



We warmly invite you to a special Evensong for Corpus Christi Day this evening Thursday 11 June, at 6:00 p.m. BST.

The service is open to all and will be posted on the College Chapel Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CCCChapel/> where it will be available afterwards.

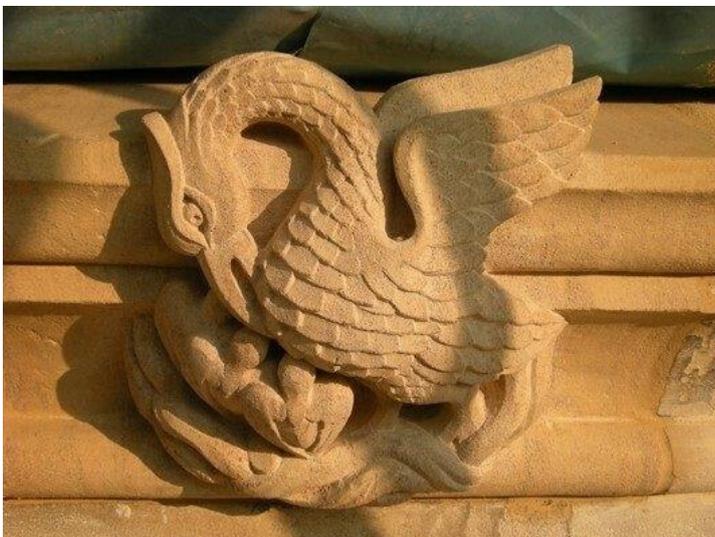


Editorial

The Master, Professor Christopher Kelly

Our College of the Corpus Christi and the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded in 1352 by the townspeople of Cambridge who, in the aftermath of a devastating plague, moved to establish a society of scholars dedicated (in the words of our statutes) to 'education, research, learning and religion'.

This Corpus Christi Day issue of the *Pelican in Brief* again offers a prismatic view of the College as it deals with the challenges of COVID-19. It also celebrates our founders, most especially Margaret Andrew, the College's first known benefactor and explores the history of our very name – Corpus Christi.



On Corpus Christi Day, it is right and proper that we should reflect on our foundation, on the generosity and vision of our benefactors that has enabled this College to survive nearly seven centuries and on the faith of our founders in the strength of their new collegiate community. Our College was founded by a small group of radical reformers recovering from the near collapse of their own society.

I often reflect on them, and on what they might demand of us 668 years later as we face our own problems, and as I think long and hard about what sort of future I should try to shape for my own son (who turns one-year-old this weekend). It is that spirit that I want to share with you a statement that I have today published on the College's website. It is a frank, open and very personal reflection on the events that have dominated the last fortnight.

Personal message from the Master on Corpus Christi Day 2020

Black lives matter. This is a simple and powerful truth. It is important that we listen to – and amplify – the cry that went out from George Floyd in Minneapolis and has resonated around the world. It is important (uniquely so in a university) that we seek to educate ourselves about the history of racism and its living and lasting manifestations. The assertion that our society is fair and equal is one of the most offensive exercises of white privilege. To counter it is our duty. But words can only go so far – hence why this statement is brief. What matters is change. A lament that does not move us to take responsibility is hollow. The challenge that now confronts every institution, and in particular, every Cambridge college, is to transform the anger and outrage of the last few weeks into action. I look forward to educating myself further, to listening to a rich diversity of voices – and to translating advice into material change. This small College should mirror in miniature the pressing concerns of our society. There is much work to be undertaken, and I know we all could have already done more than we have. We will do more, in both the long and short term, with urgency and with deliberation.



