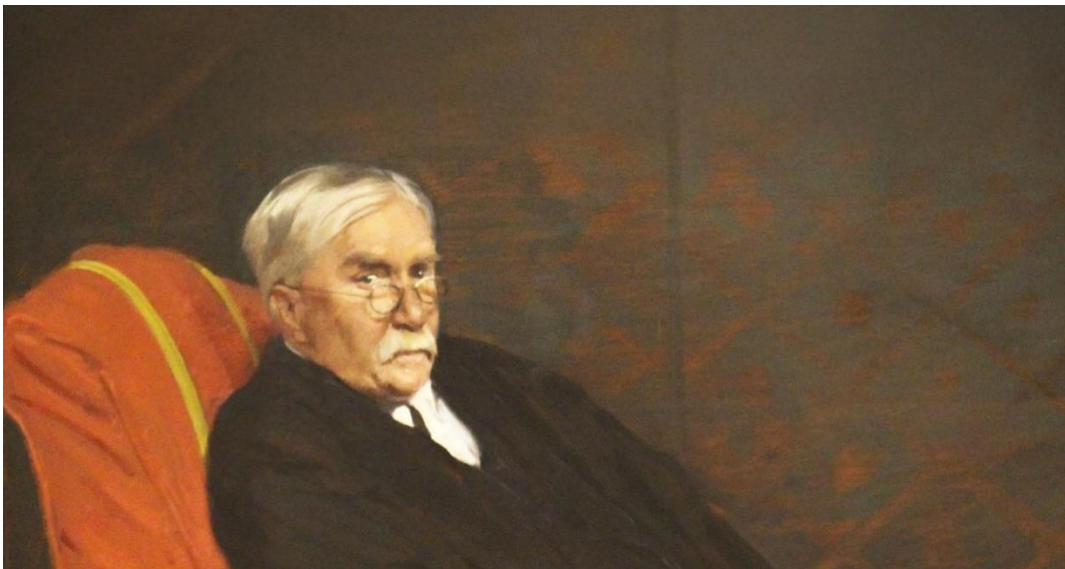


A C Benson  
Diarist



## A Centenary Exhibition

The Robert Cripps Gallery  
Magdalene College  
Cambridge

## ACB

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON, son of Edward White Benson and his remarkable wife Mary (Minnie) Sidgwick, was Fellow of Magdalene from 1904, President from 1912, and one of the College's most significant and most generous Masters (from 1915 until his death in June 1925).

As Professor Ronald Hyam, who has co-edited the Benson Diaries with Professor Eamon Duffy, writes: "No one can be long in Magdalene without encountering the spirit of Benson or hearing something described as 'Bensonian'".

A C Benson grew up in Wellington College, Lincoln Cathedral Close, and later Cornwall. His father was the first Master of Wellington College, Chancellor of Lincoln, and Bishop of Truro, eventually becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 1882

As a master at Eton, his old school, A C Benson was a skilled Classicist, encouraging his students (despite his own reservations about the value of Greek) to develop their enthusiasm and their abilities.

Invited to come to Cambridge to be a supervisor at Magdalene, he remained in the College for the rest of his life.

This exhibition explores A C Benson's *Diary* and his career – both remarkable witnesses to Edwardian England, to the Cambridge of the early twentieth century and to the literary milieu of the time.

*The portrait of Benson on the cover is used by permission © Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, reproduced with Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-ND 4.0*

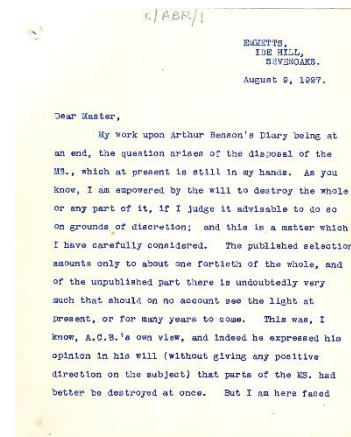
# The Diaries

FROM 1897 ONWARDS, BENSON KEPT A DIARY which at the time of his death had swelled to 180 volumes and almost 5 million words: for comparison, the complete diary of Samuel Pepys is just over one million words, the Authorised Version of the Bible a mere 783,137.

