

## The Papists of New College: I

This short piece offers a list of Catholics associated to varying degrees with New College during the Reformation period. The appended list, based on a study of entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, groups individuals into five categories: Elizabethan exiles (by far the most numerous), musicians, university men, deprived clergy, and lawmen. These categories are designed to give the reader an idea of the orbits in which these men moved, and of their careers beyond the College. It is offered as a prelude to further research, particularly to work building on the editions of the Benefactors' Book by William Poole and Anna-Lujz Gilbert in recent issues of *New College Notes*.<sup>1</sup>

### Abbreviations:

<i>Alumni Oxonienses</i>	<i>Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714</i> , ed. Joseph Foster (Oxford, 1891)
BHO	<i>British History Online</i> < <a href="https://www.british-history.ac.uk/">https://www.british-history.ac.uk/</a> >
CCEd	<i>The Clergy of the Church of England Database</i> < <a href="http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk">http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk</a> >
ODNB	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> < <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com">http://www.oxforddnb.com</a> >

### CONTEXTUAL NOTE: AGENTS OF REFORMATION VS NEW COLLEGE FELLOWS<sup>2</sup>

In her first months as queen, the last surviving child of the Tudor dynasty passed the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, the legislation now known as the Elizabethan religious settlement (1559), and England became a Protestant nation—in name at least. It would not be the last word on the English Reformation, but it was the most decisive. Two years later, in 1561, in the performance of his duties as visitor, a scandalized Richard Horne, Bishop of Worcester, recorded New College as one of the three most recalcitrant strongholds of popery in the University. Horne would prove to be both attentive and persistent in his drive to rehabilitate the College to be an instrument of the godly university, dispatching thirty-three fellows during the first decade of Elizabeth's reign.<sup>3</sup>

The fellows of New College had been seemingly content to allow the Henrician reforms to pass uncontested. Under Edward VI, the College's new warden, Henry Cole, was acquiescent in his conformity, even at the destruction of many manuscripts at the hands of Edward's iconoclasts, from whose rampages the fellows—evidently cannier than their warden—managed to spare the stained glass by pleading poverty (iconoclasts being amenable to questions of economy, if not beauty and civility).<sup>4</sup> A cabal of evangelical fellows saw off their conformist but reputedly conservative warden Cole in 1551, replacing him with Ralph Skinner, a member of a coterie of Protestant scholars that coalesced around Henry Grey, third marquess of Dorset.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the Catholic character of the fellowship intensified. Skinner was soon replaced by Thomas White,

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<sup>1</sup> William Poole '[New College Library Benefactors' Book 1601-1610: An Edition](#)', *New College Notes* 9 (2018), no. 6, and Anna-Lujz Gilbert '[New College Library Benefactors' Book 1611-1615](#)', *New College Notes* 11 (2019), no. 5.

<sup>2</sup> What follows draws on the work of Penry Williams, 'From the Reformation to the Era of Reform, 1530–1850', in *New College Oxford 1379–1979*, ed. John Buxton and Penry Williams (Oxford: The Warden and Fellows of New College, 1979), pp. 44–71, and David Parrott, '[New College and the Reformation](#)', *New College Notes* 9 (2018), no. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, 'From the Reformation', p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 48. That religion was at the root of the squabble between Cole and the fellowship is disputed; there is uncertainty around the nature of Cole's confessional identity: T. F. Mayer, 'Cole, Henry (1504/5–1579/80)', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5851>>. S. M. Thorpe, 'Skinner, Ralph (1513/14–63), of Barnstaple, Devon', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509–1558*, ed. S. T. Bindoff (London: Secker & Warburg, 1982): <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/skinner-ralph-151314-63>>; Robert C. Braddock, 'Grey, Henry, duke of Suffolk (1517–1554)', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11535>>.

in 1553, who seized upon the opportunity of Mary I's accession to effect Catholic renewal in the spiritual and liturgical life of the College. Mary's Catholic restoration—and indeed reformation, being influenced by reforming trends within the Church to combat the threat of Protestant heresy—provided the backdrop to the introduction of Thomas Stapleton and Owen Lewis to the fellowship, but even before Mary's accession, two new fellows—John Rastell and John Martiall—had brought Roman sensibilities back to the College.

