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Welcome to Issue Three of Insight. I am writing this introduction in somewhat different circumstances than the previous two years, as I am sitting in a room in Back Quad which has become the temporary library office for the Long Vacation whilst a full scale refurbishment project takes place in the historic library building.

The refurbishment of the Upper and Lower Libraries had always been planned to be the last part of our long term plans to extend the library building under the Provost’s Garden, but as the date for the full project remains uncertain it was agreed to go ahead with the refurbishment separately. This was a timely decision because the heating and lighting systems in the historic library are long overdue for replacement, and concern has been felt in the College for some years that the systems might fail altogether. The floorboards have to come up in both the Upper and Lower Libraries to replace the heating and wiring, so it was decided to take the opportunity to undertake a full scale renovation of both parts of the building in the shortest possible timescale in order to minimise disruption to library users. It is intended that next year’s Insight will be a “buildings special” as I have asked the members of the project team, including the specialist conservators working on the stonework, plaster and timber, to contribute to what I expect to be a bumper issue.

Immediately after the end of Trinity Term a team of removal specialists from Crown Fine Arts undertook the packing and removal to storage of all the books from the Lower Library, some 35,000 volumes, a feat which was achieved in less than a week. The contractors started the following week, working to a very tight timescale in order to allow us to re-open the Lower Library to students at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term, when the removal process will be reversed. While the wholesale emptying of the Lower Library was taking place on the ground floor, upstairs a second team of fine art specialists from Crown were carefully wrapping and packing our manuscript collection and the globes, orrery and statue of Queen Philippa. These are now all in storage for six months until the work in the Upper Library is completed at the beginning of next year. Images of some parts of the move are displayed here.

In the meantime, to whet the appetite for next year’s “building special” I am pleased to include in this year’s issue an article by my former colleague Veronika Vernier on the plaster ceiling in the Upper Library. Other articles include a paper by Will Poole from New College on the Library of Thomas Barlow, whose donation of a large collection of books to the College in the late seventeenth century was one of the main drivers for the construction of the Upper Library in the 1690’s. Mark Rankin from James Madison University has written about the Queen’s copy of Tyndale’s Whole Works which has an interesting provenance and has added to his research project on perceptions of Henry VIII after the enactment of the Royal Supremacy in 1535. Last but not least Jane Eagan of the Oxford Conservation Consortium has written the third in her series on the conservation of our Henrician manuscripts.

As always I am most grateful to all the contributors and in particular to Lynette Dobson who has produced the Newsletter for us and taken many of the photographs.

If you have ideas for future articles or indeed would like to contribute, please contact me at amanda.saville@queens.ox.ac.uk

Amanda Saville
Librarian
July 2013

Cover images: A shelf of bound antiquarian pamphlets and tracts in our Select Store; the miniature globe inside the Upper Library orrery.
Thomas Barlow’s books at Queen’s

Thomas Barlow (1607–91) (fig. 1) was one of the more interesting of seventeenth-century Oxford’s ‘public intellectuals’. He started out as an undergraduate at Queen’s in the 1620s, and rose successively as Bodley’s Librarian (1652–60), Provost of Queen’s College (1658), Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity (1660), Archdeacon of Oxford (1664), and finally Bishop of Lincoln (1675). As Provost of Queen’s, he succeeded another great scholar, Gerard Langbaine, who had married his predecessor’s widow and eventually died ‘of an extrem cold’ caught from overwork in the Bodleian. Langbaine had cultivated at Queen’s in the interregnum a tactfully royalist culture which attracted many future loyalist statesmen and intellectuals. Queen’s during Barlow’s tenure as Bodley’s Librarian was home to such future luminaries as Sir Joseph Williamson, who was to serve as secretary for state and second President of the Royal Society of London. His almost exact contemporary Sir Robert Southwell had also been a student at Queen’s in the 1650s, where he turned his hand to poetry; some quirky verse survives on, for instance, musical meetings in interregnum Oxford, as well as the death of a New College choirboy who fell out of a mulberry tree and brained himself.1 Southwell later became a prominent diplomat and, like Williamson, President of the Royal Society of London. A less worldly contemporary was the stupor mundi Thomas Hyde, a man who, like Barlow, would become Bodley’s Librarian too, as well as holding chairs in both Arabic and Hebrew. Hyde specialised in Persian and Turkish, and even dabbled in Chinese, the first English scholar to do so in any depth.

Queen’s over these decades was indeed a bookish place. At the time when Barlow was an undergraduate, the College opened an undergraduate library distinct from that of the fellows, the ‘Taberdars Library’, to which Barlow would later donate at least one book.2 From these earlier decades too survives the lively diary of Thomas Crossfield of Queen’s, to whom we owe much of our knowledge of the social life of the College at that time. When Langbaine died, he bequeathed a portion of his books to the Bodleian and another to Queen’s, a custom Barlow too would follow. After the Restoration the College Library became a well-known spot for academic tourism, largely because of the alleged sample of the devil’s handwriting there: ‘... that dung fork, pothook hand / That in Queen’s Colledge Library does stand.’3 (fig. 2)

Barlow, who had presided over the Bodleian’s reception of Langbaine’s friend John Selden’s library in the late 1650s, made plans to bequeath his own collection long before his death. He first announced his intentions on 2 June 1675 after a good dinner in Queen’s. Barlow declared that he intended to leave all his books to the Bodleian Library, such as they had not already, and the residue to Queen’s. He had wavered over which institution to prefer, but in the end resolved upon the Bodleian as his chief beneficiary, saying that ‘he had alreadly six hundred volumes at least which the University library had not.’ A week after this dinner, the fastidious Savilian professor of Geometry John Wallis, who had been present, wrote down a testimonial as evidence of Barlow’s intentions, presumably lest the bishop-elect renge on his promise.4

The portion of Barlow’s library unwanted by the Bodleian eventually arrived in Queen’s in the mid-1690s. The Bodleian accounts show that almost £40 was paid over two years to Queen’s for ‘Carriage of the Bishop of Lincolne’s Bookes giuen

Fig. 1: Portrait of Thomas Barlow from the College’s collection.

