

FRIENDS OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE LIBRARY NEWSLETTER, May 2020



A Word of Welcome... From John Wagstaff, College Librarian

As I write to you from Cambridge on a sunny Wednesday morning, the university is beginning to give serious thought to what happens when lockdown eases sufficiently to allow more regular operations to resume, and eventually allows our students to return. This is something that we are all looking forward to, even though home working has not, perhaps, been quite as hard as some of us might have expected originally.

You may well be wondering what the librarians are doing when we don't actually have a physical library to run. The answer is: plenty! One of the results – the completion of a project to update our “Old Library Timeline” – is described below. We are also contributing content to the university's new Archives Management System, “ArchivesSpace”, which will eventually replace the former

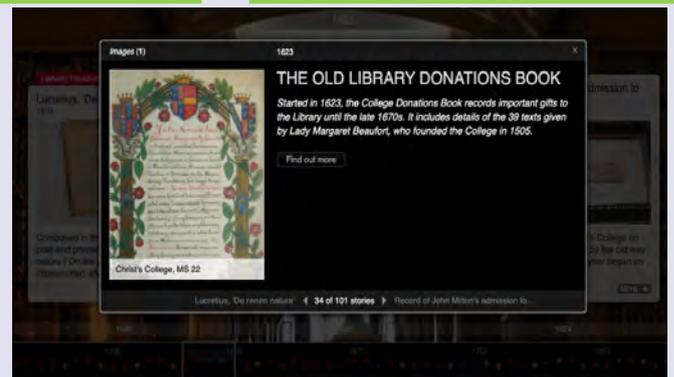
Janus system (Janus, rather ironically in view of its name, is becoming life-expired). I'll report more in regard to ArchivesSpace in our next Newsletter. Furthermore, we are working our way through many subject reading lists, so as to ensure that when our students do return they will have the print books they need; and in the meantime we are finding e-book equivalents for them where available. So: “interesting” times, and like everyone else in the university we are doing our best to stay positive and to stay useful.

Take a New Look at our Old Library Timeline!

The Old Library is firmly in the digital age, thanks to our newly updated online Old Library Timeline. Improving the timeline has involved adding new examples of the library's treasures, and providing extra information about significant alumni, donors, and events in the library's (and the College's) history. This has brought the total number of entries in the timeline to 101! We have also

included information on our past exhibitions, and provide links to the online versions of exhibitions where relevant. Lastly, the timeline now directs users to related material on our 'Christ's Treasures' library blog (see <http://christstreasures.blogspot.com/>). Two images from the Timeline appear below. That on the left gives details of our oldest manuscript item (a lectionary,

in Greek, from ca 1080), while the one on the right shows the College's beautiful Donations Book (MS 22), which records significant gifts to the library up to the 1670s. The link to the Timeline is at <https://www.christs.cam.ac.uk/old-library-timeline>, where you will also find some helpful hints on how to get the most out of it. Why not take a look, and let us know your thoughts?



Hunting Christ's College through Old Books (1)

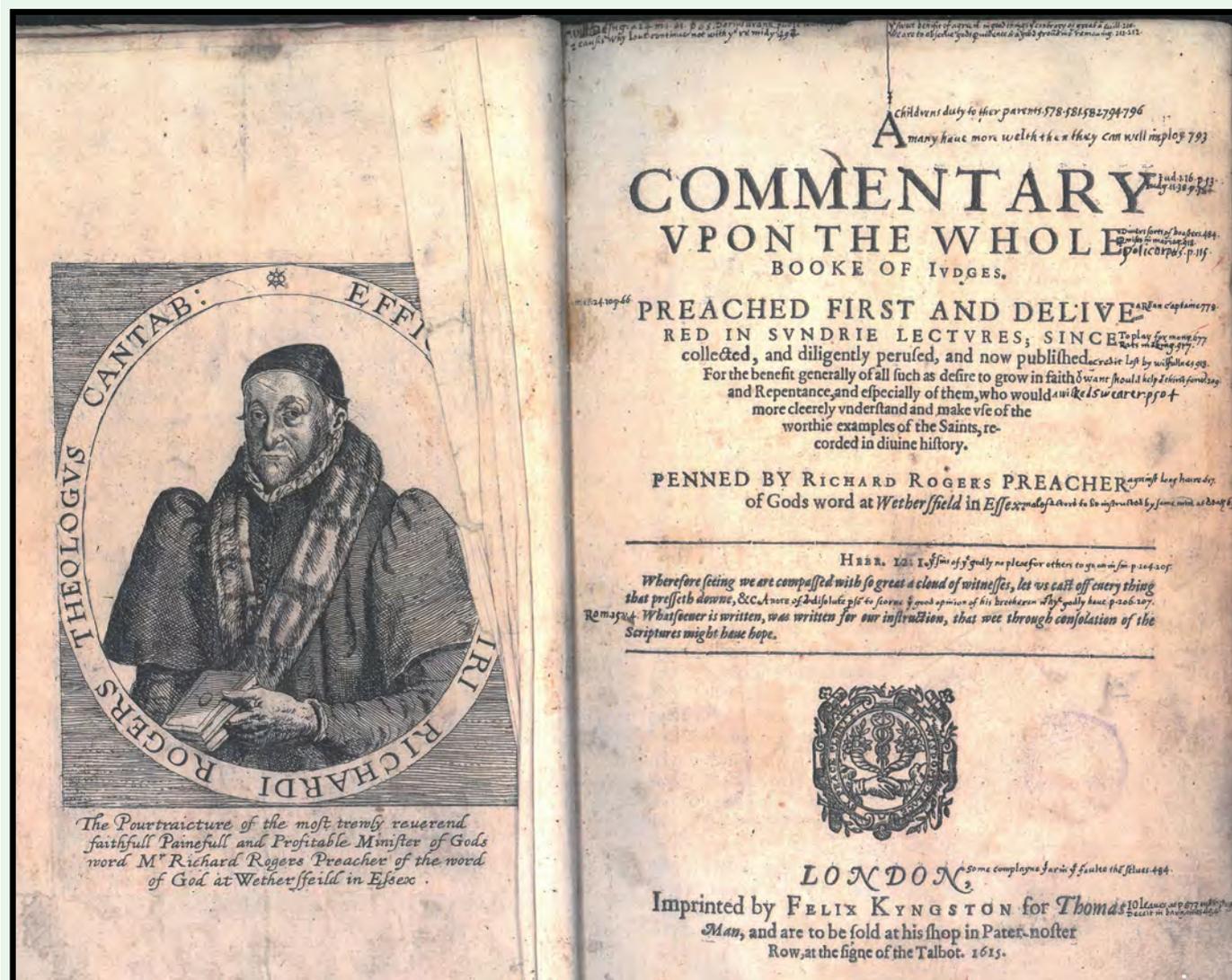
We're always delighted to hear from our Library Friends, and for this Newsletter we've managed to persuade a long-time Friend, Bill Hines, to write about his bibliographic endeavours at Aberystwyth University Library. Bill works on what is called "book provenance" – meaning that he examines books (usually old books) for signs of their previous owners. Perhaps one of these owners has written his/her name in the book, with a date; perhaps there is a friendly inscription in a book given as a gift; or maybe there is a personal bookplate (or more than one). Having found evidence of ownership of this sort, Bill's next step is to try to find out more, and to make connections. Fortunately for us, during his researches he has found connections with a number of figures associated with Christ's College.

