

THE COLLEGE ARCHIVE

With the celebrations this year of the 60th anniversary of D-day a short account of the College in war-time, based on material in the Archives, seems appropriate.

In Cambridge, as elsewhere in the country, the declaration of war in September 1939 came as no surprise. There was some doubt as to whether the university term would begin as usual, but in the event it did, and many students, apart from those who had volunteered for war service or been called up as reservists, returned to continue with their courses. In Emmanuel, North Court was requisitioned by the RAF, and cadets began to arrive during September, at first fed by the College kitchens but later by their own cooks. Emmanuel House was used as their sick quarters.

In general, University life continued more normally than it had during the First World War. Scholarship examinations were held at varying times of year, and entrance scholarships and exhibitions were awarded, to be taken up whenever conditions allowed the holder to enter Emmanuel. Most arts students were allowed one year at university before being called up. Scientists and engineers of the required standard were awarded state bursaries, which specified the subjects they were to study, and shortened degree courses were completed in two years. Many who received bursaries would have come to Emmanuel in any case in peacetime, and some had been accepted by the College before the offer of a bursary. Following graduation they were directed into suitable employment, though the most able remained at Cambridge to carry out research. Medical students were also allowed deferment of call-up until they had qualified. Men who were medically unfit for the forces were often permitted to come up, and short courses for potential officers, lasting a few months, were organised at Cambridge by all three services. In many cases the men who attended these courses returned after demobilisation to complete their studies. On the other hand, some voluntarily abandoned their courses to join up, often against tutorial advice.

Most undergraduates were compelled to undergo some form of military training while at Cambridge, in one of the university military units or the Home Guard (see introductory photograph to College Notes, p 171). The subway under Emmanuel Street was strengthened and used as an air-raid shelter. Fire-watching was organised and a College fire brigade was set up, whose members remained in residence during vacations. One incendiary bomb, which fell on the roof of the kitchens, was extinguished before it could do any damage. A Fire Protection Scheme log book in the Archives contains virtually no records of action, merely daily reports on

the availability of the towing vehicle and trailer, which were regularly out of service, sometimes for weeks at a time.

Because of the military occupation of parts of the College, RAF sentries were posted at some of the gates and passes with photographs were issued to those civilians who were allowed to enter. A book recording the issue of passes has survived and shows that the total number was 408. The removal of the railings at the front of the College for scrap metal must have made security more difficult, and it was for that reason that the College refused to surrender the railings between Emmanuel Street and North Court, arguing that with the RAF in occupation of the buildings a secure fence was needed. Those railings survived until the widening of Emmanuel Street after the war.

Much of the archival material from this period deals with the domestic side of College life. There are kitchen order books, Food Office notices about rationing, copies of College notices about domestic arrangements, records of daily menus and kitchen diaries. As well as the general problems caused by rationing of food and fuel the College kitchens suffered from a constant shortage of staff. Some were called up, and the College was asked repeatedly if any others could be released for what the government regarded as essential war work. The College protested in vain that many of their students were being trained for scientific work of national importance and had to be fed adequately. At times they were reduced to engaging unsatisfactory local women, some of whom never turned up for work or who remained for only a few days, and employing undergraduates to wash up.

Before the war, dinner had been the only meal served in Hall, and breakfast and lunch were either ordered from the kitchens and taken to the men's rooms or provided by the men themselves. Now the restrictions of wartime forced the College to provide a set breakfast and lunch for its resident members. These are some examples of main meals served: Wednesday 27 January 1943: lunch – cheese, salad, baked potatoes, Chesterfield pudding and sauce; Fellows' dinner – soup, egg cutlets, carrots, mashed potatoes, pineapple baba; undergraduates' dinner – country cream pie (reputedly made largely of potatoes), savoys, potatoes, pineapple baba. Monday 14 February 1944: lunch – cheese pudding, savoys and potatoes, Nelson pudding and custard; dinner – baked luncheon meat and stuffing, mixed vegetables, potatoes, ginger pudding and sauce. Some unusual items appeared on menus in the later years of the war: casseroles of rooks (served to the Fellows only), coots and godwits, moorhens, liver and kidney omelettes (no doubt made with dried egg), curried crayfish and sweetbreads, and casserole of lambs' tongues.

Dishes consisting mainly of vegetables or based on leftovers were served quite frequently.

Rations were augmented by fruit and vegetables grown in the College gardens, which were largely turned over to food production. Undergraduates were employed to help with the work. The kitchen diaries record amounts of produce brought from the gardens: on 21 April 1941 there were 41lb of brussel tops and 28lb of spring greens. These were followed in the summer by lettuces, cabbages and cauliflowers, spinach, peas and beans. There are records of the making of jam, jelly and marmalade. Blackcurrant, strawberry and plum were among the jams produced, and a proportion of the undergraduates' sugar ration was retained by the kitchens each summer for jam-making. The jam was used in puddings and any surplus was sold to the undergraduates.

The maintenance of the College buildings during the war was a constant concern. Labour and materials were difficult to obtain and licences had to be applied for before work could be carried out. The then Master, 'Timmy' Hele, was Vice-Chancellor in 1943, and a local firm, Prime's, was asked to use pre-war paint to improve the appearance of the Lodge just before he took office. Inevitably there were delays in the supply of new boilers and kitchen equipment because of a shortage of metal. At one point it was no longer possible to have coal delivered to rooms, and undergraduates were asked to collect it from dumps around the College grounds. Fires could not be lit in the Michaelmas Term until official permission was given. The wattage of light bulbs was controlled and no electrical appliances, apart from radios and razors, were allowed in College rooms.

Many members of the College were killed in the war, and their names are recorded in a Roll of Honour kept in the Chapel. Emmanuel men fought and held non-combatant positions in all the services, were conscripted into the mines or directed into industry, took part in scientific research connected with the war, became members of the civil service, and, as conscientious objectors or otherwise, worked in agriculture and ambulance units. In 1945 and for some years afterwards, the admission of all those who wished to enter Emmanuel was a major problem. Returning servicemen were to some extent given priority over boys straight from school, depending on their length of service and their age, but inevitably some were asked to wait for one or two years after their discharge from the forces. Shortage of University teachers, laboratory space and accommodation meant that many good candidates had to be turned down. It was well into the 1950s before College life returned to a settled pattern.

For donations to the Archive this year we would like to thank H J A Bird, M Breeze, J Bridgen, Mr and Mrs M L Clifford, Ms J Francis, J Gell, Dr R Gray, Ms D Hart Stock, Professor J W P Hazell, Professor G Melvill Jones, J Marsh, J Reddaway, Professor P Rickard, Dr P Selly, E Shrimpton and Professor J M Thoday. Readers are reminded that the Archive is always glad to receive any ephemera or other items connected with the College.

Janet Morris, Archivist