretics. As Vice-Chancellor between 1529 and 1532, he was required to handle the response of the University to the vexed question of Henry VIII's proposed divorce from Katherine of Aragon.

5th Master

Henry Lockwood (1531-1548): Lockwood was a notably active Master and a highly competent businessman. Under his tenure, the detailed College accounts – in his own hand – commence. Nevertheless, despite his obvious administrative acumen, he laboured under the financial difficulties the College incurred by the forced exchange of Roydon in Essex, an estate which Henry VIII desired for his wife-to-be Anne Boleyn, for Bromhill Priory in Norfolk. He was a good friend of Thomas Cromwell, whose son Gregory came under his charge.



6th Master

Richard Wilkes (1548-1553): A moderate Protestant Reformer, it seems likely that Wilkes joined with Archbishop Cranmer in inviting the noted Strasbourg Reformer Martin Bucer to accept the University's Regius Professorship of Divinity. Wilkes's election as Master had taken place at the College-owned estate of Malton during one of the several occasions when Christ's was evacuated due to the outbreak of the plague. Although he was not implicated in the uprising which followed the death of Edward VI, Wilkes's well-attested Protestant views ensured that he was removed from the Mastership upon the succession of Queen Mary to the throne in 1553.

7th Master

Cuthbert Scott (1553-1556): A devout religious conservative, Scott was brought back to Cambridge following Mary's accession, whereupon he immediately began restoring altars, vestments, candlesticks and other Catholic articles to the College Chapel. In 1554, Scott formed part of the deputation which went to Oxford to dispute with Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley. He resigned the Mastership upon his appointment as Bishop of Chester, and thereafter proved a belligerent critic of the Elizabethan regime. So much so, in fact, that he was deprived of his Bishopric in 1559, and, following 4 years imprisonment, fled to the Continent.



8th Master

William Taylor (1556-1559): Taylor's religious opinions appear to have made it inevitable that he would be unable to remain Master of Christ's following the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558. In June 1559 he disappeared in haste, "leaving his chamber much disordered, his garments cast in corners, and the rushes tumbled or heaped, and the College writings scattered here and there" (Peile, Vol.1, 31).

9th Master

Edward Hawford (1559-1582): Hawford was recommended for the Mastership by Queen Elizabeth's most prominent advisor William Cecil, with whom Hawford had a good understanding. An excellent and conscientious businessman, Hawford revitalised the College finances. During his tenure, Christ's emerged as a Puritan stronghold, and, as a religious moderate himself, Hawford was often required to rein in the more 'extreme' members of the College. In particular, he locked horns with the Puritan Hugh Broughton, whom he unsuccessfully tried to remove from the College's Fellowship in 1579.

10th Master

Edmund Barwell (1582-1609): Described by Christ's historian and Master John Peile as "a Puritan, but easy-going" (Peile, Vol. 1, 83), Barwell appears to have incurred the wrath of many of the Fellows when he married in 1588. He made himself scarcely more popular by seeming to be the prey of his relations, to whom he made constant loans and gifts, as detailed in the College accounts. Nevertheless, he was reputed to be a very fine preacher.

11th Master

Valentine Cary (1609-1622):

Following Barwell's death in 1609, the Christ's Fellowship chose one William Pemberton as the College's new Master. However, King James I took affront at this action, and



imposed Cary by royal mandate. Like Barwell, he often struggled to control the more fiery Puritans amongst the Fellowship, but contemporary Thomas Fuller described Cary as "a complete gentleman and excellent scholar" (Peile, Vol. 1, 183). He resigned the Mastership upon his presentation to the Bishopric of Exeter, leaving a pair of silver flagon-pots to the College.

