

Three Stapletons and Other Remarkable Acquisitions to New College Library in 2024

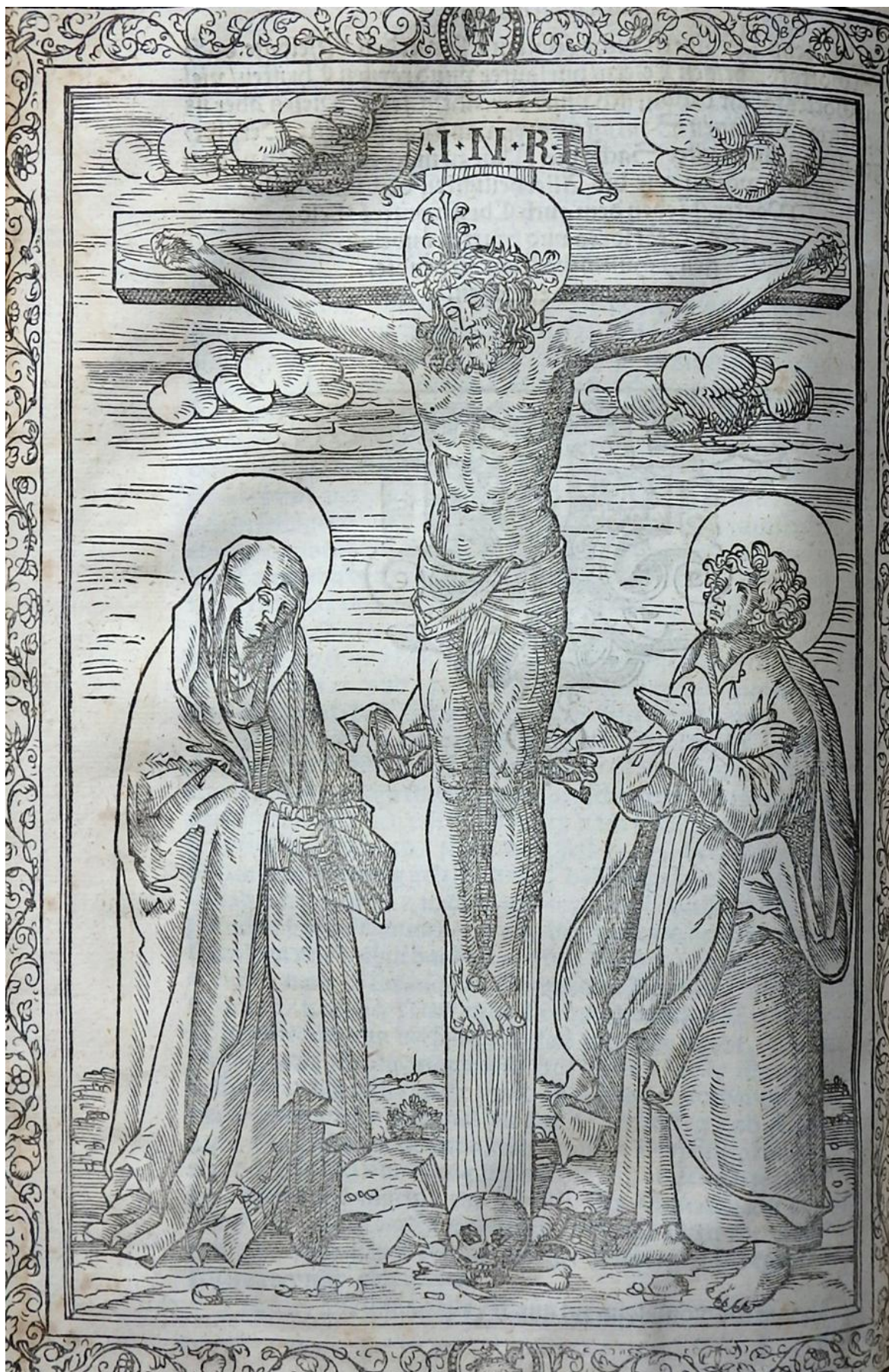
The earliest important imprints we have acquired for the library this year are three sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century volumes, by a priest and scholar whose erudition was much admired by Pope Clement VIII. Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598), one of our college’s foremost theologians, was possibly named after Saint Thomas More—who was martyred under Henry VIII for refusing to avow royal over spiritual supremacy; More was executed just days before Stapleton’s birth. From Winchester College, Thomas Stapleton proceeded to New College, where he was elected a fellow on 18 January 1553; five years later, in 1558, he was ordained a priest under Mary I. But within a couple of years, he had been forced to flee to the Low Countries, following Elizabeth I’s accession and her 1559 Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. The acts banned the celebration of Mass and imposed fines on any refusing to attend Protestant services; Stapleton, indeed, admired how alumni of both of William of Wykeham’s colleges resisted the Elizabethan religious settlement. He became a professor at the university in Douai, and then later at Louvain, where he is now buried.

