Lifting the Veil of Time: The Servants of New College Restored

New College Staff, 1927

New College Archives, NCA DB/ J2

It is often said that in any large organization, not just an Oxford college, the unsung heroes are the support staff, those hard-

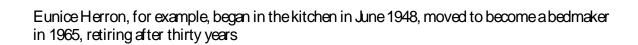
New College Archives DB/ H3 is an alphabetically arranged collection of 733 individual pink staff record cards. They were rediscovered in 2016 by the Home Bursar and her assistant, gathering dust in a neglected filing cabinet. The cards record names, addresses, dates of birth and brief employment details of individual New College staff members—the date their employment began, the department to which they were attached, their progress to other posts within college, a record of their pension details (if applicable) and, finally, the date on which their services terminated. The cards span as much as a century in time, the earliest recorded employment start date being 1865, the latest 1978, with the majority being from the 1920s to the 1970s. Presumably, after this, the card system was abandoned.

NCA DB/ H3/ 620 1865 or 1870 is the earliest in the collection

It is a rich and diverse collection. Here are the people who worked in the kitchen, the gardens, the buttery, the beer cellar, the stores, the staircases, the SCR, the Estate Office. There are Clerks of Works, groundsmen, woodmen, porters, garden staff, messengers, scullery staff, several sewing women, charwomen, a boatman, a waterman, someone who looked after the boilers, scouts (a generic term seemingly not widely used, on the cards at least, until the late 1950s/ early 1960s) and many, many bedmakers. Certain administrative staff are also recorded: Library staff,

(Home) and an

accountant.



A gentleman of no noted department, who left without giving notice on 27 January 1956 after thirteen days.

The scout who lasted just two days in September 1962.

Recent members of College may remember with some affection David Haynes, who was variously assistant JCR Butler, caretaker and yardman, and who died in 2014. His staff card is present in this set, recording that he started as a scout at the age of 23 in March 1969.

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New College bedmakers and students, ℓ . 1900 Frederick Bayliss is in the centre of the back row NCA DB/ J9/ 2

According to the employment summary kept by H.W.B. Joseph between 1913 and 1920 (NC Archives DB/H1), Frederick had become a bedmaker in 1886, four years into his employment at New College (it is possible the card is wrong in its date of 1882 and he actually *started* in 1886). He was an active

mentioned in various minutes books for these from 1904 onwards. It is also lucky that College

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For this author, however, two cards in particular stand out, for completely different reasons. The first is that of a young lady who worked as a derk in the Bursary for three months in 1977-78. Her services were terminated on Thursday 12 January 1978 because, as the marvellously deadpan note informs us, she did not return after lunch!

The second? Stanley Colbert joined College on 12 January 1938 at the age of sixteen. We are not told in which department he worked, only that he was killed in action during World War II in March 1943 at the age of twenty-one. He must have been well thought of as, not only was his name included on the college War Memorial, but also his death was mentioned in the NCR unusual for a College servant, as he is described there. There is no other note on his staff card, save for one word on the progress line it simply says:

Wonderful.

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