

The Bookplates of All Souls College Library

Until the eighteenth century, and in accordance with the Statutes, it was [the custom to list all books given to the Library in the Benefactors' Register](#), and to inscribe, in each book: "Liber Coll: Omn: Anim: fidel: defunct: ex dono _____ : ejusd: Coll: Socij." With the Old Library full to capacity, and books consequently stored off-site, the advent of the new library heralded a change in procedures. Instead of the inscription, all books were to have the College arms affixed to each book, and in 1712 Michael Burgers, engraver, was paid thirty shillings for the first bookplate, and a succession of designs followed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Although some of these designs can be dated, implying dates of presentation or acquisition of the books that bear any particular plate is not possible; it is clear that some plates were pasted over others, in some books there are two plates with no clear indication of which came first, and undoubtedly, stocks of older style plates were used up long after they had been superseded by more recent designs.

A note of the individual bookplate is included in the copy-specific notes of the catalogue records of the Library's early printed books, and is derived from an article written by J. Henderson Smith, in which he numbers each plate and variant in a chronological sequence. This article, from the *Journal of the Ex Libris Society* (ix, 1899) is reproduced, in full, below:



Bookplate #2

THE BOOK-PLATES OF ALL SOULS' COLLEGE, OXFORD.

By J. Henderson Smith.

THERE are some for whom the book-plate of a corporate body has no attraction. It lacks suggestiveness, they say, and has none of that curious personal charm of the individual plate which creates a bond of sympathy between us who contemplate it and him, the individual who used it. The individual plate has a character—a highly unsubstantial affair in many cases, no doubt, but still a character sufficient to suggest a real being; but the "institution plate" has the chilly savour of abstraction. And so the collector, whose collection means to him something more than an aggregation of the curious or rare or pecuniarily valuable, more even than a portfolio of heraldic instances, looks askance at the bookplates of most public institutions, and admits them only on secondary considerations, such as age or rarity, to a place amongst his treasures. Such objections, however, do not apply to bookplates coming from a College library; for with them we have a wealth of association and sentiment which the plates of few individuals can equal. The vast majority of ordinary plates bear names which must remain mere names; but a College plate has a far more definite meaning, for it reminds us of a permanent factor in the development of European thought.

But while the College plate thus satisfies one great element of interest in a bookplate, it not infrequently satisfies another. For as a class such plates are uncommon. It is not often that a volume finds its way out, when once it has been received into the sacred precincts of a College library, for the library is never dispersed; and thus, however numerous its instances may be within that library, as a unit in a collection it is of relatively rare occurrence. That College plates do not often satisfy a third great requirement, that of artistic beauty, is matter for regret; but the true lover of Ex Libris is antiquary as well as artist, and age can lend a beauty of its own.

The bookplates of All Souls' College form a series of uncommon interest. The library from which they come is famous as one of the most complete legal libraries in England. The foundation of the College is contemporaneous with the invention of printing, and in the library is a perfect specimen of that book which bears an earlier date than any other printed in England*. The bookplates are all, with one exception, of unusual design, and are all but one signed or by known engravers. They are numerous and mostly scarce, and their heraldry presents unusual features. No apology, then, is necessary for an account of their peculiarities.

"In the beginning of the eighteenth century," says Warren, "occur dated Ex Libris of certain colleges, who placed above their escutcheons neither helmet nor crest, and who consequently had no mantling wherewith to decorate the bare flanks of the shield"; and from the desire to clothe this nakedness arose the Jacobean style. But, although the dated plates are not very numerous, the influences which produced so marked an increase in the number of Ex Libris at this time extended to the Universities, for we find a large majority of the Colleges possessing plates in the new style. And All Souls' College is not an exception, for it seems to have used such a plate in the first few years of the century. At all events the copper of it is in the

possession of the College to this day, and it is from a modern impression from this copper, flawed as we see it, that our illustration is taken. No old print of it, however, is known to exist. It must have been in use in the library which existed before the magnificent bequest of Codrington was made, but although diligent search has been made in the library as it now is, no specimen has been found on any book to reward our toil. Neither has it ever been seen, as I am informed by the Librarian, Mr. Oman, to whose courtesy and kindness I owe the fullness of this notice. A few impressions were taken from the copper a year or two ago, but the plate is not in use now, and these are merely curiosities. This plate differs from all the rest not only in the inscription and the style, but also in the fact that it bears the coat of Chicheley, Archbishop of Canterbury and founder of the College, alone and without the coat of Codrington.



