



ETON COLLEGE
COLLECTIONS
JOURNAL

Summer 2019

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From the Provost



I am delighted to welcome another excellent edition of the Collections' Journal. As always, Rachel Bond's team have demonstrated not only the breadth of the Collections' holdings, but their own expertise and their commitment to sharing their knowledge as widely as possible inside and outside the school.

Thus it is fitting that the first article, by Saskia Nesja, shows what fun local primary

school children have under her guidance learning about the life of Victorian Etonians. Philippa Martin then describes a different kind of outreach – that by the wife of the vice provost of my day, Margaret Lambart, who marshalled an army of skilled volunteers to provide College Chapel with the splendid kneelers we enjoy today, with designs co-ordinated by Constance Howard. It is good that we are about to start a campaign of conservation of these fine textiles. More practical outreach comes in the good news from Eliza Kettle of our Archives team that the School Clerk's Registers are now available online. Next, Stephanie Coane is in conversation with Jeremy Clarke, former poet-in-residence and good friend of young Etonian poets, whose gift of his remarkable work, *Fallen*, joins his other gifts in College Library. Rebecca Tessier describes the revamped Museum of Eton Life – I think everyone who has visited will agree it is a huge improvement. Do drop in if you haven't seen it recently! Freddie zu Wied, one of the Boy Keepers of the Collections, demonstrates his outstanding knowledge of the Natural History Museum in an article about the Moa bones to be found there.

The Provost's Circle Collections Dinner listened to him spell-bound talking on this subject recently. Philippa Martin writes on the commissioning of Leaving Portraits – then as now a complicated business! Lucy Gwynn celebrates the outstanding Thomas Browne collection, which, thanks to two generations of Babington Smiths, graces College Library and provides the basis of the next Tower Gallery exhibition. Co-operation with Humboldt University in Berlin over the digitising the famous Topham Collection is celebrated by Timo Strauch, and it is wonderful to have the Collection added to the scholarly database *Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance*. Our friend – in every sense – Ian Cadell has his back page describing the many activities of the Friends, including a recent visit to the Watercolours exhibition in the Verey gallery, which is to be followed shortly by an exhibition of some of the fine portraits hung in boys' houses. Once again thank you to everyone!

Lord Waldegrave of North Hill

Forthcoming Exhibitions

New Faces: Unexhibited portraits from Eton's boarding houses
Verey Gallery
27 April - 22 September 2019
By appointment

Death and the Doctor: dying, burying and afterlives in seventeenth-century England
Tower Gallery
9 May - 1 November 2019
By appointment

To book a visit, contact us at collections@etoncollege.org.uk or 01753 370590

03

ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
From the Provost

Outreach and Engagement

04

ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
Around the Collections

*What's a bum
freezer?*

*I want a cake like
that in my room.*

*Why aren't they
learning literacy?*

I'd miss my mum.

These comments are from students at Eton, although they are not Eton students. These 60 children, aged four to seven, are visiting for the morning as part of a school trip, to learn more about what life was like for Eton boys 150 years ago. As part of a new offer from Collections, local primary school students are invited in to discover history through the lives of Eton students. The visiting students start off with a history mystery, trying to decipher an object from the collection of the Museum of Eton Life – an object so obscure that even the curators had misidentified it until recently. With some observation and careful thinking the children were able to decide that the object (pictured opposite) had something to do with lights (and was not for pinching people). This began a brief discussion of candles, rush lights, gas lighting and life before electricity, letting the children bring their prior knowledge to bear.

Now that their brains were warmed up, students divided into small groups for various further activities. One group used photographs to help them dress their paper doll versions of senior and junior boys correctly and then had a chance to exercise their creativity by designing their own prefects' waistcoats. Another played a game to match images of the many leisure-time activities enjoyed by Victorian boys with relevant *Eton College Chronicle* articles. A third investigated the period boy's room in the museum, while the final group compared their present-day lessons to those of Victorian boys, topped off with a moment of quiet contemplation of the birches in the museum display case. As the children rotated around all the activities, they gained an idea of what life may have been like for Eton students of that time period, compared to Victorian children they may have learned about in the classroom.

When we came together at the end, the general agreement from the children was that although they liked the idea of having cake in their rooms, they would not have liked the birch – very sensible!

This session was part of an exciting long-term process of making Eton's extensive and varied collections more accessible to local schools through a standardised programme. Although it might seem counter-intuitive that the history of Eton, a fee-paying single-sex secondary school, could be relevant to co-ed state primary schools, in truth the population of Eton has one great characteristic in common with these visiting students – they are all children. The boys who attended Eton were always still just boys, living through the events and turmoil of their time. Thus Eton provides a perfect example of the home front during the Second World War, with rationing, air



raid shelters and even bombing raids. Old Etonians sacrificed themselves during the Great War, Tudor students toiled at their Latin, and Victorian boys were bound by the expectations of their class. But we are not limiting this programme to history sessions. With two other excellent museums at hand, as new sessions are developed primary school students can also investigate various aspects of natural history as well as the Ancient Egyptians.

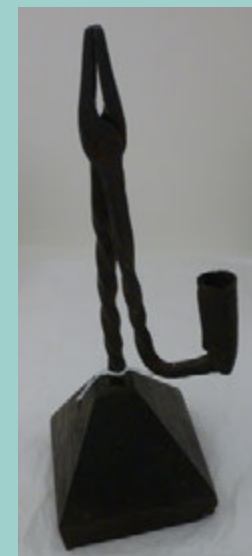
These education sessions, using replica images and objects and containing activities to appeal to different learning styles, allow students from age four to eleven to access some of the collection's rich resources. Once the primary programme is up and running, we intend to develop and expand our offer to secondary schools, focussing on sixth-form students and the unique opportunities the Collections can offer them. It is well recognised that learning done outside of classrooms and through the medium of original objects is unique and different from that done in the classroom. Here at Eton College we have the ability to offer such opportunities within an inspiring setting.

Saskia Nesja
Education Officer



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ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
Around the Collections



Rush Light

Rushes dipped in tallow were once a cheap, smoky and inadequate source of lighting. The rush would be held in the pincer and moved as it gradually burned down. This rush-light holder also has an attached candlestick for occasions when more light was required.



Bum Freezer

In Victorian Eton, older boys would wear tailcoats, just as adults did. The younger and shorter boys were consigned to the 'bum freezer' – a short coat which did not cover one's bottom. Thus in cold weather your posterior would be cold.

The Right Artist: Creating a Textile Scheme for College Chapel

06

ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
Around the Collections



Book cushions, stall cushions and kneelers in College Chapel

By 1959, an ambitious project to restore College Chapel after neglect and damage suffered during the two wars was well underway. That year Margaret Lambart, wife of the vice provost, initiated a scheme to produce new kneelers, stall cushions and book cushions for the chapel.

The first cross stitch designs for the scheme, produced to complement the existing Burne-Jones tapestries and 15th-century wall paintings, were put forward by the Wemyss School of Needlework in Fife. They featured cherub heads framing cream-coloured medallions, on a red background. Parents and friends of the college were approached to carry out the cross stitch and, by December 1959, about 100 offers of help had been

received. However, doubts over the designs began to be voiced and alternatives were suggested. Elizabeth Willink, known as Eliza Andrewes, the wife of an Eton master and a trained artist, collaborated with other Eton wives to create a new colour scheme of soft hues on a dark blue background and put forward her own designs.

The new ideas caused the textile project to stall. Mrs Lambart took on the daunting role of communicating with the many volunteers, and wrote to explain the delay. She and her husband also sought the advice of architect William Holford, whose design for a new ceiling for College Chapel had been completed in 1957. Holford wisely directed them to Robin Darwin, former Drawing Master at Eton

and then Principal of the Royal College of Art. Darwin's advice was that the involvement of an expert textile designer was critical and, with his help, Constance Howard, Head of Textiles at Goldsmiths School of Art, was employed. A further letter to the volunteers from Mrs Lambart followed: 'As you will appreciate, it is essential that the designs should be worthy of the chapel. At last we have found the right artist.'