12th Master

Thomas Bainbridge (1622-1646):

Bainbridge appears to have been a rather colourless Master, who gained a reputation amongst the College Fellowship as being a strict disciplinarian. Although similarly bland in his religious convictions, he was certainly not anti-Puritan since he complied with the iconoclast William Dowsing's demands to remove all 'idolatrous' items within the College Chapel following the outbreak of the Civil War. Like Barwell, evidence would suggest that Bainbridge too sought to use the Mastership to benefit his family. He had one son who graduated at Christ's in 1647.



13th Master

Samuel Bolton (1646-1654):

An acclaimed preacher and deeply pious churchman, in 1647 Bolton was added to the Westminster Assembly of Divines, a body set up in the wake of the English Civil War to restructure the Church of England. Several of his theological treatises were published, of which two are on display in the exhibition. Prior to assuming the Mastership of Christ's in 1646, he had been the long-serving minister of St Saviour's, Southwark. He was a sickly man, but such was his devoutness that it was said that "when he saw any probable symptoms of death...he was exceeding joyful" (Peile, Vol.1, 369). He died aged only 48.



14th Master

Ralph Cudworth (1654-1688): One of the leading members of the so-called Cambridge Platonists, Cudworth urged the precedence of mind over matter, and thus propounded a spiritual, rather than purely mechanical, explanation for the operations of nature. His *magnum opus* was published in 1678 as the *True intellectual system of the universe*, and is on display in the exhibition. As Master he was diligent, able and generally liked. However, he fell out spectacularly with Christ's Fellow Ralph Widdrington, whom no doubt judged Cudworth to be a 'trimmer' on account of his apparent transfer of allegiances from Cromwell during the Interregnum to Charles II at the Restoration.



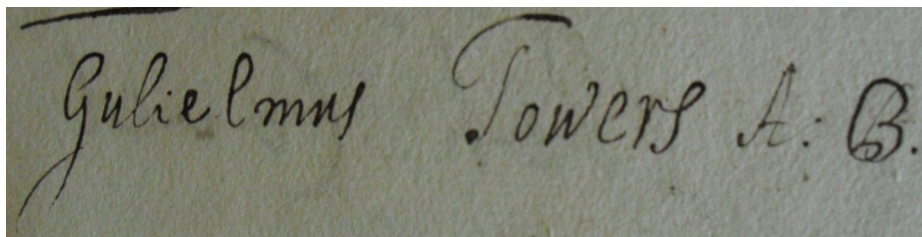
15th Master

John Covel (1688-1722): Elected a Fellow of Christ's in 1659, Covel departed Christ's 11 years later when he was appointed chaplain to the Levant Company, a position which kept him in Turkey until 1677. "A jolly well-looking man of an open countenance" prone in later life to gout, Covel demonstrated admirable business habits during his long spell as Master (Peile, Vol. 1, 559). His chief mark on the College was the redecoration of the Chapel, which cost £1340 and which obliterated the few remaining original features. A friend of Sir Isaac Newton, Covel's only learned work was a volume on the doctrine and discipline of the Greek Church, but he collected books and manuscripts voraciously, most of which were given to the British Library following his death.



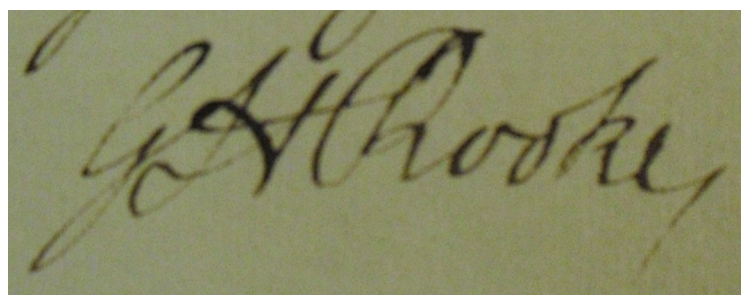
16th Master

William Towers (1723-1745): A zealous Whig at a time when political feeling ran high in the University, Towers's tenure as Master was largely uneventful. He was described by one contemporary as "in general...esteemed to be an honest and well-meaning man, but extremely unpolished and very wrong-headed...The best acquainted with him, which were but few...gave him the character of a very facetious and pleasant companion". Others bemoaned his "morose, sour and rough manner"(quoted in Peile, Vol. 2, 136). He was said to have squandered the chance to become the King's Chaplain by simply taking no notice of the offer.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script. The text reads "Gulielmus Towers A. B." written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured paper.

