

FRIENDS OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE LIBRARY NEWSLETTER, April-May 2022



A word of welcome...

From John Wagstaff, College Librarian

Dear Friends: There is a lot to report in this issue of the Newsletter. We are about to experience several staff changes in the College's library and archives operations, with our Archivist, Dr Genny Silvanus, moving to a new position at Corpus Christi College. Moreover, I myself will be moving on — but this time into retirement — in the middle of June. I have had six enjoyable years at Christ's College, and among the pleasures of my time here has been the opportunity to help the Friends group grow, and to help put on various events for you — exhibitions of course, but also occasional talks and visits.

Talking of which, two of our members have asked whether

there is interest in running a trip to Darwin's former home at Down House, near Orpington. If you would like to join such a trip, would you please let me know, via library@christs.cam.ac.uk?

Reporting on staff changes reminds me that the Old Library itself is going to undergo some large-scale changes around Easter 2023, as the second phase of restoration of the roof of College's First Court will be taking place. This will require all of the books in the Upper Old Library to be removed into storage for at least a year and perhaps longer.

In addition, College has plans to move some of the 19th- and early-20th-century materials from the Lower Old Library into storage,

some of it long term. You may have realised already that this will mean that there will be no exhibitions in the Old Library from Easter 2023 for a while; and possibly no exhibitions between now and then. As usual we will keep our Friends up to date with developments.

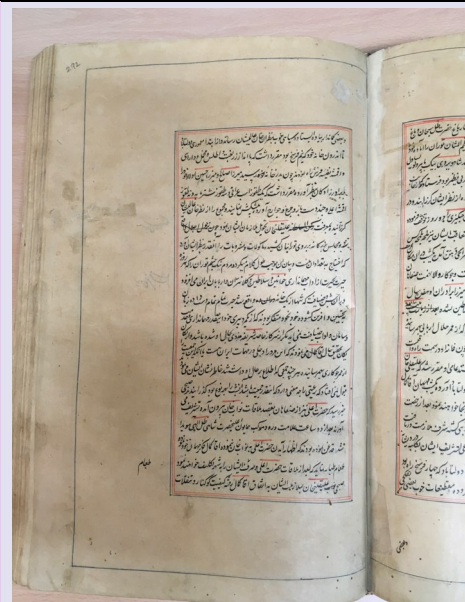
The next Newsletter will be my last, and I plan to recap some of the stories and features from previous Friends' Newsletters that have been produced under my editorship. I hope that these will stir happy memories.

As always, please contact the library with comments and news. Thank you!

A manuscript restored

Many of our Friends will know already that Christ's College Library owns a collection of around 60 Arabic and Persian manuscripts, donated in the mid-19th century by Christ's alumni John and Timothy Hutton. Back in 2018, a kind donor made funds available for the conservation of one of the most significant of these manuscripts, which dates from the 1630s and documents the reign of Shah' Abbas. So far so good — we appointed a specialist conservator, John Mumford, and he took the manuscript away for treatment in his workshop. All was

going well until — you've guessed it — the pandemic, which together with other delays meant that the manuscript was not returned to us until last month. John has done a splendid job, and we hope to be able to display the manuscript at some point so that others can see what a professional job he has made of the restoration. In the meantime, here's a photo (right) of the manuscript in its restored glory. It is now housed in a beautiful maroon-coloured protective box.



Happier times for our medals collection!



If you've been following recent issues of our Newsletter you will be well aware of the saga (and, given the time this project has been in the making, "saga" may not be an exaggeration) concerning the collection of medals that was rediscovered last year in the bottom drawer of an Old Library display cabinet. The medals had been donated in the mid-1950s by the widow of Major-General Sydney Buxton-Pope, and comprised both British and overseas honours.

In January this year, Flavio Marzo, Head of Conservation at the Cambridge Colleges Conservation Consortium — of which Christ's College is a member — visited our library to take a look at the medal collection. It was decided to create a bespoke conservation box, with the medals housed in separate areas of it. The resulting box ended up being quite large (34 x 52 x 10 centimetres), and contains two trays, of which the top one is shown here. As you can see, there is also a pocket in the top-left part of the lid to hold the provenance documentation about the medals, so that future researchers will be able to gain a full picture of how the medals came to be at Christ's.

Our thanks to all those who wrote in to help identify the medals — this item produced quite a large post-bag (or, more correctly, e-mail correspondence)!

It's worth saying that there is no way today that a gift of this sort would be allowed to languish in a drawer — today's material processing procedures are much more pro-active and robust, we're happy to say.

We would love to hear from you! If you would like to send us comments about this *Newsletter*, arrange a visit to the College Library, sponsor a book, make a donation, or simply share some memories, please contact us at library@christs.cam.ac.uk; by telephone at 01223-334950; or by post at Christ's College Library, St Andrew's Street, Cambridge CB2 3BU.