Fig. 2: “The devil’s handwriting”, from Teseo Ambrogio’s 1539 publication, Introductio in Chaldaicam lingua[m], Syriaca[m] atq[ue] Armenica[m], & dece[m] alias linguas. Sel.c.29.
to the Library’, which suggests that Queen’s organised carriage from Buckden, where Barlow’s episcopal residence was, and that the Bodleian agreed to reimburse the College, and send on duplicates.\(^5\)

We do not really know how many books came to Queen’s from the Bodleian, or indeed how large the initial shipment was, not least because both libraries duplicate-stripped their stock at many points over the subsequent centuries. Today, Queen’s librarians have spotted about half a thousand genuine Barlow books in the library. Given that the Bodleian was very likely already to hold copies of popular or topical books, as well as by law most seventeenth-century London im-

prints, we might predict that the Bodleian was more likely to receive out-of-the-way Barlow books, having no need for Barlow’s more common titles. Certainly, the corollary holds: the Barlow books at Queen’s are dominated by recent Oxford and London imprints, a great many of which are presentation copies from their authors, and a great many of which are annotated by Barlow. The Queen’s Barlow books have usually been treated as the poor cousins of the Lincoln books, and quite unfairly so. Indeed, it is somewhat puzzling why there are not more Barlow books in Queen’s, as one would have thought that Barlow’s duplicates as identified against the Bodleian stock in the 1690s must have exceeded his singletons. So in theory there should be thousands of Barlow books in Queen’s to match the thousands in the Bodleian; following the Barlow bequest, the entry in the College’s Benefactors Book (fig. 3), we might note, spoke of ‘the old library not being capacious enough for so many books, a burning desire arose to build a new library’ – as of course transpired.

Despite the comparative neglect of the Queen’s Barlow books by scholars, they are accessible because the Queen’s librarians have done more to identify and describe their Barlow books than their Bodleian counterparts. And for the reasons stated above they are attractive often precisely because the Bodleian already held an (unmarked) copy, and Barlow’s (marked) copy thus went to his own college. Thinking just of ex dono authoris or editoris copies, work with inscriptions in the Queen’s books shows up patterns of donation and friendship that are not visible in the Bodleian: presentation copies from the orientalist Thomas Hyde, for instance (fig. 4);\(^6\) and, over a period of a
decade, the major works of the prominent churchman Edward Stillingfleet, including his *The Reformation Justify’d* (London, 1674), *Defence of the Discourse concerning the Idolatry practised in the Church of Rome* (1676), *Unreasonableness of Separation* (1681), and *Origines Britanniæ* (1685).7 Other authors presenting books to Barlow surviving now only in Queen’s College include John Fell, Richard Allestree, Samuel Parker, Edward Pococke, Thomas Smith, Ralph Cudworth, Isaac Walton, and a host of lesser known names, including various visiting foreign scholars.8

Authors often presented books to Barlow with lavish inscriptions and fulsome praise: witness Barlow’s copy of Edward Benlowe’s bibliographically exquisite volume of poetry *Theophila* (1652) (fig. 5), complete with engravings printed from a rolling press in Benlowes’s own house, and this copy adorned with extra manuscript verse personalised for Barlow.9

Barlow, ever a conservative and indeed territorial scholar and theologian, had no qualms annotating sensitive texts, even presentation copies, with often fiercely hostile adversaria. A staunch Calvinist in his theology if not his ecclesiology, Barlow was bound to find, for instance, the High Anglican Jeremy Taylor’s notorious *Unum Necessarium* of 1655, with its attack on the traditional Reformed understanding of the doctrine of original sin, particularly offensive. His pen sleeps in his hand until the offending sixth chapter, at which point it wakes up, noisily; and we know that Barlow was at the time being encouraged to write against Taylor by his fellow casuist Robert Sanderson.10 The famous Cambridge scholar Ralph Cudworth sent Barlow a copy of his massive *True Intellectual System of the Universe* upon its publication in 1678 – but again Barlow in the privacy of his own study was not impressed, pointing out inconsistencies and peppering the margins with sardonic comments.11 This copy also shows Barlow’s precision as a reader: he received the book on 27 January 1678, and he has therefore adjusted the printed date to 1677. Again, where Cudworth is content to refer anonymously to ‘a Modern Atheistick Writer’, Barlow comments in Latin that this is clearly Descartes or Hobbes, and supplies exact page-citations from both (fig. 6).

Roman Catholic scholars sending Barlow books might expect their presents to be savaged by his pen for all his personal good manners: on paper one of the most consistently apoplectic anti-Papists of his age, Barlow took an almost visceral pleasure in collecting Roman Catholic books in order to wipe his pen across them, spilling out his rage, for instance, at a three-headed depiction of the triune God on one title-page now in the Bodleian: ‘Imago Trinitatis monstrosa simul et impia: Cerberum referens forte, non Deum.’12 One Catholic book in Queen’s was a gift of *The Church History of Brittany* (i.e. Britain) published in Rouen in 1668 by the Benedictine Serenus Cressy.13 The inscription by Barlow, who may first have encountered Cressy decades earlier when both men frequented the Great Tew circle, is memorable: the book was presented to Barlow by a man whose name is hard to make out, but who is described as of the ‘Insula Regalis’ of Oxford (I think this refers to Rewley), and – ‘(quod nolem)’ – a Roman Catholic. (Barlow liked to add the parenthetical ‘quod nolem’ to his title-page identifications of authors when he did not like their religion or regretted an ‘Oxford’ man holding ‘Cambridge’ opinions.) Against the title-page’s claim that its matter would be ‘evidently demonstrated’, Barlow has erupted: ‘what? the Roman Religion? The present Roman religion? continued from the Beginning? and this demonstrated? and evidently demonstrated?’, and so on (fig. 7, overleaf).
A final example of such adversarial annotation concerns Barlow’s copies of the so-called New Year Books of John Fell, the pocket-sized editions of classical and patristic authors produced by Dean Fell at his own cost every New Year for presentation to his pupils and friends. The relationship between these two giants of Restoration Oxford is particularly fascinating. In some ways the two were allies: both shared an exalted notion of the role of senior academics and bishops in the political and ecclesiastical life of the nation. Both were suspicious of educational innovation, jealous guardians of the primacy of the Oxonian curriculum, and nervous about threats to their intellectual monopoly, particularly in the form of the new science, the content of which fascinated and horrified both men, and the institutional claims of which they both staunchly denied. But the two men represented opposite camps within Oxford: Barlow the doyen of the theological faculty, Fell the autocrat of the Arminian enclave of Christ Church. In private Fell probably considered Barlow a Calvinist bigot; in private Barlow certainly enjoyed suspecting Fell of popery. The publication of George Bull’s controversial *Harmonia apostolica* (1670) provoked a series of Latin lectures from Barlow between 1673 and 1676; Fell, of course, was a backer of Bull. Yet Fell gave Barlow copies of his books, and several of Barlow’s New Year Books survive, including an Aratus and a Nemesius in Queen’s. Now Fell had been at some pains to present his Nemesius as a Christian natural philosopher and an orthodox figure, and he also supplied his edition with an appendix of his own supportive notes, replete with side-swipes at modern experimental philosophy. Barlow was not convinced by Fell’s Nemesius. He annotated his own copy with citations documenting Nemesius’s apostasy into the Origenist heresy, and against some of the notes to the edition, the Calvinist Episcopalian called the glossator, that is Fell himself, a purveyor of ‘papistico-heretical’ opinions (fig. 8, point 4).