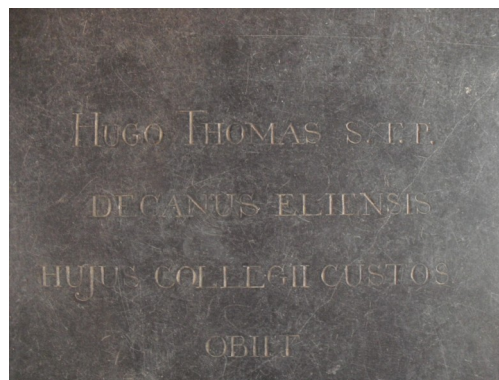
17th Master

George Rooke (1745-1754): Said to be "unamiable and of rough manners", and a dandy who "hardly ever stirred abroad without a new Pair of Dove-coloured glazed gloves", Rooke spent considerable sums on fitting up the Master's Lodge "in elegant and good taste". Like Towers before him, he was a solid Whig in politics – a factor which no doubt influenced his Tory contemporary William Cole to label him as haughty, mean and servile "to an inexpressible degree, being the most abject slave and fawning sycophant that I ever saw" (quoted in Peile, Vol. 2, 205). He suffered from recurrent bouts of ill-health during his Mastership.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script. The text reads "G. Rooke" written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured paper.

18th Master

Hugh Thomas (1754-1780): Thomas combined his role as Master of Christ's with an array of additional positions including the deanery of Ely, the chancellorship of York, the archdeaconry of Nottingham and the prebendaries of York and Ripon! Said by contemporary William Cole to be "always esteemed a very worthy man", Thomas was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1754, and again in 1777, though on the latter occasion he declined to serve on the grounds of old age and gout (quoted in Peile, Vol. 2, 209).



19th Master

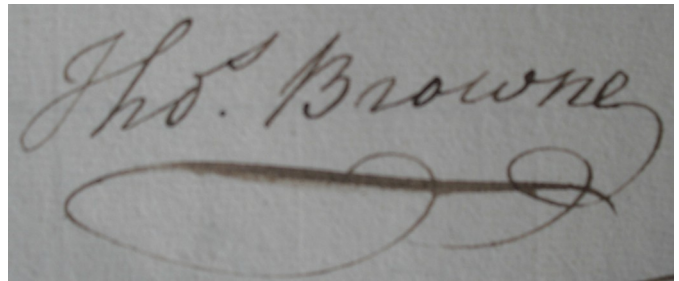
John Barker (1780-1808): Barker was a long-serving but largely undistinguished Master. He was a firm Whig in politics, whose penchant for tobacco chewing was said by one contemporary Fellow to have rendered him unfit for polite society. Peile describes him as a "hale, high-coloured man, with a very Roman nose" (Peile, Vol.2, 247).



20th Master

Thomas Browne (1808-1814):

The first and only Master of Christ's College ever to have been removed from his office, Thomas Browne was a man of considerable – if rather devious – administrative acumen. Upon assuming the Mastership, he began acting contrary to the Statutes, and spending considerable amounts of time on a project to enclose a College-owned estate at Bourn. When rent from the Bourn lands did not prove forthcoming, several Fellows called in the University Visitor (the University's disciplinary body), and Browne was removed and found to be indebted to the College to the tune of £1300. After leaving Christ's, he established himself in the town of Gorleston, where he made himself unpopular by claiming the ownership of any gravestones which happened to be knocked over by cattle. It was said he used them to line his oven.