Benson paints an endlessly fascinating and often very funny picture of a public life at the heart of the Edwardian literary, educational, church and political establishments. At his death, the Diary was crated up. Percy Lubbock, a Fellow of Magdalene, critic, reviewer, editor of Henry James and the Pepys Librarian, sifted through the diary and decided that it



would be impossible to expunge or delete all the material and opinions which might offend the living, recommended that the Diary be boxed up, sealed and not opened until 50 years after Benson's death.



Lubbock's letter outlining plans for Benson's Diary concludes with the demand for assurances from the College that the instructions (which Lubbock 'felt sure' would have met with Benson's approval) would be followed.

The Instructions from Lubbock were indeed followed and the crate containing Benson's Diary was not opened until 1976. The photograph shows the famous English Fellow I A Richards (*right*) with the College carpenter, Mr D Strachan after the opening.



# The Editors of the Diary

## Ronald Hyam

PROFESSOR RONALD HYAM is an Emeritus Fellow and a former President of Magdalene College. He is the Emeritus Professor in British Imperial History at the University of Cambridge. Among many key studies, he has written Britain's *declining empire: the road to decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: a study of empire and expansion*, 3rd edn (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), and *Empire and sexuality: the British experience* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1992).

Ronald Hyam is Archivist Emeritus of the College.

## Eamon Duffy

PROFESSOR EAMON DUFFY is the Emeritus Professor of the History of Christianity. Duffy's is a leading voice in the history of Christianity during the Middle Ages and Reformation, with his ground-breaking 1992 book *The Stripping of the Altars. The Voices of Morebath, Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*, (2001) was awarded the 2002 Hawthornden Prize for Literature. Eamon Duffy's history of the papacy, *Saints and Sinners*, was first published in 1997, Most recently, Eamon Duffy published *John Henry Newman: A Very Brief History* (2019), which was released to coincide with the canonisation of the English theologian.

In common with Ronald Hyam, Eamon Duffy is a former President of the College.

## THANKS

Thanks for assistance with this exhibition to:

Katy Green (College Archivist),

Dr Jane Hughes (Keeper of the Old Library and Pepys Librarian),

Professor Tom Spencer (Gallery Registrar),

Catherine Sutherland (Special Collections Librarian),

Susannah Roberts (Gallery Exhibitions Administrator),

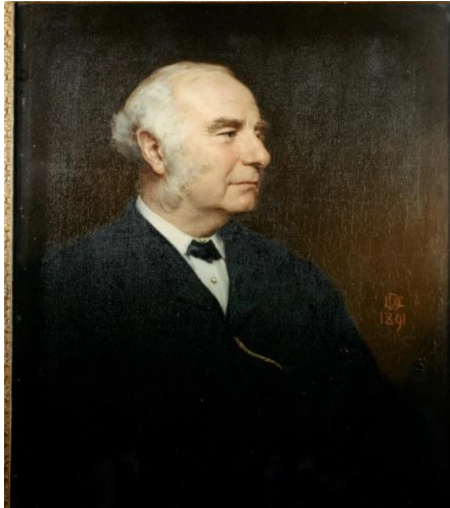
Maciej M. Pawlikowski (Photographer),

Sara Rawlinson (Photographer),

John Garner (Duncan Robinson Curatorial Scholar),

Sam Wiffin (College Carpenter).