News from the College

Dr Fumiya Iida, Fellow and Reader in Robotics, Department of Engineering

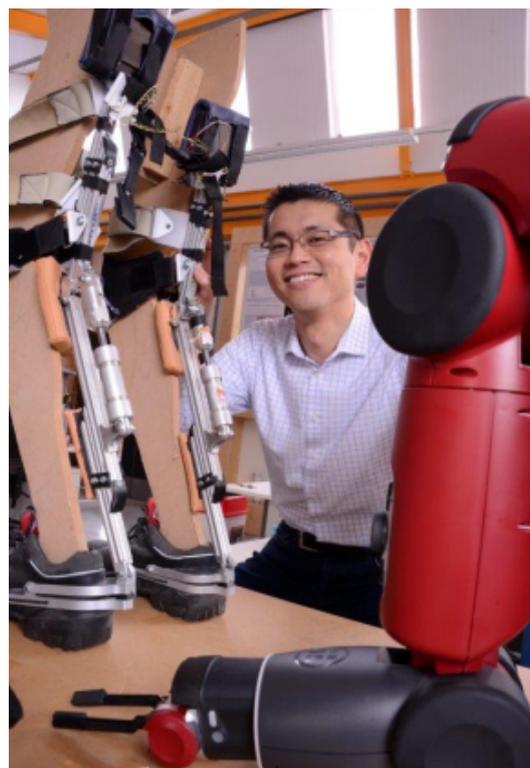
We engineers are always looking for challenges to solve with our knowledge and skills. This attitude, however, is too often misguided as we realise the challenges are bigger than we thought! Our aspirations for what technology can achieve are so high that our ideas are often swept away before becoming reality.

When COVID-19 hit us in March, I thought the pandemic was a challenge for medics, biochemists and pharmacists, and that there was little engineers could contribute to help. The development of medical devices and pharmaceuticals is a hugely active field of research, but it requires a great deal of background knowledge to make progress, and even if development of a product or drug is successful, it takes years of testing and approval before it reaches those who need it.

However, my view of the limitations we faced was challenged robustly when COVID-19 hit us. When the University was about to close down, one of my postgraduate students asked me if he could take some of our lab's portable 3D printers home with him. I told him to go ahead, since we couldn't use them in the lab during lockdown and he was welcome to experiment with them at home. What emerged was rather delightful. The student found a local Facebook group receiving and distributing 3D printed face shields, and he programmed our lab 3D printers to print as many of them as possible. He is now printing twenty-four head clips of face shields every day, and over four hundred of them have so far been shipped to a distribution hub. These masks were first sent to front-line workers like cleaners and carers in Cambridge, but now the distribution has been expanded to many other places across the UK.

Another postdoc co-worker in my group whose work had more or less been stopped by the lockdown reported to me that she had become involved with a ventilator development project to supply ventilators for African countries. She joined a group of Cambridge mechanical engineers, who are attempting to rapid-prototype low-cost ventilators, and her rapid-prototyping skills in electronics helped them to complete the first prototype in a matter of a few weeks. It is now undergoing performance testing, before being mass-produced and delivered to countries where it is desperately needed.

These projects are not the big high-tech research projects we usually work on, but they reflect our students' willingness to contribute and help in this unprecedented situation. On reflection, what makes cheap and fast prototyping useful is the power of community. Each of us has very limited capacity alone, but together we are very powerful, especially when we work in structured communities such as the Facebook group or the mechanical engineering student group. This lesson I believe will guide us not only in how to collaborate in ways we had not expected but also how to make ourselves resilient and prepare for the next big challenges ahead.



Dr Iida and his lab were also featured in the news for designing an open-source ventilator with local clinicians, engineers and manufacturers across Africa that is focused on addressing the specific needs for treating COVID-19 patients, yet is a fully functioning system for use after the pandemic. Read more [here](#).



Reflections from the Fellowship

Dr Shruti Kapila, Fellow, Tutor and Director of Studies in History examines the impact of the Bubonic plague that devastated Bombay and western and northern India in 1896.

Ever since the pandemic was declared in March, I've been thinking about global epidemics and their relationship to politics. Commentators and philosophers were somewhat quick to opine that our current moment of suspended animation will work as a much-needed pause that would usher in a new and better age for humanity and that would 'heal' nature.

As a historian, and due to habit and training, I turned to the past in the hope of gaining insight into what has been the single most challenging human event in several decades. In doing so, I found the history of India especially instructive. I say this not out of native attachment but rather as its scale and story of imperialism and freedom have had a long and enduring impact on twentieth-century world history.

The key event here that has helped me think about the pandemic is, without a doubt, the Bubonic plague that rocked Bombay and western and northern India, and which started in 1896. Within two decades, twelve million Indians were killed by it, just two million short of the fourteen million who died due to the Spanish flu that came soon after the plague.

Appearing as it did at the height of the British Empire in India, the plague emerged as a defining watershed as it inaugurated mass anti-colonial and nationalist politics. At the same time, the plague and its management paradoxically created widespread consensus for western medicine in Indian society, which had been largely resistant to it for nearly a century.

