Christ Church Upper Library

2 November 2017 - 23 February 2018

More than a House for Books

Exhibition to celebrate the launch of
A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts
More than a House for Books, curated by David Rundle and Cristina Neagu, considers the place of the Western manuscripts within the wider context of the Library’s eclectic riches. It delineates how what we now know as its ‘special collections’ came to be owned by Christ Church and considers what that tells us about the purpose and scope of a library.

The exhibition coincides with the publication of R. Hanna and D. Rundle, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts, to c. 1600, in Christ Church, Oxford, the first in a planned series of manuscript catalogues offering detailed codicological, textual and historical descriptions. The lavishly illustrated volume is published by the Oxford Bibliographical Society in its Special Series of Manuscript Catalogues. The exhibition builds upon the new insights that catalogue provides about the history of the Library, and also suggests routes for future research.

The exhibition will be open in the Upper Library from 2 November 2017 to 23 February 2018.

Visiting hours:

Monday – Friday: 10.00 am - 1.00 pm; 2.00 pm - 4.30 pm

For further details please contact the Keeper of Special Collections, Christ Church Library, Oxford, OX1 1DP. Telephone: + 44(0) 1865 276 265. Email: cristina.neagu@chch.ox.ac.uk
Terrestrial globe signed by Richard Cushee, London, c. 1731
The Orrery Collection of Scientific Instruments

Sections
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C: Beyond Books
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Section A: Across the Learned Tradition

In Oxford terms, Christ Church is a young foundation. It was the successor to Thomas Wolsey’s Cardinal College, which had been established in 1525 but lasted only five years. Wolsey was disgraced in 1529 and died the following year. His college was re-founded in 1531, on a less grand scale, and named after the man who had been Wolsey’s patron and the cause of his downfall, Henry VIII. It then changed its identity again at the very end of Henry’s reign, in late 1546, when a new dual institution, combining cathedral and college, was founded (that is why it is wrong to say ‘Christ Church College’; it is known to its members as ‘the House’, from the Latin title Ædes Christi, which can mean either ‘college’ or ‘house’).

A library was planned for Cardinal College but neither of its successors made any initial provision for one. It was more than a decade after Christ Church came into being that it decided to establish a library for itself. It was to be housed in a room off the cloisters south of the cathedral, using furniture from the university’s Duke Humfrey’s Library, which had itself been closed in 1549 (on orders of the university’s chancellor, Richard Cox, who was also Christ Church’s dean). The new Library had no set budget, and it was supported by soliciting gifts. The institution to some extent controlled what arrived by asking for money rather than books, and it spent those funds on relevant printed books. Some donors, however, decided to furnish the Library with manuscripts, mostly medieval but some early modern. So, its manuscript holdings reflect the identities various well-wishers wanted Christ Church to have.

Captions

MS. 145

Wycliffite Bible (England, end of the fourteenth century)

This imposing and textually important volume was the very first Western manuscript given to the Library. It was donated by Edward Saunders, probably in 1586 when he graduated from Christ Church with his MA. Saunders was from Northamptonshire and the codex had previously been given to his father by Robert Clay, vicar of Flore, 1570-79. There is an irony to the donation of this volume to the Library: as an educational establishment, Christ Church was expected to be fully Latin-speaking, with penalties for lapsing into the vernacular, but its ecclesiastical status meant that English would be heard every day in its chapel, Oxford’s cathedral. Presumably, Saunders thought his gift appropriate because the work spoke of England’s anti-Catholic tradition, and so it could help bolster the foundation’s Protestant identity.

MS. 95

Pauline Epistles, glossed (England, start of the twelfth century)

This manuscript, the second Western codex to enter the collection, provides a contrast with the Wycliffite Bible that arrived before it. It is a witness to the Catholic tradition of monastic study of the Bible. It was presented to Christ Church in 1588 by John Howson (d. 1632), who had come up as an undergraduate in 1577 and was to have a long association with the foundation and with the university, later being vice-chancellor, in 1602, and being bishop of Oxford, 1618-28, until he was translated to Durham for the last years of his life. Did Howson see any conflict between his gift and the only other Western manuscript in the library at the time? Was it, indeed, to provide a contrast and so broaden the collection’s identity that he donated it?
MS. 180

Psalms in French (Edinburgh, 1599)

Like any university college of the early modern period, Christ Church was a male preserve. That did not mean, though, that there was no interest in it from women, particularly in the era of the Republic. At the point, when Christ Church’s sometime royal resident, Charles I, had been executed, the government’s opposition to bishops and so to cathedrals was antagonistic to the very identity of the dual foundation. As a result, the House became something of a symbol of the old order for disaffected royalists.