The 1593 Antwerp edition of Stapleton’s *Promptuarium Morale super Evangelia Dominicalia Totius Anni: Pars Hyemalis* we have acquired is notable for its fine, white pigskin binding with blind-stamped decoration, which retains fully intact its two brass and leather clasps, and for its extensive manuscript Latin inscriptions in various hands. The two parts of his *Promptuarium Morale: Das ist Sittlich Speißkammer* (Ingolstadt, 1597) is the first German edition of this 1593 Latin work. The copy the library has obtained of this likewise has of note a blind-stamped pigskin binding, and remnants of its two brass clasps—and an interesting provenance, with title-page ownership stamps from the former library of the Franciscan monastery in Graz, ‘Ad Conv: F. F. Min: Græcensium’. The woodcut illustrations it contains are singularly spectacular. Thirdly, our newly acquired Cologne 1613–4 imprint of all three parts of Thomas Stapleton’s *Promptuarium Catholicum* also features a contemporary white pigskin binding, and, again, a significant provenance. This exceptional copy bears an inscription—on the title-page of the first part—recording the book’s donation in 1617 to the Franciscan monastery at Dettelbach by the monastery’s own founder, Julius Echter von Mespelbrunn (1545–1617), Prince-Bishop of Würzburg: ‘Fratribus Franciscanis de observania conventus Dettelbacensis Julius Episcopus Wirteburg et fundator monasterii Donodedit A[nn]o M.DCXVII’. As well as this foundation, the prince-bishop also re-established the university at Würzburg in 1582, an exemplar of Catholic education during the Counter-Reformation.



New College Library, Oxford, BT1.17.22

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New College Library, Oxford, BT3.12.13, Sommertheyl, opp. p. [1]

In July 2024 we acquired a superb copy of a rare edition, printed in Breslau in 1658, of the popular Latin epigrams by New College poet and Welshman John Owen (1563/4–1622?), often known by his Latinisation ‘Joannes Audoenus’. Following his scholarship in 1577 to Winchester, Owen came to New College as a fellow, graduating BCL in 1590, and upon leaving Oxford thence worked as a schoolmaster.¹ Aside from rarity, our copy’s interest derives from a provenance that is indicative of the book’s usage (perhaps unsurprisingly) by several students over the years, including a then 15-year-old Baron Carl Georg von Riedesel zu Eisenbach (1746–1819), the lawyer and politician.



Front pastedown and flyleaf, and frontispiece portrait and engraved title-page
 New College Library, Oxford, BT3.38.16(1)
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¹ For more on John Owen, and his ownership of books now in New College Library, see, respectively: William Poole, [‘Naps upon Parnassus: Some Attempts at Literary Humour in Elizabethan and Jacobean New College’](#), *New College Notes* 13 (2020) no. 5, and William Shire, [‘A Changing World: Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* from 1544—BT3.187.1\(2\)’](#), *New College Notes* 16 (2021) no. 5.

Owen's book is bound with another of considerable rarity, *Fürsten-Schatz oder unterschiedliche unvorgreifliche politische Bedencken*, published in 1665 without an imprint, by an unknown author. This German book appears to be unrecorded beyond the holdings of a handful of libraries in Germany and one in the US. Owen's epigrams were notorious for their scurrilous attacks on the Papacy and the Catholic Church, and this German 'Mirror of Princes' with which they are bound (and which we know to have been owned by at least one German nobleman) has been written ostensibly to provide advice to nobles and to military officials on contentious matters of religious difference.²

The library this year also obtained two other early modern books of significance to our institution on account of donor inscriptions. At an auction in January I acquired a copy of the first part of *The English Historical Library*, the most important publication by William Nicolson (1655–1727), bishop of Carlisle and later of Derry. An inscription on the front pastedown indicates the book was a gift from the author to the Winchester College scholar, New College fellow, and ecclesiastical judge Richard Parsons (1641/2–1711): 'Rich. Parsons LL:DL, 1696. Cancr. Gloucr. Donum Authoris'. Parsons received his civil law doctorate in 1687, and was appointed chancellor of the diocese of Gloucester in 1677, a role he held up until his death. And I purchased from a London rare books dealer a scarce first-edition copy of *An Essay Upon Government* (1716), which seeks to construct a defence of England's state church and the legitimacy of a Protestant monarchy and succession, written by the theologian Thomas Burnett (*d.* 1750), who graduated Doctor of Divinity from New College in 1720. The copy bears a contemporary ownership inscription 'Sam: Moody'—quite possibly the Queens' College, Cambridge graduate (like Burnett), ordained in 1707—and, more materially, a later inscription, in the hand of the Wykehamist the Revd Peter Hall (1803–1849), 'Presented to the library of Winton College'.³

Landowner, magistrate, and poet Francis Noel Clarke Mundy (1739–1815) was born 15 August 1739 at Osbaston Hall in Leicestershire, and, following Repton School, he was educated firstly at Winchester College—where he began writing poetry, encouraged by headmaster Joseph Warton (1722–1800)—and then from 1757 at New College (MA 1761). He is celebrated today for his descriptive poems *Needwood Forest* (1776), commemorating the ancient Staffordshire woodland, and *The Fall of Needwood* (1808), which laments that woodland's destruction following the 1803 Inclosure Act. (In the seventeenth century, the forest had covered a vast 92,000 acres, with some 47,000 trees listed in 1684.)⁴

We have been fortunate this year to acquire three volumes by Mundy. One contains both a Lichfield printing, probably of 1790, of Mundy's chorographic *Needwood Forest* along with an 1808 Derby imprint of his later *The Fall of Needwood*. This volume is of great bibliographical interest. The earlier printing amounts to a work of collaborative authorship: Mundy's 'Needwood Forest' is appended by four other poems, 'Address to Swilcar Oak' (a huge, ancient oak in the forest) by E. D. (Erasmus Darwin), 'A Rural Coronation' by A. S. (Anna Seward), 'Sonnet' by B. B. (Sir Brooke Boothby), and 'On Mr Mundy's Needwood Forest' by E. D. Jun. (Erasmus Darwin, Jr). Its title-page bears a gift inscription in ink from the author to Francis Massingsberd, and the poem 'Needwood Forest' itself includes manuscript alterations by the author. The later imprint, *The Fall of Needwood*, bearing the inscription 'From the Author' on its title-page and containing corrections in ink and what appear to be authorial comments, also includes 'My Grand Climacteric, 1802', poems by Anna Seward and William Hayley, and Mundy's 'On a Picture by R. R. Reinagle' (dated

² John Owen, *Epigrammatum Ioan Oweni CambroBritanni Oxoniensis* (Wratisslaviae: Sumptibus Esaiæ Fellgibeli, 1658), New College Library, Oxford, BT3.38.16(1); *Fürsten-Schatz oder unterschiedliche unvorgreifliche politische Bedencken* ([Germany?], 1665), New College Library, Oxford, BT3.38.16(2).

