

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

CHRIST COLLEGE
LIBRARY
TASMANIA

PRICE 6d.

FRIENDS OF CHRIST COLLEGE

1 9 5 6

THE FRANKLIN MUSEUM LIBRARY

The Christ College Library is older than Christ College itself. This statement does not refer to the fact that some of the individual books are 450 years older than the College, but that the collecting of the library began some years before Christ College was itself established.

In 1840 Sir John Franklin had laid the foundation stone of Christ College on the Governor's estate at New Norfolk, but for many reasons, this scheme failed. The Franklins, however, never gave up their vision of a University College in Tasmania, which was to be the nucleus of a University built on the lines of the great Universities of England. On March 16, 1842 on Lady Franklin's personal estate of Lower Ancanthe at Lenah Valley, Sir John Franklin laid "the corner stone of an edifice to be given in trust from Lady Franklin to the College." Here at her own expense Lady Franklin erected her museum and by the end of 1843 had collected her natural history specimens and a small library. Sir John and his wife had to leave for England in the same year leaving Reverend Thomas Ewing as curator of the Ancanthe Museum. In the "Tasmanian Journal" vol. 2, 1846, appears a list of the books with their donors. Also printed are the rules of the library which begin:

1. That the books admissable into the library be of three classes only:

(a) Works illustrative of Tasmania and the neighbouring colonies.

(b) Works written by authors who are, or have been, inhabitants of Tasmania.

(c) Works printed and published in Tasmania unless of a kind objected to by the trustees.

When we come to look at this part of the Christ College library we find that about two thirds of the collection consists of travel and description in Australasia. Many of these books are inscribed by the authors. The remaining third of the collection consists chiefly of magnificent works of natural history, many with handcoloured plates. These include "Gould's", "Birds of Australia", "Gray and Mitchell's", "Genera of Birds", Lewin's "Birds of New South Wales" as well as works on British and exotic butterflies.

A few other books of special interest are Meyer's, "Vocabulary of the Language Spoken by the Aborigines of ... South Australia", 1843, "presented by His Excellency Captain Grey", and a book of poems "Naboth the Jezreelite", written and "donated Ann Flinder, the daughter of Captain Flinders, R.N., 1844". All these books have the Franklin Museum book plate showing the doric facade of the building, and, if not inscribed by the donor's own hand have Lady Franklin's own pointed, spidery handwriting giving the name of donor and date. Sir John himself gave a number of volumes of his various voyages, and rather tragic are the volumes, sent out by Lady Franklin after her husband's death, as "The Second Voyage of the Prince Albert in search of Sir John Franklin".

In 1846, three years after the Franklins left Tasmania, Christ College was at last established on the Bishop's Estates at Bishopsbourne, and it appears that the Franklin Museum Library was almost immediately transported there and incorporated with the rest of the Christ College Library.

11.

THE BISHOPSBOURNE LIBRARY

By 1848 the library at Bishopsbourne already consisted of 3,000 volumes but, unlike the Franklin Library, it does not possess a complete list of donors. A great deal of information about the origin of the books can, however, be obtained from the "Catalogue of the Christ's College Library in the Diocese of Tasmania" printed by Elliston, Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land, 1848, and from the many bookplates and inscriptions in the books themselves.

The first donation was made in 1839 by the Committee of the London Tract Society, who donated £10 worth of theological books upon learning of the plan to establish a college in Van Diemen's Land. One of the largest single contributions was that of the Reverend Francis Vansittart Thornton, who presented a "remarkably excellent selection of standard works exceeding 500 volumes in number, and worth nearly £400". Other donors mentioned in the preface are "the late lamented Bishop Shirley of Sodor and Man", the Reverend Professor Whewell and the Reverend Edward Coleridge and the "Associates of the late Dr. Bray", who gave 110 volumes.

John Philip Gell, the first Warden of Christ College presented over 1,200 volumes including a valuable portion of the library of the Venerable William Hutchins, the first Arch-deacon of Van Diemen's Land.

Oxford University sent the college a set of about 100 volumes with handsome full leather binding lavishly decorated with gold leaf. From the many bookplates and inscriptions it appears that gifts were made from private libraries in many parts of England and Tasmania.

Of particular interest are the books given by the Reverend Rowland Robert Davies, Rural Dean of Longford and one of the Fellows of the College who "enriched the library with a number of old and rare editions of the classics, curious historical tracts, and an ancient manuscript copy of the work of Thomas à Kempis, 'De Imitatione Christi'".

It would appear that it is to the Reverend Rowland Davies that Christ College is indebted for its incunabula, i.e. books printed before 1500, when printing was still in its infancy. Among these is a copy of Plutarch's "Lives" printed in Venice by Nicolas Jenson. In 1458, Jenson was sent by the King of France, secretly to Mainz to learn the new art of printing invented by Gutenberg. Jenson introduced printing into France and later set up his own printery in Venice, then the world centre of commerce and industry.

Another famous printer whose work is well represented in the Christ College Library is the scholarly Venetian Aldus Manutius, whose first work appeared in 1495 and who specialized in printing the recently re-discovered masterpieces of ancient Greek literature brought to Venice in manuscript by Greek scholars fleeing from Constantinople.

Space does not allow further details to be given of the Bishopsbourne Library, but the collection shows the development of book production through 400 years of printing, illustrating and binding.

Christ College was closed at Bishopsbourne in 1857 and soon after the library was transported back to Hobart. During the latter half of last century the College was established in several different buildings including those which are now the University of Tasmania, and the west wing

of Hutchin's School. During this time the library was stored in a number of places and it was not till Christ College became once more firmly established in Park Street that the library was fully unpacked and brought together again.

111.

THE LIBRARY OF ST. WILFRID

This brief history would not be complete without mention of the extensive theological library of St. Wilfrid's College, which was brought from Cressy in 1929 when that establishment was amalgamated with Christ College. This library is comparatively recent in origin and to it are added all new donations.