Bookplate #1

"In 1710 Christopher Codrington left by will the sum of £10,000 to the College for the purpose of building a new Library, together with a large collection of valuable books." Codrington was well known in his time as a wit and scholar, though little of his work remains to us to-day. He was eminent as a soldier, and was Captain-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands, a post which he resigned in 1703, owing to the unfortunate result of the Guadeloupe expedition. He then gave himself up to literature, and the collection bequeathed to All Souls' is rich in books of every class. For this collection the plate by

* [The "book which bears an earlier date than any other printed in England" was, at the time, believed to have been the *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*, bearing a colophon that gives 1468 as the date of printing, and which is actually a misprint for "M.cccc.lxxvij"]

Burghers seems to have been designed. It is found in two sizes, one signed "M. Burg. Sculp," the other and smaller signed " M.B.s." in ligature, and on both the inscription is "Bibliotheca Chiclleio-Codringtoniana." Of the larger size modern impressions are common, for the copper still exists in its original condition; but the smaller plate has been altered more than once. It is found in the state we have described, viz., with the inscription, Bibliotheca Chiclleio-Codringtoniana, and Burghers' signature; but for some reason the inscription was altered to "Liber Coll: Omn: Anim: Fidel: defunct: in Oxon.," and removed from the slab on which it had formerly been engraved to a position below the design. Why this was done it is difficult to say. It might be suggested that the first state was intended exclusively for books which had actually formed part of Codrington's own library, while the second state was intended for books added afterwards. But this theory is not supported by the fact that both plates are sometimes found on the one book, the later pasted over the earlier variety. On the whole, it seems more probable that the College did not continue to approve the name of Chiclleio-Codringtoniana for the library. Such we know to have been its original designation, for Wood tells us that the foundation-stone of the building laid in 1716 bore that inscription. But it may well have been that so cumbrous a title was considered unsuitable to what was really after all the College library, and so the simpler name of the Library of All Souls' College, Oxford, was adopted. The coat of Codrington, however, was retained, and it is curious to observe how the design of Burghers, in which we have episcopal emblems on the Chicheley side and military emblems on the Codrington side, marking the vocations of the founder and benefactor respectively, has been continued in modified form down to the present day.

The small plate was once more altered. The inscription, differently abbreviated, was replaced on the slab from which it had been taken, and it is in this condition that it is occasionally used to-day, usually with an inscription added in type recording a gift, such as " Presented to the Library of All Souls' College by Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India."

We now pass to a group of plates of an entirely different appearance, in which again we find curious alteration and variation. To this group we may give the name of the *Wale and Green* design, and an example is reproduced. Their date is about 1750 to 1760. Indeed, we might say that 1756 is the precise year, for it was in that year that the building operations commenced in 1716 were completed, and it is reasonable to suppose that a new book-plate was engraved to commemorate the event. At all events, they are not earlier than 1753, for the globe which forms part of the design has reference to a gift made to the College in 1753 of two large globes by Senex, still to be seen in the library. The first variety is signed " S. Wale inv. et del., J. Green Sculp." in dotted signature. We shall not attempt a description, but refer the reader to the illustration, only calling attention to the mitre and crosier on one side, sword and banners on the other. The whole design is lightly engraved in this variety, and the signature is very faint. Possibly this faintness was the cause of the second variety, which has no signatures, and is heavily engraved throughout. In this second variety there are many variations from the first, but on the whole it seems probable that it is the original copper reengraved or retouched. Two coppers of this design are extant, being of the second variety



Bookplate #6

and the third, which we are about to describe. It is signed " S. Wale delin., J. Green Sculp." and we have reason for supposing that it is quite a separate plate, and is not an altered variety of the first or second. We can suggest no adequate reason to account for the existence of two coppers of so poor a design, and merely record the fact.

