

Some Notable Acquisitions and Associations from 2020

Over the course of the year the library has acquired items relating to John Sparrow (1906–92)—a scholar of both Winchester and New College who became Warden of All Souls College in 1952, and was one of the most distinguished British book collectors of the last century. The earliest of these is a 1602 Paris printing by Claude Morel of a commentary by his brother Frédéric Morel on the Roman poet Statius. It appears to be the only copy within Oxford, and is one of only a few held in libraries within Britain. It bears Sparrow’s small bookplate and the inscription ‘J. S. emptum apud Blackwell, Jan. 1958’. But it enjoyed an impressive Oxford provenance even before Sparrow owned it. The book carries the stamp ‘F. W. Hall of St John’s College Oxford’—i.e. Frederick William Hall, President of St John’s College (1931–3). Provenance marks indicate it was in turn given by ‘FWH to HWG Nov. 1910’—to Heathcote William Garrod, the classicist and Oxford Professor of Poetry (1923–8). The flyleaf also bears in ink ‘R. E. to F. H. Feb. 1898’, so it is conceivable, though speculative, this Oxford academic peregrination may have extended back previously from Corpus Professor of Latin, Robinson Ellis to Brasenose College fellow, Frederic Arthur Hirtzel.¹

As a precocious teenager, John Sparrow had produced a fine vellum-bound edition of the poems of Henry King (1592–1669), Bishop of Chichester, which concludes with a bibliography by another of the century’s great bookmen, the surgeon Sir Geoffrey Keynes (1887–1982); the copy acquired by the library is an author’s presentation copy inscribed by Sparrow.² While he was warden, Sparrow was presented with a published pamphlet on another Winchester scholar and New College alumnus—Sydney Smith (1771–1845)—by its author Dr Alan Bell, sometime librarian of the former Rhodes House Library (now the Bodleian’s Commonwealth and African Studies Collections). (Bell published a biography of Smith in 1980.) New College Library acquired the pamphlet on account of its provenance and the signed handwritten letter within it, of 13 November 1972, by Bell to Sparrow: ‘At long last I have something, however slight, to show for my work on Sydney Smith. . . . The Delegates [of Oxford University Press] . . . are also looking at a proposal for four volumes of letters and will I hope be more enthusiastic than [Dan] Davin’s encouraging “I would advise you not to discontinue your work”’.³ A fourth item acquired by the library is a copy of *A Nip in the Air* (1974), written by Sparrow’s friend, Sir John Betjeman—in a fine limited edition signed by the poet—which was presented to Sparrow by the New York bibliophile and Betjeman collector, Duncan Andrews (1935–2011). Its front endpaper bears Sparrow’s bookplate and the inscription: ‘For John Sparrow in admiration and gratitude, from Duncan Andrews. MCMLXXVI’.⁴

The library purchased this year other significant presentation copies relating to its alumni. These include a very rare copy of the 1802 poetical tribute to the 5th duke of Bedford, who was responsible for the building of much of Bloomsbury, written by botanist and New College fellow Charles Abbot (1761–1817). Only two other copies extant in libraries worldwide have been traced: at the British Library and Stanford University Library; New College’s copy has the distinction of being an author’s presentation copy.⁵ Two other acquisitions are college authors’ presentation copies to family members. One is a collection of poems, by the Dorset clergyman and New College fellow the Reverend Henry John Urquhart (1798–1862)—published by subscription in 1845—

¹ Frédéric Morel, *In Papinii Surculi Statii Sylvas, Fed. Morelli Profess. Regii commentationes et coniectanea* (Paris: Claude Morel, 1602), New College Library, Oxford, BT3.18.10.

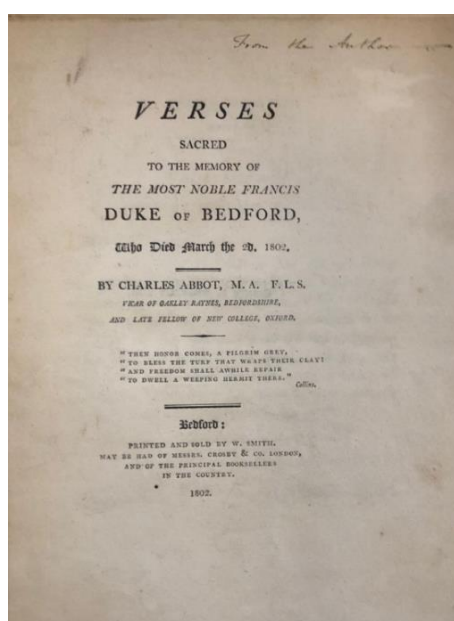
² *The Poems of Bishop Henry King*, ed. John Sparrow (London: Nonesuch Press, 1925), New College Library, Oxford, NC/SPA.