As we have seen, Barlow was an obsessive annotator of his books, and it is often commented that his library opens windows onto the intellectual culture of seventeenth-century Oxford in a manner unparalleled by other resources of the time. And yet this is usually said thinking solely of the Lincoln series in the Bodleian, of which only a portion actually derived from Barlow’s library. Although we are simply not sure how many genuine Barlow books survive in either the Lincoln series or in Queen’s, it is high time for both scholars of the book and intellectual historians of
the period to recognise the distinctive nature and value of Barlow’s books now in Queen’s College Library.

1Southwell’s poetic notebook is Bodleian, MS Eng. poet. f 6.
3Thomas Flatman, Poems and Songs (London, 1674), p. 88. It is really a page of Theseo Ambrogio’s Itinera Mundi linguum (Pavia, 1539). For the Devil’s Hand at Queen’s see Wood, Life and Times, i. 498-99; Magrath, The Queen’s College, ii. 62, 278-79. The Devil’s Hand has been cut out of the Bodleian’s Selden copy!
4Bodleian, MS Eng. misc. b 247, fols. 178-79.
5Macray, Annals, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1890), pp. 157-58. Bodleian Accounts 1676-1813, accounts for 1692-3, records £23 paid to the Bursar of Queen’s. The following year a further £14 6s 11d was paid out for the same purpose (fols. 23v, 24v).
6Both the copies in Queen’s College of Hyde’s edition of the Malay Gospels in roman type were presented to Barlow by Hyde (Oxford, 1677) (shelfmark UU.i.252, copies 1 and 2), as was Hyde’s edition of Abraham ben Mordechai Parissol, Itineria Mundi (Oxford, 1691), shelfmark Y.a.34, possibly the last presentation copy Barlow received before his death.
7Respectively Queen’s College printed books UU.b.29(3), UU.b.5469, UU.b.5466, and 30.C.11.
8Some ‘lesser known names’ presenting their own works to Barlow now held in Queen’s College, in descending order of publication, for brevity’s sake only back to 1670 (there are many prior examples): John Curtois, A Discourse shewing that Kings have their Being and Authority from God (London, 1685) [UU.b.13(3)]; Luke Beaulieu, The Holy Inquisition (London, 1681) [II.d.85]; Andrew Sall, Votum pro pace Christiana (Oxford, 1678) [UU.b.5405]; John Lamphire, owner of the MS used to print for the first time Thomas Lydiat, Canones chronologici (Oxford, 1675) [EE.e.65]; William Asshetton, The Causes of Scandal and Persecution (London, 1674) [UU.b.4142]; Isaac Basier, The Dead Mans Real Speech (London, 1673) [UU.b.140]; William Asshetton, The Danger of Hypocrasie (London, 1673) [UU.b.21(10)]; Paulus Tarczali, Brevis dissertation de vocatione gentium, et conversion Judorum (Oxford, 1672) [UU.b.1231(2), with a MS presentation epistle]; Johann Heinrich Otho, Historia doctorum Misnricorum (Oxford, 1672) [UU.r.326]; Richard Berry, A Sermon upon the Epiphany (Dublin, 1672) [UU.b.21(14) copy 1]; Daniel Whity, Logos tes pisteos or An Endeavour to Evince the Certainty of Christian Faith (Oxford, 1671) [UU.b.5703]; William Durham, A Sermon Preached before the Artillery Company (London, 1671) [UU.b.21(8) copy 1]; William Asshetton, Toleration Disapprov’d and Condemn’d (Oxford, 1670) [UU.b.4143]; John Parry, Nehemiah, or the Excellent Governour (Oxford, 1670) [UU.b.21(6)].
9Queen’s College, PP.r.5, copy 2.
10MS Tanner 52, fol. 172, letter of 28 September 1655, and MS Ballard 9, fol. 3, letter of 28 September 1656, MS Tanner 52, fol. 212, letter of 17 September 1657, all of Robert Sanderson to Thomas Barlow, with advice to Barlow on how best to respond to Taylor’s book.
11Queen’s College, FF.g.231, copy 2.
12Bodleian, A 2.18 Linc. Barlow then cross-references to the Primer of Salisbury (Rouen, 1555), pp. 86, 705, for other instances of ‘monstris haec Trinitatis Imago.’
13Queen’s College, 15.E.5.
14Barlow’s annotated copy of Bull’s book is Bodleian, B 7.11 Linc.
15Queen’s College, BB.p.112, against the passage on grace in the notes, p. 42.

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A John Day William Tyndale presentation copy in Queen’s College Library?

Mark Rankin
James Madison University

I visited the Queen’s College Library during summer 2012 in order to consult its copy of John Foxe’s edition of The whole worke of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doct. Barnes (1573) (shelf mark 67.B.12), along with its copy of Edward Fox’s De vera differentia regiae potestatis et ecclesiasticae (1534) (shelf mark Uu.b.2014). My interest in both books emerges from my research on perceptions and representations of Henry VIII from 1535, when Parliament enacted the Royal Supremacy, into the seventeenth century.