This is the context of this gift made in 1654 by Anne Ker (née Stanley), wife of the exiled earl of Ancram. The small volume is a calligraphical tour-de-force, changing script every other opening. It had been produced in 1599 by the Scottish scribe of Huguenot descent, Esther Inglis, and had been presented (by Esther’s husband’s male patron) to Elizabeth I. It was, then, a manuscript produced for a woman by a woman and given to this male-dominated institution by a woman. The donation is testimony to the power of female agency in a period when monarchy had been emasculated.

MS. 184, fol. 2r-3

Poems and heraldry in Welsh and English (?North Wales, turn of 16th to 17th century)

Christ Church has no particular Welsh associations to explain why it should have been given two manuscripts largely in the Welsh language. The Salusbury family of Denbighshire is celebrated in both codices; members of that family were students at Oxford’s Jesus College and one at Braesnose, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The two volumes arrived in Christ Church in the mid-eighteenth century but their donor is unrecorded and it may be that the Library did not quite know what to make of them. This volume’s companion (MS. 183) was recorded in the catalogue as ‘Letters and Receipts. Engl. MS.’, which hardly captures its contents. What may have interested viewers was the heraldic material in the volume. What was not recognised until the later twentieth century is that the copy of an ode composed by the leading Jacobean poet Ben Jonson (1572-1637) is written in this manuscript in his own hand.

MS. 189

Moses ibn Tibbon, on arithmetic (?Italy, 1476).

The very first manuscript Christ Church was not one in any Western language but in that of the Old Testament: it was a thirteenth-century Torah, given by the former professor of Hebrew, Richard Bruarne, in 1565. It is, however, no longer here: it left in the first half of the seventeenth century and is now owned by Westminster Abbey.

A continuous tradition of owning Hebrew manuscripts only began in the second half of the seventeenth century, through two acts. One was the financial bequest of the regius professor of Hebrew John Morris (d. 1648) to buy relevant books. The other was the donation of thirteen manuscripts by the dean, John Fell (1625-86), in 1683. Though there is no internal evidence to confirm it, the book shown here appears to have been one of them. It is a copy of the Hebrew translation of an Arabic treatise on arithmetic, Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Ayyash al-Hassar's seminal Kitāb al Bayān wa-l-tadhkār. The translation was completed in 1271 in Montpellier; this copy, from the fifteenth century, is written in Provencal/Sephardic cursive.

It is notable that the manuscripts given by Fell included some kabbalah but are mainly scientific or philosophical rather than theological. There had been a tradition of study of Hebrew on site since King Henry VIII’s College in the 1530s, and, as a result, the library had already developed a collection of Hebrew printed books, and those in manuscript were intended to supplement that core.
Christ Church now has over 85 Greek manuscripts, a collection larger than any other Oxford college. This, however, was a relatively late development: before the eighteenth century, the House had no Greek codices. Its holdings in this language are mainly the result of one bequest, from the library’s most beneficent donor. William Wake (1657-1737), of a royalist family, was an undergraduate here in the 1670s, and was later a canon of the cathedral but he went on to be bishop of Lincoln, 1705-1716 and subsequently archbishop of Canterbury.

This fine manuscript, with an image of each Evangelist preceding his Gospel, was one of three which belonged to the Pantokratoros Monastery of Mount Athos and which were brought to England for Archbishop Wake in 1727. Wake was particularly interested in producing a new edition of the Greek New Testament.

Section B – Beyond the languages of the West and of the Bible

In the first section, we saw how Christ Church became the owner of a collection of manuscripts, several of them in western European vernaculars, as well as in Latin, Hebrew and (eventually) Greek. A major period for the development of the collection followed the Restoration in 1660 and was encouraged by the activities of two deans of Christ Church. The first was John Fell, the man who carved out the institution’s Restoration identity as a bastion of the establishment. We have already seen that he gave Hebrew manuscripts to the Library. It was during his time that books in languages beyond those of the Bible began to enter the collection, including the first copies of the Koran.