Howard's role was to map out a plan for the new scheme, design most of the kneelers and cushions, offer direction to other designers involved and check the quality of the completed needlework. She skilfully embraced contributions made by others, whether from amateur or established



Book cushion designed by Constance Howard (1910-2000)

designers, to form a unified, coherent and attractive scheme. Eliza Andrewes remained involved, designing seat cushions for the sub-stalls. Evelyn, Lady Younger, wife of Viscount Younger (former director of brewers George Younger & Sons) and a friend of the Lambarts, designed kneelers.

In total, some 180 volunteers realised the cross stitch designs. Most, but not all, were women. They included the Hon. Amy Akers Douglas, who had designed the tapestries for Lower Chapel; Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester (whose sons, Princes William and Richard, left Eton in 1960 and 1963 respectively); and a girl of just ten years old. Among the men were the 82-year-old Earl of Elgin and John Edmund Martineau (1904-1982), then the managing director of brewers Whitbread and Co. Ltd, who designed and worked a kneeler, seat and book cushion for one of the two conduct's desks.

The volunteers were each asked to contribute £3 to cover the cost of materials. They were sent a canvas with a sample of the required cross stitch on one corner, wools and two rug needles. The embroidery was carried out using three strands of wool, one in a contrasting

shade. Makers were required to add their initials at the corner of each work. Mrs Lambart, Lady Younger and others then made up the embroidery panels into cushions or kneeler covers. On completion of the project, in May 1964, the Embroiderers' Guild hosted a three-day exhibition of the works at their premises in Wimpole Street, London.

This remarkable collaborative effort, involving a vast network of individuals, produced some 200 textiles. Each design, whether a floral pattern, Christian symbol or heraldic device, is a successful work of art in its own right. Those by Constance Howard are outstanding.

In 2001 Eliza Andrewes wrote to Provost Eric Anderson, recalling the project and adding a warning about the poor condition of some of the works. Repairs were made, but today the kneelers, in particular, require attention. Following a conservation survey of the textiles this year, the work will be scheduled, to ensure that these wonderful embroideries remain in use for generations to come.

Sources: COLL VP 02 33, Eton College Archives

Philippa Martin
Keeper of Fine & Decorative Art



Eliza Andrewes, *Design for a Stall Cushion*, gouche on paper

07

ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
Around the Collections

Digitisation of the School Clerk's Registers

The School Clerk's Registers are extremely useful volumes, as they contain the details of an Eton boy's date of birth, his arrival at Eton, his departure – usually with the proposed destination, his previous school, all his tutors and house masters, and any prizes achieved during his time here. There are total of five volumes, each lasting between 29 and 17 years and containing the records of thousands of boys.

Beginning in 1878, the School Clerk's Registers actually predate the position of School Clerk, which was created in 1884, six years after the first entries in the registers. Prior to the creation of this post, the head master's butler had undertaken certain duties on behalf of the head master. In 1878, this would have been the butler to the then head master, Dr Hornby, who would have begun the first School Clerk's Registers,

before the official post was created by Dr Warre when he became head master in 1884. The increase in the school, from around 600 boys in 1850 to over 900 by 1878, led to the need for a proper clerk and so the first appointment was to Sergeant Major Charles Osborn, who had previously been the sergeant instructor of the Corps. The role of the School Clerk lasted until 2003, when following the retirement of Les Cross, and with the growth in the work and staff of School Office, the post became School Office Manager, with the role of Registrar added. The registers themselves, however, ran from 1878 to 1966 in five volumes. After 1966 a boy's information was recorded on a registry card, and this system is still used today.

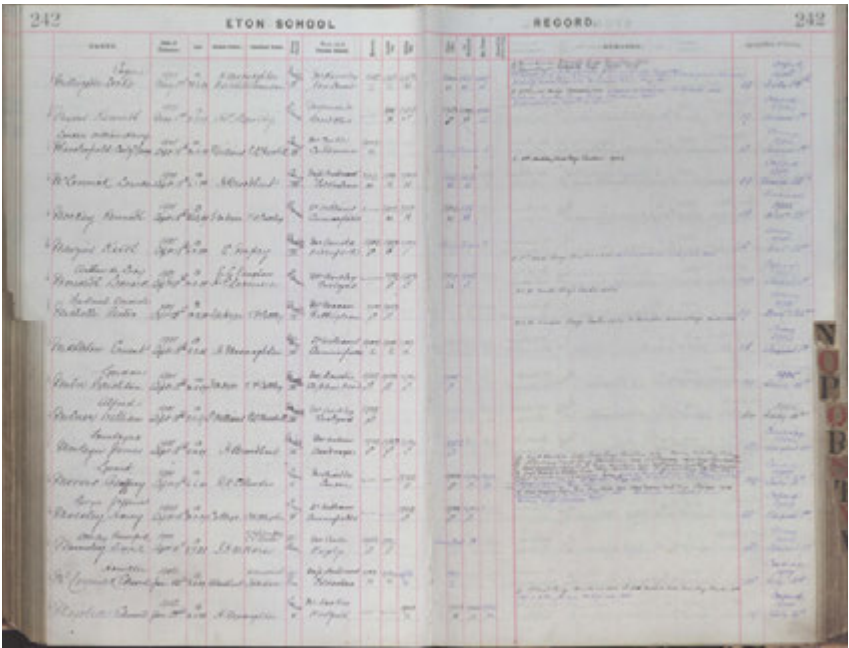
As part of my job as the Archives Assistant, I answer enquiries which are sent in by

members of the public and by members of Eton staff. Many of the enquiries that we receive are from family historians wishing to know more about their ancestors, and in particular, their time at school. With the help of the School Clerk's Registers, we can provide them with insight to a boy's time here.