³ William Nicolson, *The English Historical Library: or, A Short View and Character Of most of the Writers Now Extant, either in Print or Manuscript* (London: Abel Swall and T. Child, [1696]), front pastedown, BT3.38.12; Thomas Burnett, *An Essay Upon Government: or, the Natural Notions of Government* (London: J. Baker and T. Warner, 1716), front pastedown, NB.88.19.

⁴ Paul A. Elliott, *Erasmus Darwin's Gardens: Medicine, Agriculture and the Sciences in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2021), p. 246. See also Thomas Banbury, "'The Fall of Needwood": Social Dimensions of Landscape Change in Eighteenth-Century Staffordshire', *Midland History* 48 (2023), 49–64.

October 1809). (The actual painting in question, by Ramsay Richard Reinagle (1775–1862), is now held by the Yale Center for British Art.) In addition, four manuscript pages have been bound in, containing a poem entitled, charmingly, ‘Mr Mundy to his grandson William, on his repeating most accurately his Fall of Needwood, which he had secretly learned by heart before he had completed his seventh year’ (the scene captured in Reinagle’s painting), along with an ‘Epitaph on Mrs Nelly Munday 1814’ (signed ‘F. N. C. M.’). It is a remarkable copy indeed.⁵



Ramsay Richard Reinagle, ‘Francis Noel C Mundy Esq with his Grandson William Mundy’ (oil on canvas, 1809)
Paul Mellon Collection, B1977.14.66, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut

The other copy we have acquired of Mundy’s 1808 Derby-imprinted *The Fall of Needwood* is distinguished, once again, not only by its provenance, but also by a fine gilt-tooled binding, of red morocco, with blue marbled pastedowns, blue ribbon place-marker, and gilded text-block edges. It bears an ink inscription ‘From the Author—1810’ as well as having its page numbers (for pp. 27–38, as in the preceding copy) corrected in ink. It also contains an armorial bookplate of Stephen George Kemble (theatre manager, actor, and writer, Kemble (1758–1822), was a contemporary of Mundy’s), and, most pertinently for us, the bookplate of Winchester and New College scholar, the celebrated book collector and warden of All Souls College, Oxford, John Sparrow (1906–1992).

Our third Mundy acquisition is the 1830 edition of *Needwood Forest, and The Fall of Needwood, with other Poems*; the only other library in the UK apparently recorded as holding a copy is the British Library. The book includes a printing of the poem that relates to Reinagle’s painting, and here it is

⁵ Francis Noel Clarke Mundy, *Needwood Forest. Written in the Year M,DCC,LXXVI* (Lichfield: John Jackson, [1790?], NB.88.25(1), bound with his *The Fall of Needwood* (Derby: J. Drewry, 1808 [i.e. 1809]), NB.88.25(2).

entitled ‘To My Grandson William, On his repeating to me most perfectly and accurately my Poem, The Fall of Needwood, Which he had secretly got by heart. January, 1809’. It also includes a preface by the volume’s editor praising the late Mundy’s ‘kindness of heart’, ‘delight to relieve the afflictions of those who lived in the neighbourhood’, and ‘amiable character’, as well as the impartiality, knowledge of the law, and sense of social justice that informed his work as a magistrate. The preface indicates how Francis Mundy (1771–1837), Mundy’s eldest son and inheritor of his principal seat of Markeaton Hall in Derbyshire—and at the time member of parliament for Derbyshire—has been instrumental in the book’s publication.⁶

Other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century books added to our collections this year include an attractively bound 1796 edition of *The Chace*, the most famous poetical work of country squire William Somerville (1675–1742), who was educated at Winchester and New College. I obtained this at auction, specifically on account of its double—a rarity—fore-edge paintings of hunting scenes; it complements the library’s already strong holdings of the works of New College’s poet of the hunt.⁷ And, largely on account of its provenance, I acquired from a Lincolnshire rare books dealer a uniformly bound set of two three-volume works by American historian William Hickling Prescott (1796–1859), the *History of the Conquest of Peru* and *History of the Conquest of Mexico*. The six volumes are presented in a fine gilt-tooled, green full-calf prize binding, executed for Rugby School and bearing the gilt arms of the school, for presentation to Welshman Charles Smyth Morris (1848–1912), with ‘CHARLES MORRIS HONORIS CAUSA’ in gold lettering on the outside lower board of volume one of each work.⁸ Charles Morris was a pupil at Rugby from 1863 till 1866 before matriculating at New College on 18 October 1867, and was later admitted to Lincoln’s Inn on 16 April 1872. It appears he was received into the Catholic Church around 1883, and likely corresponded with Cardinal (later Saint) John Henry Newman around that time; he died a bachelor. Inscriptions in the books indicate that this fine set seems to have made its way into the possession of Charles’s younger brother Edward Harold Morris (1850–1929). Edward was also a pupil at Rugby School (1864–9), subsequently a solicitor, and outlived his elder brother; he inherited the family estate and house, Bryn Myrddin in Carmarthen, which their father Thomas Charles Morris (1808–1886), a justice of the peace, mayor of Carmarthen, and county sheriff, had built.⁹

