

# FRIENDS OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE LIBRARY NEWSLETTER, September-October 2021



## A word of welcome...

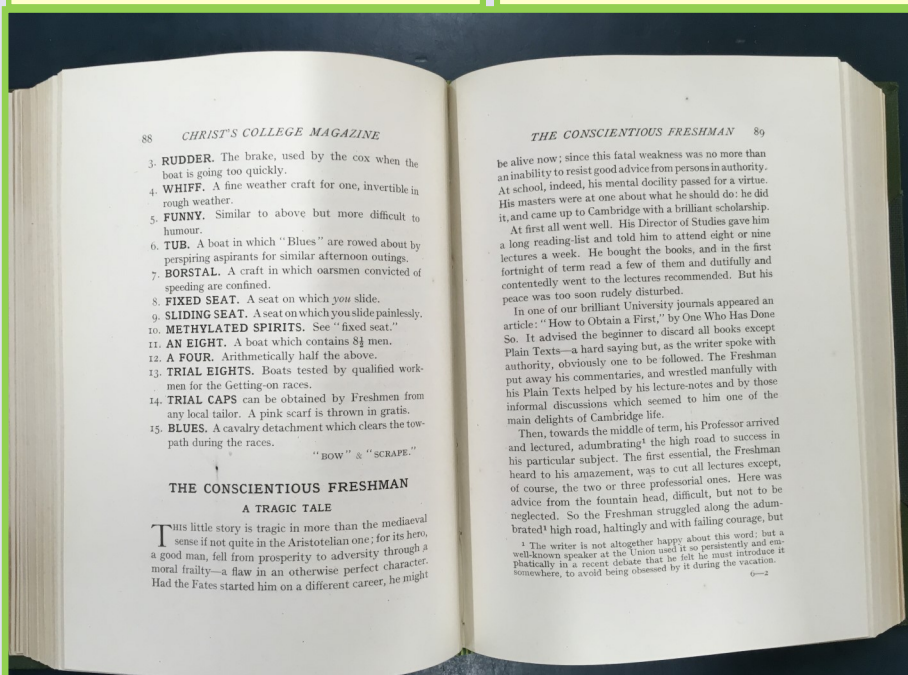
### From John Wagstaff, College Librarian

Dear Friends: Well, the calendar has once again rolled around to late September, meaning that in just a few short and increasingly hectic weeks the library will be playing host to groups of new and enthusiastic undergraduates and postgraduates. Not that things have been entirely quiet recently — the College is once again open to visitors, who are appearing in quite large numbers (partly, perhaps, because not all the colleges of Cambridge have reopened yet); and we have also recently been open again for Bed and Breakfast guests. Moreover, some postgraduate students are already in residence.

The library staff have been taking advantage of having an emptier than usual library to work on various projects, one of which is to create an online, searchable version of the *Christ's College Magazine*. Up to now we have only had a card index, arranged by author and subject. It's quite intriguing to see how the subjects tackled in the *Magazine* (which commenced publication in 1886) have changed over the years. Early issues often featured poetry, and travel writing (since there were fewer travel opportunities back then, it seems that anyone who had been to Europe or even beyond wrote a report for the *Magazine*). Memories of the College in past times also feature prominently.

Also included were short stories, often humorous. One such can be seen below: "The conscientious freshman: a tragic tale", written by one "Meden Agan" (early contributors were fond of using pseudonyms) and printed in the *Magazine* in 1922. According to the storyteller, the undergraduate in question suffers from one fatal weakness, i.e. "an inability to resist good advice from persons in authority". Unfortunately, this "good advice" (such as it is) turns out to be contradictory, reflecting the conflicting perspectives of the various persons (the student's tutor, a professor, a cleric and a former successful student). Almost inevitably this proves too much for our student, who suffers a sad fate. Clearly a warning for others!

Putting such trivialities aside, you'll also find in this newsletter some information from Amy Bowles about our **next exhibition**, which she is curating. It's a great joy to be able to tell our Friends about an exhibition once more, since we haven't had anything to show in the Old Library since early 2020. The exhibition opens to the public on 18 November, but we will, as usual, be having a reception for invited guests — including all our library **Friends** — on **Tuesday, 16 November**. Please look out for a separate invitation from me to that event, which will begin as usual at 6 p.m.

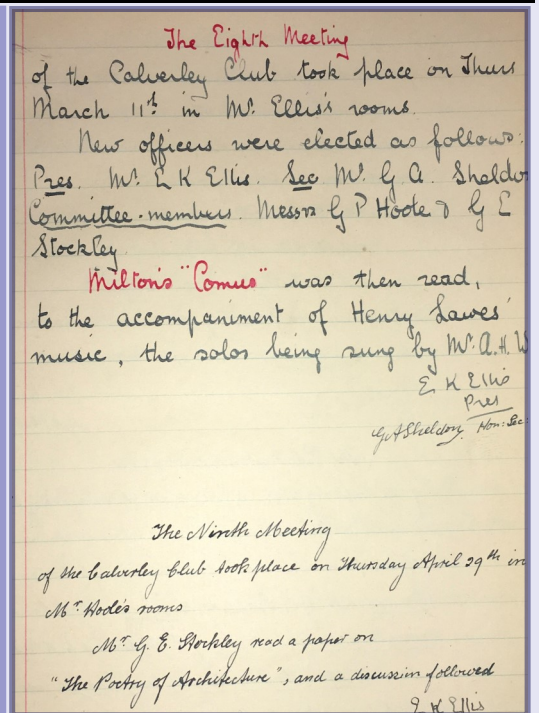


## Our winter exhibition: Poetry and Place in Cambridge

From Wordsworth to Sylvia Plath, poets have often been drawn to Cambridge. Our new exhibition explores the rich history of poetry about Cambridge by focusing on the poems and poets surrounded by the city. Ever since Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* described the Old Mill in Trumpington, poets have written about Cambridge spaces and places.

The exhibition includes works by well-known writers such as Milton, Chaucer, and Wordsworth, as well as by lesser-known poets like Mary Davys and James Payn. The history of poetry at Christ's College is well represented, with exhibits on Charles Stuart Calverley and the College's long-serving "scullion" and poet John Wisken. Some records of the College's literary societies survive in its Archives, including the meeting notes of the English Literary Society, also known as the Calverley Society, between 1919 and 1924 (right).

We do hope you will join us for the exhibition in the newly re-opened Old Library, from Thursday 18 November. The exhibition is free, and will be open from 2pm until 4pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays until 17th February 2022.



The English Literary Society enjoy  
Milton's *Comus* in 1920

## Celebrating Dante

September 2021 marks the 600th anniversary of the death of Dante, probably best known for the *Inferno-Purgatorio-Paradiso* trilogy that is collectively known as *The Divine Comedy*. Our library owns several editions, including a tiny printed one published in Florence in 1901. We show it here alongside a modern 50 pence coin.

*The Divine Comedy* was not published until 1472, and circulated in manuscript before then. Since the earliest examples of printing in the west date from around 1450, the fact that Dante's work was printed relatively early reflects its importance. The oldest printed copy of *The Divine Comedy* held at Christ's was published in Venice in 1544.



**We would love to hear from you!** If you would like to send us comments about this *Newsletter*, arrange a visit to the College Library, sponsor a book, make a donation, or simply share some memories, please contact us at [library@christs.cam.ac.uk](mailto:library@christs.cam.ac.uk); by telephone at 01223-334950; or by post at Christ's College Library, St Andrew's Street, Cambridge CB2 3BU.