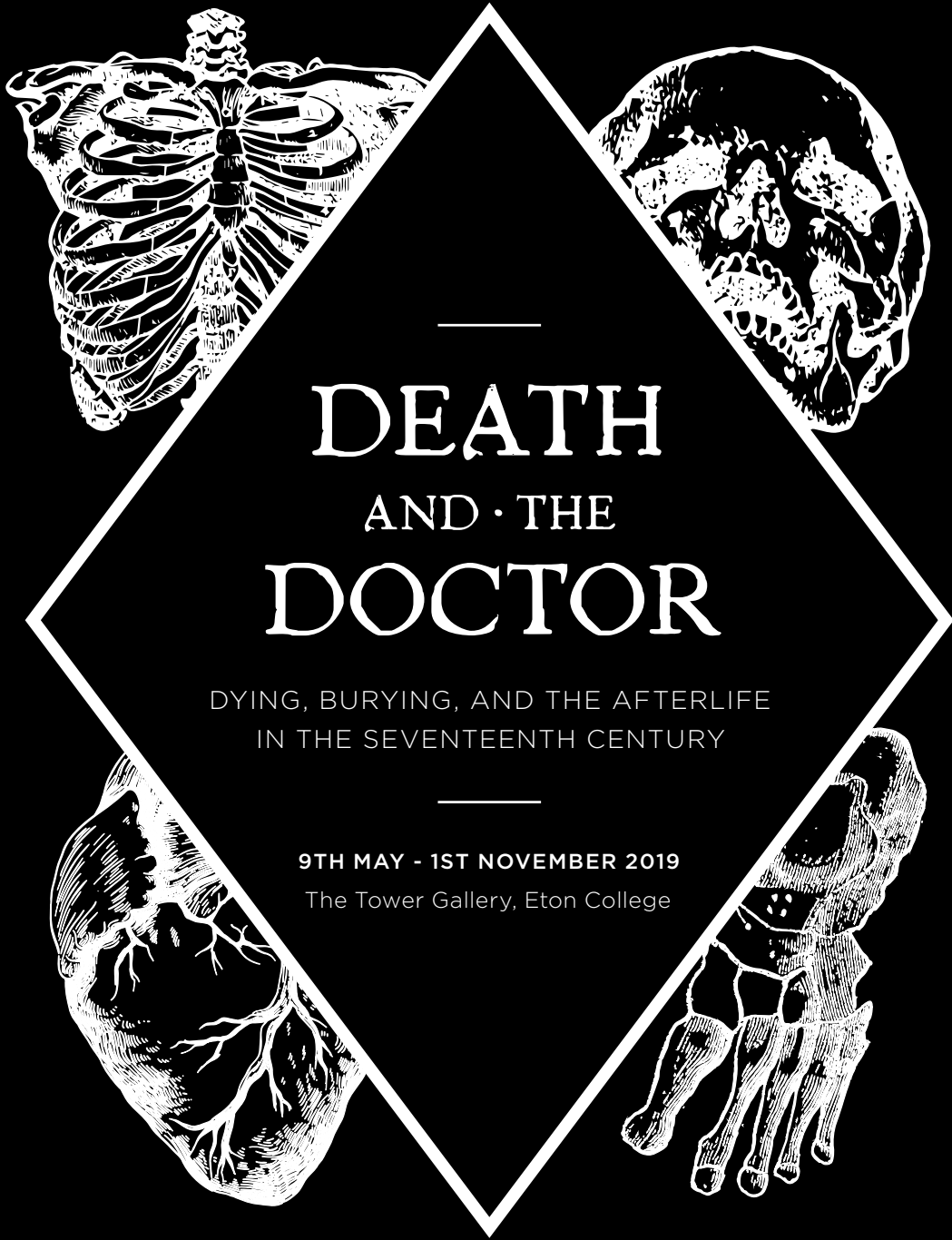
Recently, prior to the registers being added to the online resources from the College Archives, I was asked to do some research on Henry Moseley, the physicist whose work provided a new foundation for the modern day Periodic Table. By using the School Clerk's Registers, we can see that Moseley entered Eton in 1901 as a King's Scholar and went on to excel in science and mathematics, winning prizes in chemistry and physics in 1906, as well as being awarded prizes in geology, mathematics and Latin during his school career. The registers allow us to make a quick reference to see how boys did in school; we can then delve further to find out more and answer enquiries using information which we have in the Archives. For Moseley, knowing he won prizes for his work, we can check to see if he had any Sent Up for Goods (outstanding work sent by the head master or lower master for preservation in the College Archives) which he did – a total of 15.

Whilst the School Clerk's Registers remain available to consult in the Reading Room, the College Archives is pleased to announce that they have recently been digitised, enabling enquirers to carry out their own research. The first three volumes are now available online at www.archives.etoncollege.com.

Eliza Kettle
Archives Assistant



Page of the School Clerk's Register containing Henry Moseley's entry. SCH/01/01 1878-1907

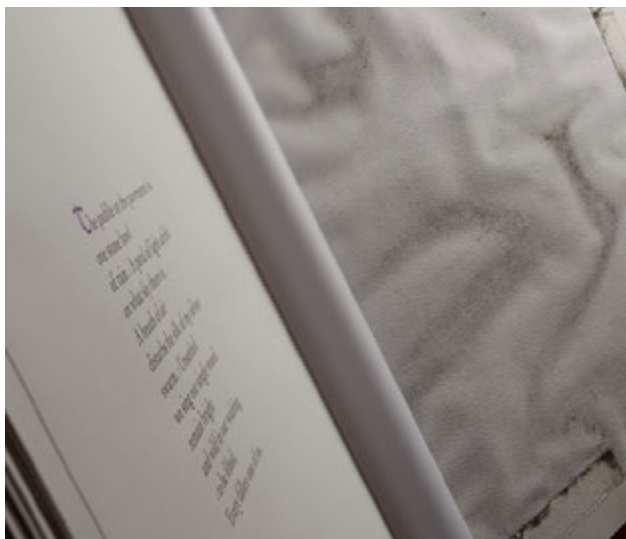


This exhibition looks at experiences and ideas of death, the corpse and posthumous life in seventeenth-century England. Its starting point is the writing of Norwich physician and author Sir Thomas Browne, whose extraordinary essay *Urne-Buriall* is an extended meditation on death, and particularly on what is left of us after we are gone: decaying remains, scraps of memories, and the possibility of eternal life. The exhibition looks at deaths, funerals, and resurrections as described in the sonorous language of the Book of Common Prayer, and in the works of Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton.

Alongside these, it presents the seventeenth-century fascination with the funerary customs of other cultures, from pyramids to catacombs to funeral pyres. Through contemporary illustrations it explores the use of the dead body in the rapidly developing science of anatomy and it introduces Browne's remarkable writings through Eton College Library's fine collection of editions of his works.

To book a visit, contact us at collections@etoncollege.org.uk or 01753 370590

'Every Fallen one of us'



In November 2018 an unusual gift was made to College Library by Jeremy Clarke, a former poet-in-residence at Eton. His most recent book, *Psalms in the Vulgar Tongue*, was published last year. Here he is in conversation with Stephie Coane, Curator of College Library's Modern Collections.

S: As a former poet-in-residence, your connection with Eton goes back further than mine. How did it first come about and what has sustained it?

J: I was officially poet-in-residence in 2010. Since that time, I've continued coming to Eton as a 'visiting poet', mainly giving workshops to the boys and occasionally judging writing prizes. I enjoy working with the boys on their poetry writing. I think it's a valuable practice—exploring how you see.

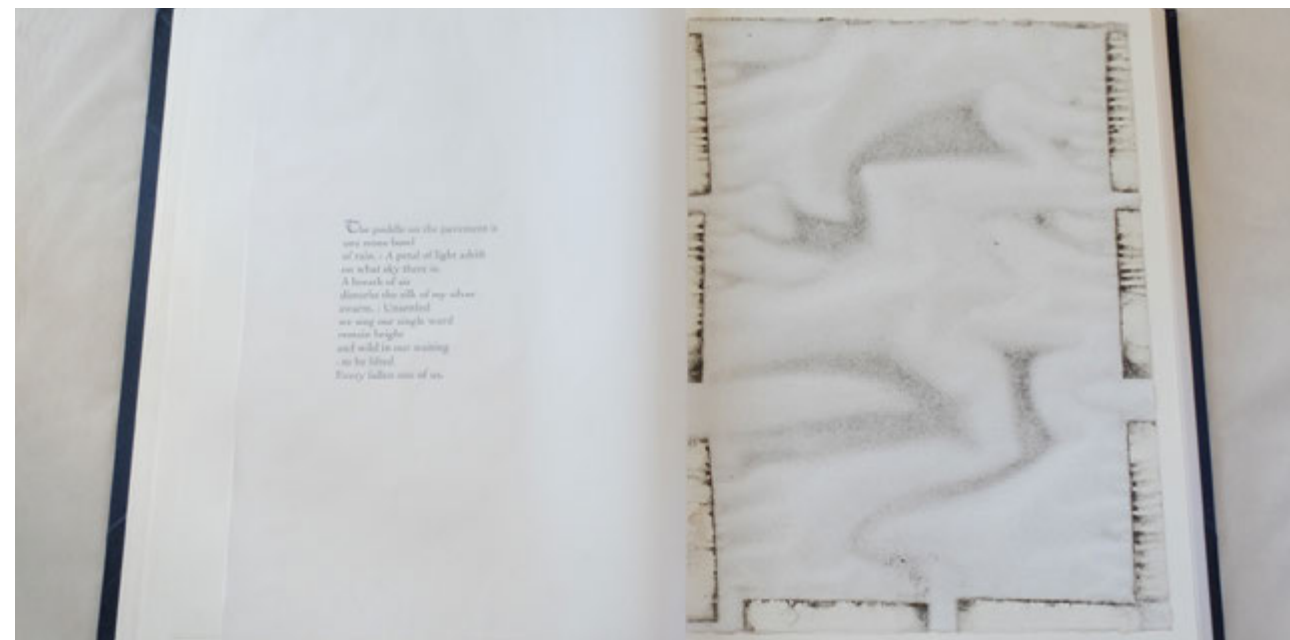
S: In fact I have noticed that after hearing you read your poetry, I've experienced a sort of heightened visual awareness for a couple of days! Would you say this is a theme of your work overall?

