

The Muniments of Corpus Christi College

By J. G. MILNE

THE Corpus muniments require less description than those of some Colleges, as they were carefully studied and used by President Fowler for his history of the College published by the Oxford Historical Society in 1893,¹ so far as the domestic affairs of the College were concerned. Since then, however, two important lots of papers have come to light, which give some additional material unknown to him. One of these is the correspondence of Robert Newlin, steward of the College in the latter half of the seventeenth century: he was appointed probably shortly before 1648, in which year he was expelled by the Parliamentary Visitors, and restored in 1660: from that date till 1695 he seems to have done most of the correspondence of the College, and kept most of the letters he received, as well as the papers left by the 'intruded' President and Fellows: and these we found, about ten years ago, at the bottom of a cupboard in the old Bursary, apparently as Newlin had left them. The other lot were in a large chest, which seemed at first sight to be half full of crumpled paper: investigation showed that none of the documents was dated later than 1642, and it seems probable that they were used for packing away the College plate during the troubles of the Civil Wars. The College had surrendered its plate at the request of the King in January, 1643, but, like one or two other Colleges, appears to have redeemed it by a money payment, which is probably represented by an entry of £300 os. 4½d. in the accounts for 1643; and, having got its plate back, it prudently put it out of sight, wrapped up in the first pieces of paper that came to hand in the Bursary: among these papers were several of great interest, such as the original building accounts of the College, a number of thirteenth and fourteenth century documents relating to the manor of Milton in Surrey, which must have come to the College in connexion with a lawsuit between rival claimants to the manor at the time of its purchase by the Founder, and some rather later statements in a similar dispute over the title of Temple Guiting, another of the Founder's purchases.

While, however, there is not much more work to be done in regard to the internal history, there is abundance of material available in the muniments

¹ T. Fowler, *The History of Corpus Christi College, with Lists of its Members*, O.H.S. xxv.

relating to the College estates, and in the following notes class D of Mr. Pantin's scheme¹ will take the chief place.

A (1). The acts and proceedings of the College Meetings are practically complete from 1748: before these there are lists of orders and warrants from 1650 to 1661 and from 1683 to 1830; also registers of punishments, absences, and graces, from 1641 to 1785. These were all fully used by President Fowler, and the quotations he made from them will give a good idea of the general character of the entries.

(2). There are no letter-books, in the strict sense, among the older archives; the first lease-book contains copies of a few important letters in the earliest years of the College, but long before the volume was completed, in 1551, it had become what all subsequent books were, a mere record of leases and presentations to College livings. The series of these is complete. Except among Robert Newlin's papers, there are but few drafts of letters; no other steward, and no Presidents except Rainolds and Cooke, seem to have troubled to preserve their correspondence.

(3). The registers of admissions and elections are full, and have been printed in detail by President Fowler: the only documents he did not use are the bonds given by Fellows on admission to actual Fellowship, and these add nothing to the information in the registers. It may however be noted in this connexion that President Cooke kept practically all the papers that came to him during the forty years of his office, and these include not only the applications, testimonials, and certificates of candidates for scholarships, but the Grace-books of men proceeding to degrees, who were required to read dissertations in Hall before the College Grace was given: these provide some interesting evidence in regard to the standards and subjects of studies, apart from the personal interest attaching to the work of such men as John Keble and Thomas Arnold.

(4). The muniments were copied out in thirty volumes, known as the Bursary Transcripts; the work was begun in 1627, and the copies were arranged and annotated after the Restoration by William Fulman. The transcripts are in various hands, probably those of the Bursary clerks; but most of the copies are reasonably accurate: the originals are still in possession of the College, except for one group transferred on the sale of the estate. The only other register of deeds is a contemporary list of those concerning property given to the College by the Founder.

(6). The *Liber Benefactorum* is complete from the foundation till 1803: fuller particulars of books given to the Library are supplied by a list compiled about 1700. These were used by President Fowler, and the second more

¹ 'College Muniments: a Preliminary Note,' *Oxonienisia*, I, 140 ff.

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minutely by Mr J. R. Liddell in his account of the Corpus Library in the sixteenth century.¹

B (1). There is a very full series of accounts, drawn up to meet the system under which the first charge on the ordinary revenues of the College was the payment of the charges for commons, liveries, and stipends of the members of the foundation: the balances remaining thereafter were divided between the President and Fellows on certain scales, varying according to the source from which the income arose, and subject to the allotment of a proportionate amount to the reserve fund in the Tower, which was intended to meet extraordinary expenses of a capital nature or, if not required for such purposes, to be invested. The annual statement was given in the *Libri Magni*, which begin in 1521 and end in 1866: fourteen years are missing from the series, eight of them in the first quarter of a century. The details for most of the missing years can be supplied from the indentures of the President and the Bursars, the earliest of which is for 1525: one or both of the indentures can be found for most years to 1855. Separate accounts were kept of corn-rents and fines on the renewals of leases, the application of which was governed by special orders. These documents have not been exhaustively studied, and in the hands of an expert would probably provide valuable information.