## Pictures in the Exhibition



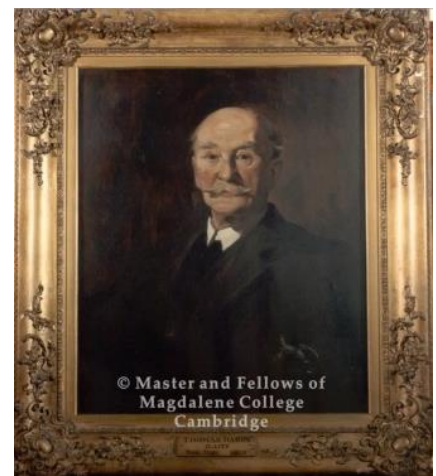
**Professor Alfred Newton FRS (1829-1907)**, First Professor of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy, University of Cambridge (1866-1907) and Fellow of Magdalene College (elected 1854). Portrait by Lowes Cato Dickinson (1819-1908), (1891), oil on canvas, 73.5 x 61 cm. Commissioned by Magdalene College.

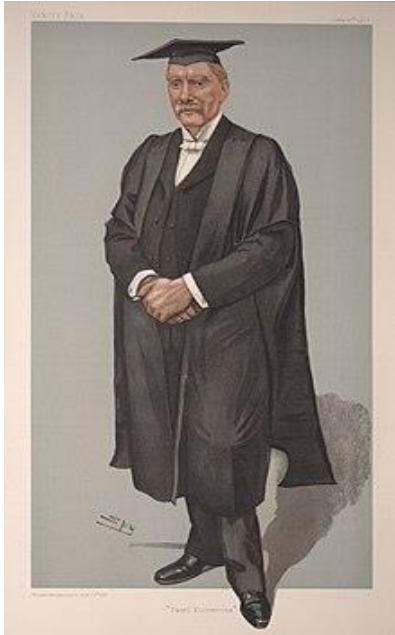
*"I was delighted with old Newton; very lame, walking with two sticks – fresh-faced, a charming voice, & a pleasant expressive face & manner – a real old gentleman."* Diary 15<sup>th</sup> October 1907

But Newton's implacable opposition to every College reform or improvement ACB proposed soon made him *"rather a horror to me"*. Ironically, on Newton's death in 1907, ACB acquired his house, the Old Lodge, and lived there for the rest of his life.

**Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)**, novelist, poet and Honorary Fellow of Magdalene College (elected 1913). Portrait by Richard Fuller Maitland (1885-1953), (1913), oil on canvas, 59.5 x 49.5 cm. Commissioned by A.C. Benson and given to the College.

*"Then Hardy came up & sate down the other side of me. I make it a rule never to introduce myself to the notice of distinguished men, unless they recognise me; Hardy had looked at me, then looked away, suffused by a misty smile, & I presently gathered that this was a recognition – he seemed hurt by my not speaking to him".* Diary 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1904





**A.C. Benson** by 'Spy' entitled '*Fasti Etonenses*' which appeared in the magazine *Vanity Fair*. 'Spy' was the name used by the artist Leslie Ward (1851-1922). (1903), cartoon, 39.5 x 25.5 cm.

*"On Saturday . . fled up to town to sit to Leslie Ward for Vanity Fair .I drove an interminable way into Chelsea – & at last, in a little low street, Bloomfield St, I drew up at what looked like the door of a Mews, with various bell-pulls. I rang. There came to a wicket a handsome well-dressed man, in a dark fashionable suit, high white collar & slippers. Rather a handsome, well-cut, finely lined face, with a black moustache. This was "Spy" himself".* Diary January 1903.

**Also on display:** '**Arthur Christopher Benson** vowing eternal fidelity to the Obvious'. By Max Beerbohm (1872-1956), (1908), cartoon, 30.5 x 30.5 cm. Given to the College by F. R. Salter (1887-1967), economic historian and President of Magdalene; it traditionally migrates with the President (along with a tortoise shell) as a 'symbol of office'

**Sir Stephen Gaselee** (1882-1943), Pepys Librarian (1908-1919) and Fellow (elected 1909) of Magdalene College. Portrait by John Innes (fl. 1944), (1944; painted posthumously from a photograph), oil on canvas, 54.5 x 44.5 cm. After Magdalene, Gaselee was appointed Librarian and Keeper of the Papers at the Foreign Office; under his direction, it became one of the world's most important centres of information on international relations.