The plague was first detected in the city of Bombay. The city was the heaving and densely populated capital of the world cotton trade. It was also a key node in global sea routes into the Suez as well as the port of choice for pilgrims for the Hajj. Bombay was also the central point of internal migration and for the railway network in the subcontinent.



The so-called 'patient zero' of the plague was an inhabitant of one of the thickly packed neighbourhoods of mill workers that dotted the city. Bombay was segregated along racial lines. This racial line had been policed as a line of contagion since the start of the nineteenth century as infectious and venereal diseases periodically caused death and devastation. To that end, ambitious vaccination programmes in colonial India had faced social and cultural resistance, as these were identified with the imperial project to 'colonize the Indian body.' *

The plague incited changes in the three related areas of the state, medicine and politics. A draconian Epidemics Control Act enacted in 1897 empowered the state to conduct widespread surveillance and segregation of Indian populations that was accompanied by the aggressive deployment of policing and coercion. Secondly, much like today, the epidemic occasioned great medical innovation that was funded not by the imperial state but by the Aga Khan, the leader of the Ismaili Muslims and a wealthy philanthropist. The successful vaccine that is still in use today was produced by Waldemar Haffkine, an early Zionist and Jewish émigré from Russia who made his way to Bombay via the Pasteur Institute. And finally, under the leadership of the Indian nationalist leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak, mass anti-colonial politics were mounted that took to the street as the site of mass protest. Strikingly, the Plague Commissioner in neighbouring Pune, WC Rand and his lieutenant were assassinated by young Indian radicals who, like anarchists in Europe, followed the cult of the bomb.

Draconian measures that included forcible entry into houses, violent spraying of disinfectants by the police in neighbourhoods and on people alike, who were forced to congregate and submit to it, and above all, the segregation of women and children in camps, incited mass resistance and political restiveness. Informed by pragmatism, the imperial state changed its policy and opened the doors to Indian doctors of the elite Medical Service that had hitherto been organised on racial lines. Indianisation of the medical profession thus created a new consensus and acceptance of western medicine in Indian society.

A little over a century later, and today, India is the world's largest producer of generic drugs and the country exports medical doctors worldwide even as India has become a destination for medical tourism. The plague wrought the greatest transformation, however, on the political remaking of India and Indians as it triggered and laid down the foundations of mass anti-imperial nationalism.

Now, a little over two months into the pandemic, I am captivated by #BlackLivesMatter and the American protests against racism. I wonder if this moment of pause will in fact, become the greatest moment of political change in our times.

*David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)

Shruti Kapila's interests include modern Indian history and politics, empire and global political thought. She also contributes to print media and television, Twitter: [@shrutikapila](#). You can listen to her podcast with Sir Christopher Clark [here](#).

Image: A hospital in India during the plague (1896/97). Image source: Wellcome Library / Public Domain.



Student Voices

Dominic Bielby, JCR President and second-year undergraduate in Law, describes what life is like at as a student during COVID-19.

It would be a bit of an understatement to say that life, for many of us in Corpus, has changed. The world has been turned upside down to a degree which would have been simply impossible to imagine at the start of the academic year. It is surreal to recall those final weeks of Lent Term; the conviviality of the Nicholas Bacon Law Dinner; procrastinatory pub trips; and the anticipation of heading home to enjoy a few days of rest and relaxation, before returning for Easter. Before we knew it, however, this comforting normality had morphed into our new reality of lockdowns, social-distancing and alertness, the pressure of which is only now, tentatively, starting to lift.

For a while I was stuck in Newnham House, confined to my room, only venturing outside for a walk every evening. In any other circumstances the stillness of Silver Street and the Backs would have been calming, a foil to their usual bustle, but in those early nights of the virus, it was intensely unsettling. On my last night in Cambridge, I walked to the UL and Sidgewick site to say goodbye to the places which have been my home for the last year and a half. It was as if a quiet apocalypse had descended, Faculties which I knew best when full of life, now eerie in their silence. The next day, it was time to head back North, homeward bound, where I entered into the daily routine which continues today; a mixture of working, sleeping and regulation-compliant walking across days which have blurred into each other, one after the other.

On reflection, I have been affected at three different levels, as have many of my peers. At one level, as a UK citizen, we have had one of our most basic rights – that of freedom of movement – drastically curtailed, rightly so, in the name of public health and we have all been pushed towards a collective responsibility to keep ourselves and the nation safe, the likes of which are unparalleled in this century. Closer to Cambridge, as students of the University, our supervisions have migrated to Zoom, whilst our Tripos exams have either been scrapped, delayed or transformed into virtual variations.

