

## The College Ghost

I am pleased to announce the discovery of the possible identity of the College ghost. Even sceptics like myself have long regretted that, whilst lesser Colleges claimed visitations by such celebrity revenants as the headless Archbishop Laud (St John's), John Crocker (Exeter), Charles I (Christchurch), and even the Devil himself (perhaps inevitably, Brasenose), our own 'black scholar' languished in ignominious anonymity, despite regular sightings around Chapel and the Bell Tower over many years. In my day the night porters, who had themselves encountered this shadowy figure, used to associate his appearances with failure to perform the custom of running three times backwards around the Cloisters on Halloween. However, as far as I know no-one has yet linked these traditions to the story of John Quinby, which I discovered whilst researching for my own historical novel set in College. Quinby was a fellow during the reformation who fell foul of the fearsome then warden, Dr London (W 1526-42). London, described by a contemporary as '*a stout and filthy prebendary*', accused Quinby of heresy and locked him in the Bell Tower where, '*starved with cold and lack of food, at length he died*', cursing London and vowing supernatural vengeance. His dying words were that his 'stomach was gone from all meat, except it were a Warden pie'. London did indeed have his comeuppance. After being discovered committing adultery with a mother and her daughter, and accused of other misdemeanours, he '*ended his naughty life in prison*'. We can all be grateful that the Wardens in modern times have been men of better character.

A N Donaldson

[A N Donaldson's literary ghost story, 'Prospero's Mirror', set in New College in the 1660's and 1930's, was recently published by Endeavour Press]