Fell’s protégé and eventual successor as Dean, Henry Aldrich (1648-1710), developed the range of interests further, to include Syriac and Aramaic. Even this, though, did not define the limits of what came to be in Christ Church’s possessions. In the same period, members of the House and other donors gave books in Russian and Chinese — but whether these were cherished by their new owner should be doubted as some were later alienated from the collection. In the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the collection was further supplemented by handwritten works which must have seemed even more exotic.

Captions

MS. 232
Saadi of Shiraz, Būstān (1647/48).

This is the first recorded arrival at Christ Church of a manuscript in a non-Biblical Oriental language. Its inscription states it contains ‘Liber Persicus dictus Pomarium’, that is ‘a Book in Farsi called The Orchard’ (MS. LR 1, p. 136a). Pomarium was the accepted Latin name for the Būstān, one of the masterpieces of the leading Iranian poet, Saadi of Shiraz (d. 1291 or 1292). This copy was completed in the Islamic year 1058, which equates to 1647/48 AD. It was given to the House soon after its production, in 1661, by John Dormer. His father was a member of the Long Parliament who had become reconciled to the Restoration, and the son himself had attended Christ Church, 1656-58. In July 1661, he was knighted and as that status was recorded in the donation note, it may be that the presentation was a celebratory act. How he came by the book is unclear. He died in Livorno in 1675, but his younger brother, Robert, also a Houseman, went on to follow his father as an MP.

Chinese

This book has a note stating it was given by Thomas Heath ‘civis Londoniensis’ in 1691. Though a fifteen-year-old boy of that name had entered Christ Church in 1686, it seems unlikely that he is to be identified with this citizen of London who may possibly have been a relative. The records describe the gift as a ‘codex MS’, that is, a manuscript, but it is actually an example of printing, an art practised in Asia long before Gutenberg’s invention in the West. This
example was given to Christ Church only twenty years after it was printed in Taiwan. It provides a calendar of the Southern Ming dynasty. A batch of fifty copies reached England because they were given to Henry Dacres, the East India Company's agent in Bantam.

This is not the first Chinese book to have been given to the House. Another is recorded in the 1676 catalogue of the Archives, ‘written (as they say) on the bark of trees’; it left Christ Church at some point in the mid-eighteenth century.

MS. 204

Koran (1441/1442).

There are four complete Korans and two partial ones in the collection, all of which had arrived by the time the Library moved into this building in the 1760s. It is symptomatic of the lack of many individuals on site who were knowledgeable in Arabic that there is insufficient information to associate with certainty specific volumes with recorded accessions. So, this cannot be equated with the volume bought with money from the Morris bequest on the advice of Edward Pocock, professor of Hebrew and Arabic, in 1688: that is described as ‘pulcherrimo charactere exaratus’ (produced in the most beautiful script) but is only a partial Koran. We do, though, that this Koran, completed in the Islamic year 845, was in the collection by c. 1750 and may have arrived in the preceding decade. It is elegantly written on thick paper, is illuminated throughout and is in a very fine Islamic leather binding.

MS. 144

Henry Aldrich, Syriac and Aramaic Grammars (Oxford, start of the eighteenth century)

Henry Aldrich was the energetic dean who pushed further the frontiers of Christ Church’s range of knowledge. This volume opens with a printed Hebrew grammar, as it was to be taught at Westminster School, composed by Richard Busby (1606-95), himself a Houseman, and printed at the Sheldonian, probably under Aldrich’s guidance. It is followed by two further grammars written in Aldrich’s own hand, extending the range to cover the other Semitic languages of Syriac and Aramaic.

On Aldrich’s death in 1710, his personal collection, including this book, was bequeathed to Christ Church, a donation so large that it required further space to be built in the Library. That donation was one of the causes of the decision to plan a new Library on this present site, completing Peckwater Quad which Aldrich himself helped design. His significance was such that a bust was commissioned for the library soon after his death and it was transferred to the New Library when it opened in the early 1760s. You can still see as you leave this room; it stands in the western niche (so to your right) on the staircase.