21st Master

John Kaye (1814-1830): Unlike his eighteenth-century predecessors, John Kaye was a man of singular academic ability. Senior Wrangler and first Chancellor's Medallist in 1804, Kaye was elected to the Christ's Fellowship before he was 21. Two years after assuming the Mastership of Christ's in 1814, he was made the University's Regius Professor of Divinity, whilst from 1820 he combined all three roles with the Bishopric of Bristol.



Within the University, he was responsible for the revival of the theology of the Greek Fathers, about whose writings he published extensively. He was transferred to the diocese of Lincoln in 1827, and resigned the Mastership of Christ's three years later.

22nd Master

John Graham (1830-1849): By 1830, Christ's College had earned a reputation as one of the most reform-minded, even 'radical' societies in the University, and John Graham's election as Master served only to consolidate this. In 1838, he sought – fruitlessly – to implement a remarkable set of proposals, which, if accepted, would have dramatically reformed the College's Statutes in order to allow the marriage of Fellows, and to remove certain restrictions on non-Anglicans. Although known for his "certain oddities of manner", which included a "jaunty step" and the "neglect of some usual convention as to dress", it was Graham's "real kindness...large knowledge...clearness of thought and felicity of expression" which left the strongest impression on his students (*Christ's College Magazine*, 1893, 5). Graham was chaplain to the Prince Consort from 1841, stood high in the favour of Queen Victoria, and was consecrated Bishop of Chester in 1848, whereupon he resigned the Mastership.



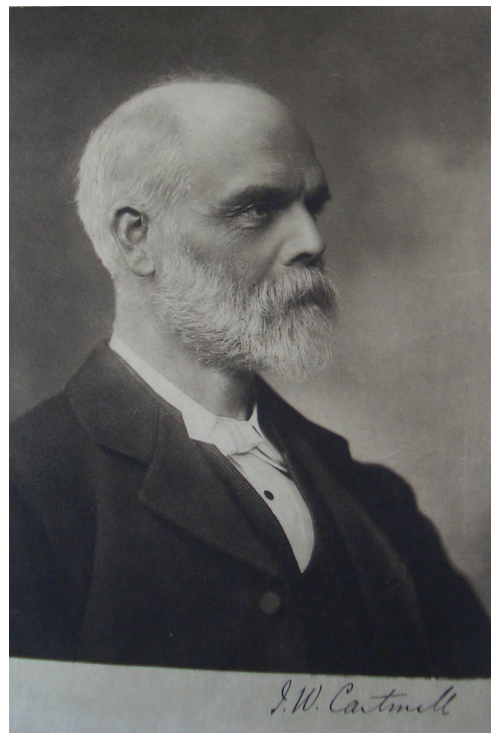
23rd Master

Joseph Shaw (1849): Resident in the Lodge for less than four weeks, Joseph Shaw's tenure as Master remains to this day the shortest in the College's history. A Fellow of the College since 1807, Shaw was said to have been distinguished neither "as a scholar [n]or as a mathematician, but was a man of good sense, a gentleman, easy-going in all things, himself a constant visitor to Newmarket, and...an excellent judge of a horse" (*Christ's College Magazine*, 1893, 2). His election on 12 January 1849 seems to have resulted after an impasse was reached between two more likely candidates. He resigned on 2 February and returned to the Fellows' Combination room which had been his home for 42 years. In the last years of his life, he was said to be "a vigilant guardian of the College grass" (Peile, Vol. 2, 353).



24th Master

James Cartmell (1849-1881): Cartmell proved to be one of Christ's most vigorous Masters. Whilst convinced of the necessity for reform in College and University, he was nevertheless cautious and anxious not to move before public opinion was suitably mature. He was the driving force behind the implementation of the College's transitional Statutes in 1860, which effected the first alterations since their original issue in 1506. Whilst future Master John Peile commented of Cartmell that "His far superior knowledge and experience in College affairs enabled him almost always to get his own way", students fondly remembered him leading his little boy into Chapel by the hand, the two of them sitting together in the Master's stall (Peile, Vol. 2, 437).