Notably interesting twentieth-century acquisitions have ranged across both library and archives materials. To add to our important holding of rare books and manuscripts by the American antiquities collector, writer, and New College classics student Edward ‘Ned’ Perry Warren (1860–1928), which we have been building in recent years, we were fortunate to be able to acquire a copy of his 1913 printing of his poetry, *The Wild Rose*, bearing on the title-page in black

⁶ Francis Noel Clarke Mundy, *The Fall of Needwood* (Derby: J. Drewry, 1808 [i.e. 1809]), John Sparrow’s copy, NB.88.24; Francis Noel Clarke Mundy, *Needwood Forest, and The Fall of Needwood, with other Poems* (Derby: Thomas Richardson, 1830), pp. 105–7, [v], vi, NB.88.21.

⁷ William Somerville, *The Chace, A Poem. A New Edition. To Which is Prefixed a Critical Essay by J. Aikin* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1796), NB.73.41. On New College Library’s Somerville holdings, see Christopher Skelton-Foord, ‘Chasing Somerville, New College’s Poet of the Hunt’, *New College Notes* 18 (2022), no. 6.

⁸ William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Peru: With a Preliminary View of the Civilisation of the Incas*, 5th ed., 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1857), RS5408–10 (a mixed set; volume 2 is from the ‘new edition’ of 1862); William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico: With a Preliminary View of the Ancient Mexican Civilization, and the Life of the Conqueror, Hernando Cortés*, 8th ed., 3 vols. (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1860), RS5405–7.

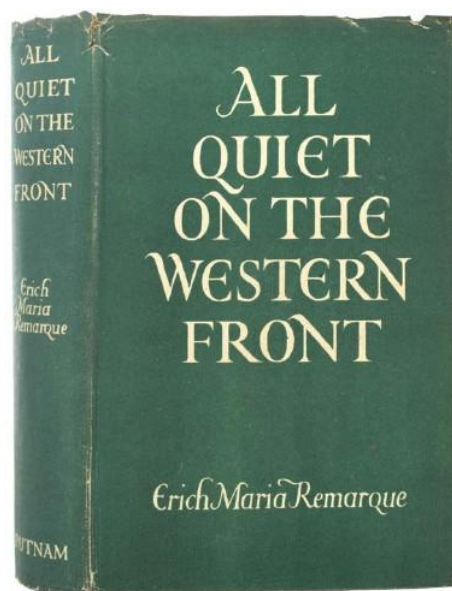
⁹ *Rugby School Register: Volume II: From August, 1842, to January, 1874*, ed. A. T. Michell (Rugby: A. J. Lawrence, 1902), pp. 221, 241; *Old Rugbeian Society Newsletter* 9 (June 1913), Letter No. IX; *Old Rugbeian Society Newsletter* 61 (October 1930), Letter No. LXI; Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1715–1886* (London: Joseph Foster, 1887–8), III, 986; *The Records of the Honorable Society of Lincoln’s Inn: Vol. II: Admissions from A. D. 1800 to A. D. 1893, and Chapel Registers* (London: Lincoln’s Inn, 1896), p. 353; Letter from Cardinal Newman mostly likely to Charles Smyth Morris (4 January 1885), in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman, Vol. 31: The Last Years: January 1885 to August 1890*, ed. Stephen Dessain and Thomas Gornall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 6; Francis Green, ‘Early Banks in West Wales’, in *West Wales Historical Records: The Annual Magazine of the Historical Society of West Wales*, ed. Francis Green (Carmarthen: W. Spurrell & Son, 1916), pp. 129–64, at pp. 147–8.

ink his name in his own hand underneath his penname of Arthur Lyon Raile.¹⁰ We have also acquired books by writer, fashion expert, and sometime Keeper of Prints, Drawings and Paintings at the Victoria and Albert Museum, James Laver (1899–1975), who came to New College in 1919 after his war service, graduating with a BA in modern history in 1922 and then with a BLitt the following year for a thesis on John Wesley. These include *His Last Sebastian and Other Poems* (1922), of special significance to our college on account of Laver’s signed dedicatory inscription therein to another of our alumni, history tutor L. G. Wickham Legg (1877–1962), who was educated at Winchester then New College, followed by an extraordinarily long period, 1908–1955, as a fellow of our college. Another interesting item is Laver’s pastiche of Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*, his *A Stitch in Time* (1927). Expertly printed by the Nonesuch Press, it sold extraordinarily well and was, as Laver describes it in his autobiography, ‘my first real piece of luck as a literary man’. The copy we acquired comes in a custom-made slipcase whose outer case mimics quarter leather binding, and it is accompanied by a letter from Laver to a ‘Miss Moseley’ alluding to how this limited-edition publication has rocketed in price on account of its popularity:

The last copy I bought for a friend cost me 25/–, and my solitary own copy is going the rounds of my friends . . . Perhaps, as Mr Bennett suggests, the price will soon fall to a reasonable figure.¹¹

Another interesting association item of the 1920s with accompanying letter is an offprint of his lengthy chapter on ‘The Foreign Office’ by our alumnus Cecil Algernon (1879–1953), the barrister, historian, and writer. Cecil writes to Sir Algernon Law, presenting him with the offprint as a token for the assistance he gave Cecil in writing the chapter.¹²