³ Alan Bell, *Sydney Smith, Rector of Foston 1806–1829* (York: St Anthony’s Press, 1972), New College Library, Oxford, NC/SMI/BEL. New College Library holds the large collection of Alan Bell’s transcripts of Sydney Smith letters: www.sydney-smith.org.uk/new-college-collection.html (Accessed: 9 November 2020).

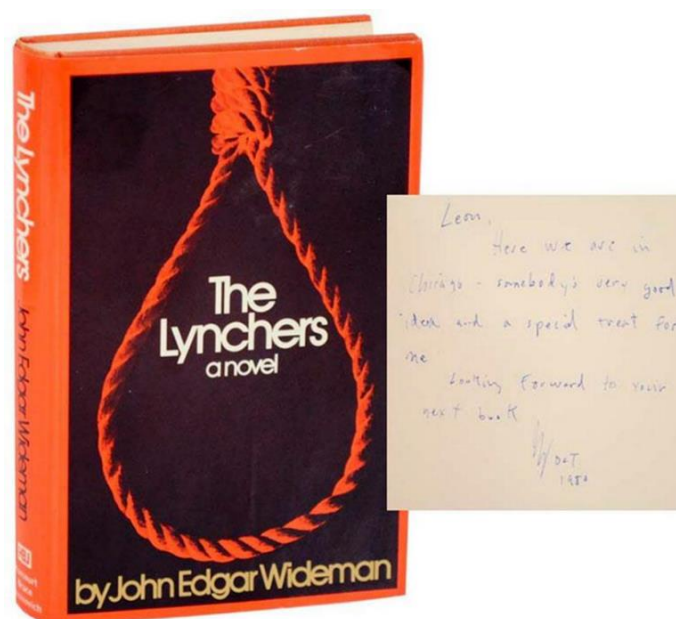
⁴ John Betjeman, *A Nip in the Air* (London: John Murray, 1974), New College Library, Oxford, RS5255.

⁵ Charles Abbot, *Verses Sacred to the Memory of the Most Noble Francis Duke of Bedford, who died March the 2d. 1802* (Bedford: W. Smith, 1802), New College Library, Oxford, NB.134.20.

which opens with a dedication to New College Warden David Williams (1786–1860)—and sometime headmaster of Winchester: ‘To the Reverend the Warden of New College, Oxford . . . from one of your most grateful and benefitted Wiccatical pupils’.⁶ The only other extant copies of this book in Britain seem to be those held by the British Library and the National Library of Scotland. Our copy bears the author’s signature ‘Rev. Henrico J. Urquhart’, dated 1852, along with a presentation dedication ‘To Hannah Hussey Urquhart’ (most likely his daughter). The other book is altogether different, a satirical fantasy novel by our alumnus Sherard Vines (1890–1974), whose given name owes itself to Vines’s father having been Sherardian Professor of Botany at Oxford. This copy of *Return, Belphegor!* (1932), which Vines had given to his second wife, Agnes Rennie Vines—the dedicatee of the book—has annotations in Vines’s hand, including his inscription ‘To my darling Rabbit from Tyger’, along with small sketches of the respective animals.⁷



New College Library, Oxford, NB.134.20



New College Library, Oxford, NC/WID

Other New College authors’ books purchased this year include a signed association copy of *The Lynchers* (1973), an acclaimed novel by John Edgar Wideman (*b.* 1941), Rhodes scholar and Thouron fellow at New College in the 1960s. Our copy is significant for its signed inscription from Wideman to fellow African-American novelist, Leon Forrest (1937–97): ‘Leon, Here we are in Chicago—somebody’s very good idea and a special treat for me. Looking forward to your next book, JW Oct 1980’.⁸ During a year when the Black Lives Matter movement has been central to world events, the library has acquired author-signed copies of more of Wideman’s books, and a copy of a critical study on Wideman, *Blackness and Modernism* (1989), also inscribed by Wideman.⁸ We also purchased in 2020 D. M. Thomas’s most celebrated novel, the Booker Prize-shortlisted *The White Hotel* (1981). Cornishman Thomas (*b.* 1935) read English at New College, and wrote *The White Hotel* while spending a year in the college’s Sacher building, drawing upon the library’s holdings of Freud’s works to research for his book. The idea for the novel itself he conceived