25th Master

Charles Anthony Swainson (1881-1887): Swainson was required to reorganise the whole accounts of the College in order to make the returns to the University rendered necessary by the new College Statutes of 1882. He was a deeply learned theologian and published numerous works on the creeds and liturgies of the Church. Noted for his disciplinarian tendencies – "nobody ever ventured to call on [him] in anything but a black morning coat and waistcoat" – Swainson was nevertheless chiefly remembered for being "A kindly old gentleman...whose whole life was...constantly pervaded with a sense of duty" (*Christ's College Magazine*, 1923, 246).



26th Master

John Peile (1887-1910): The first Master of the College not in holy orders, Peile was a distinguished classical scholar and linguist. He was an extraordinarily active and hugely popular Master, and the College prospered under him. He took a leading part in University business, strongly advocating movements for widening the spectrum of studies, female education and for bringing more students to Cambridge. As Master, he dedicated all his spare time to researching and writing about the College history and its former members. One of the results, his two-volume *Biographical Register* features in the exhibition. “He bubbled over with humour, naturally and irresistibly, never as if consciously making a jest, but because he saw all through his own humour, genial and kindly”, recalled one contemporary (*Christ’s College Magazine*, 1910, 153).



27th Master

Sir Arthur Shipley (1910-1927): “Quite rotund” in later life, Shipley had distinguished himself as a student, and latterly as a lecturer and reader, in the field of zoology (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*). His particular interest lay in parasitic worms. As Master, he renovated the Lodge extensively and, as a keen collector of furniture, fitted it out with great taste. During the First World War, he delighted in welcoming and entertaining the officers temporarily stationed in Christ’s, displaying, it was said, “an almost paternal anxiety” for their “comfort and well-being”. Shipley was rumoured to enjoy a bottle of port before breakfast every day (*Christ’s College Magazine*, 1991, 7).



28th Master

Norman McLean (1927-1936):

Affectionately known as 'Daddy McLean' by his students, Norman McLean was a theological scholar of considerable repute. Appointed lecturer in Hebrew at Christ's in 1903, McLean also held the post of University Lecturer in Aramaic until 1931. From 1895, he devoted his life's work to the preparation of the nine-volume Cambridge edition of the Greek Septuagint, complete with extensive critical apparatus. Kind, caring and deeply concerned for the welfare and interests of each of his students, he was a much-loved and highly-respected occupant of the Lodge. Poor health meant he had to resign the Mastership in 1936. His edition of the Septuagint was only half-finished upon his death in 1947.



29th Master

Sir Charles Galton Darwin (1936-

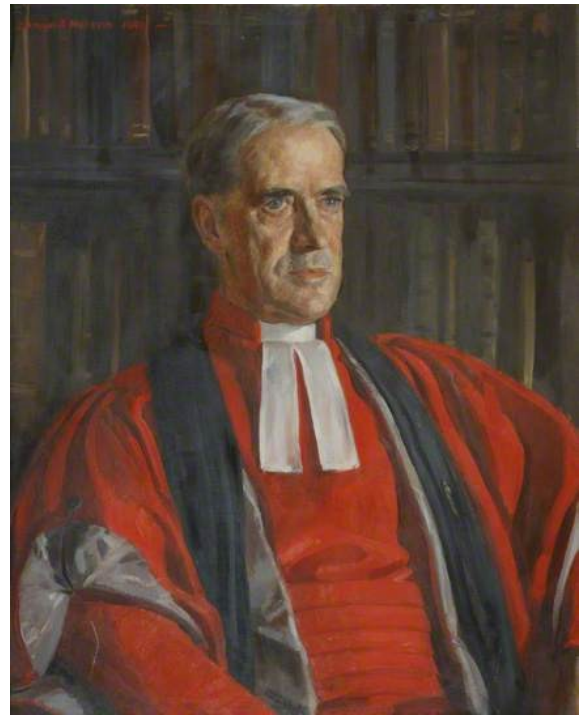
1939): Grandson and namesake of the pioneer of evolutionary theory, Darwin was himself one of the leading quantum physicists of the first half of the twentieth century. He terminated his brief Mastership in 1939 when he became director of the National Physical Laboratory. He was subsequently seconded to America during the Second World War, where he liaised over the development of the atomic bomb.