In 1929 the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* first appeared in English, a celebrated translation by Australian A. W. Wheen (1897–1971). Arthur Wesley Wheen was wounded and received military medals in the First World War, whereafter he read history at New College (BA 1923) as a Rhodes scholar, then worked as a librarian at the Victoria and Albert Museum until his retirement in 1962. His is a translation of the landmark bestselling novel, *Im Westen nichts Neues*, published the year before by German war veteran Erich Maria Remarque: the famous English title Wheen came up with has since become idiomatic. The library has managed to acquire a much sought-after first edition in English, complete with its first issue dustjacket.¹³



New College Library, Oxford, NC/WHE

¹⁰ Arthur Lyon Raile [i.e. Edward Perry Warren], *The Wild Rose: A Volume of Poems* (London: David Nutt, 1913), NC/WAR. On Warren and New College Library’s holdings of his works, see two articles in this journal by Christopher Skelton-Foord: ‘[The Appeal of Eros to Apollo: A New Manuscript for New College, Oxford](#)’, *New College Notes* 17 (2022), no. 9, and ‘[Ned Warren’s “Jack in the Pulpit”: New College MS 380 and Textual Transmission](#)’, *New College Notes* 18 (2022), no. 9.

¹¹ James Laver, *His Last Sebastian and Other Poems* (London: Simpkin, 1922), the dedicatory inscription in our copy reads: ‘To L. G. Wickham Legg Esq with the Compliments of the Author, James Laver’; James Laver, *Museum Piece or the Education of an Iconographer* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1963), p. 127; James Laver, *A Stitch in Time; or Pride Prevents a Fall* (London: Printed for the Nonesuch Press by Richard Clay & Sons, 1927), with an accompanying letter (11 February 1928) from James Laver to Miss Moseley, all held at New College Library, Oxford, NC/LAV.

¹² Algernon Cecil, ‘The Foreign Office’, [offprint from *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, 1783–1919: Volume III: 1866–1919*, ed. A. W. Ward and G. P. Gooch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), pp. 539–630], with a letter from Algernon Cecil to Sir Algernon Law (17 November 1923), NC/CEC

¹³ Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trans. A. W. Wheen (London: Putnam’s, 1929), NC/WHE.

1929 was also the year our alumnus, the writer and architect Geoffrey Scott (1884–1929), died suddenly of pneumonia. Schooled at Highgate and Rugby, at Oxford he won both the Newdigate prize in 1906 for his poem ‘The Death of Shelley’, and the Chancellor’s essay prize two years later for his *The National Character of English Architecture*. His most celebrated publications are *The Architecture of Humanism* (1914) and his biography of eighteenth-century French novelist Isabelle de Charrière, *The Portrait of Zélide* (1925), which won the James Tait Black memorial prize. His personal life was complicated, and he had affairs with both men and women. The married art historian Mary Berenson, almost 20 years his senior, fell in love with him and supported his career; he, however, married Lady Sybil Marjorie Cutting, but that marriage ended in divorce following his affair with Vita Sackville-West. The library has acquired Scott’s posthumously published *Poems* of 1931 whose foreword sets out:

The literary remains of Geoffrey Scott are so scanty and so precious that no apology is required for the publication of these poems, the majority of which are now given to the world for the first time. He was working on these poems at the end of the summer of 1929 within a few weeks of his death on August 14 of that year. Some of the poems have probably received their final form: others would doubtless have been further polished and revised.¹⁴

From a London auction in June, I acquired an intriguing variety of items regarding Conservative MP for Harwich, Sir Harry Kottingham Newton, 2nd baronet (1875–1951), who was the son of a lord mayor of London, and educated at Rugby School and then New College where he read law (1894–7). They include a limited-edition copy of his book of letters *Your Books, My Son* (1934), addressed to his eldest son to introduce him to a ‘small collection of esteemed books’, a copy personally inscribed by the author in tribute to his ‘very dear wife’. The auction lot also comprised correspondence and other materials relating to his family, as well as booksellers’ bills.¹⁵