J: I'm interested in conveying simple 'truth' (of simple things). These 'truths', as it were, I see as allegories of or references to larger truths or realities, which sounds rather grand... I'm entirely against being grand (hence why I write about gutter

drains and broken streetlights...). Everything is worthy of our attention, can teach us something. Generally, we don't look low enough.

S: I've been told we don't look up enough, either... During your last visit to Eton in November to give a workshop to boys, you presented to College Library the outcome of a project you've been working on for a couple of years, which one could say looks both high and low.

J: The *Fallen* book. For this, I wanted to find a way to have the city 'answer' my poems (from *Psalms in the Vulgar Tongue*). To have the weather, the city air, give its side of the story—of struggle, survival, redemption, renewal: the realities that are present in my psalms. I laid out large, blank watercolour sheets of paper on a central London rooftop, and let the city 'say' on



them whatever it wanted. I allowed each set of sheets (five) to remain on the roof for an entire season. I did this for a year – laying down fresh sheets at the start of each season, to achieve the 20 illustrations of *Fallen*. I think they're beautiful. From the air and seasons, that we think of as 'nothing', came something. Their silent voices are perfect partners to the (equally unheard) voices in the poems – a weed in a wall, a raindrop hung under a windowsill, a blade of grass in concrete.

S: It's a beautiful and unexpectedly moving book. The simplicity of the printed texts on smooth, clean paper faces the textured and cockled 'weather sheets' with the patterns laid down by water and city dust, veiled by the tissue paper guards. What gave you the idea, and what were the challenges in realising it?

J: My initial challenge was accessing the roof of my building—climbing a tiny drop-down ladder and then crawling through a narrow skylight hatch to the roof. And doing so while dragging either a bucket of bricks or an armload of found lumber, in order to construct a makeshift frame for securing the sheets. I made multiple trips in this mad manner.

I actually had to redo one entire season's sheets because they'd been ripped up by seagulls (I assume). I then bought some chicken wire and rolled a section loosely over the frame, and tied little strips of plastic bags to the wire, to flap around like I was protecting some kind of food crop. Crazy. People who would have witnessed all this from adjacent buildings, must have wondered, *what on earth...* I thought it looked a bit like a meteorological experiment.

Other challenges—undoing the frame to get the end of season sheets up and getting them down through the hatch undamaged; going up to the roof in bad weather, to see if the sheets were still there or ruined by a heavy rain or a tearing wind.

I had eight sheets on the roof at all times. I put down/took up just the five for each season. I hoped it might be possible to capture a full year, all four seasons, on a long-suffering three. The three survived. They are not part of the book, and have been framed separately. I thought they deserved their own display.

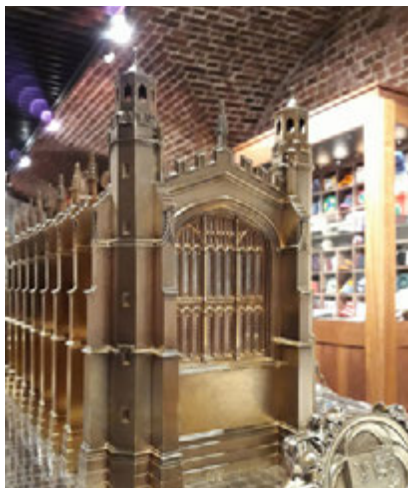
S: You've also mentioned that another challenge was finding a bookbinder able to create a binding for the finished work, which weighs in at some 30kg and is now one of the largest volumes in College Library!

J: Virtually no one would print the poems on the sheets I had, and only one binder was open to making the book. My original plan was for a concertina design—so that the whole book could be laid out, or stood on end (allowing the reader/viewer to walk through the seasons). Sadly, this proved unworkable. Plus, it would have been many times the weight it is now. So, completely unliftable. It's not exactly carrier-friendly now. Such a weight, but when you open it... it is all air and light.

Fallen (If.3.01), joins other books and holograph manuscripts by Jeremy Clarke in College Library. More of his work can be found on his website: jeremyclarke.com

A Fresh Face for Some Museum Favourites

The Museum of Eton Life explores over 550 years of the history, traditions and experience of living and studying at the school. A previous issue of the *Collections Journal* reported on how displays such as the *Present-Day Boys' Room* have been added to continue this story of life at Eton (Michaelmas 2016). We also have a programme of temporary displays, which bring new and previously unseen objects from the museum store into the museum, and focus on different aspects of school life or history. Another important part of ensuring that we are effectively using our collections to communicate these stories from Eton's history is the refreshing and development of existing displays.



Silver gilt model of Eton College chapel, base of white silver. Engraved with the arms of Eton College and with the royal arms of William IV. Maker: John Tapley for Rundell Bridge and Rundell, London: 1834-35.

Often, the conservation needs of the collection prompt a rethink of how, where and why we present an object. This was the case with the silver gilt model of Eton



Part of the Worship display, Museum of Eton Life, with the inclusion of religious texts and artefacts.

College Chapel, which was rehoused in a microclimate chamber last year. Previously in the museum's *Chapel* display, the model is now stunningly presented (following a thorough clean by the Conservation team) as a focal point in the museum. It can be seen in greater detail, up close and 'in the round', and is located adjacent to the Food display in order to link it to its original use as a table centrepiece at an annual dinner held in London by the 'Noblemen and Gentlemen of Eton'.

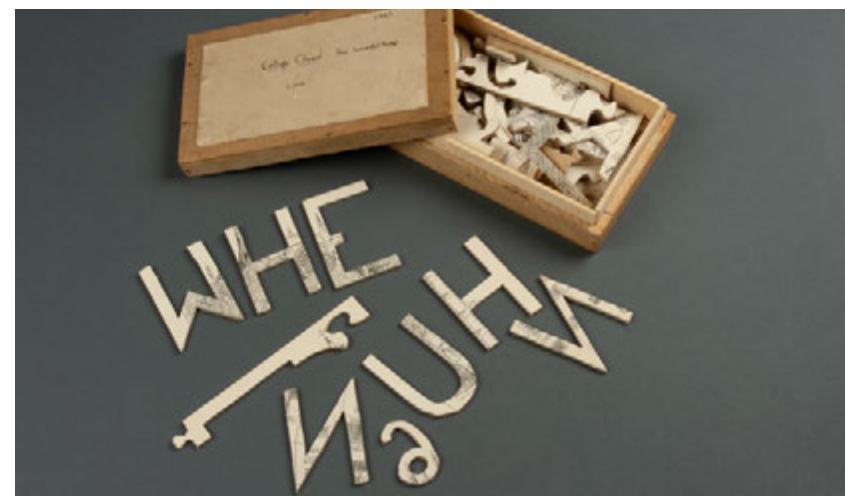
The resulting gap in the *Chapel* case gave us the opportunity to revitalise and update that display, reflecting on the place of chapel at the heart of the school and the diversity of religions represented at the college today. The new *Worship* display looks at the religious foundation of the school, follows College Chapel's history and decorative schemes, and the inclusion of multiple faiths at the school through the Faiths Forum.

This year's temporary display takes a fun look at that essential part of childhood (and beyond!), toys and games, through five objects from the museum collection. From a stash of marbles buried in a bottle and unearthed from School Yard during its refurbishment in 2017 to *The Eton Game*, a board game created by a former master, this display is both a look at the uniqueness of Eton and the universality of childhood.

The principal development in the museum in 2018 was the redesign of the Old Etonian (OE) display. Whereas the rest of the museum displays take a thematic look at aspects of school life, the OE display celebrates the achievements of Eton's alumni. Formerly, the display consisted of a gallery of pictures and panels listing names of renowned Etonians. Whilst this gave a great impression of the sheer number of well-known old boys, the display itself was tired and the content outdated, and



Close-up of the George Orwell display, which is the first of a new series of cross-collections displays focused on Old Etonians.