The fellows were more vocal against the rising tide of Protestantism thereafter. Theirs would be a scholarly resistance, of such impressive quality that Penry Williams would call New College 'the chief Oxford stronghold of the humanist exponents of the Catholic faith'.<sup>6</sup> Williams was thinking here of the formidable brothers Nicholas and John Harpsfield, and of the would-be exiles Nicholas Sanders, Owen Lewis, and Thomas Stapleton. These were some of the most celebrated Catholic scholars of their generation, indeed both Harpsfields, Sanders, and Stapleton would go on to be notoriously muscular polemicists in the service of the counter-Reformation.

For all of Horne's zeal in stamping out false religion and nonconformity—among other, more earthly, abuses—his surveillance was remarkably slow to effect change. In 1566, Horne's representative Dr George Acworth found little improvement and no small cause for alarm: he 'uncovered an immense heap of abuses, ranging from the trivial to the genuinely disquieting'.<sup>7</sup> One fellow, William Blandy, accepted that he had indeed 'atrociously struck one Pearse with a great stick so as to fell him to the ground', and though he felt that the matter was at an end—he had been 'properly punished at the time'—he was not so much remorseless as re-invigorated about his motivations. When charged with having struck Pearse in the head with a club as well as shoving him into the fire, he denied the offences, but declared 'that he hoped to see all such heritiques burned with hoter fier then that is' and, further, 'that all Protestants were knaves, schismatikes, and bruter than brute beastes'.<sup>8</sup> One master Henslow, surely Stephen Henslow, produced a thoroughly unconvincing denial that he had not received communion since the queen's accession.<sup>9</sup> Both were relieved of their fellowships.

Yet Acworth was selective in his deprivations: he did not simply cast out any fellow with dubious religious credentials. A fellow by the name of Fisher, likely John Fisher, was 'accused of having laughed and sworn' and of finishing all of the wine while receiving holy communion, 'in mockery of the Holy Supper', was able to find seven fellows to speak on his behalf, and was granted a reprieve.<sup>10</sup> Fisher's behaviour is a colourful example of the operation of the queen's own preferences for measuring conformity to the religious settlement. The statutes required that subjects attend the services of the established Church; those who refused (recusants—technically any non-conformist but usually Catholics) considered the practice schismatic but pastoral advice within the Catholic Church was divided. Elizabeth consistently rebuffed attempts by her counsellors to enhance the stipulation for church attendance to receiving communion, too. Many Catholics found church papistry, the practice of attending church in order to comply with the statute but perhaps finding ways to signify their dissent through acts of disobedience, to be a palatable compromise to strict recusancy.<sup>11</sup> Fisher's conduct, which meets the definition for church papistry very well, may have appalled his godly colleagues, but while he could drum up the right number of supporters to vouch for him, he could exploit a loophole which the queen herself

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<sup>6</sup> Williams, 'From the Reformation', p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Hastings Rashdall and Robert Rait, *New College*, University of Oxford College Histories (London: F. E. Robinson, 1901), quotation at p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 118. Henslow was a fellow from 1557–66: *Alumnae Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Henslow, Stephen', BHO: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp679-705>>.

<sup>10</sup> Rashdall and Rait, *New College*, p. 119. For Fisher, a fellow from 1562–73, see *Alumnae Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Fisher, John', BHO: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp480-509>>.

<sup>11</sup> The standard work is Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge Boydell, 1993).

refused to close. The expectations for members of the University, were higher, however, and the visitation injunctions of 1566 served as a stern reminder of this. Yet Acworth seems to have focused his investigations not on the misdeeds of the fellows—apart from the particularly egregious ones—but on the reliability of the warden. It was White who was targeted for his apparent failure to administer holy communion more than three times since the accession of Elizabeth, and for having neglected to punish those who failed to attend chapel'.<sup>12</sup> It seems that Acworth took the pragmatic view that it was more important to ensure that the warden could be trusted to enforce the religious settlement than to pursue individual papists.