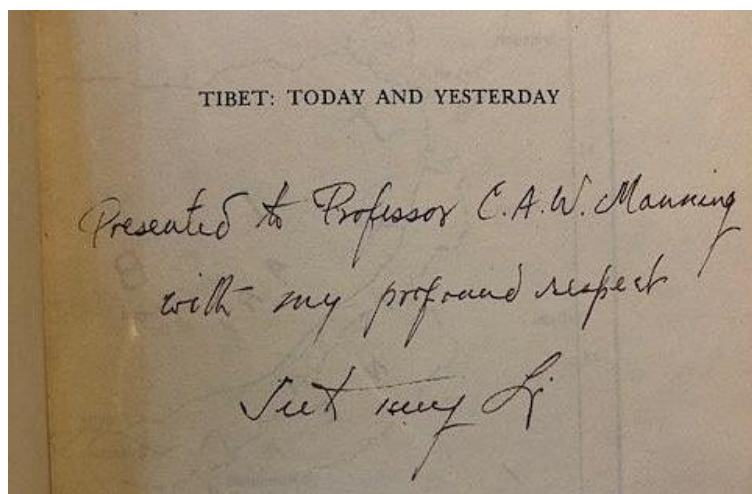
⁶ H. J. Urquhart, *Poems Sacred and Classical* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1845), p. [iv], New College Library, Oxford, NC/URQ.

⁷ Sherard Vines, *Return, Belphegor!* (London: Wishart, 1932), New College Library, Oxford, NC/VIN.

⁸ John Edgar Wideman’s *A Glance Away* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), *The Lynchers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), *Philadelphia Fire: A Novel* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), *The Stories of John Edgar Wideman* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), *Writing to Save a Life: The Louis Till File* (New York: Scribner, 2016), and *American Histories: Stories* (New York: Scribner, 2018), all held at New College Library’s shelfmark NC/WID; James W. Coleman, *Blackness and Modernism: The Literary Career of John Edgar Wideman* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), New College Library, Oxford, NC/WID/COL.

while walking around the New College gardens. Like Wideman's *Lynchery*, our copy of *The White Hotel* is notable for its association between two writers; it bears an inscription and dedication in the author's hand 'For Anthony, with very best wishes, D M Thomas, June '81', along with the signature of author Anthony Thwaite (b. 1930) as well. Thomas is a prolific novelist, poet, and translator, and the library has this year acquired other signed copies of his books, including two from 1980: his novel *Birthstone*, signed by Thomas and dated by him '83 Oxford', and an exceptionally fine illustrated edition of the poem, *Protest*—ours is copy 12 of 50 copies signed by the poet and the designer.⁹ Journalist and broadcaster Reginald 'Reggie' Bosanquet (1932–84) was another of our famous alumni, and the library now has an association copy of his biography, signed by him and with a light-hearted dedication to his fellow ITN newscaster Leonard Parkin (1929–93): 'To the only man who borrows my dinner-jackets under the pretence they are for his son! Love Reggie'.¹⁰

The library has also purchased noteworthy association copies of works by its alumni academics. These include an 1871 Oxford printing of Homer's *Odyssey* (in Greek), interleaved with plain paper containing copious notes on the text in English—running to thousands of words—written by philosopher, theologian, historian, and Anglican cleric Hastings Rashdall (1858–1924); the book also carries his signature 'Hastings Rashdall, New College, Oxon'. Rashdall was a scholar at New College and later there a fellow in philosophy for twenty-two years; he ended his distinguished career as Dean of Carlisle Cathedral.¹¹ Additionally, the library acquired a copy of Sir James Emerson Tennent's *Christianity in Ceylon* (1850) containing the ownership signature of the



New College Library, Oxford, NC/MAN, half-title page

Winchester and New College-educated linguist of Sinhalese and Maldivian, Dr Christopher H. B. Reynolds (1922–2015). Thirdly, we acquired an author's presentation copy of Chinese Ambassador and scholar Tieh-Tseng Li's *Tibet Today and Yesterday* (1960). It was given to New College fellow in law and the LSE Professor of International Relations, Charles Manning (1894–1978), and inscribed: 'Presented to Professor C. A. W. Manning with my profound respect, Tieh Tseng Li'.¹²

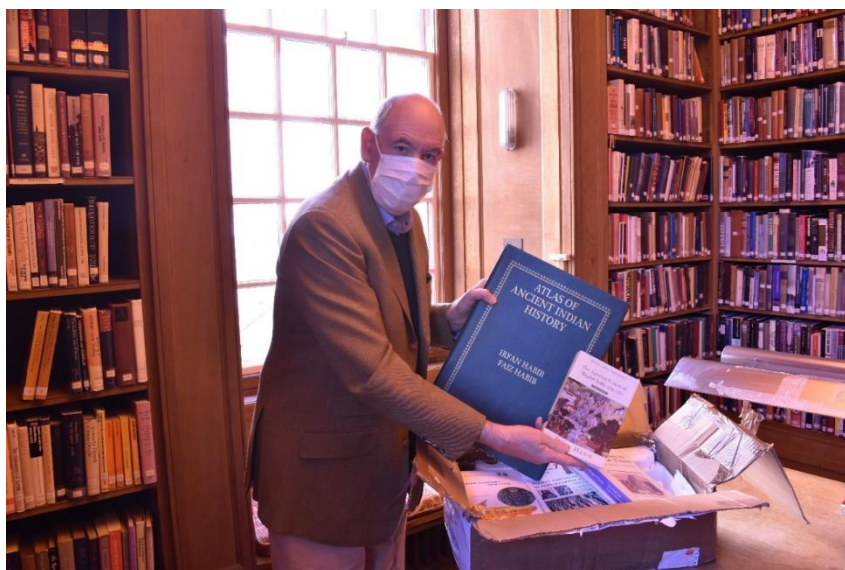
Each year, New College Library is indebted to the generosity of its kind donors, chief among whom are often our own alumni. This year, in particular, I am very pleased to record my thanks to our alumnus, Professor Irfan Habib (b. 1931), one of the foremost historians of South Asia, for donating in September from India around twenty books he has written, and which he has taken the time to inscribe for us.