William Tyndale is an important figure in this story. He translated the New Testament into English and was the first to print any part of the English Bible. Later, in a banderole (i.e., scroll) accompanying a woodcut illustration of his strangulation prior to being executed, he is said to have prayed at the moment of his death that God would open the eyes of Henry VIII, who did not support Tyndale’s translation activities. This illustration appeared in John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs (first published 1563) and in the biography of Tyndale which affords a preface to the
Tyndale section of *The whole workes* (sig. A4r, fig. 1, overleaf). According to a later account, which is probably spurious, Henry is supposed to have described Tyndale’s non-translation prose work *Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) as “a book for me and all kings to read.” Nevertheless, Henry did not approve of Tyndale’s *Practice of Prelates* (1530), which opposed Henry’s attempt to divorce Catherine of Aragon. Besides contributing to an explosion of printed propaganda surrounding the divorce question, *Prelates* also contains Foxe’s possible source for Tyndale’s desire that Henry’s eyes be opened. Tyndale voices this sentiment twice in *Prelates*, and either Foxe or his printer, John Day, applies it to the Tyndale woodcut at the moment of death. Reuse of the woodcut illustration with the banderole containing this saying in the *Whole workes* indicates the extent to which Tyndale’s oppositional relationship to Henry VIII had come to define his career by the 1570s.

In preparing an edition of *Practice of Prelates* for publication in the Catholic University of America’s Independent Works of William Tyndale series (2000- ), I set out last summer to consult every copy of the *Whole workes*, which contains *Prelates*, extant in Oxford. The Queen’s College copy of the *Whole workes* contains a provocative provenance and intriguing evidence of possible use by early readers which sheds light upon Tyndale’s importance in Tudor England. On the page opposite the appearance of the illustration of Tyndale’s execution in the Queen’s copy, an early italic hand has intriguingly written “Ex dono Iohannis Day Typographi / 22° Junij 1576” (A3v). John Day printed both this book and the *Book of Martyrs* and was among the most sophisticated printers in Elizabethan London. He enjoyed the patronage of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, and of William Cecil, one of Queen Elizabeth’s principal advisors. Day possesses no known connection to Queen’s, and the blind-tooled leather binding of this book does not suggest a presentation copy. The gift may have constituted part of a purchase funded by Day, or, as seems more likely, it may have come to Queen’s through a bequest from another donor.

Admittedly tenuous as it might be, evidence does exist to suggest that the Queen’s copy may have come to the College from Archbishop Parker via his successor, Archbishop Edmund Grindal. The latter was a Cambridge man, but he bequeathed dozens of books to Queen’s in conjunction with his foundation of a grammar school at St Bees, in his native Cumberland, and in honor of the College’s historical commitment to educating students of that county. This copy of the Whole workes does not appear on the handlist of those Grindal volumes now identifiable in the Library. Nevertheless, it contains markings in red crayon throughout its margins, which draw attention to passages concerning royal authority in a manner consistent with the use of red crayon by Parker and his team of researchers in scouring Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and other contemporary printed books for evidence of the antiquity of the Church of England (fig. 2). In addition, the Queen’s copy contains a number of substantial marginal annotations in an early secretary script that focus upon the nature of the Eucharist, a subject in which Parker and his associates took considerable interest.

The link between this copy and Parker’s circle is speculative but does suggest a viable avenue for further research into its early provenance. Day had operated a printing press at Lambeth under Parker’s supervision, and if he did offer the book to Parker, someone may have inscribed sig. A3v as an aide memoir to document the book’s origin in Day’s gift. The inscription in the Queen’s copy certainly dates from Grindal’s archbishopric, follow-
ing Parker’s death in 1575, when memory of the book’s origin may have been fading. Nevertheless, Day’s presentation volumes to his patrons were typically much more lavishly decorated than is this book.\(^7\) Other copies of the Tyndale *Whole workes* gifted by Day survive. The copy now at King’s College, Cambridge, was given to the college by Day, and at least one deluxe copy (now held at the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York) was bound at Lambeth and presented to Queen Elizabeth.\(^8\)

From the present vantage point, a possible connection between the Queen’s copy and Day via Parker can only be suggested.


\(^2\)Details on Day’s career are taken from Elizabeth Evenden, *Patents, Pictures and Patronage: John Day and the Tudor Book Trade* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).


\(^5\)See for instance Parker’s edition of Aelfric’s *A testimonie of antiquitie* (1568), an Easter-day sermon bowdlerized in support of an Elizabethan stance toward the Eucharist.


\(^7\)Evenden, *Patents, Pictures and Patronage*, pp. 107-12.

\(^8\)Evenden, *Patents, Pictures and Patronage*, pp. 111, 146.

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**The plaster ceiling and its Masters at The Queen’s College Library (1692-1756)**

Veronika Vernier

On entering the Upper Library at The Queen’s College for the first time who would not agree with Nikolaus Pevsner who claims: ‘The library interior is gorgeous’. To explain this he highlights the ‘plaster ceiling with outstanding decoration by James Hands, dated 1695’ and offers a detailed description:

“The three principal panels were probably intended to have paintings. Instead in 1756 Thomas Roberts added his dainty Rocco decoration. Above the windows runs a beautiful stucco frieze of swags and garlands, also late C17, but much more delicate than the ceiling work. This has been assigned to Vanderstein, who was paid for ‘fretwork in the new Library...’ The south wall has a splendid portal with columns, seated stucco figures of Arts and Science on the broken segmental pediment, and the coat of arms of Provost Halton above attended by many cherubs (fig.1).

Timothy Halton, Provost from 1677 to 1704, is widely regarded to have been closely involved in the design of the building and furnishing of the Upper Library.

As Pevsner emphasised, a key part of the interior was the plasterwork for the Library ceiling.
Fortunately, the names of the three plasterers, each with their distinctive styles, who decorated the Library are known. Work was carried out in two phases, by James Hands and Johannes Vandersteen as part of the initial building project in the last years of the seventeenth century, and completed by Thomas Roberts from 1756.