Thomas Martin referred to the New College he knew, that of the 1540s, as a 'Catholicke Colledge'. To him and his similarly affected peers, it was.<sup>13</sup> The same may be speculated about the College in the following two decades: that such clusters of Catholics who remained could find sympathetic fellows and ways of getting along. For all the confidence of modern commentators, Oxford in the 1580s and 1590s still played host to more papists than Horne and his agents would have accepted, even after the introduction of the statute requiring matriculands over the age of sixteen to take the Oath of Supremacy.<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth's ministers were acutely concerned for that Oxford should be a beacon of religious conformity and godly scholarship, but Catholics still took opportunities to avail themselves of a university education on English soil where possible. Heads of house now had greater influence over admission to the University, such that a sympathetic college head might omit certain passages of the Oath, or to tolerate the presence of a Catholic youth living and studying at the University without matriculating or taking a degree, under the tutelage of a tame tutor.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the richest evidence for Catholic participation in the University after the Reformation comes from the gifts and bequests made to Colleges. It must be borne in mind that the continental colleges established by those former fellows of New College and their peers were modelled on their former colleges, their social, spiritual, and intellectual homes. To parents seeking a Catholic education for their children, there was a clear alternative to the officially hostile environment of the universities. Yet some Catholics were slower to abandon hope of Catholic education on English soil, and were reluctant to sever ties completely with the universities. St John's College, Oxford benefited from one such example in the form of Sir Thomas Tresham (1543–1605), whose own student days had been spent at Christ Church (without matriculating) but who was induced by his friend John Case (the celebrated Aristotelian, disgraced but still welcomed former fellow of St John's, and scarcely closeted Catholic) to donate 124 works in 203 volumes to the College's new library between 1598 and 1603. The donation was thoroughly and unapologetically Catholic in character, and, even more remarkably, has survived *in situ*.<sup>16</sup> The New College benefactors' books evince the same phenomenon, even if they lack—as far as we know—a donation as substantial as that of Tresham. Thomas Martin (1520/21–1592/3), the civil lawyer, diplomat, and polemicist, who had been a fellow of New College between 1540 and 1553 is one such example. His donation of the manuscript known as the 'Bohun Apocalypse' (New College Library, Oxford, MS 65) is imbued with the same concern for Catholic legacy as that of Tresham: it is 'the workshop rather than the published results of labour in the Lord, and it is certainly also a statement of conviction in the future of New College as a seat of learning'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Rashdall and Rait, *New College*, pp. 121–2.

<sup>13</sup> Arabella Milbank, 'Sixteenth-Century Ownership of the Bohun Apocalypse, New College MS 65', *New College Notes* 4 (2013), quoted on p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> James McConica, 'The Rise of the Undergraduate College', *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 3, *The Collegiate University*, ed. James McConica (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 1–68, at pp. 49–51.

<sup>15</sup> See James McConica, 'The Catholic Experience in Tudor Oxford', in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), pp. 39–66, at pp. 58–9.

<sup>16</sup> See Katie McKeogh, 'Sir Thomas Tresham (1543–1605) and Early Modern Catholic Culture and Identity, 1580–1610', (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Milbank, 'Sixteenth-Century Ownership', p. 48.



Thomas Martin, *Historica descriptio complectens vitam, ac res gestas beatissimi viri Guilielmi Wicami* (London, 1597)  
Full-page pen-and-ink drawing of William of Wykeham inserted before title page  
New College Library, Oxford, BT1.132.17

## APPENDIX: CATHOLICS ASSOCIATED WITH NEW COLLEGE AFTER THE REFORMATION

±	imprisoned for religion or Catholic intrigue
†	martyr
§	member of the English College at Douai, Louvain, or Rheims.