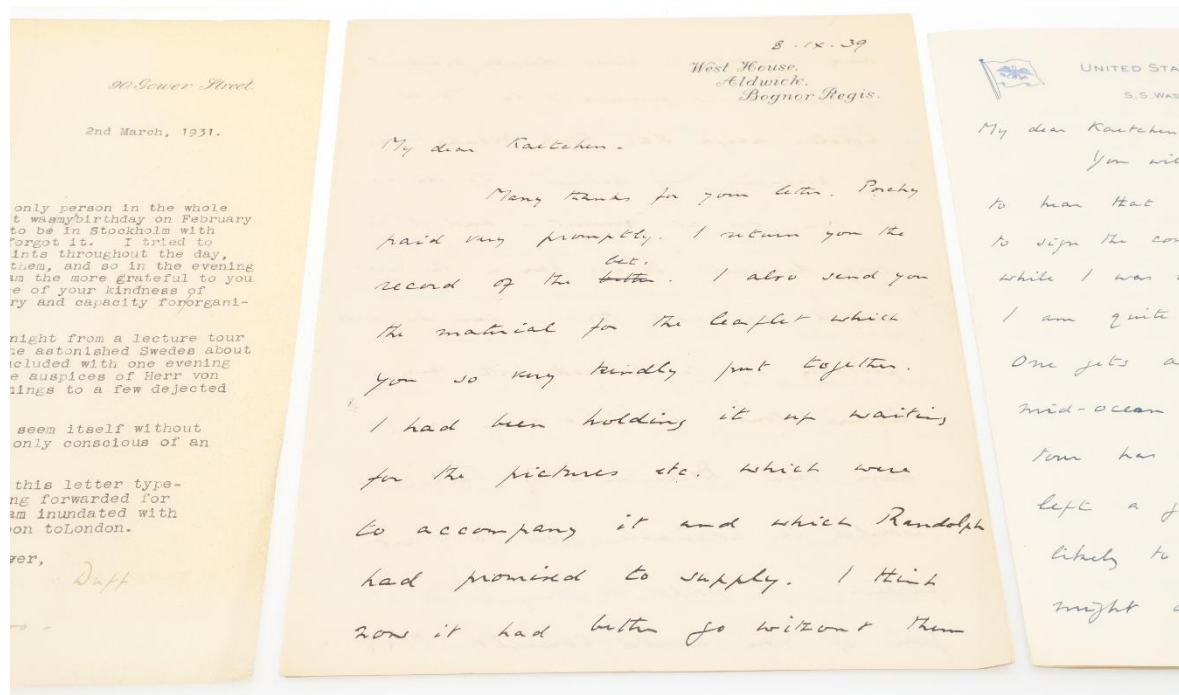


New College Archives, Oxford, NCA JCR/R/NewtonH

¹⁴ Geoffrey Scott, *Poems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), NC/SCO.

¹⁵ Harry Kottingham Newton, *Your Books, My Son: Being Some Account Bibliographical & Biographical Contained in Forty Letters Written Mainly During the Earlier Months of 1931, Intended to Introduce to his Eldest Son a Small Collection of Esteemed Books Made for Him by his Father* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), the upper flyleaf inscription reads: ‘Of 101 copies this is printed for the Mother of “Jeremy, Michael & Christopher,” the writer’s very dear Wife’, and signed ‘Harry’ with the date ‘2-7-34’, NC/NEW; also, various book collector’s papers relating to Sir Harry Kottingham Newton and his family, New College Archives, Oxford, NCA JCR/R/NewtonH.

Further letters (both autograph and typed), dated 1930 to 1940, I acquired for the archives in September from a Somerset auctioneers; they are signed by our alumnus, the politician and diplomat Duff Cooper, first Viscount Norwich (1890–1954) to his friend, the Jewish journalist, impresario, and theatre critic Rudolf ‘Kaetchen’ Kommer (1886–1943). Other Duff Cooper materials purchased this year include a presentation copy of his *Translations and Verses* (1949), marking his long friendship with Laura Lister, Lady Fraser of Lovat, and which includes a sonnet he has written out to her on the half title-page. With it are two letters: one is probably from 1910, in which Cooper congratulates her on her marriage and her being received into the Catholic Church, which he is sure is ‘wise and right’ and he regrets not having the ‘faith to enter too’; the other is dated 26 January 1951, presenting her with this book. Another unusual and scarce item is a collection of obituary notices for Cooper, assembled as a booklet by his friends for private circulation, with the agreement of his widow, Lady Diana Cooper.¹⁶ And we have obtained a volume of verse *The Worst Unsaid* (1962) by T. S. Matthews (1901–1991), the American magazine editor and writer; (Thomas Stanley Matthews earned his degrees from Princeton University and New College, and is probably best known for his editorship of *Time* magazine). The copy we have acquired is inscribed by the author to Duff Cooper’s widow.¹⁷ Another famous American magazine editor and writer who also died in the 1990s was Willie Morris (1934–1999), known for editing *Harper’s Magazine*. Following his time at the University of Texas at Austin, Morris came to New College as a Rhodes Scholar, where he read history. We have acquired fine, illustrated letterpress editions (along with a prospectus for the book) of his *My Two Oxfords*, an essay wherein he reminisces about his life in two different Oxfords—Oxford, England and Oxford, Mississippi.¹⁸



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA JCR/R/Duff Cooper

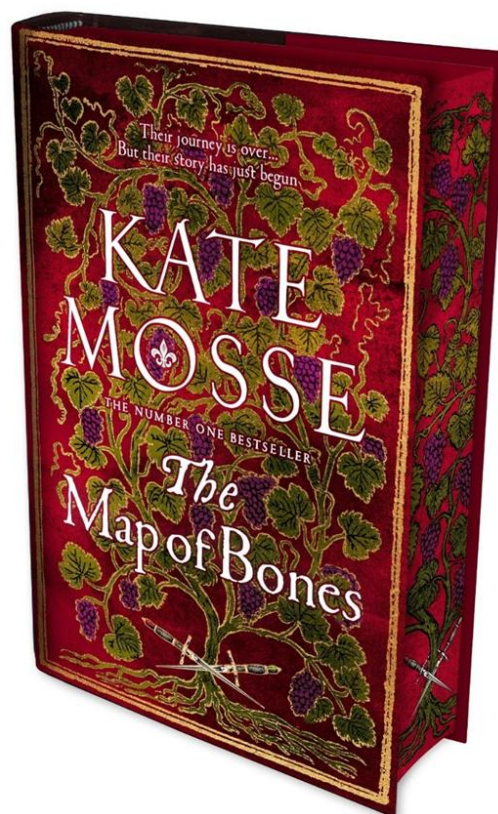
¹⁶ New College Archives, Oxford, NCA JCR/R/Duff Cooper; Duff Cooper, *Translations and Verses* (London: The Dropmore Press, 1949), half title-page, along with two letters (1910?, and 26 January 1951), and *Alfred Duff Cooper, 1st Viscount Norwich, 12 February 1890–1 January 1954* (Andover: The Chapel River Press, [1955?]), New College Library, Oxford, NC/COO.

