The Cardinal's College: Christ Church, Chapter and Verse, by the Archivist Ms Judith Curthoys, is the first complete history of Christ Church since Henry Thompson’s volume back in 1900, although there have been specialist books on specific topics, Hugh Trevor-Roper’s stylish pocket history, and the beautiful Portrait of the House, edited by Christopher Butler.

The book builds on the tales that have been told in Christ Church over the years, explains the constitutional oddities that have both beset and aided Christ Church throughout its history, explores how the college and cathedral have worked together (or not, as was sometimes the case), and describes how students were fed and watered, taught, and accommodated.

As Dean Christopher Lewis said in his foreword to the book:

"Christ Church’s past is complex, in part because of the way it was founded, the cathedral and college entwined, the vagaries of royal patronage, the glorious but porous buildings. Judith Curthoys has produced a beautifully excavated mine with style, as a good archivist can. The notes show her workings and we are the beneficiaries of the detail, for good history is in part the knowledge that in the 1540s and 1550s rabbit was eaten in Hall on Thursdays. The wonder of a good institution is the way in which facts and stories which would otherwise have been lost in the wash of time, as it were stick to the place and are preserved. Here we have the material ordered yet still fresh and appealing.

We also need to know why Christ Church has changed, often rapidly, at times owing to external forces but often on its own initiative. At one time, a dean flees because William and Mary are on the horizon, at another, we discover how learning became ‘a duty, a pleasure, and even a fashion’, at another, women are admitted; it is almost impossible now to imagine the place without them. Christ Church cannot be said to be isolated from ‘the world’.

Judith keeps our feet on the ground, yet our eyes are encouraged to range widely. Here we have a book into which everyone can dig, to their hearts’ content."

The Cardinal’s College is £25 plus p&p (£5 p&p to addresses in the UK, £10 to Europe, £15 to RoW)

To order your copy, please email: development.office@chch.ox.ac.uk