Perhaps, however, the most potent change has been the impact to our lives as members of the Corpus community; spread across the country and the world, that friendly, lively atmosphere that we know and love about our College has dissipated from its base in Old House and with it the prospect of post-exam rewards - May Balls, punting and trips to Grantchester - lost, the unattainable dreams of a time which feels years in the past. Whilst these general privations have been difficult for many of us to accommodate, as we feel that we have lost key aspects of that which makes our University experience so special, they pale in comparison with the particular burdens shouldered by some members of our community dealing directly with the effects of the Coronavirus, be it through their work to keep us safe; managing the consequences of infections within their own family; or dealing with the strains and stresses that a pandemic can cause to mental health.



In any case, it often feels that the days in which we lived pre-COVID-19 will never return, however, in many ways strands of normalcy have remained, linking us still with Cambridge and Corpus. Those Zoom supervisions, even with their technical constraints and annoying glitches, have allowed us to keep up the academic discussion which attracted us to the University in the first place, reminding us of the need for thought and contemplation in the face of grave circumstances, to allow better ideas to thrive in the aftermath. For some, the prospect of exams, although as nerve-wracking as they have always been, has provided a welcome structure through which to focus their energy, as well as reminding us of our original goal when we came to Cambridge and where we may wish to take ourselves afterwards. Even with the pressures of dispersion on the fabric of the Corpus community, Corpuscles have still managed to stay close, metaphorically, of course: undergraduates are as talkative on their group chats as ever and even some JCR-organised events have occurred in earnest, the Committee meetings as thrilling for members as they were in person. Although, ultimately, these experiences are not the same as we would be having without the pandemic, they offer at least glimmers of the world to which we belonged and will, eventually, return.

When, in due time, we travel back to Cambridge, I have no doubt that those first few days will be as surreal as the immediate days post-lockdown were, the fact of our return evidencing the resilience of our College, an institution whose origins lay in the embers of another epidemic over 650 years ago. With time however, our memories of life in this extraordinary chapter of our world history and our personal stories, will be pushed to the back of our minds as new experiences are had and better times enjoyed, to exist in the same ephemeral state as our memories of Michaelmas and Lent do now. Nevertheless, I am sure that in years to come we will, on occasion, be reminded of this period, for better or for worse, and the part that we all played in the history of Corpus, and our role in shaping its future when we returned.



Corpus postgraduate Sarah Rafferty shares how the College Boat Club is maintaining its sense of community, whilst keeping its members fit and raising money for an important local cause through the CCCBC Charity Challenge.

This week, the Boat Club should have been competing in May Bumps, building on the huge success of the Lent Bumps campaign. Instead, CCCBC has been adapting to life where rowing in our usual eights is not possible. Although geographically dispersed, CCCBC has managed to maintain its sense of community, whilst keeping its members fit and raising money for an important local cause.



Over the course of Easter Term, the Men's and Women's Captains have organised successful virtual circuit training sessions and our Social Secretary has hosted pub quizzes on Zoom (including a round testing our knowledge of college blade colours). We are also preparing for *Virtual Bumps* whereby crew members will be trying their hands at running 800m, rather than rowing the usual bumps course. This will be celebrated with a virtual black-tie Boat Club Dinner, to try and keep some normality to this most abnormal Easter Term.

To channel our efforts towards a worthwhile cause, the Boat Club has coordinated a charity fundraiser.

CCCBC has taken on the challenge to walk, run, cycle and erg the distance from Corpus to Figueira da Foz, Portugal - where our annual training camp is held - over the course of a week. That's a 2020km collective effort. We began our challenge on Saturday 6 June and it will be concluding on Friday 12 June. Over thirty current members and alumni have been participating in the challenge so far. Tim Rhodes – the College boatman – has also been adding his cycling kilometres to our total.

It was important for us to support a local charity, helping with the indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are therefore raising money for Wintercomfort, which is a charity providing essential support and services for the homeless in Cambridge. Wintercomfort has put out an Emergency COVID-19 Appeal in order to receive the funding it needs to adapt and continue its work during the pandemic. Since the closure of its usual activities on 25 March, the charity has supported 292 people through emergency food vouchers; a laundry service; providing mindfulness packs and ensuring all rough sleepers are verified by the appropriate services, amongst other initiatives.