*"The Master [Donaldson] preached a really rather impressive sermon on Simplicity – no rhetoric. It came out of his own mind; if only he could drop the breathless style, as if every word were the breaking of some awful calamity. He spoke of the multiplicity & complexity of his new cares [as Vice-Chancellor]. I caught Gaselee's eye & we remembered that they included two days' shooting in the first week of office."*

**A.C. Benson** (1862-1925). William Nicholson (1872-1949), (1924), oil on canvas, 56 x 65 cm. See Front of booklet.

**The Hall of Magdalene College** as Benson would have known it. The basic size, layout and fenestration of the Hall is early sixteenth century, with the flat ceiling and pine panelling dating from 1714. The neo-Georgian plaster decoration of the ceiling was added in 1911.

**Stained glass.** Panels of stained glass prepared probably for Benson to use in the Pepys Library, but never installed. He described them as good but not quite perfect. The item on the light-box is an image of St Christopher.

# Display Cabinets

## Display Case 1

### The Benson Family, Royal Connections and Eton College

1 NOTEBOOK. In January 1892 A C Benson and his brother Hugh toured the area round Ripon and Pateley Bridge, in search of biographical, genealogical and topographical information on their family's Yorkshire yeomanry origins, which ACB recorded and sketched in this notebook.

2 FAMILY TREE. ACB published the resulting *Genealogy of the Family of Benson* in a privately printed edition of 125 in 1895: this copy is open at the Sidgwick branch of the family, to which A C Benson's mother and uncle, the philosopher Henry Sidgwick, belonged.

3 FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH. Archbishop Benson had died in 1896, his beloved eldest son Martin, in 1878, while still a schoolboy, and Arthur's sister Eleanor (Nellie) in 1891 ages 26. The remaining family members feature largely in the Diary: his remarkable mother Mary Benson (*seated, middle*), the aged family nurse Beth Cooper (*seated right*) and his sister Maggie (*left*), who lapsed permanently into paranoid schizophrenia in 1907. ACB's brothers, Hugh and Fred (E. F. Benson), both successful novelists, stand beside him.

The comically cowardly family dog, Roddie (*front*), disappeared in 1907, a bereavement which elicited one of Arthur's most poignant and most charming essays.

4 POETRY COLLECTION. *Le Cahier Jaune* (Eton, 1892) The choice of title and yellow wrappers for Benson's first collection of poems, circulated to friends and influential literary figures (including Henry James), is intriguing. "The Yellow Press" was a dismissive term for sensational and ephemeral journalism: but ACB would later contribute poems to the short-lived Aesthetic movement journal, *The Yellow Book* (whose first editor was Aubrey Beardsley).

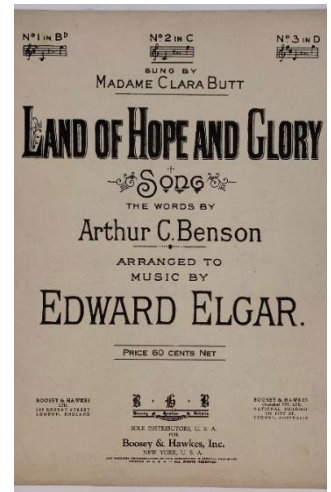
5 TIGER'S WHISKER. Benson was housemaster at Eton to the children of England's royalties and ruling elites, including Eddie and Alec Cadogan, sons of the 5th Earl Cadogan, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In January 1902, Benson was invited to stay at the Viceregal Lodge in Dublin's Phoenix Park, which also housed the Dublin Zoo: ACB taped this tiger's whisker, wire-stiff, as a souvenir inside the cover of volume 10 of the Diary.



6 **LAND OF HOPE.** The best known of his royal commissions was the Ode to mark the Coronation of Edward VII, with music by Elgar. This was so successful that the publisher Boosey commissioned a shortened libretto for Dame Clara Butt, which rapidly became an unofficial national anthem, whose jingoistic tone later embarrassed ACB.