(2). The minor accounts are numerous, but less consecutive, except for the Buttery-books, of which there is an almost complete series from 1648: in the sixteenth century only eleven terminal *visus* are preserved between 1536 and 1542. The earliest Kitchen-book is dated 1655, and eighty-four are preserved between that year and 1840: the Brewery-books are mainly of the eighteenth century. The Tower-books begin in 1561 and go down to 1859, and can be supplemented from some special records relating to various building schemes: as regards buildings, however, the most valuable documents are the original building accounts of the erection of the College in 1514, which have lately been copied by Mrs. Lobel for the use of the Commission on Historical Monuments, and a further account for 1517. The Library accounts are for the most part only preserved in the summaries in the *Libri Magni*. There are also several groups of bills, the earliest being for the years 1649 to 1659, which are in a bundle made up by Robert Newlin after the Restoration and docketed by him 'Bills for workmen during usurpation': he also kept many of his own bills down to 1680, and there are sample groups from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

C. The best inventory of plate is a list drawn up in 1699 and kept under revision till 1783. The Library catalogues are numerous; but there do not seem to be any lists of the contents of chambers.

¹ A typed copy of Mr. Liddell's work is in the College archives.

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D. The charters and title-deeds copied in the Bursary Transcripts number over 4400, and in many cases go back long before the foundation of the College : two parcels contain documents dealing with property which never belonged to the College, and it is interesting to note the circumstances which brought them there. After the Dissolution, King Henry desired the College to exchange the Manor of Molesey, one of the Founder's purchases, for the Manor of West Hendred, which had belonged to the Priory of Holy Trinity at Wallingford ; and he covenanted to hand over all the evidences in his hands relating to the latter. What was actually handed over, however, was a bunch of documents taken from the archives of the Priory, some of which had nothing to do with the title to the Manor, among them a confirmation of a gift of land at Standlake in the reign of Stephen ; and they seem to have been wrapped up in a couple of rolls of the Priory accounts in the reign of Richard the Third. Another of the Founder's purchases was a comparatively small estate in South and East Brent, Somerset, the title-deeds for which were mixed up with some scores of documents relating to property in Cornwall which had once belonged to the same family as the Brent estates : it seemed that the explanation of the confusion might be that the Brent property was the last remnant of the family possessions, and when it was sold the family muniment chest was turned out and the whole contents despatched to the Founder.

The deeds in this collection deal with estates in the following parishes or places :—

Oxfordshire : Oxford city (College site and adjacent houses in Merton Street and Magpie Lane), Rewley, Cowley, Iffley, Littlemore, Headington, Horspath, Stanton St. John, Marston, Eynsham, Witney, Handborough, Heyford, Tackley.

Buckinghamshire : Brill and Oakley.

Berkshire : West Hendred, Arborfield, Streatley.

Hampshire : Overton and Polhampton, Kingsclere, Newtown (Newbury), Odiham, Crondall, Dogmersfield, Maplederwell, Longstoke, Marwell, Rombridge, Hursley, Michelmersh, Ibthropp and Hurstborne Tarrant, Totton and Eling, South Stoneham, West Wellow, Culmeston and Warneford.

Lincolnshire : Barkston, Beckingham, Braceby, Fenton, Grantham, Great Gonerby, Lissington, Ropsley.

Yorkshire : Ingleby.

Bedfordshire : Pertenhall with Little Staughton, Keysoe, Riseley and Sharnbrook.

Gloucestershire : Temple Guiting, with Barton and Naunton, Duntisborne Rous and Chalford, Cheltenham.

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Somerset : East and South Brent and Melsborough, Taunton.

Surrey : Egham and Thorpe.

Kent : Graveney, Netherhall in Thanet, Selling and Sheldwick, Chilham and Ensing.

Wiltshire : Puckshipton, Warminster, Knoyle, Downton, Whiteparish.

Devon : Langford.

The College held manors at the following of the places named above :— Heyford, West Hendred, Polhampton, Maplederwell, Marwell, Rombridge, Ibtropp, Pertenhall, Temple Guiting, Duntisborne Rous, Northgrove (Brent and Melsborough), Milton (Egham), Harefield, Perrywood, Pucklesale (all three Selling), Furnax (Puckshipton), Langford.

Very few of the deeds copied in the Bursary Transcripts deal with the history of the estates after their purchase for the College : but this history is fully recorded in the cases of the manors in the Court Rolls, which are almost complete except for a few gaps in the middle of the sixteenth century, and from 1602 are preserved in book-copies as well as in the original rolls. For other properties there is a complete series of leases in the Lease-books, and most of the original deeds are also extant. The revenues derived from the estates are set out in detail in the Bailiff's accounts, of which hardly any are missing, and these can be checked against the entries in the Libri Magni : and from 1602 there is a continuous set of Bailiff's books. The Corn-books, which give particulars of the corn-rents, begin in 1589 : many are missing in the seventeenth century, but from 1735 to 1873 the sequence is unbroken.

Besides these annual returns, there are rentals, terriers, surveys, and maps of various dates for most of the estates : special mention may be made here of an excellent set of maps of the properties in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Hampshire made by Langden in 1606 and following years,¹ and a survey of the extensive manor of Temple Guiting by Agas in 1583. Much light on the relations of the College with its tenants is also to be derived from the records of progresses, which were only systematically kept in books from the beginning of the eighteenth century, but of which several stray examples of earlier date exist. A good many letters are also preserved : in particular the letters filed by Robert Newlin and his successor between 1661 and 1704 number over 1400, and some of these are of interest for the information they give on matters other than College business : some selections from the letters of Richard Alleyn, one of Newlin's correspondents, were printed in the *Pelican Record* for March, 1933.

E. There are several copies of the College Statutes, both in manuscript and print, some of the latter annotated. The Visitors' injunctions are preserved both in originals and copies.

¹ Langden's maps have been photographed at the Ordnance Survey Office.