At the time of writing, we're at the end of Day 2, and have managed a distance of 950km with 1,070km remaining. That's the equivalent of travelling from Corpus to 50km south of Bordeaux, France. Activities so far have included a half marathon, multiple >50km cycle rides, erging in the rain and a walk along the river in Henley-on-Thames, which would usually be preparing for the annual Henley Royal Regatta.



If you would like to donate to CCCBC's Charity Challenge, you can visit our JustGiving page here: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/corpus-christi-college-boat-club>.



View from the College Chapel

The Revd Dr Andrew Davison, Dean of Chapel, Fellow in Theology and Starbridge (University) Lecturer in Theology and Natural Sciences explains the origins of the Guild dedicated to 'Corpus Christi'.

Later in this edition of *Pelican in Brief*, Dr Philippa Hoskin will relate the story of how our College was founded, and its relation to two Guilds dedicated to Corpus Christi and the Blessed Virgin Mary. But how did it come to be that there was a Guild dedicated to 'Corpus Christi' – the Body of Christ – in mid-fourteenth century England?

The story takes in academic theology – indeed Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a giant among theologians – popular piety, and an interconnected Europe that saw the Archdeacon of Liège become Pope Urban IV. It was Urban's solemn decree in 1264 that instituted a feast day in honour of the Eucharist, or sacrament of Holy Communion, to be observed each year on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday: which is to say, today.

As with much that makes its way into the calendar of the churches, the commemoration started small and local. In the North of Europe, a nun born in what is today Belgium, St Juliana of Liège, held the Eucharist in particular veneration. Before she died in 1258, she had impressed that devotion upon her local bishop, Robert de Thorete, and upon a more junior cleric, Jacques Pantaléon. Robert would institute a local day of celebration in the calendar of his diocese, but Jacques was to have the greater impact, ascending to become Pope Urban IV in 1261. He died not long after, in 1264, but not before he had proclaimed, in the year he died, that a Feast of Corpus Christi should henceforth be marked throughout the Church.

That is not the end of local detail however. It may also have mattered that in Urban's time (and indeed, from Urban's time, and for the next forty years) the papacy was based not in Rome but in Orvieto (an Italian town I urge you to visit if you have the opportunity). Not much further than a dozen miles away, in Bolsena, a miracle was held to have taken place in 1263, with the bread of Holy Communion bleeding upon the fair linen cloth that was laid upon the altar: confirmation, it was thought, of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Urban's declaration of Corpus Christi does not mention the miracle, but if the dating to 1263 is correct, it is also a likely provocation. And as it happened, Thomas Aquinas was resident theologian in Orvieto, at the service of the papal court, in the early 1260s, and a writer at the height of his powers. So, Urban could call upon him to compose material, especially hymns, for the new feast. Those hymns are still sung around the world, and in Corpus Chapel, including *Adoro te devote* ('Thee we adore, O hidden saviour') with its salutation to the 'Pius pelican', which might raise an approving smile among members of the College, encountered perhaps in Gerard Finzi's anthem 'Lo the Full Final Sacrifice', based [– in a round-about way –](#) on Thomas' verse.

Popes could not exactly snap their fingers and get what they wanted in 1264, if they ever could, as is witnessed by the efforts of subsequent Popes (Clement V and John XXII in particular) to make sure that the new feast actually caught on. Not until the start of the fourteenth century does it seem to have become part of the order of things in Germany, and in England even a little later. But eventually it did. And that is how devotion to the Eucharist – and to the Eucharistic elements, and especially the consecrated bread – would be part of the religious constitution of the townspeople of Cambridge, wanting to found a Guild.



The Feast was abolished in England in 1548, when Thomas Cranmer was Archbishop (and, not unrelated, our College would eventually be known as 'Benet College' for a while). Celebration of Corpus Christi Day was revived here and there, somewhat rebelliously, by the Oxford Movement. There is a story – I am not sure if it's true – of a distressed Bishop of London writing to the vicar of All Saints', Margaret Street (a shrine of Anglo-catholic devotion) asking him to explain why he was to be seen 'walking down Oxford Street on Thursday last *behind the Holy Communion*'. Such joyous processions of the Eucharistic bread have been part of the celebration of Corpus Christi day since its inception. A procession from St Bene't's Church to Little Saint Mary's (founded the same year as our College), or vice versa, is to be seen and heard passing by the front of the College each year (see left), perhaps with a brass band, certainly with congregation in full song, and ideally preceded by children throwing rose petals.