Henry George Babington Smith (KS 1915-21), hand-made jigsaw puzzle of College Chapel from Barnes Pool bridge, featured in the temporary games display.



The recently updated Old Etonian display in the Museum of Eton Life.

was ready for renovation. Through the efforts of the Collections, the Old Etonian Association, the IT Department and an external designer, the display not only has a fresh face but also has greatly expanded its scope and content, to more effectively and engagingly convey the extent of OE influence worldwide through stories, images and information.

We have updated the panels with pictures and interpretation, renewed the picture wall to focus on recent OEs, bringing together familiar names and faces from the 20th and 21st centuries, and introduced a screen presenting a slideshow of images and details about individual OEs. We have also included a case to house a changing selection of objects and materials from the Collections relating to OEs; the first display looks at George Orwell's time at Eton and his two famous works, *1984* and *Animal Farm*. There is an abundance of information here that rewards both a quick look and closer study. The final phase planned for the OE display is to create digital content for two interactive portals. These will enable visitors to search lists of OEs in a variety of ways and investigate associated biographies and digitised materials from across the collections.

Rebecca Tessier
Museum Officer

The Power of a Parrot

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ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
Around the Collections



Moa Bones, NHM.571:1-3-2017
Top: Femur (Thigh); Left: Tibio-Tarsus (Shin); Right: Tarso-Metatarsus (Fused Ankle and Foot).

Eton's Natural History Museum's grand menagerie arguably has no better Antipodean ambassador than Display 54's charismatic Kākāpo. The colourful bird's name can be translated directly from Māori to *night parrot*, alluding to one of its many unique titles as the world's only nocturnal parrot. The special conditions posed for its evolution in New Zealand gave rise to something of a Darwinian masterpiece whose traits include an herbivorous diet, the highest mass of any parrot and an inability to fly. Despite these unique features, its morphology and anatomy are actually typical of many

birds found on oceanic islands. To see evidence of this, one has only to look at the Kākāpo's neighbour (sharing the same museum cabinet and country-of-origin), the Kiwi. These birds are, however, not at all closely related, rather they are notable instances of convergent evolution, where organisms may evolve comparable traits independently of one another due to similar sets of ecological and environmental conditions. For the Kiwi and the Kākāpo, these included an abundance of food and an absence of predators; there became no need for the excessive energy expenditure of flight,

leading to a more lethargic lifestyle, a lower metabolism, and diminished sternum, keel and wing muscles.

The Kiwi was not the only other bird to undergo this process of adaptation. In fact it is but one of a whole class of very large flightless birds with similar stories from around the world. These are the *ratites*. Extant members of this diverse group include the Rheas of South America, the Ostrich of Africa and Arabia, and the Emu of Australia. The most massive ratite species, the Moa, could be found living alongside the Kakapos and Kiwis of New Zealand just 700 years

ago. These birds strikingly demonstrate the evolutionary phenomenon of insular gigantism, standing up to 3.6m tall and weighing up to 250kg. The Moa occupied similar habitats to those of its successors today, but played an ecological role as the dominant herbivore of the islands with its only natural predator being the similarly large Haast's Eagle (also extinct).

It is certainly heartening to see the recent expert cleaning and repair of the Moa specimen now on display in the museum, joining the Kākāpo and the Kiwi once again. Represented by a right femur and right tarso-metatarsus bone is the heavy-footed Moa (*Pachyornis elephantonotus*) of South Island, as well as another Moa species represented by a tibio-tarsus bone. The significance of these specimens may firstly lie as exemplar evidence of the drastic impact humans can have on individual species over a short period of time. Having been genetically isolated for over 80 million years, the Moa's demise began upon the arrival of the Māori people in the 13th century and occurred in earnest over a 100-year period up to 1445. With no adaptation to deal with armed bipedal predators, the spread of human population quickly consumed both islands' endemic species. The Kākāpo is a notable reminder of how easily this can still happen today. After the species were already compromised by the previous arrival of the Māori people with egg-eating Polynesian rats (*Rattus exulans*), European settlers brought rabbits, cats and dogs. These were ecologically extremely disruptive, but more devastating was the later introduction of mustelids such as stoats and weasels to reduce the growing rabbit population. These severely affected the population of Kākāpo, such that as of 1977 there were thought to be only 100 to 200 living birds. A recent appeal and recovery programme involving the naming and monitoring of every individual parrot has led to growing numbers once again.

The Kākāpo serves today as an excellent agent for the explanation of these topics to a wide range of audiences in the Natural

History Museum. The colourful character and peculiar features of such alien-seeming specimens such as the Kākāpo grant them the advantage of great appeal to many age groups, particularly younger children, as evidenced by their responses in education sessions in the museum this year and last as part of the Eton College Community Engagement scheme. This saw a number of C-Block boys welcoming groups from primary schools to the museum and introducing them to various topics ranging from Darwin to conservation and extinction. The Kākāpo had an instrumental role to play here, allowing the children to effectively engage with the topics in a way not possible within the classroom. The Kākāpo found another role on F-Block Sunday, when every

year it serves marvellously as a perfect introduction for boys to the 17,000-strong collection of the museum by exemplifying its incredible depth and diversity.

A personal thank you to the Kākāpo is due as I reflect on F-Block Sunday in my first year at the college and note this encounter as the root for my own affiliation with the Collections as a whole. The humble Kākāpo is surely an example of the great power of a single specimen, and will duly serve this role for years to come.

Freddie zu Wied (PGW)
Boy Keeper of Collections and NHM
student custodian



Kākāpo, (*Strigops habroptilus*), NHM.577-2017

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ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
Around the Collections

Letters and Portraits: Forming the Leaving Portrait Collection

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ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
Features



Henry Raeburn (1756-1823), *Richard Penn Curzon (later 1st Earl Howe)*, c.1814, oil on canvas

The history of the group of works we call the Eton 'leaving portraits' is complex. The circumstances surrounding the commissions, the status and ownership of the works, and how the scheme evolved over time, all require further research. As a project to commission eight new portraits of boys who left the college in 2018 nears completion, it seems apt to look at a group of previously unexplored

letters in the Eton College Archives*, which throw new light on aspects of the tradition in the early 19th century.

The commissioning of leaving portraits of Eton boys began in the 1750s. Prior to this, boys had made a monetary gift to the head master (HM) as they left the college. But Edward Barnard (Head Master 1754-65; Provost 1765-81) altered this

practice, instead requesting portraits from boys he personally selected. Whether the individuals were chosen for their social position, promise, achievements at Eton or because of Barnard's affection for them is unclear, but a combination of reasons seems most likely. This was the beginning of a tradition which continued for about 100 years. The sitters or their families frequently commissioned an additional version of the portrait to allow one to hang at the family home. Although the leaving portraits were the property of the individuals who requested them, the works were generally given or bequeathed to the college. However, letters in the archive reveal that occasionally sitters attempted to reclaim them.

On 8 December 1809, future Prime Minister George Canning, aware that Provost Jonathan Davies (HM 1773-92; Provost 1791-1809) was on his deathbed, wrote to the Head Master, Joseph Goodall. Canning's letter indicates that he had previously tried to recover the leaving portrait he had given to Davies. Now, somewhat distastefully, he again requested the portrait be returned to him following Davies' imminent demise. Perhaps embarrassed at the timing of his request, he blamed it on his spouse:

When I inform you that the person who has a fancy for that [portrait] now at Eton is my wife, you will, I am sure, forgive the trouble which I have given you.

A note on the letter records that the portrait was painted by John Hoppner (1758-1810). Goodall later confirmed that while 'Ld Willerby & Grenville leave their portraits, as does Mr Puller-Mr Canning exchanges his ...' In the following month,



Thomas Kirkby (1775-c1847), *Henry Herbert (later 3rd Earl of Carnarvon)*, c.1826, oil on canvas

Canning wrote to Goodall again to express his pleasure 'that our exchange has proved so mutually satisfactory.'