MS. 231

Yahya Beg, Shāh u Gedā (late 16th or early 17th century)

The move of the book collection into the New Library (where you are standing now) encouraged further donations to Christ Church. This is one of them, a manuscript in Turkish given towards the end of the eighteenth century. The text is Shāh u Gedā (The King and the Beggar), a poem by Yahya Beg (d. 1582), a janissary from present-day Montenegro. It is in an Ottoman binding, and a note (in the Latin alphabet) states it was at Tripoli in 1612. There is no record, however, of the name of its donor. It is the sole example of a manuscript in Turkish in the Library.

MS. 233 Bis

The Book of Common Prayer on palm leaves

This item does not appear in any of the catalogues of the collection. It is a copy of the central liturgical text of the Anglican communion translated into Malabaric (Tamil) by Benjamin Schulze, Protestant Missionary, 1726. The first Protestant mission in India was established at Tranquebar in 1706 by Lutheran clergy from Halle (Germany), led by Bartholomaus Ziegenbalg, who, with Johann Grundler, completed a Tamil translation of the New Testament in 1711.
It is not known how this arrived at Christ Church; its absence from the catalogues may suggest it arrived late, after 1867, when the first printed catalogue of the manuscripts, by George Kitchin (whose daughter is mentioned in the next case), was published — or it may be suggestive of the perplexity it caused its new owners.

MS. 233

Another late gift is this set of palm leaves. It was presented in 1826 by John Sneyd (d. 1835), rector of Elford (Staffordshire), who had entered Christ Church in 1782 and taken his BA in 1786. This is one example where there is still much to research that could be done. It is not certain in what language it is written (possibly Malayali) and when it was produced. Have you got any insights?

**Section C: Beyond Books**

The collecting of books went beyond anything that could have been considered relevant to the university syllabus. At the same time, the curiosities which were thought appropriate for the Library were not limited to the textual. Sometimes, in one donation, the Library received both books and other objects, though often with little connexion between the items. In other instances, the donor dispensed with the idea of giving any book at all, thinking of other objects as a suitable material for the collection. The result was that the Library became a repository not just for manuscripts of various origins across the globe, but for paintings, coins, instruments (either scientific or musical), as well as some wonders of the natural world. The library was not only the hub of Christ Church’s antiquarian and cultural studies; it also served as its cabinet of curiosities.
Captions

MS. 122 and disc

These two items were both given by Robert Payne. He matriculated at Christ Church in 1611 and was later a canon of the cathedral, 1638-48. He was a doctor of theology who also a mathematician, translating Galileo, and was a correspondent with Thomas Hobbes. He made two donations to the Library, one in the year that civil war broke out, 1642, and the other in the year of the execution of Charles I, 1649 (in the meantime, he had fought on the royalist side in 1648). Both were mainly of printed books, in Latin, Greek and Italian, but also included one manuscript and two scientific instruments. Displayed here is the manuscript, a small and unimpressive thirteenth-century copy of a canon law text, Henry of Merseburg’s summa on Extr. Alongside it is one of the instruments which is on long-term loan to the Museum of the History of Science. It has only recently been identified as Payne’s gift and its purpose is not entirely certain. In the record of his 1642 donation, it is described as a ‘concauum marmortuum’ (a marbled concave), a phrase so vague it might suggest that even then the librarian was uncertain what to make of it. The best guess is that this disc was used for polishing lenses.

Coins

A frequent appearance in the Library Donors’ Book, which starts in 1611, is the mention of donations of coins. The first occasion on which a collection of ‘antiqua numismata’ (ancient coins) was given was 1619, by Francis Godwin (1562-1633), bishop of Hereford, and himself a Christ Church man and son of the fifth dean, Thomas Godwin (1517-1590). His donation occurred in the same year as the gift of two globes for the library and it may be that both sets of items were intended to complete the fittings appropriate to such a space.

Further gifts occurred in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, culminating with those provided as part of William Wake’s bequest. Those displayed here reflect the gift of Charles Brent, sometime Librarian, in 1717.

Mandrakes

John Fell, who for the last ten years of his life was bishop of Oxford as well as being dean, died on 10 July 1686 and was buried in the cathedral. His executors selected some items ‘ex suo Musaeo’ (from his museum/collection) to be given to Christ Church’s library. They included a few printed books, a ‘picture of King Henry the 8th’, a ‘librum palmeum ling. Selanensi’ (‘a book on palm leaves in Ceylonese’, perhaps reflecting his interest in missionary work to India) and this oddity: ‘two Mandrakes in a Silver Box’. No explanation is provided for why the executors thought these might be an appropriate donation. It is also mystery why Fell might have wanted them: mandrakes have long been said to have magical powers but not for the reason mentioned in Harry Potter; traditionally, they were thought to enhance fertility, but Fell never married. That he considered them a prized possession is shown by their being kept in a fine silver box in Parisian-style filigree.