In the fullness of time, the Church of England would characteristically reintegrate much that, for a while, it had done without. The *Alternative Service Book* of 1980 noted, at the end of its calendar, that 'The Thursday after Trinity Sunday may be observed as a day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion.' Finally, in 2000, with *Common Worship*, the name of our College would come back in full: the Thursday after Trinity Sunday being 'The Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion (Corpus Christi)'. One day, perhaps, it will even make it out of parenthesis.

Image: Rowan Williams, Baron Williams of Oystermouth, carrying the Blessed Sacrament on Corpus Christi Day past Corpus Christi College 20 June 2019.

Image credit: Martin Bond, [A Cambridge Diary](#).

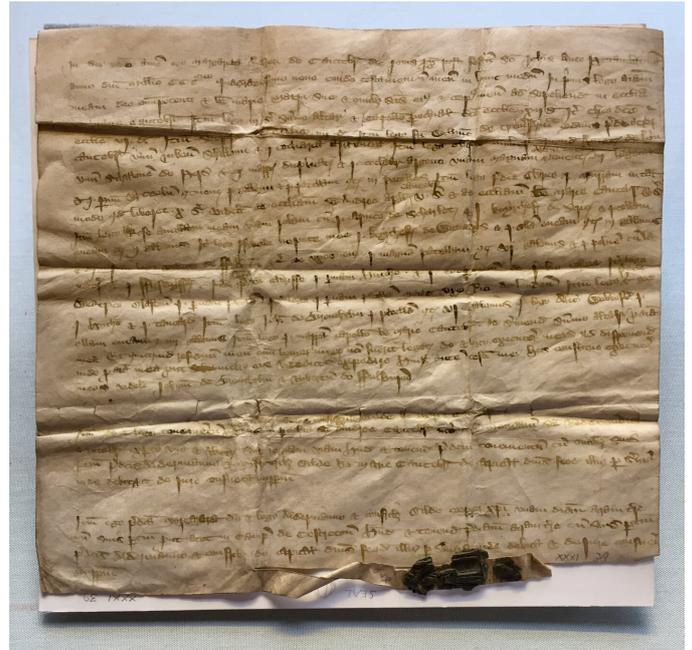


Observations from the Past

Dr Philippa Hoskin, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Fellow Librarian, explains the important will of Margaret Andrew of Chesterton and how it provided the grounds of College today.

The College gives pride of place in its list of benefactors to Margaret Andrew of Chesterton who, by her will of 7 May 1349, gave lands to both the gild of St Mary and the gild of Corpus Christi, which just three years later were to merge into the joint gild in which Corpus Christi College has its origins. About Margaret we know very little: she had a small amount of land – she gave one and a half acres in Chesterton fields to Corpus Christi gild and a tenement ‘in St Andrews parish next that of St Radegund, and abutting on the King’s way’, to St Mary’s gild. The gift to the Corpus Christi gild is significant because it is the very earliest documentary evidence of its existence. Apart from that, Margaret left a collection of domestic goods that suggest that she’d had oversight of a relatively large household, including fourteen bowls and basins of various sizes.

Gilds were a key part of the lives of medieval men and women. The gilds which founded our College were what is known as religious gilds and they provided mutual social and religious support for their members. In return for gifts of cash, goods, or rents or land, members received the support of other members and the guarantee that after their deaths, their souls would be aided on their way to heaven by prayers and masses paid for by the gild. Gilds kept lists of their deceased members and we are fortunate that in our College archives we not only have a copy of Margaret Andrew’s will but also a list of the people that the gild of St Mary kept in their prayers and memories. If Margaret’s motive for her charitable bequest was to be remembered, then she has had her wish granted.



Our corporate life has been made possible by the collective good will of previous generations of men and women who for nearly seven hundred years have not only joined together to support the scholarly endeavours of College members of their own times but who have also had an eye to supporting the work of the future College and its members.

Images: Margaret Andrew’s will, 7 May 1349, CCC 1/G/1/34.

Pelican in Brief is available on our website and all issues can be found [here](#).

The next issue will be published on 18 June.

For further information, please visit our website www.corpus.cam.ac.uk or contact Jane Martin at jmm56@corpus.cam.ac.uk