**The ceiling panels by James Hands (c.1664-1718)**

The frames of the ceiling panels were made by James Hands in 1694 and 1695. The first mention of his name in the Quarterage Books of the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers was in 1685. This meant that he was made a ‘free man’, i.e. he had completed his apprenticeship and was free to run his own business. As apprenticeships lasted for seven years and normally started at the age of fourteen, he must have been born around 1664 and was approximately 28-29 years old, a young man, when he started working at Queen’s in 1694.3

A lack of stylistic similarities to other Oxford buildings suggests that Queen’s was his only Oxford commission, but there are a few stately homes where the plasterwork resembles the Queen’s Library ceiling. However, there is no ceiling which can be attributed to him without doubt. Those he might have been involved in decorating include Melton Constable, Norfolk and Halswell Park, Somerset where the name of the plasterers are unknown. Hands’s name is recorded in the Library Account books between 22 February 1694 and 5 July 1695, towards the end of the building period. He was paid £75 on the testimony of the accounts but in a later account summary by Joseph Smith Jr, the son of Joseph Smith Provost (1730-56), who claims that he copied the data from Halton’s notes, there is an entry of £148 for ‘Ceiling’ and another £16 for ‘Plaisterers’.4 It still sounds very modest considering the accounts which James Hands and his partner James Ellis drew up in 1714-15 in Greenwich at St Alfege’s Church and St Paul’s at Deptford in 1716-17, for which the final payments were £204.12.2 and £766.0.0 respectively. St Paul’s was built twenty years later than the Queen’s Library, and the plaster decoration is markedly different from that at Queen’s. The hand-modelled parts of the decoration at St Paul’s are much less flamboyant, the flowers are more rustic and fruits have been almost completely omitted. The beauty of the interior at St Paul’s Deptford comes from the abundance of Corinthian capitals and the restrained borders which lack the hard undercutting so typical of Queen’s. The large final payment at St Paul’s is not surprising if we look at the interior, and was lower at St Alfege due to the large proportion of moulding done with a template.

The difference between these churches and Hands’ work at Queen’s is not just that the architects, Nicholas Hawksmoor at St Alfege’s and Thomas Archer at Deptford, had different ideas about the interior decoration, but that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the so-called naturalistic style, in which the ceiling at Queen’s was executed, rapidly went out of fashion. The period which started after the Restoration of the monarchy and flourished until the end of the century ‘developed in the direction of fresh naturalism in detail, in which groupings, festoons, crossed sprays, or wreaths of flowers, leaves and fruit were set within a simple geometric setting outlined by moulded ribs. A large panel usually occupied the centre of the field, but only on rare occasions was given up to the decorative painter... It is this sharpness and vivacity of treatment, paralleled by the contemporary advance in the technique of wood-carving, mainly by the influence of Grinling Gibbons, that gives this short period its interest’.5

Already before the close of the century ornamental plasterwork was less in favour and Edward Gouge, the ‘beste master’ of the period, in a letter dated 1702, complains that ‘for some years past, for want of money occasioned by the war and by the use of ceiling painting, the employment which has been by chiefest pretence has been always dwindling away till now it’s just come to nothing’.6 Our ceiling at Queen’s seems to be the last example of this type of naturalistic plastering as nothing similar is recorded after 1695.

To produce these fine representations of flowers, fruits, objects, animals etc. required a particular technique. The material used was lime plaster which is produced by the calcination of limestone rock at high temperature to form quick lime. Slaking with water produced a non-hydraulic lime putty which does not set on contact with water. During drying the lime reverts to a chemically identical material to its parent rock by slow absorption of carbon dioxide. The nature of the lime does not allow for a later return to create, for instance, recesses and indentations or to undercut. Instead the craftsman must work up and introduce detail as he adds new material a little at a time. The stucco duro, which was used at Queen’s...
The plaster ceiling and its Masters at The Queen’s College Library (1692-1756)

Library, introduced by Italian plasterers working in England in the early seventeenth century, is basically the same as lime plaster but is prepared with greater care and has the important addition of some glutinous substance, which renders it very much like dough when it has been properly mixed and worked together. This made it possible to produce plaster not thicker than cardboard which offers infinite opportunities to create the most complicated shapes individually. This meant that the modelling of a highly decorative ceiling like the one at Queen’s might be measured in several months. From the dates of his payments between February 1694 and July 1695 can be seen that it took Hands one and a half years to complete the work.

As lime hardens only very slowly, large projections such as limbs, wings, foliage and instruments required the use of supporting armature. This could be wrought iron wire, nails and lead, or organic such as wood, leather or bone. These armatures can be disguised as stems and tendrils as can be seen on the ceiling at Queen’s (fig. 2).7 The composition of the ceiling at Queen’s is made up of three panels, the central one of which is the largest and oval shaped (see fig.1). The other two at the ends have straight sides and segmented ends with a similar shape to the frame of the oval middle compartment. In these moulded frames clusters of flowers and fruits are loosely attached to the stem in the middle, giving a light, airy feeling to the decoration. It is not dense, and there is no feeling of ‘horror vacuii’ as in some similar ceilings of the period. The oval panel is surrounded by sprigs of oak, a clear reference to the Boscobel oak. Oak leaves were added to the plasterer’s repertoire in recognition of the role played by the Boscobel oak in the escape of Charles II - a display of loyalty to the Crown that in the earlier seventeenth century was made less subtly by including the royal arms on ceilings or overmantels.8

The three main panels are separated by triangular panels filled with acanthus leaves. Acanthus readily offers itself for beautiful modelling and can be bent effortlessly in any direction, still looking natural. Since antiquity its fleshy, scalloped leaves were used for Corinthian and Composite capitals and other modelling and we can well understand why. Their decorative qualities are unparalleled and their symbolism, their thorns signifying pain and punishment for sins, can be widely applied in any Christian context. The two small panels are flanked by boxes containing laurel leaves. With its evergreen leaves the laurel is the symbol of immortality and triumph, and was used frequently in plasterwork everywhere.

At both ends of the middle panel there are strapwork cartouches which share great similarities with the ones at Trinity Chapel, Oxford. (fig. 3) As it is very unlikely that Hands was working at the same time at both places, the explanation for this
could be that in this detail the plasterers worked from the same pattern book. The rest of the plasterwork at Trinity differs from Queen’s. A possibly more significant example of the adoption of this cartouche can be found in Provost Halton’s portrait of 1704 which was engraved by Michael Burghers. It depicts him not long before his death in the same year at the age of 72. The frame is very similar to the cartouche on the ceiling and it seems that this could be a tribute to his library again both by the sitter and the engraver who was very familiar with the building as several engravings, made by him, attest (fig. 4).