¹⁷ T. S. Matthews, *The Worst Unsaid: A Book of Verse* (London: Anthony Blond, [1962]), NC/MAT.

¹⁸ Willie Morris, *My Two Oxfords*, wood engravings by John DePol (Council Bluffs, Iowa: Yellow Barn Press, 1992)—this copy is signed by the author and the illustrator, and is accompanied by a 4-page prospectus leaflet; Willie Morris, *My Two Oxfords*, wood engravings by John DePol (Lake Oswego, Oregon: Blackwell North America, 1993)—this copy comes with a Blackwell’s presentation letter, dated 4 December 1992; all are held at NC/MOR.

I am pleased the library has again this year obtained author-signed copies of recent novels by our own alumni.¹⁹ These include *Parade* (2024) by Rachel Cusk (b. 1967), *End of Story* (2024) by A. J. Finn (b. 1979), a brilliant writer with his own complicated backstory²⁰—it is a follow-up to his debut novel, *The Woman in the Window* (2018), which was a No. 1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and was made into a film starring Amy Adams and Gary Oldman—*Wife* (2024) by Charlotte Mendelson (b. 1972), *The Map of Bones* (2024) by Kate Mosse (b. 1961)—the fourth and final novel of her Joubert family chronicles, and in a signed independent bookshop edition with attractive artwork and sprayed edges—and *The Future Future* (2023) by Adam Thirlwell (b. 1978). Of special interest to our collections are two other recent, author-signed novels by alumni that we acquired. One is *The King's Engraver* (2023), a historical novel of the eighteenth century based on the life of William Wynne Ryland (1732–1783), kindly donated to us by its author Chris Lethbridge, and which includes a scene set in New College's Founder's Library (chapter 21).

And the second is *Simul* (2024) by barrister and novelist Andrew Caldecott (b. 1952), a sequel to his *Momenticon* of 2022, with a striking dustjacket design by Leo Nickolls, in a numbered edition, double signed by author and illustrator. Caldecott in an interview has described *Simul* thus:



New College Library, Oxford, NC/MOS

The novel is dystopian and features a recreated Oxford College (New College in fact) in one of the very few patches of countryside to survive, now known as the College of Novelties. Its ostensible purpose is to record the benefits and losses to mankind of its many discoveries and inventions, listed in a vast library in white and black volumes respectively, in the hope of preventing like errors in the future. But the College has another deeper purpose which only emerges at the very end of the book. The map contains the College's motto (Veritas in Nigro et Alba: truth in black and white) and also, hidden in plain sight, a hint at its more arcane function.²¹

A splendid, illustrated map of the College of Novelties (closely resembling New College), created by artist Nicola Howell Hawley, features on the endpapers of the novel, and, as Andrew Caldecott explained to me in an email, 'in the College of Novelties, the Library is the dominant building' (would that it were ever thus). So, in chapter 14 of the novel, we can follow the character, Piety, as

¹⁹ Rachel Cusk, *Parade*, signed edition (London: Faber, 2024), NC/CUS; A. J. Finn, *End of Story* (London: Hemlock Press, 2024), NC/FIN; Charlotte Mendelson, *Wife* (London: Mantle, 2024), NC/MEN; Kate Mosse, *The Map of Bones*, signed independent bookshop edition (London: Mantle, 2024), NC/MOS; Adam Thirlwell, *The Future Future* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2023), NC/THI; Chris Lethbridge, *The King's Engraver: A Tale of Art, Espionage and Crime* ([s.l.]: A Time A Place A Story, 2023), NC/LET.

²⁰ Ian Parker, 'Unreliable Narrator', *The New Yorker* 94 (11 February 2019), 30–43; published online as Ian Parker, 'A Suspense Novelist's Trail of Deceptions', *The New Yorker* (4 February 2019): <www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/02/11/a-suspense-novelists-trail-of-deceptions>.