Bill writes: After a working life largely wasted in the support of ever changing academic and governmental goals in modern day academe, balancing library budgets and embracing the delights of new technology, albeit with some distaste, it has been a relief to while away my declining years in pursuit of the old books that first attracted me into the library world. As a retirement project I have been looking at the provenance of special collections in Aberystwyth University Library, seeking out traces of the great and the good, and ways in which their reading may have influenced them. Classic items were already well known, so for example the library holds the Warburton Shakespeare, used and annotated by Samuel Johnson in the production of his dictionary. However, other unexpected links have become apparent across the collection, including books with connections to Jonathan Swift and Horace Walpole.

It has also been interesting to look at books written by Christ's men and to trace their impact. A classic example of such a book would be Richard Rogers, whose Commentary upon the whole booke of Judges was published in 1615 (see the illustration on the next page of this Newsletter). Rogers was one of many eminent Puritan divines who studied at Christ's, and our copy was purchased and heavily annotated by William Dowsing, the iconoclast who smashed images in many Suffolk and Cambridge churches at the time of the Civil War. William Perkins, another noted Puritan author in the late 16th century, produced a mass of scholarly writing that was still influencing Richard Jones of Wern, an important early Calvinistic Methodist in rural Wales, some two centuries later. Sadly, no great links to Milton or Darwin have turned up yet, although one or two of Darwin's associates, including members of the Hooker family, have appeared in the lists, and Aberystwyth does hold an interesting letter about the Welsh translation of Paradise Lost in 1819.

One slight offshoot of this work has been the discovery of a number of books owned by Christ's students in the past, and I have had great fun tracing the careers of obscure clerics and members of the landed gentry. I had located a 1620 copy of Pindar owned by John Sturges (MA1709) a few years ago, and was pleased to see a 1581 copy of Jewel's Apologia, also owned by him, turning up in a Blackwell Antiquarian sale catalogue at the end of last year, albeit with wrongly identified provenance. Sturges led a quiet life as a Prebendary of Winchester Cathedral in the 1720s and 30s, but his grandson was briefly Home Secretary in the 1820s. Other Christ's figures include William Danby, who created a mini Stonehenge on his estate in Yorkshire(!); George Lake Russell, a 19th century Chancery barrister who was the son of a wealthy Chief Justice of Bengal; and "Young Roscius", William Henry West Betty the childhood actor prodigy, who was briefly a student here. From the beginning of the 20th century a copy of W.W. Skeat's Etymological Dictionary of the English Language threw up an amusing letter that he sent to Professor John Rhys, the celebrated Celtic scholar, about issues of Welsh pronunciation. All in all an eclectic mix, and the hunt goes on!

Hunting Christ's College through Old Books (2)



The title-page and frontispiece of the *Commentary upon the Whole Booke of Judges* by Christ's alumnus Richard Rogers, published in London in 1615. This is one of several treasures to have been investigated by Bill Hines in the course of his provenance research at Aberystwyth University.

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; by telephone at 01223-334950; or by post at Christ's College Library, St Andrew's Street, Cambridge CB2 3BU.