## Elizabethan Exiles

- Thomas Butler<sup>§</sup> (*b.* 1532/3, *d.* in or before 1591), Catholic priest, translator. Fellow 1551–62.<sup>18</sup>  
 Thomas Darrell<sup>§</sup> (*b.* 1538/9), Catholic priest. Matric. 1555. Fellow 1559–62.<sup>19</sup>  
 Thomas Dorman<sup>§</sup> (*c.* 1534–*c.* 1577), Catholic controversialist. Prob. fellow *c.* 1550.<sup>20</sup>  
 James Fenn<sup>§±†</sup> (*c.* 1540–1584), Catholic priest, martyr. New Coll. chorister.<sup>21</sup>  
 John Fenn<sup>§</sup> (1535–1615), Catholic priest, translator. Fellow 1550–62.<sup>22</sup>  
 John Fowler<sup>§</sup> (1537–1579), printer, translator, editor, publisher. Fellow 1555–59.<sup>23</sup>  
 Thomas Harding<sup>§</sup> (1516–1572), theologian, Catholic controversialist. Fellow 1534–54.<sup>24</sup>  
 Thomas Hide<sup>§</sup> (1524–1597), Catholic controversialist. Fellow 1543–50.<sup>25</sup>  
 Owen Lewis<sup>§</sup> (1533–1594), bishop of Cassano, Naples. Fellow 1554–62.<sup>26</sup>  
 John Martiall<sup>§</sup> (1534–1597), Catholic controversialist. Fellow 1551–52.<sup>27</sup>  
 ? Sir Christopher Perkins<sup>§</sup> (1542/3–1622), diplomat, Jesuit. Attendance New Coll. assumed.<sup>28</sup>  
 John Pits<sup>§</sup> (1560–1616), Catholic priest. Matric. 1579.<sup>29</sup>  
 Robert Poyntz<sup>§</sup> (*b.* *c.* 1535, *d.* in or after 1568), theologian. Fellow 1553–64.<sup>30</sup>  
 William Rainolds<sup>§</sup> (1544?–1594), Catholic convert, priest, author. Fellow 1560–72.<sup>31</sup>  
 John Rastell<sup>§</sup> (1530–1577), author and Jesuit. Fellow 1549–60.<sup>32</sup>  
 Nicholas Sander<sup>§</sup> (*c.* 1530–1581), Catholic controversialist. Fellow 1548–60.<sup>33</sup>  
 Thomas Stapleton<sup>§</sup> (1535–1598), Catholic theologian, historian, controversialist. Fellow 1553–59.<sup>34</sup>  
 Richard White<sup>§</sup> (1539–1611), antiquary, jurist. Fellow 1555–64.<sup>35</sup>  
 Richard Willes<sup>§</sup> (1546–1579?), poet, geographer, Jesuit. Scholar 1562–64.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Peter Holmes, 'Butler, Thomas', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4208>>.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Holmes, 'Darrell, Thomas', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7169>>.

<sup>20</sup> Frank A. James III, 'Dorman, Thomas', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7834>>.

<sup>21</sup> J. Andreas Löwe, 'Fenn, James', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9281>>.

<sup>22</sup> Peter E. B. Harris, 'Fenn, John', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9282>>.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Arblaster, 'Fowler, John', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10009>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Fowler, John', BHO: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp510-541>>.

<sup>24</sup> L. E. C. Wooding, 'Harding, Thomas', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12264>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Harding, Thomas', BHO: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp626-651>>.

<sup>25</sup> L. E. C. Wooding, 'Hide, Thomas', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14335>>.

<sup>26</sup> Michael E. Williams, 'Lewis, Owen [Lewis Owen]', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16599>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Lewis, Owen', BHO: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp892-921>>.

<sup>27</sup> L. E. C. Wooding, 'Martiall, John', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18171>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Marshall, John', BHO: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp956-982>>.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas M. McCoog, 'Perkins [Parkins], Sir Christopher', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21968>>. Perkins claimed to have been educated at Winchester and then at Oxford; his membership of New College is therefore assumed on the basis of this association.

<sup>29</sup> F. Blom and J. Blom, 'Pits, John', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22325>>.