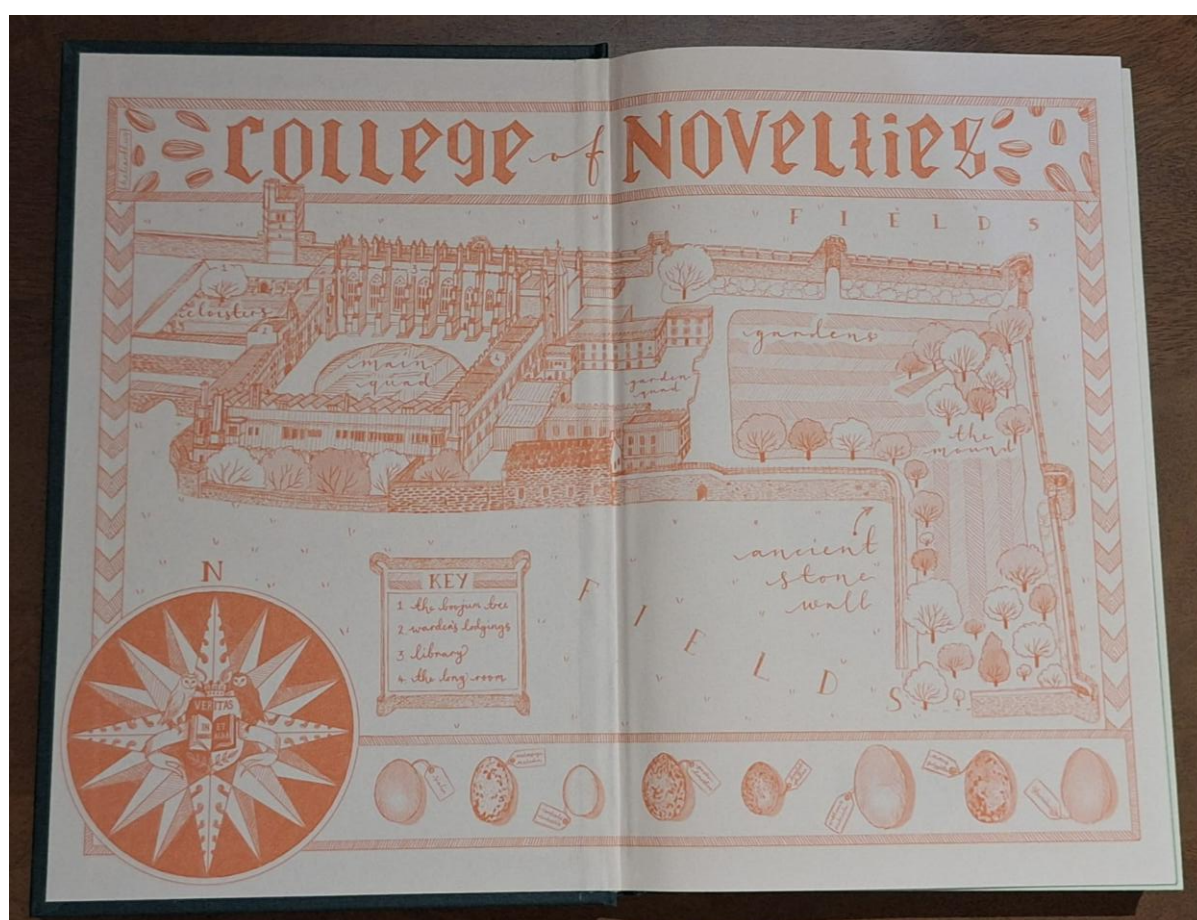
²¹ Nicola Hawley, 'Map of the Month: An Interview with Andrew Caldecott' <www.howellillustration.co.uk/post/map-of-the-month-an-interview-with-andrew-caldecott> (Accessed: 23 December 2024).

She made her way to the library, which was conveniently empty and unlocked. It had to hold more than judgements on the past. The rows of bookshelves had no obvious scheme alphabetically or by subject matter.

She searched for buttons, levers or switches without success. In frustration, she punched a shelf of white books on the pluses of nuclear fission. It spun on its axis and black books appeared on the other side addressing the negatives, from fissile waste to the perils of mass destruction.

She retraced her steps. The change had opened up a new passageway. The next bookcase to spin opened another new path, which led deeper into the maze. Trial and error revealed that only cases with books of one colour revolved, and they did so alternately. After twelve further rotations, she found herself facing a solid door, the first since the library entrance.

Despite the fortified frame and two elaborate keyholes, it was unlocked.²²



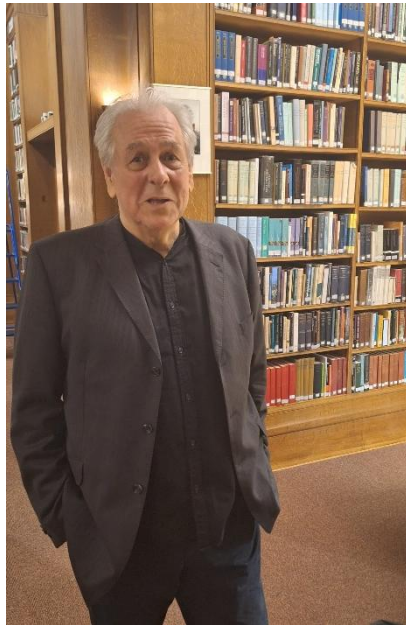
Nicola Howell Hawley, endpapers illustration to Andrew Caldecott's *Simul* (2024)
New College Library, Oxford, NC/CAL

Finally, I should like to make very special mention of one more of our celebrated alumni novelists, the bestselling and remarkable Paul Hoffman (*b.* 1953), who read English here at New College, and was once employed as a senior film censor at the British Board of Film Classification. Probably best known for his *Left Hand of God* trilogy, his other work includes the screenplay for

²² Email from Andrew Caldecott (26 January 2024); Andrew Caldecott, *Simul*, ill. Nick May, signed and numbered edition (London: Jo Fletcher Books, 2024), NC/CAL.

the 1998 film *The Wisdom of Crocodiles*, starring Jude Law, Timothy Spall, and Elina Löwersohn, which also shares its name with the title of his very first novel, published in 2000.

It was a great pleasure to welcome Paul Hoffman back to the library at the end of this year. He has generously donated some of his novels, copies of which he kindly inscribed for our collections.²³ And he is also pictured here—standing alongside the English Literature bookshelves at New College Library.



Christopher Skelton-Foord
Librarian
New College, Oxford

²³ Paul Hoffman, *The White Devil* (London: Michael Joseph, 2021), *Scorn* (London: Red Opera, 2017), *The Beating of His Wings* (London: Michael Joseph, 2013), *The Last Four Things* (London: Michael Joseph, 2011), *The Left Hand of God* (London: Michael Joseph, 2010), *The Golden Age of Censorship* (London: Doubleday, 2007), *The Wisdom of Crocodiles* (London: Big Time Press, 2000), NC/HOF.