Cornet (?Verona, 1605)

We might think of libraries as silent places but that of Christ Church has long been full of music. That is, in large part, thanks to Henry Aldrich who, as well as being a scholar of languages and an architect was also a keen musician and composer. So, on his death, his collection of scores passed to the Library. It is perhaps a homage to his interests and to the foundation’s musical tradition which encouraged some of the motifs of the room in which you are standing. Look around you and you will see violins and other instruments depicted in the stucco.

In addition, the Library has become home to some working instruments, a pair of cornets which were bought by the foundation for the visit of James VI and I in 1605. It is not certain where they were made but it is thought Verona is a possibility. The silver mount appears to have been added and has on it the coat-of-arms of Christ Church. It is unclear when they were transferred to the Library.
Orrery instruments

The seventeenth-century gifts of scientific instruments to the Library were vastly augmented by the bequest of the collection by an alumnus, Charles Boyle, earl of Orrery (1674-1731). It included books but is more notable for the objects it contained, including examples of the models of the solar system which are named after him.

Here is presented one element from an orrery: it is a miniature globe, which records the name of its maker, Richard Cushee, and the date of its making, 1731. This, in fact, did not come in Orrery’s bequest, but was left by him to Dr Robert Freind (1667-1751), master of Westminster School and later Canon of Christ Church.

Proportional Compasses, by John Rowley, London, c. 1700 (Inventory Number: 28201)

Part of the Orrery collection, these proportional dividers can be used for linear, circular, square and cubic measurement, for which there are graduated scales marked, "D Lineæ rectæ", "Diuisiones Circuli", "Diuisiones Planorum", and "Diuisiones Solidorum". Silver and steel; with fish-skin covered wooden case. Signed, "John Rowley Londini Fecit". Undated, c.1700.

Other instruments from the Orrery collection can be seen nearby in the case next to the south wall of this room.

Ptolemaic Armillary Sphere, by John Rowley, London, c. 1700; inv. 15386

One of a pair of English brass and silvered armilliary spheres made by John Rowley c.1700. The instrument is signed, "IOHN ROWLEY LONDINI FECIT"; it is undated. The pair of armillary spheres are constructed to demonstrate the planetary theories of Ptolemy and Copernicus. This instrument illustrates the Ptolemaic theory. Small compasses fitted under the horizon bands are used for orientating the instruments, and the bases are fitted with levelling screws. There are separate graduated arcs for measuring altitudes.

Ivory Quadrant, by J. Rowley, English, c. 1700; inv. 31785

English ivory and brass quadrant (Gunter type) on a wooden stand. Signed, "I: Rowley. fecit:."; undated; c.1700. The quadrant is used to find the time from the sun's altitude, as well as for other astronomical measurements and calculations. It follows the design published in 1623 by Edmund Gunter.

Mus 783

Choral verse anthem from the Henry Aldrich music collection.

It is estimated that there are 8,000 compositions in the music books, manuscript and print, that Aldrich left to the foundation over which he had presided. Many are by Italian composers but some are by the dean himself, including this anthem, originally composed for liturgical use in Christ Church Cathedral. Aldrich composed a total of sixteen verse anthems, representing over one half of his total compositional output, that follow a traditional verse anthem structure used by contemporary composers, such as Henry Purcell. This manuscript is thought to be an autograph.

Giuseppe Cesari, St Jerome in Prayer

Drawing in red chalk. 177 x 150 mm.

As well as his books, Aldrich left to the Library his collections of both drawings and prints; the form the earliest and perhaps least known of Christ Church’s art collections. The prints number over 2,000 and include works by Andrea Mantegna and Albrecht Dürer, as well as English mezzotints and French portraits. The collection largely survives in its original albums.
The drawing is attributed to Giuseppe Cesari (aka Cavaliere D’Arpiano (1568-1640). This drawing, like Aldrich’s prints, was transferred in the twentieth century from the Library to the new institution of Christ Church’s Picture Gallery.