This correspondence would seem to indicate that the Canning portrait by Hoppner now in the collection, said to represent the sitter at 'about the age of 25', is the work received in exchange for the original leaving portrait.

Canning's success may have encouraged his contemporary, Henry Richard Fox, 3rd Baron Holland to follow suit. Later that month Goodall wrote to inform Holland:

I am ready to obey [the] mandate for the removal of your Lordship's portrait; but before I do so I cannot resist the desire I have of making an attempt to retain it at the Lodge... Mr Canning exchanges his picture.

The evidence of the portrait of Holland by French artist Francois-Xavier Fabre (1766-1837) in the Eton collection today apparently demonstrates that Goodall's efforts paid off and Holland either withdrew the request or exchanged the work.

When Goodall succeeded as Provost, the position of Head Master was filled by Dr John Keate (HM 1809-34). As Eton's longest-serving head master, Keate gathered more leaving portraits than any other. Most are

now on display in Election Chamber. In May 1814 he received a letter from Richard Penn Curzon, who would become Earl Howe, Lord Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide, consort of William IV. Curzon apologised for the lateness of his portrait. Since leaving in the summer of 1813, he had been travelling in Scotland, where he had hit on a brilliant portraitist:

I am sorry to have been so long prevented from testifying my sense of the honour you did me in requesting my portrait. ... on my arrival at Edinburgh ... I sat immediately to Mr Raeburn, an artist of great eminence in Scotland. It will be a great pleasure to me to find that it gives you satisfaction.

Curzon had little need to apologise. Other leaving portraits were received after much longer intervals. In 1826, Keate received a letter from writer and traveller Henry Herbert, styled Lord Porchester (1800-49; later 3rd Earl of Carnarvon), some ten years after he had left the school:

I fear you must have thought me very negligent and slow in performing the request which you so kindly made when I left Eton of having my picture taken ... I was for many years afterwards almost exclusively on the Continent and since last I had the pleasure of seeing you I have continually urged the completion of the picture... I trust you will impute the fault not to myself but to the artist - [Thomas] Kirkby ...

The correspondence regarding leaving portraits is mainly, but not exclusively, between head masters and sitters. However, in 1836 Keate received a letter from John Lonsdale, the father of a former pupil and then the Principal of King's College, London:

We are glad you are satisfied with our boy's portrait; and thank you much for your kind expressions respecting it. It has been commended here & by judges, both as a painting, & as a likeness. Hamilton thinks highly of the painter, Mr George Patten, of Newman Street.

This letter reveals an error in the catalogue of the *Eton College Portraits* (published 1910) by Lionel Cust, who seems to have confused the names of sitter and artist in attributing the work to portraitist James Lonsdale (1777-1839), no relation to the sitter's family.

These fragmented conversations from Eton's past suggest how little the commissioning process may have changed in the intervening 200 years, not least in the difficulty of securing a portrait once the subject has left the college and embarked on the next stage of his life.

The Provost initiated the latest portraits of 2018 leavers and personally selected the sitters. A talented photographic artist, Tereza Červeňová, was commissioned to create the works and, as in the past, travel plans and commitments caused some delays in sittings taking place! Now, after the completion of the sittings, we await the arrival of the portraits, which undoubtedly will be well received. Červeňová's contemporary leaving portraits will be displayed at the college later this year and take their place within this remarkable tradition.

*Sources: COLL P 01 5 020; COLL P 01 12 01; COLL P 01 12 02; ED 360 02 04 03; ED 475 03 02 01; ED 475 09 01 14, Eton College Archives

Philippa Martin
Keeper of Fine & Decorative Art



Francois-Xavier Fabre (1766-1837), *Henry Richard Fox, 3rd Baron Holland*, c.1795, oil on canvas

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ETON COLLEGE COLLECTIONS
Features

Remembering Sir Thomas Browne

and his Burial Urns

The iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity – Sir Thomas Browne

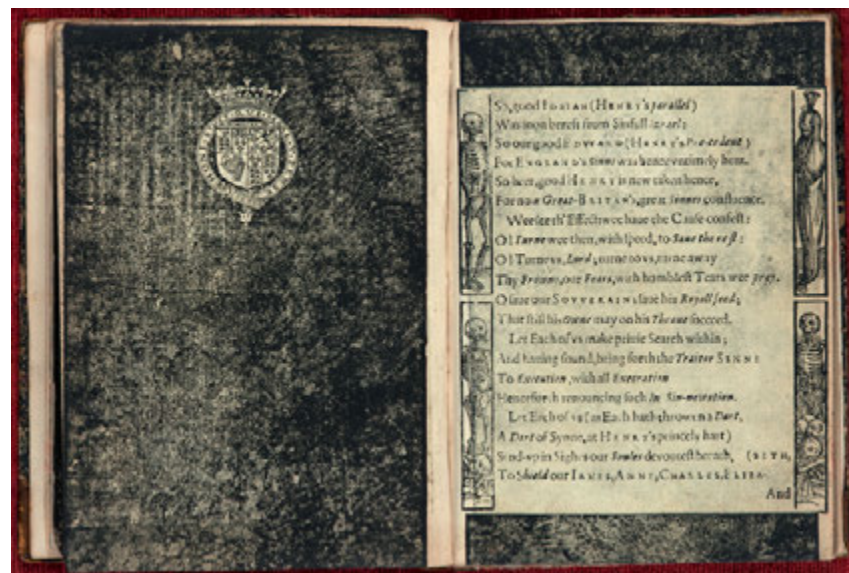
Buy why fly in the face of facts? Few people love the writings of Sir Thomas Browne, but those who do are of the salt of the Earth – Virginia Woolf

Sir Thomas Browne (1604?-82) wrote in one of his best known essays that memory deals unfairly with dead men and women, and that some are forgotten even when they deserve to be remembered. He would have appreciated the irony of the fact that, despite being regarded as one of the best English prose writers of the 17th century, his own name is now relatively unknown. Fortunately for College Library, one man who loved the writings of Thomas Browne was an Old Etonian, David Babington Smith (1909-89), who with his father Henry (1863-1923) put together a fine collection of Browne's works, and left them to the college. The Babington Smith collection ranges from very early copies to beautiful private press versions to modern scholarly critical editions.

In this article – and in the current Tower Gallery exhibition—I hope to persuade you that Browne is worth remembering—and worth reading. The exhibition explores how Browne thought and felt about death and the dead. Browne lived most of his life in Norwich, practising as a provincial physician and gaining an international reputation as a scholar with extraordinarily wide interests through the publication of

essays on philosophy and science. In the 1650s, a friend sent him a gift of four ancient cinerary or burial urns, chosen from among nearly 50 urns that had recently been excavated by some workmen in a field near Walsingham, some 30 miles north of Norwich. In these urns, Browne found traces of humans who had lived and died in Norfolk a millennium before him: ashes, fragments of bones and teeth, as well as bits of wood, tweezers, combs, and in one case a jewel. Browne seized the chance to investigate the