About this time must have been engraved the small All Souls' plate, which is well known. Of this, too, there are two varieties. The one is signed "Js Green fecit," the other is unsigned, and examination will show many other variations. Of these the signed state is much the less common, for the unsigned has been in use for very many years and still is frequently employed.

The interval between the Green and Sherborn designs contains only one plate, a circular quasi-pictorial, dated 1890. It is said by Mr. Hamilton to have been engraved by Culleton, but it was considered so unsatisfactory by the College authorities that it has been very little used.

We now come to the Sherborn plate. This also is in two sizes, and is a very beautiful specimen of the artist's best work. The signature runs, "C W. Sherborn fecit, Lond. 1891." The large size measures rather more than $5 \frac{1}{4} \times 4 \frac{1}{8}$ inches. It bears a date 1437, which is that of the foundation of the College. The design, which is precisely the same in both sizes, is too well known to need description here, but we must record, what is also now well known, that a number of prints were taken off the large copper before it was discovered that a mistake had been made in the heraldry : the cinqfoils in the Chicheley coat ought to have been pierced. The mistake was rectified, of course, and there are thus two states of the plate in existence, one with the cinqfoils pierced, one with them unpierced.

There are thus no fewer than fourteen varieties of the plates of All Souls' College, although there are only six designs. Small variations seem to be a characteristic of book-plates connected with this College, for we find similarly two varieties of an early armorial of one Ralph Freman, whose collection was left to the library. To commemorate this gift, a small label was printed in ordinary type and dated, which is not mentioned in Mr. Hamilton's " Dated Book-plates." It reads "Ex legatis Radulphi Freman S.T.P. de Hammels in Com. Hert. et Coll. Omn. An. quondam socij MDCCLXXIII." This label is the earliest of a large number, similar in their simplicity, and all recording gifts, but of no particular interest. A fruitful source of variation is in the heraldry, where we find the lions sometimes *guardant*, sometimes merely *passant*, the cinqfoils pierced and unpierced, the fess *fretty gules* and *fretty or*, and numerous other eccentricities. We may notice, too, in passing, that the correct tincturing in the coat of Codrington, the *fess sable fretty gules*, is an exception to the alleged rule of English heraldry against placing colour on colour; but the Sherborn plate may be accepted as giving the correct and most authoritative representation of the arms. The College is to be congratulated on its series of book-plates, which is unique in design and interest.

We here give a short table or list of the plates, with the exact inscriptions and references to the plates reproduced in the present number

- 1.—"Collegium Omnium Animarum in Univer: Oxon." Jacobean. (*See illustration above.*)
- 2.—Burghers' deign. "Bibliotheca Chichleio-Codringtoniana. M. Burg. sculp." Large size. (*See illustration above.*)
- 3.—Do. Same inscription. "MB.s." Small size.
- 4.—Do. "Liber Coll. Omn. An. Fidel. defunct. in Oxon."—with inscription below design, and unsigned. (*See illustration below.*)
- 5.—Do. " Libel. Coll. Omn. An. Fidel defunct. in Oxon."—with inscription on slab, and unsigned.

6.—Wale and Green design. "Liber Coll. Omn. Anim. Fidel. defunct. in Oxon.* , S. Wale inv. et del., J. Green Sculp." Signature dotted. (*See illustration above.*)

7.—Do. Same inscription, but unsigned.

8.—Do. Same inscription, "S. Wale delin., J. Green sculp."

9.—Small Green design. Same inscription, "Js Green fecit." Small. (*See illustration below.*)

10.—Do. Same inscription, unsigned. Same size.

11.—Culleton design. Same inscription. 1890. Circular plate. (*See illustration below.*)

12.—Sherborn design. Same inscription, "C. W. Sherborn fecit Lond. 1891." Large size, cinquefoils not pierced.

13.—Do., do. Cinquefoils pierced.

14.—Do., do. Small size.



Bookplate #4



Bookplate #9



Bookplate #11

*"Liber Collegii Omnium animarum fidelium defunctorum in Oxonii," or Book of the College of All Souls of the Faithful deceased in Oxford.