The most striking piece in the Library is the group above the doorway which is made up of the allegorical figures of the Arts and Science, putti, cherubs and an eagle (fig. 5). The elements are linked by swags of flowers and a ribbon with the inscription ‘Robertus Eglesfield Reginae Philippae Asacris Confessionibus Collegium Fundavit AD MCCCXL’. The ribbon is held very appropriately by an eagle, a reference to Eglesfield, Chaplain to Queen Philippa and de facto founder of the College, and supported by putti who surround the College’s arms, which are themselves flanked by two putti and held up by cherubs. The attributes of Science are easy to decipher. They are exact and include a globe, a quadrant, a sextant, a watch and a sundial. The figure of Science is alert, looking directly at the beholder. The figure of the Arts is softer, ecstatic, with her mouth slightly opened befitting a representative of the arts overwhelmed with emotions. On closer inspection we find that the figure is actually St Catherine of Alexandria, the patron saint of education and learning. The missing spokes of the damaged wheel that she is holding against her breast indicate her providential deliverance when Maxentius’ attempt to kill her with wheels was thwarted by a divine thunderbolt. The figures, the putti and the swags are extremely well modelled. This fact is a giveaway as to the origin of the artist. It would have been a rare exception, although not unprecedented, if at the end of the seventeenth century an English plasterer had made human figures with such ease as this group attests. English plasterers did not normally have a proper training for modelling human figures. Apart from this we also have documentary evidence in the Account Books where an entry on 4 April 1694 states: ‘Received then of Wm Rooke Bursar five pound for frett worke in ye new Library 5.0.0. Joannes Vander Stein’. The next entry, which claims on 6 April ‘Received then in full of Wm Rooke for worke done by me to this day two pounds and one shilling’ signed again by Vander Stein. We can assume that some of his payments, where the jobs were not specified, must have been received for doing the swags above the windows. The putti both in the swags above the windows and in the group are also very Gibbonsesque, as is the selection of plants, which are different from those of the ceiling borders by Hands, and which includes tulips, pinecones, grapes, lilies, artichokes, crocuses, hyacinths, forget-me-nots, Turkish lilies, acorns and more (fig. 6, 7). Hyacinths above the doorway and crocuses in the frame of the coat of arms of Provost Halton also appear in the swags linking the master of the group with the master of the
The plaster ceiling and its Masters at The Queen’s College Library (1692-1756)

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swags. The selection is in the tradition of seventeenth century Dutch still life, bringing together plants from different seasons, always in full bloom. Traces of ‘tulipomania’, the seventeenth century craze for tulips, can be detected in several representations of tulips, which are drooping over other plants, opened so full that their petals are curling backwards. In one case in a fruit bowl even Gibbons signature motif of the peapod turns up, also fully opened. All these features point to the direction of Vanderstein, the Flemish master.

The name of Vanderstein is first mentioned in a licence of 16 November 1678 granted for him to be employed under the architect Hugh May in the King’s service at Windsor Castle. He was a stone-carver, servant and housekeeper to Grinling Gibbons which, in contemporary understanding, meant that he was working alongside Gibbons.  

It is not only plants which are worthy of our attention in the swags. Disciplines other than botany are also represented directly or indirectly. On the east side above the fifth window the whole panoply of geography is packed into the swag: quadrants, a theodolite, a spherical astrolabe, a globe and dividers and a rolled up map.

Music, represented by a wide range of instruments like violins, flutes, trombones, and a lute, received a very loving treatment. A harp occupies the centre of the group and this might not only be because of its decorative shape: the harp is the attribute of Terpsichore, the Muse of dancing and song.

One of the most interesting and thought-provoking groups is above the central bay, with a pelican in the centre (fig. 8). The motif of the pelican piercing its breast to feed its young with its blood became a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ but also an attribute of Charity personified. Elizabeth I adopted the symbol portraying herself as ‘Mother of the Church of England’ and thus accord with the well-known royalist sentiments of the College.

There are two swags made of shells. The scallop shell is a symbol of the pilgrim but one would hesitate to believe that that is why they are there. It might just be the case that they are making an oblique reference to Venus, familiar to scholars.
from their classical studies or that they might symbolize the sea. Certainly their beautiful shapes make them ideal for modeling (fig. 9, previous page). Shells were also frequently carved by Grinling Gibbons who also depicted oak wreaths, the meaning of which in the Queen’s plaster decoration is harder to interpret. Unusually, around the end of the wreath of oak branches with acorns a snake is coiling, but a reference to the tree of knowledge in Paradise with the serpent seems rather unexpected. Yet, a medical reference to Asclepius, although fitting some parts of the plaster iconography would be isolated in this part of the scheme.

The flasks, mandragora roots and poppy heads on the west side symbolise medicine. The unripe seed pods of the opium poppy can reduce pain, alter mood and behaviour, and induce sleep or stupor. Mandrake or mandragora has been known since ancient times and magical powers were attributed to it partly because of its shape which resembles a diminutive man. The representation of them in plaster is very unusual and definitely suggests that they were ‘custom made’ for the library. Their slightly crude modelling also indicates that they were not among the tried and tested patterns as were many of the other figures (fig. 10).

Two cornucopias with a corn ear sticking out of one and plums from the other are clear symbols of Plenty. With the bunch of grapes and the abundance of sunflowers in the same swag however it is hard not to associate these plants with religious symbolism: bread and the vine for the Eucharist and the sunflower, a soul in search of Christ. Cornucopias, fruit bowls, and the pelican are all symbols of charity, which seems to be the most overwhelming aspect of the decoration (fig. 11).

**Rococo plasterwork in the middle of ceiling panels by Thomas Roberts (1711-1771) of Oxford**

The middle of the three panels remained blank for more than half of a century. However, the size of the panels makes it unlikely that there was no intention to fill them with either frescoes or at least a middle rose (fig.12). Whatever was the reason not to finish the work in 1695, the idea was not forgotten. It is to the credit of the College and its decision makers, mainly Provost Smith, that the solution they chose is in great harmony with the original plasterwork and that the master, to whom they gave the commission, was probably one of the best of the time and also a local man.