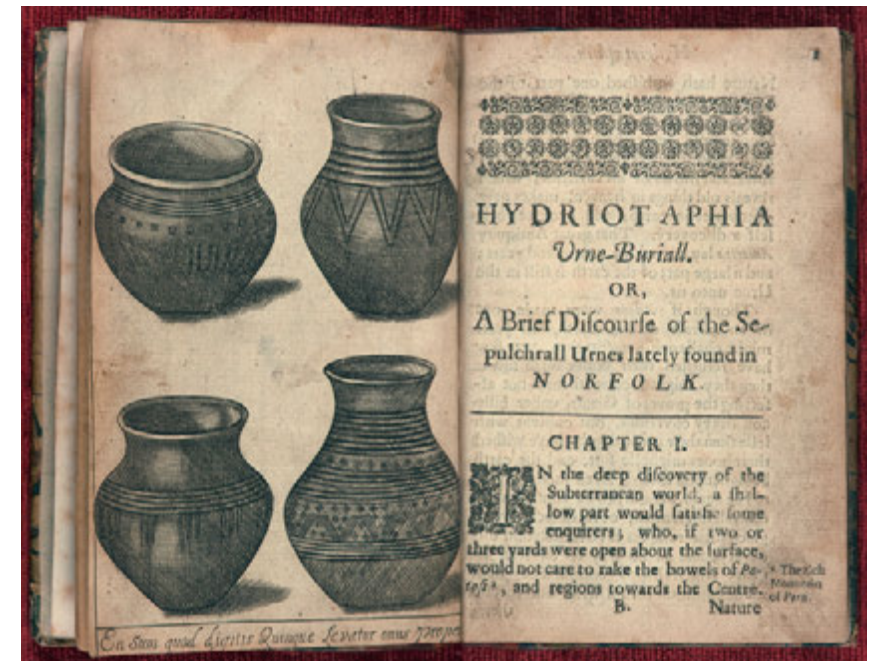
urns and their contents as archaeological remains that could tell him about the early inhabitants of Norfolk, their funerary practices and their beliefs. His essay *Urne-Buriall* (1658) starts as a scientific study of his urns, but swerves into a meditation on the wealth of hidden knowledge that lies beneath our feet and our physical closeness to an apparently distant past; and on decay, mortality, eternity, and the likelihood of our names and deeds being remembered in centuries to come.



An opening from *Lachrymae lachrymarum* (1612), a mourning book for Henry, Prince of Wales (Fs.3.35)

As a doctor, Browne had daily contact with dead and dying bodies. His profession was an effort to 'keep men out of their urns' in an age when modern medicine was still in its infancy. But his feelings about the dead body seem strangely conflicted. On the one hand, corpses and their exhumation fill him with an instinctive horror: 'To be gnaw'd out of our graves, to have our skulls made drinking bowls, and our bones turned into Pipes, to delight and sport our Enemies, are Tragically abominations'. But Browne the scientist is also excited by the phenomena associated with the dead body. In *Urne-Buriall* he observes in an exhumed cadaver that the 'salt and lixivious liquor of the body, had coagulated large lumps of fat, into the consistence of the hardest castle-soap'. This is the first scientific description of 'corpse wax' or adipocere. Browne had trained in continental medical schools where anatomising human bodies was becoming routine—only through meticulous knife-work on dead bodies could knowledge be acquired to keep other men and women from death. His career was contemporaneous with a great raft of anatomical innovations, not least William Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood (first published in 1628). In this context, the body becomes for Browne a source of wonder, as 'the netty fibres of the veins and vessels of life' he finds in an anatomised corpse reveal the truth of Psalm 39: 'Thou hast curiously embroydered me, thou has wrought me up after the finest way of texture, and as it were with a needle'.

Skulls, skeletons, and rotting corpses featured heavily in 17th-century funeral monuments, and also in books, jewellery, furniture and paintings. These memento mori served to remind viewers of their imminent deaths, and of the moral imperative to be constantly mindful of their behaviour to secure life after death. The same impulse lay behind the publication of sermons preached at funerals and of elegies dedicated to the recently dead. The personal virtues of James I's eldest son, Prince Henry, were memorialised in *Lachrymae lachrymarum*



The beginning of Browne's essay *Urne-Buriall* (1658), with an illustration of the four cinerary urns (laa4.49)

(a book printed with alternate pages washed in black) and held up as an example to the living. For Browne, being remembered for one's Christian virtue is a sufficient memorial for eternity, and physical monuments are irrelevant when God alone knows where our bones shall rest until our resurrection. In *Urne-Buriall*, some of his most brilliant prose compares the simplicity of Christian afterlife and salvation with the desperate and vain struggles of ancient pagans to secure eternal life: 'Pyramids, arches, obelisks were but the irregularities of vain-glory, and wilde enormities of ancient magnanimity. But the most magnanimous resolution rests in the Christian religion, which trampleth upon pride, and sets on the neck of ambition'. In the end, he writes, 'Tis all one to lye in St. Innocents Church-yard, as in the Sands of Ægypt: Ready to be anything, in the extasie of being ever, and as content with six foot as the Moles of Adrianus'.

Given Browne's panic about the disturbance of human bones, and his ambition to lie quietly in his allotted six foot of earth, it is poignant that his own body was subject to exhumation and undignified display. He was

laid to rest in the chancel of his parish church, St Peter Mancroft in Norwich. In 1840, his coffin—clearly marked—was unearthed whilst a new grave was being dug. It should have been reinterred, but the sexton took the skull and sold it. It spent some decades on display in a silver and glass casket in the pathological museum of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. Increasingly outraged bids were made to have it restored to the church for reburial. Sir William Osler lamented in 1905 that the 'tender sympathy with the poor relics of humanity which Browne expresses so beautifully...has not been meted to his own'. In 1921 the skull was finally restored, and was given an entry in the parish clerk's register: 'Buried: Sir Thomas Browne, skull. Age: 317'. Today, several casts of the skull can still be viewed, including in the vestry of St Peter Mancroft and at the Royal College of Surgeons. The cast belonging to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital features in the Tower Gallery exhibition as a reminder of Browne's achievements and of the fragility of our lives after death.

Lucy Gwynn
Deputy Librarian

Marble on Paper – and Online

Richard Topham's collection of drawings after antique sculpture in early 18th-century Italian collections of antiquities, today preserved in Eton College Library, has been digitised for the first time in its entirety and is being added to the scholarly database of the *Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance*.

Richard Topham (1671–1730) created a virtual museum landscape with the means available in his time. After his retirement in 1713, the wealthy English lawyer and politician from Windsor devoted himself to collecting drawings after antique works of art in Italy. With the help of agents, he commissioned a large number of artists to systematically record the holdings of Roman, Florentine and other Italian collections of antiquities. In less than 20 years, he amassed over 2,200 drawings and watercolours which, together with

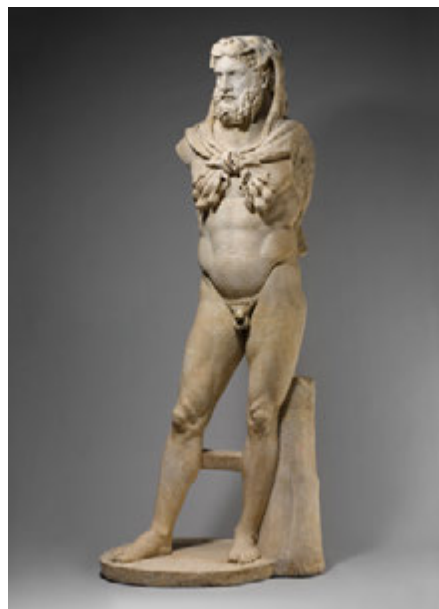
his collection of single-leaf prints and his library, he bequeathed to Eton College, where everything has been preserved virtually unchanged to the present day.

The drawings document antique works of almost all kinds of art, mainly sculpture (statues, busts, reliefs), wall paintings, decorative art objects (vases, gems, coins) and, to a lesser extent, architecture. Topham's own related files suggest that his collection was carefully planned. He aimed for, and partly achieved, completeness. He recorded the names of the artists working for him, and identified the objects they had drawn as well as their current place of preservation. The campaigns were carried out by draughtsmen in Rome, Florence, Venice and elsewhere within a limited timeframe. As a result, some collections got their first and only individual graphic catalogue. Considering the mobility of antiques on the art market, already

common at that time, and the fact that later on entire collections moved or became completely dispersed, Topham's drawings are extremely valuable as documentary material. At the same time, his topographical approach, focusing on artworks as parts of a certain collection, differs fundamentally from other great antiquarian enterprises, namely the more prominent and more thoroughly studied encyclopaedic 'paper museum' commissioned by Cassiano dal Pozzo in the 17th century. Another peculiarity of Richard Topham's collecting activities is that he apparently never intended to visit the ancient monuments, whose images he acquired, in person and on site. His desire was, in the truest sense of the word, to have them 'on file'.