Preparatory drawing by Henry Aldrich and engraving by Michael Burghers for Henry Maundrell’s *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1703).

This is a volume illustrated entirely under Aldrich’s direction. The engraver is Michael Burghers. Exceptionally, two preparatory drawings by Aldrich have survived. This is one of them. In the later editions of the book published after Aldrich’s death, further illustrations (from Jean Marot’s *Architecture française*) were added under the supervision of Nicholas Hawksmoor.

**Section D: Remembering Wolsey (… and Alice)**

Christ Church may have been founded by Henry VIII but the figure more often remembered here is the person who established its predecessor, Cardinal College: Thomas Wolsey. There is a small statue of Henry in this room, but there are more artefacts here related to Wolsey. Indeed, every book on the shelves has a bookplate with Wolsey’s coat-of-arms, because his heraldic devices are the arms of the foundation, with the cardinal’s hat often being used as its symbol (incongruously for an institution which incorporates an Anglican cathedral). In addition, manuscripts and memorabilia have been collected over the centuries in remembrance of Wolsey.
The first addition to the holdings was also the most resplendent: in 1614, a former cathedral chorister and graduate of Christ Church, John Lant, presented to the Library, along with some printed medical works, a richly decorated lectionary made for the cardinal. It is one of a pair, with its twin now at Magdalen College. In 2017, the two were reunited digitally and can now be seen alongside each other at www.wolseymanuscripts.ac.uk.

The highpoint of interest in collecting items associated with Wolsey occurred at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. In subsequent decades, alongside Wolsey, the person who became most associated with Christ Church was, in part, fictional: the girl, Alice, based on the daughter of Dean Liddell and whose adventures were by the House’s mathematics don, Charles Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll. At the same time, with increased specialisation, other elements of the Library’s collections have moved elsewhere: the drawings and prints to the Picture Gallery, while the coins were deposited in 1941 at the Ashmolean and most of the scientific instruments are at the Museum of the History of Science. With those departures and the increase in material relating to Wolsey and to Alice, the Library has arguably become less of a museum and more akin to a mausoleum.

Captions

Archives, D&C vi.c.6 (= MS. 339)
Statutes of Cardinal College, Oxford (Westminster, 1525)

Not all of the manuscripts owned by Christ Church are housed in the library: some are considered too important for that. Their significance lies in their recording the rights and rules of the foundation. Those volumes were originally held by the Dean and Chapter in the cathedral buildings; they are now in the foundation’s Archives. They are mainly cartularies of former monasteries whose lands passed to Christ Church, but they also included two codices of statutes, drawn up by Thomas Wolsey. One is for his school in his hometown of Ipswich, which was intended to act as feeder for his Oxford college. The statutes of Cardinal College, Oxford, have remained on site since 1525 and are still in their chemise binding with Wolsey’s seal present.

MS. 154
George Cavendish, Life of Thomas Wolsey (England, start of the seventeenth century)

Cavendish, a former servant of Wolsey, wrote his biography in the mid-sixteenth century. It circulated for nearly a century in manuscript (over fifty copies survive) and was printed only in 1641. It has sometimes been said that this manuscript may have been used by the printer or that this was ‘the original’ of the text but neither claim is plausible. This is a relatively late transcription of Cavendish’s work, which was given to Christ Church at some point between 1676 and 1717. It was later joined by another later copy of the work, which was donated in 1741 precisely because of the association of Christ Church with Wolsey (now MS. 155).

MS. 684
Roll recording Wolsey’s Household (England, end of the sixteenth century)

The turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century saw the heyday of interest in remembering Wolsey on the site where he built his grandiose college. It was then that three items related to him arrived. The first chronologically sits behind you. The second to arrive is this roll, listing the cardinal’s household and recording his rise and fall. It is damaged now because it was kept for centuries rolled in a metal tube but most of the text is legible. It was presented to Christ Church by an alumnus, A. W. Oxford (1854/5-1948).