30th Master

Charles Earle Raven (1939-1950): Of Raven his contemporary and friend Owen Chadwick reminisced, “All his adult life he had been a great preacher and a natural leader of men: tall and spare, with chiselled features, brilliant eyes, a youthful appearance, dynamic energy, and a magical voice, he never spoke without riveting attention” (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*).

Fascinated by the intersection between faith and reason, Raven wrote widely on subjects as diverse as primitive Christianity and early English science. An army chaplain on the front line during the First World War, he was appointed the Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge in 1932. As Vice-Chancellor, he presented the first honorary degree awarded by the University to a woman – the Queen – in 1948.



31st Master

Brian Westerdale Downs (1950-1963): Dapper and debonair, when Downs wasn't teaching and researching about English and modern European foreign languages, he “delight[ed] in the gaming tables of Monte Carlo, or organis[ed] theatre parties and act[ed] as host to undergraduate play-readings” (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*). He was appointed as the University's first Professor of Scandinavian Studies in 1950, the year he was also elected Master of Christ's.

His most important works relate to the nineteenth-century Norwegian playwright and poet Henrik Ibsen.



32nd Master

The Lord Todd (1963-1978): One of the leading chemists of the twentieth century, Lord Todd received the Nobel Prize in 1957 in recognition of his pioneering biochemical research into the structure and synthesis of nucleotides, nucleosides and nucleotide co-enzymes. Following spells at Oxford and Manchester, Todd had been made Professor of Organic Chemistry at Cambridge in 1944, although his acceptance of the position had been dependent upon the promise that a new laboratory on Lensfield Road would be erected. Internationally decorated for his scientific research, and ennobled for his governmental work, Todd cut an imposing figure, known by his undergraduates and colleagues as 'Lord Todd Almighty'.



33rd Master

Sir John Plumb (1978-1982):

One of the most distinguished Cambridge historians of his era, Plumb transformed thinking about eighteenth-century Britain. An extraordinary teacher and compulsive writer, Plumb was Professor of Modern English History between 1966 and 1974, and was knighted in 1982. A natural collector, Plumb delighted in purchasing fine wines, silver, porcelain, artwork and furniture. He was a true *bon viveur* and held legendary social functions in the Master's Lodge, which, during his occupancy, became known familiarly as 'Jack's Palace'.

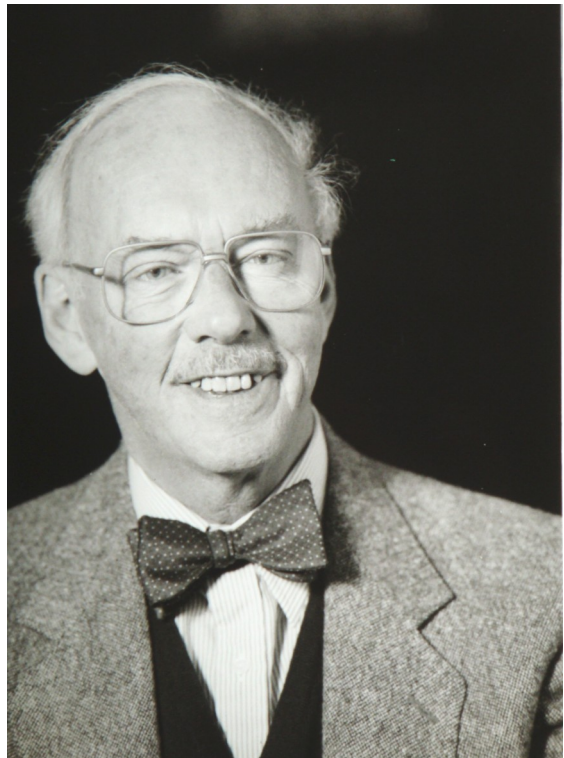


34th Master

Sir Hans Kornberg (1982-1995):