Thomas Roberts (1711-1771) had a long and distinguished career mainly in the Oxford area and was one of the most prolific plasterers who worked in the new rococo manner. He may have been in partnership with the Danish stuccoist Charles Stanley, with whom he worked on eight ceilings in the Radcliffe Camera in 1744 and at Kirtlington Park c.1745. His earliest association with Oxford was in 1738, when he decorated the colonnade of Magdalen’s New Building with a vaulted plaster ceiling. The ceiling of St John’s College Senior Common...
Room (1742) is his work, and in 1750 he was engaged to complete the stucco decoration in the Codrington Library at All Souls. He also decorated Hawksmoor’s Honington Hall, Warwickshire, the ceilings of the dining room and the library at Ditchley, and in 1753 the ceiling in the tower room at the Bodleian Library.

In 1752 he started working in the Christ Church Library and was employed there until 1762. His stucco work, as at Kirtlington Park, is of the highest order, including very sophisticated and fine depictions of musical and navigational instruments and the ceilings (fig. 13). From 1756 he squeezed in work on the Queen’s Library alongside the last stages of the project at Christ Church. This was very much the mature period of his working life, he had done all his great projects by then and he certainly had learnt the trade to the highest standard.

During the sixty two years since the Library was finished, fashion in decorative work had changed a lot. Whatever was originally planned had to be revised in the light of the new tastes in art. In the early eighteenth century Swiss-Italian stuccoists reached England and their style of working had a defining effect on the plasterwork of the period. James Gibbs, the builder of the Radcliffe Camera, who spent some time in Italy, introduced Italian stuccatori like the Artari dynasty and Giovanni Bagutti to England. Thomas Roberts, who does not seem to have travelled abroad clearly picked up methods from the Swiss-Italian stuccoists while working alongside them and developed a refined style which is not inferior to any of his foreign counterparts.

By the mid-eighteenth century the introduction of French rococo ornament, a style embodied in France in the light and inventive elegance of Louis XV can be traced. In 1736 a pattern book, published by an Italian author, described sixty different ornaments ‘very useful for painters, sculptors, stonecarvers, woodcarvers…. in which shells, flowers, broken scrolls, and cartouches twisted on their axes, are intermingled’. These were not universally welcomed by the English who saw the style as an attack on Palladianism. Isaac Ware in his Complete Body of Architecture calls them ‘the French crooked figures… as frivolous ‘as unmeaning ornament barely and nakedly scattered over the surface’ but he claims that compliance with the detested thing sometimes is necessary, for ‘the owner of the house has an undoubted right to please himself’. The architect, therefore, is not to refuse to meet the French ornament, but to ‘receive with discretion’, blend it with other elements until it is reduced ‘to more decent appearance’.

The entry in the College Register for 12 June 1756 records that ‘it was agreed at a meeting of the Provost and Fellows, that ‘1st Thos Roberts shall be employed to clean and beautify the Stucco Work, Festoons and Sculptures in the Library; to new-coat the Ceiling, to add new Ornaments in the Oval Space in the Middle, and the Compartments at the Ends’,

The project at Queen’s could not have been an easy one for a master plasterer like Roberts. The frames were defined, the decoration in the mouldings was already there and he had to adapt his work to the existing pattern. In his choice of motifs and modelling, he did not directly emulate anything in the existing decorative scheme, but used the same shapes as those he used anywhere else he worked: the garlands, pierced shells, arched lines and tangled semicircles are the same as at Christ Church or Kirtlington but on a slightly smaller, unobtrusive scale. In spite of this seemingly indifferent approach, the final result is fine and blends with the rest. The feeling is as if the middle parts by Roberts were the younger, more tender versions of the plants and shapes in the frames and in the swags, which happily embrace the ‘newcomers’. The only new motif is the gilded sun in the middle compartment, similar to his ungilded one at Kirtlington, finished with an oak wreath. The College, with very good sense, did not have the other compartments gilded, and this act was clearly ‘the French ornament… received with discretion… to more decent appearance…’ Rococo tamed to meet Baroque.
The final overall impression is that of a somewhat eclectic, but beautifully harmonious space which takes one’s breath away, no matter how many times one sees it. Even if we can easily identify the three hands which worked on the plaster decoration this does not diminish the impact of the whole. Provost Halton, had he seen it, would have been happy with the end result, even if it was not quite what he had envisaged. Provost Smith finally completed the great project both sympathetically and magnificently.

2 Guildhall Library, MS 6127 Quarterage Books of the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers (1682-97), vol. 3.
3 I am indebted to Claire Gapper for this information.
4 The Queen’s College Library, MS 544.
7 G Beard, Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain (London, 2011), Introduction by R Ireland.
8 I am most grateful to Claire Gapper for this information and much more. Her help throughout this project has been invaluable.
9 I am grateful to Claire Gapper for drawing my attention to this detail.
10 The spelling of his name varies, e.g. In the Account Books at Queen’s he signs his name as Joannes Vander Stein. We are following the spelling adopted by the College.
14 M Jourdain, pp. 88-89.

Veronika Vernier retired from her position as the Library’s Historical Collections Assistant in 2010 and periodically works as a consultant on projects relating to the special collections.

A fuller version of this article is available on our website http://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/library/history/

Photographs by Veronika Vernier.

Re refurbishment of medieval manuscripts for Henry VIII

Part three, Queen’s College MS 317

Jane Eagan
Oxford Conservation Consortium

In first two issues of Insight, I outlined a project to conserve seven Queen’s manuscripts recovered in velvet for the library of Henry VIII, and described two of these manuscripts which were documented and repaired with funding by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT). In this issue, I would like to continue with Queen’s MS 317, a gospel book, Matthew and Mark, with prologues and Gloss, probably written at Reading Abbey in the twelfth or thirteenth century (for the complete catalogue entry go to: www.queens.ox.ac.uk/library/special-collections/medieval-manuscripts/the-catalogue) (fig. 1).

As a first step, MS 317 was digitized as part of the NMCT project in order to provide a surrogate copy for preservation reasons, and to reduce handling by readers; this was done by Colin Dunn (www.scriptura.co.uk). Digitization was carried out before conservation treatment, and was done carefully with a cradle that fully supported the volume in its damaged state.