We might wonder why the roll was produced. It was clearly not made in the cardinal’s lifetime and, in fact, its details depend on the description of the household later provided by Cavendish in his biography. Some suggestion of how it was read is provided by the added text written down its right-hand side. There it is claimed the roll belonged to Sir Isaac Newton who, it says, ‘had often been heard Repromanding Cardinal Wolsesey [sic]’ for the number of servants. There is no corroboratory evidence for the assertion of the connexion with Newton, but these words do reveal one way in which the roll was probably read. What was later given to Christ Church as a relic was earlier employed as a reminder of his vices, his arrogance and love of display.
A third relic of Wolsey arrived two years after the roll, in 1907. This is a yet more domestic item, a porcelain bowl from which, it was claimed, the cardinal ate his porridge. A card kept with it says a card kept with it says was ‘procured from Miss White of Hove in 1907, whose grandfather was Edward Wolsey, last member of a branch of the Wolsey family’. There were two Miss Whites, sisters who ran a preparatory school in Hove. They may have believed themselves to be descended from the cardinal — he did have two illegitimate children — but it is implausible that this bowl was once his. Leaving aside the point that all his property was sequestered by the crown and so was not available for his offspring, the bowl is of Chinese manufacture and in a style which places its production between 1580 and 1645. It is interesting evidence, to sit alongside the better-known Walsingham Bowl, for English interest in Chinese porcelain but, in terms of being a relic of the cardinal, it is a pious fraud.

“Cardinal’s Hat”

This large red hat, in the design of a cardinal’s galero, has a fascinating history. It was owned by the collector, Horace Walpole (1717-1797), and displayed in his house at Strawberry Hill. It was Walpole who provided for it the ‘gothick’ case in which you now see it. Walpole claimed that it was the red hat of Thomas Wolsey which had been stored in the Royal Wardrobe and re-found there in the seventeenth century by Bishop Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), who himself had little affection for Wolsey. Supposedly, Burnet gave it to his son, who gave it to his housekeeper, who gave it to the Countess of Albemarle’s butler, who gave it to his mistress, who gave it to Walpole. We are on more certain grounds with its later history: at the sale of goods from Strawberry Hill, it was bought for £36 by the Victorian actor, Charles Kean (1811-1868), among whose roles was the cardinal in Shakespeare’s Henry VIII. After his death, it went to the auction house twice and, in 1898, was bought by Christ Church, thanks to fund-raising by alumni including A. W. Oxford (who later gave the Wolsey roll). The question then arose of where to place it: in good Oxford fashion, a committee was appointed to decide the location and its deliberations ended with a vote in which seven said it should stand in the Hall but the majority, 14, preferred the library. Whether it was actually ever worn by Wolsey is still open to debate…
The inspiration for the embroidered image comes from a painting representing Cardinal Wolsey Entering the Abbey of Leicester (from the play *Henry VIII*, Act IV, Scene 2) by Richard Westall (1765-1836).

“The Mouse's Tail”

There are various manuscripts in the Library that reveal the process undertaken to transform Lewis Carroll’s original manuscript story into the printed book known as Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. One of them is the so called 'Mouse's Tail' (Carroll-A13). It has been assembled with various bends by cutting the straight vertical line version into strips and gluing them onto a board. This image is numbered by Dodgson as “No. 1.” hence he may have tried other versions which have not survived. The purpose of this image was probably to act as a guide to the type-setter. The mouse’s tail appears on page 37 of the first edition, with the bends matching closely to this mock-up. The document is part of the Lewis Carroll collection, a bequest made by the Dodgson family.

"Xie Kitchin as a Dane"
14 May 1873 [2424]. Gold-toned print from original wet-collodion glass negative. 14.2 x 10.2 cm

This picture was taken by Charles Dodgson, a keen photographer. The sitter is Alexandra Kitchin, the daughter of G.W. Kitchin, Dodgson's friend and colleague, and the author of Christ Church’s first manuscript catalogue. The photographs are a recent gift to the Library from a member of the college, now a successful Film Director and Producer. This is a very special image, as it appears to have been held in high regard by its author. Soon after the photograph was taken, Dodgson’s friend, Alice Emily Donkin made an oil painting based on the image, entitled “Waiting to Skate”. It hung in Dodgson’s rooms at Christ Church until his death, afterwards going to the Kitchin family. This was one of Dodgson’s favourite photographs of Xie and many prints survive. The one which has now reached Christ Church however is rather unique. The note on the back of the image reveals that was the sitter’s own copy, which she later passed on to her daughter. Apart from its provenance, there is something else which puts this particular copy in a class of its own: a fingerprint (very likely Dodgson's) on the right side of the sitter’s face.