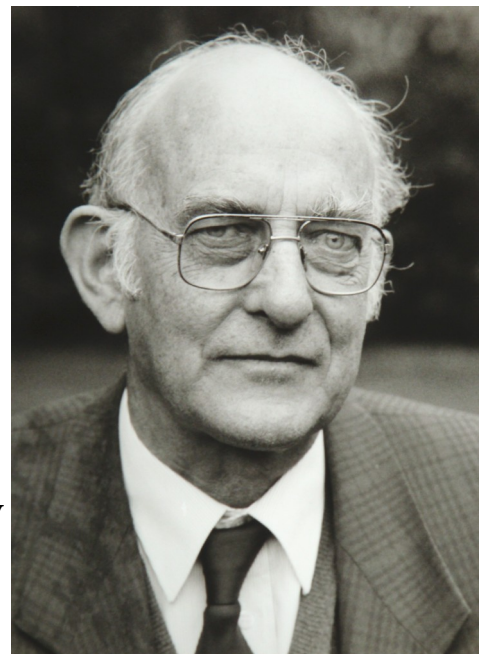
Appointed Professor of Biochemistry by Leicester University at the age of only 32, Kornberg was persuaded to come to Cambridge in 1975 by Lord Todd. He was duly elected to the William Dunn Chair of Biochemistry, a position he held for 20 years. In the years between 1976 and 1981, Kornberg was Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, and in recognition of this work was knighted in 1978. He was a hugely popular Master of Christ's, who had " an ability to

put people at their ease, and a memory so good he c[ould] recall the names of everyone in the College" (*Christ's College Magazine*, 1995, 7).



35th Master

Alan Munro (1995-2002): Having studied Natural Sciences at Christ's, Munro joined the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge in 1968, and set up a programme in cellular immunology. He worked at the Salk Institute in the USA, and was the Boerhaave Professor at the University of Leiden between 1976 and 1977. In 1989, he co-founded the highly successful Cambridge-based biotechnology company Immunology Ltd, specialising in immunotherapy. As Master, he played a vital role in helping to prepare for the 2005 quincentenary celebrations. Munro decorated the Lodge with his large collection of modern Scottish paintings, and, together with his wife, undertook significant landscaping in the Master's Garden.



36th Master

Malcolm Bowie (2002-2006): Professor Malcolm Bowie was the most eminent UK scholar of his generation in French studies. He held many key positions in the Humanities, including the Marshal Foch Chair of French at the University of Oxford between 1992 and 2002. Professor Bowie spearheaded the celebrations of Christ's 500th anniversary in 2005 and the fund-raising campaign associated with it, and entertained the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at one of the key events of that year. Bowie was universally acknowledged for the breadth of his learning and his beautiful writing style, evident not least in his critically-acclaimed 1998 work *Proust among the stars*, which won the 2001 Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism.



37th Master

Frank Kelly (2006-): Christ's incumbent Master, Frank Kelly is Professor of the Mathematics of Systems at Cambridge. His main research interests lie in random processes, networks and optimization. He works on the mathematics of very large-scale systems, such as telecommunication and transport networks. He spent the academic year 2001-2002 as a Visiting Professor at Stanford University in the USA. From 2003-2006 he served as Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK Government's Department for Transport, and in 2011-12 as a non-executive director of Autonomy plc. He is a Trustee of RAND Europe and Chair of the Council for the Mathematical Sciences. In 2013, he was awarded a CBE in the New Year's Honours List .



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[All of Christ's College except where otherwise stated]



The seal of Christ's College