Fig. 1: MS 317 before treatment (upper board).
The text-block was of sheep or goat parchment, relatively even in weight and well selected with few blemishes and a rather velvety surface preparation. It was not highly decorated; there was a single historiated initial on a raised gold ground at the start of the gospel of Matthew (letter ‘L’ for Liber). In the roundels can be seen representations of Christ, King David, a bearded man, and a youth, although the pigments are slightly abraded (fig. 2). The leaves were in good condition with relatively minor damage; the binding however had major structural problems which made it vulnerable to any handling or use. The upper board was completely detached, and the first and second supports were broken at the lower joint (where the lower board is attached to the text-block). There were also large losses in the velvet covering along the free board edges.

Fol. i bears the ex libris of Reading Abbey; if the manuscript was not written at the Abbey, it was at least in the library there, but after 1190–95 when the Reading Abbey booklist was compiled and in which this manuscript is not noted. It is interesting that this manuscript with a Reading Abbey provenance is covered in black velvet, similar to Queen’s MS 323, also with a strong Reading connection and the only other volume of the Queen’s group to be covered in black velvet.

Alterations for the royal library

The sewing of MS 317 on three split supports of alum tawed skin was medieval, and patch panel spine linings of twelfth-century manuscript waste parchment were present in all spine panels. On examination of the sturdy oak boards, it was evident they had been reused, and were from a different binding; in addition to the three lacing entry/exit holes relating to the current sewing, there were six redundant lacing holes, slightly staggered to prevent the board from splitting (fig. 3). The profile of the entry holes, where the sewing support passes from the outer face of the board onto the inner face, where it is pegged off, was very similar to MS 323, and did not appear to be contemporary with the sewing, i.e. medieval (fig. 4). It seems likely that the original sewing was retained, but that a ‘new’ pair of boards were provided when the binding was altered on entry into the royal library.

A later endband had been worked on the manuscript, through the parchment spine linings at head and tail. This was the typical ‘Henrician’ endband, worked in blue and pink over a rolled piece of tanned skin. The earlier endband tie downs, where the endbanding thread entered the quire centres, were still in place, the endbands having been removed, presumably cut away.
Conservation of Queen’s College MS 317

The aims of the treatment on MS 317 were to reattach the upper board and reinforce attachment of the lower board; to document the structure so that the record will be accessible even after treatment when elements are covered; to stabilize the covering material and prevent loss of the textile.

The velvet textile was lifted mechanically from the spine using a microspatula. The spine covering had been glued in place with animal glue, leading to deterioration of the textile which was weak and brittle. The patch spine linings were removed from panels 2, 3 and kept separately; new linings of aerocotton were pasted in place and extended onto the boards to reinforce board attachment. The spine linings could not be removed from 1 and 4 as the endband tiedowns passed through them; these were left in situ.

New linen braids were secured in place over the sewing supports, and secured in place by stitching through several quires with linen thread. The ends of the braids were frayed out and pasted to the boards to form the board attachment, along with the extensions of the cotton spine linings (fig. 5).

After work on the binding had been completed, the textile covering was treated by a textile conservator specializing in Tudor textiles, Dr Maria Hayward. To fill the large loss on the spine and support the fragile velvet in that area, an infill patch was prepared by laminating a loosely woven dyed cotton with cotton poplin using Lascaux adhesive. This patch was stitched in place and turned in at head and tail. The fraying velvet at the tail edge of the upper board was secured in place with long and short conservation stitches (fig. 6).

Conclusion/changes to original by Henry VIII

Queen’s MS 317 shows the sort of alterations made to the group of monastic manuscripts acquired for the royal library after the Dissolution. These changes were carried out for aesthetic reasons, and left the underlying medieval structures largely intact. The aim seems to have been to produce luxurious-looking items while economizing on materials and time.

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Photographs by Jane Eagan.
As the centenary of the outbreak of World War I approaches we have been considering how best to mark the anniversary in Queen’s. The Library is fortunate in possessing an extensive collection of First World War material which covers both the war itself and the run up to the conflict.

As our collection is so large we decided to hold two exhibitions, one in 2013 to explore what was happening in the years immediately before the outbreak of war, and one during the centenary of the war itself. Our collection enables us to have this two pronged approach as the rich and varied holdings shed an illuminating light on the period and, when viewed alongside each other, provide a unique overview to events both before and during the conflict.

The first exhibition, held from Winter 2012 to Summer 2013, was curated by our then Library Assistant, Rory McCluckie, and displayed items demonstrating opinions and ideals on both sides in the lead up to World War I.

A large proportion of our World War I holdings originally belonged to William Sanday, the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Christ Church who became fascinated by the First World War and, on his death in 1920, donated his extensive collection to Queen’s together with his theological pamphlets.

The collection as a whole contains German, French, British and some American publications, both monograph and pamphlet. Most of the material was produced by the opposing sides during the war itself and some of it is graphic propaganda, although there are also a number of very thoughtful essays on the origin of the war, several by Sanday himself.

When World War I broke out in 1914 Sanday the theologian found a new subject for his writings. His political standpoint was rather conservative and the armed forces always had a curious fascination for him. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the business of a pamphleteer, publishing in 1914 *The Deeper Causes of the War* (displayed in *The road to war*); *The meaning of the war for Germany and Great Britain: an attempted synthesis* (1915); *In view of the end: a retrospect and a prospect* (1916) and *When should the war end?* (1917).

In addition to Sanday’s pamphlet *The deeper causes of war*, items were chosen for the 2013 exhibition to illustrate a variety of perspectives and a range of different attitudes from the opposing powers to each other. They include works written by German, American and British authors. All the items on show were written no later than 1915 in order to keep the focus clearly on the road to war and the opening months of hostilities. As the war advanced perspectives and attitudes changed, a theme which will be developed in the subsequent exhibition.

The image on the left is the cover of a book which featured in the exhibition, Emil Reich’s *Germany’s swelled head* (1907). The book opens with the lines, “The Germans are afflicted with the severest attack of swelled-headedness known to modern history. The English are practically ignorant of this dangerous state of mind in their greatest rivals. These two statements are the burden of this book. The first of them can be made out as one can prove a mathematical truth.”

Covers and images from other items which featured in the exhibition are displayed on the back cover of this issue of *Insight*.
The road to war

Select images from our 2013 exhibition