Topham's drawings can be considered a perfectly suited addition to the *Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance*, a research initiative at the intersection between archaeology and the history of art, launched in 1946 at the Warburg Institute in London and based today at Humboldt University in Berlin. At the core of the *Census* lies its scholarly database that records and correlates information about written and visual sources documenting antique monuments in post-antique times. By stating when, where and in which state of preservation they were excavated, seen, described, restored, moved, etc., the *Census* helps to understand the material basis on which previous generations of artists and antiquarians shaped their own image of Antiquity.

In a way, Topham's collection of drawings itself constitutes a *Census avant le lettre*. Despite its importance for our knowledge

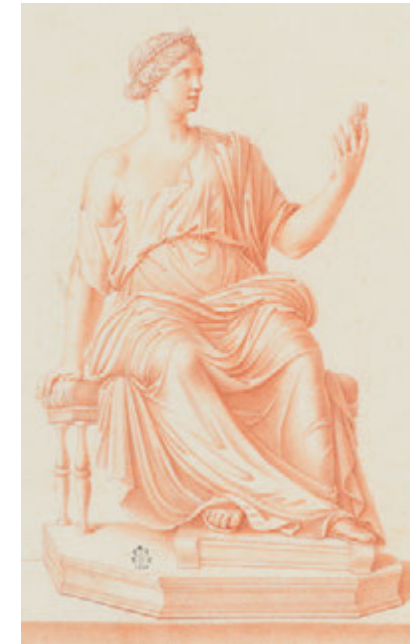


Left: Statue of Hercules (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 03.12.14). Right: Venanzio Rusconi, Statue of Hercules, as seen in the Palazzo Giustiniani in Rome between 1715 and 1730 (ECL-Bm.14.28)



Left: Statue of a Seated Female (Oenone) (Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, inv. SK 599; photo: SPSC). Right: Bernardino Ciferri, Statue of a Seated Female, as seen in the Villa Mattei in Rome between 1715 and 1730 (ECL-Bm.11.16)

about the history of hundreds of antique works of art, the collection has hitherto received only limited attention. Therefore, in a joint effort with Eton College Library and with generous support from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, the *Census* commissioned a comprehensive digitisation campaign for about 1,850 drawings after antique sculpture from Topham's collection



and is now working on their inclusion in the *Census* database with the help of additional funding from the Volkswagen Foundation.

For the first time, the drawings will be catalogued, illustrated and published online, perfectly contextualised in a database that already contains thousands of records of antique sculpture and their

documentation from the Renaissance to the age of Johann Joachim Winckelmann and his contemporaries. The Topham project initiates the bridging of the gap between these two cornerstones of the *Census*, which will be continued by future initiatives.

Over 1,500 Topham drawings have already been added as document records to the database, and more than 1,000 of them have already been linked to a monument record of the object represented in them. The process of identifying the monuments starts off from Jean Sampson's pioneering catalogue, which was transferred into the Eton Collections Online Catalogue several years ago, but which still represents the state of knowledge of 1974, when Sampson completed her master's thesis. With the help of modern research resources in print and online, the percentage of objects identified by the end of the project can be expected to be significantly higher.

The *Census* database and website can be consulted at www.census.de. The complete records of the Topham collection drawings will be released later in 2019.

Timo Strauch
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance



Left: Cinerary Urn of Cornelius Aprilis and Cornelia Nimphe (Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, inv. 2842; photo: Antonio Trigo Arnal). Right: Bernardino Ciferri, Cinerary Urn of Cornelius Aprilis and Cornelia Nimphe, as seen in the Villa Mattei in Rome between 1715 and 1730 (ECL-Bm.11.121)



Friends of the Collections Review

On 7 February 2019, Philippa Martin, Keeper of Eton's Fine & Decorative Art collection, gave a delightful and informative talk to Friends in the Museum of Eton Life – followed by a visit to the beautiful *Watercolours* exhibition in the Verey Gallery. Space in the museum is limited, so we were reluctantly obliged to restrict numbers and even turn a few Friends away. We much regret any inconvenience caused; it is hard to know how popular an event will be, particularly on a dark February evening!

In January, an opportunity occurred for the Friends to sponsor the acquisition of three small silver plaques, with fascinating connections to Eton. Uniquely, they depict School Yard, the



We are delighted to announce the revival of the Friends e-bulletin, which we hope to send out quarterly to keep you up to date with news and events. So that you don't miss out on this, may I remind all Friends to make sure that Caroline Bradshaw (friends@etoncollege.org.uk) has your email address if you have one?

Ian Cadell
Friends of the Collections



Procession of Boats, including a fireworks display, and the college viewed from the river, and had formed the decorative elements on the base of a cup presented to the famous Old Etonian actor and theatre manager Charles Kean in 1862. Keeper of Silver Shauna Gailey and Librarian Emeritus Michael Meredith successfully bid for them at auction. The interesting story of Charles Kean and his trophy we hope will be told in a future edition of the *Journal* and we plan to display the plaques for Friends in due course.

The Friends have been invited to visit Lambeth Palace on Monday 17 June 2019. Giles Mandelbrote, the Librarian and Archivist, will give a talk on the library of the Archbishops of Canterbury and a tour will follow. This will no doubt be a fascinating event, to which we are greatly looking forward. Our autumn event will be held in Election Hall on Thursday 3 October when Lucy Gwynn will give us a talk entitled *Introducing Sir Thomas Browne: a seventeenth-century doctor and writer*.

Save the Date: Forthcoming Friends Events

Monday 17th June
Visit to Lambeth Palace Library
6.30pm, Tickets £20
Invitations to follow

Thursday 3rd October
Talk and special exhibition view
with Dr Lucy Gwynn
Sir Thomas Browne: a seventeenth-century doctor and writer
6.30pm, Tickets £15
Invitations to follow

For more information please contact
friends@etoncollege.org.uk

NEW FACES

Unexhibited Portraits from Eton's Boarding Houses

Verey Gallery, 27 April – 22 September 2019
by appointment

Anyone who has walked around the Foundation area of the college will have seen at least part of the impressive collection of portraits on display there. Much less well known are the extensive number of portraits hanging elsewhere, in boarding houses, school departments and other buildings.

More than three-quarters of Eton College's collection of some 540 oil paintings are portraits. The Fine & Decorative Art collection also includes portraits in the form of drawings, watercolours, miniatures, prints and sculpture. Selections from the collection have been shown in the past. Public exhibitions dedicated to Eton's leaving portraits were held in 1951 (Tate) and 1991 (Dulwich Picture Gallery). However, these exhibitions featured many of the same works and were largely drawn from the collection normally on display in the Foundation area, and in particular in the Provost's Lodge. Of those hanging outside the Foundation area, few have been exhibited in living memory.

Now, for the first time, the exhibition *NEW FACES: Unexhibited Portraits from Eton's Boarding Houses* offers an opportunity to discover these less familiar faces, including leaving portraits, portraits of staff, significant Old Etonians and others associated with the college.

To book a visit, contact us at:
collections@etoncollege.org.uk
or 01753 370590

Philip de László (1869–1937)
Laura Andorsen (née Lewis) 1928
oil on canvas

Explore

The Three Museums of Eton College



The Museum of Eton Life



The Natural History Museum



The Museum of Antiquities



***Seven Halts on the Somme* by Hughie O'Donoghue, RA** - Millington-Drake Gallery
Victorian Stained Glass by Thomas Willement - Austen-Leigh Gallery
Open in School Hall most Sunday afternoons from 18 November 2018 to 28 April 2019.
For further information see etoncollege.com/CollectionsAccess

Open Sundays,
2.30 - 5.00pm
Free Admission

Eton College Collections
Eton College, Windsor, SL4 6DW

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Website: www.etoncollege.com/CollegeCollections
Blog: www.etoncollegecollections.wordpress.com
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