<sup>30</sup> G. Martin Murphy, 'Poyntz, Robert', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22692>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Poyntz, Robert', BHO: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp1181-1208>>.

<sup>31</sup> J. Blom and F. Blom, 'Rainolds [Reynolds], William', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23030>>.

<sup>32</sup> Dennis Flynn, 'Rastell, John', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23150>>.

<sup>33</sup> T. F. Mayer, 'Sander [Sanders], Nicholas', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24621>>.

<sup>34</sup> Marvin R. O'Connell, 'Stapleton, Thomas', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26307>>.

<sup>35</sup> J. W. Binns, 'White, Richard', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29265>>.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Payne, 'Willes, Richard', ODNB: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29444>>.

## Musicians

Robert Dallam (*c.* 1602–665), organ builder. Died working on New Coll. organ. Buried at New Coll.<sup>37</sup>

Arthur Phillips (1605–1695), organist, composer, Catholic convert. Univ. Choragus. Matric. 1622.<sup>38</sup>

## University Men

Edward Atslowe<sup>±</sup> (*d.* 1594), fellow College of Physicians, sometime alleged traitor. Fellow 1551–62.<sup>39</sup>

Thomas Neale (*b. c.* 1519, *d.* in or after 1590), Hebraist; regius professor of Hebrew. Fellow 1540.<sup>40</sup>

## Deprived Clergy

John Boxall<sup>±</sup> (1524/5–1571), MA DD, canon, warden (Winchester), secretary of state. Fellow 1540–54.<sup>41</sup>

Henry Cole<sup>±</sup> (1504/5–1579/80), Catholic controversialist. Fellow 1521–40. Warden 1542–51.<sup>42</sup>

John Harpsfield<sup>±</sup> (1516–1578), Catholic priest, writer. Fellow 1534–51. Elected warden 1556 (refused).<sup>43</sup>

Nicholas Harpsfield<sup>±</sup> (1519–1575), Catholic controversialist, historian. Fellow 1535–53.<sup>44</sup>

## Lawmen

William Blandy (*f.* 1563–1581), translator, member Middle Temple. Fellow 1563–66.<sup>45</sup>

Thomas Martin (1520/21–1592/3), civil lawyer, diplomat, polemicist. Fellow 1540–53.<sup>46</sup>

Thomas Reade<sup>§</sup> (1606/7–1669), royalist army officer, civil lawyer, Catholic convert. Matric. 1631.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Christopher Kent, 'Dallam, Robert', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7029>>.

<sup>38</sup> L. M. Middleton, revised by David S. Knight, 'Phillips, Arthur', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22144>>.

<sup>39</sup> Sidney Lee, revised by Rachel E. Davies, 'Atslowe, Edward', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/870>>.

<sup>40</sup> G. Lloyd Jones, 'Neal [Neale], Thomas', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19818>>.

<sup>41</sup> C. S. Knighton, 'Boxall, John', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3094>>; 'John Boxall (CCEd Person ID 94492)', *CCEd*.

<sup>42</sup> T. F. Mayer, 'Cole, Henry', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5851>>; 'Henry Cole (CCEd Person ID: 40082)', *CCEd*.

<sup>43</sup> William Wizeman, 'Harpsfield, John', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12368>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Harpsfield, John', *BHO*: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp652-678>>.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas S. Freeman, 'Harpsfield, Nicholas', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12369>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Harpsfield, Nicholas', *BHO*: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp652-678>>. Harpsfield took exile under Edward VI, during which time he studied at the university at Louvain, but he was not among the Elizabethan exiles, nor was he a member of the later English College there.

<sup>45</sup> J. Andreas Löwe, 'Blandy [Blandie], William', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2619>>.

<sup>46</sup> Steve Hindle, 'Martin [Martyr], Thomas', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18237>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Martin, Thomas', *BHO*: <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp956-982>>.

<sup>47</sup> Charlotte Fell-Smith, revised by S. L. Sadler, 'Reade [Read], Thomas', *ODNB*: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23221>>; *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Reade, Thomas', *BHO*: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp1227-1250>>.