⁹ D. M. Thomas, *The White Hotel: A Novel* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1981)—I am grateful to the author for the information he shared with me in a personal communication of 9 November 2020 about the circumstances of the composition of his novel. D. M. Thomas, *Birthstone: A Novel* (London: Gollancz, 1980); *Protest: A Poem*, by D. M. Thomas; after a medieval Armenian poem by Frik; designed and engraved by Reg. Boulton (Hereford: D. M. Thomas, 1980). All three books are held by New College Library, Oxford at its shelfmark NC/THO.

¹⁰ Reginald Bosanquet with Wallace Reyburn, *Let's Get Through Wednesday: My 25 Years with ITN* (London: Michael Joseph, 1980), New College Library, Oxford, NC/BOS.

¹¹ *Homērou Odysseia* (= *Homeri Odyssea*) (Oxford: James Parker, 1871), New College Library, Oxford, NC/RAS.

¹² Sir James Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon . . . With an Historical Sketch of the Brahmanical and Buddhist Superstitions* (London: John Murray, 1850), New College Library, Oxford, NC/REY; Tieh-Tseng Li, *Tibet Today and Yesterday* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960), New College Library, Oxford, NC/MAN.



The Warden unwrapping in the library the books donated by Professor Irfan Habib, September 2020

Dr Mark Byford, sometime Salvesen fellow at New College, has long been a great friend to the library. This year his donations have included a very fine, composite volume in contemporary black morocco containing two early printings by Winchester and New College man (BA 1661, MA 1664) Thomas Ken (1637–1711), Bishop of Bath and Wells. These copies of *An Exposition on the Church-Catechism, or The Practice of Divine Love* (1686) and *Directions for Prayer, for the Diocess of Bath and Wells* (1703) make up a book bearing the inscription and signature ‘Elizabeth Keytes Book July 17th 1708’, which may indicate it belonged to an Elizabeth Keyt (*b.* 1689), wife of Thomas Charles Tracy, 5th Viscount Tracy of Rathcoole.¹³

At the close of 2020, we received two further donations whose significance is such the books will be the subject of much work next year, which—I hope—will be fruitful in many ways. Dr Byford’s generosity enabled the library to purchase a very rare first edition of perhaps the only New College play from the age of Shakespeare to survive in its entirety, *The Sophister* (1639) by lawyer Richard Zouche (1590–1661), Winchester and New College scholar and college fellow. This will be the focus of research by Fellow Librarian, Dr William Poole.

And, finally, I was thrilled to receive into the library the most significant, sizeable donation or bequest of early printed books made to the library for at least the past century, if not longer. Thanks to the considerable generosity of our alumnus, the conservationist and author Randal Keynes, OBE (*b.* 1948), we now have a collection of over 200 volumes by and relating to Robert Lowth (1710–87), sometime fellow of New College, and Bishop of London and Oxford Professor of Poetry (1741–51). A Biblical scholar, known for his work on the Book of *Isaiah* and on the nature of Hebrew poetry, Lowth also wrote a celebrated *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) which went through many editions, as well as a *Life* (1758) of our college’s founder, William of Wykeham. It was a spectacular climax to an unusual year.

Christopher Skelton-Foord
Librarian
New College, Oxford

¹³ Thomas Ken, *An Exposition on the Church-Catechism, or The Practice of Divine Love, Revised. Composed for the Diocese of Bath & Wells* (London: Charles Brome; Winchester: William Clarke, 1686), New College Library, Oxford, BT3.2.16(1); bound with: Thomas Ken, *Directions for Prayer, for the Diocess of Bath and Wells. To the Poor Inhabitants within the Diocess of Bath and Wells, Thomas their unworthy Bishop wisheth the knowledg [sic] and love of God* (London: Charles Brome, 1703), New College Library, Oxford, BT3.2.16(2).