There is an early, gravelly but audible recording of Clara Butt singing the piece in 1909 here...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXfce7-oNtl>



7 **CIGARETTE CASE.** This silver cigarette case was a present from ACB's colleague, classicist and eventually Vice Provost of Eton, Hugh MacNaghten (1862-1929), one the close circle of friends with whom ACB lived and worked. But he and MacNaghten came to differ profoundly on the dominance of Latin and Greek in the Eton curriculum, the issue which led to Benson's resignation from the school. Like Benson a sufferer from depression, MacNaghten committed suicide by drowning himself in the Thames.

8 **DINNER WITH THE QUEEN.** As son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Housemaster to several of Queen Victoria's grandchildren, ACB drew the Royal Family's attention, and his poetic facility led to commissions of hymns for Royal occasions such as christenings, weddings and funerals, even verses for the Queen's Christmas cards. After presenting his biography of the Archbishop to the Queen, he was invited to dine with her on 17 December 1899, an event he recorded in reverential detail.

9 **ETON FIRE.** In the early hours of 1<sup>st</sup> June 1903 a fire gutted Baldwin's End, the house presided over by R S Kindersley, housing thirty boys. The windows were barred, and though most escaped unharmed, two were tragically burned to death. ACB's account for the Eton Chronicle was censored by the headmaster, Edmond Warre, to exculpate the school. The fire, it emerged, had been started by a disturbed pupil, and the incident darkened ACB's final weeks at Eton.

10 **THE MYRTLE BOUGH.** Benson deplored the dominance of Latin and Greek at Eton, and advocated a modern curriculum giving primacy to the sciences, modern languages, literature, and history, a stance which marked him as a probable reforming successor to Warre, but alienated more conservative colleagues. The invitation from Edward VII to edit Queen Victoria's letters crystallised his growing frustrations: he resigned, and in August 1903 circulated this farewell pamphlet, *The Myrtle Bough*, reiterating his criticisms: the title is a provocative allusion to the myrtle boughs used to disguise their daggers by the heroes who were believed to have liberated Athens from tyranny in BC 514. The presentation copy to Sir James Crichton-Browne (1840-1938), Lord Chancellor's Visitor in lunacy!!



## Display Case 2

### The Magdalene Years

1      **PHOTOGRAPH OF PERCY LUBBOCK.** Even before becoming Master, Benson recruited 'young and vigorous' dons to raise Magdalene's standing, including Percy Lubbock and (later Sir) Stephen Gaselee (portrait in the exhibition) as successive Pepys Librarians. Lubbock, the first editor of Henry James' letters, was ACB's former pupil and life-long friend. At Benson's request, he became the first editor of the Diary, and, despite its frequent complaints about himself, secured its preservation.

2      **IVOR RICHARDS.** The young I A Richards. Though war and mental illness darkened his Mastership, in his last years A C Benson recruited or fostered a galaxy of academic talent – among others, the archaeologist Cyril Fox, the parasitologist David Keilin, and I A Richards, the inventor of 'Practical Criticism', and probably the leading literary critic of the first half of the twentieth century. At the end of his Harvard career, Richards returned with his redoubtable wife, the mountaineer Dorothea Pilley, to live in Magdalene. Richards was present when the Diary was exhumed from its crate in 1976.

3      **KINGSLEY CLUB MINUTE BOOK (Cover).** To widen undergraduate intellectual horizons, in 1905 Benson founded the Kingsley Club, Magdalene's version of the "Apostles", an undergraduate discussion group which met in his rooms to hear and discuss literature, music, art and science. George Mallory was an early secretary, and, with interruptions, the Club survived into the 1990s, its membership including a high proportion of the College's most distinguished alumni, from Michael Redgrave to Bamber Gascoigne.

4      **A FAVOURITE STUDENT: ROBERT KEABLE.** (Photograph) Robert Keable (1887–1927) was one of Benson's first pupils, and attributed his First in History to ACB's tuition. An ardent evangelical, he fell under the influence of Hugh Benson and developed strong leanings towards Roman Catholicism. He was ordained in 1911, became an Anglican missionary in Zanzibar and then Basutoland (now Lesotho), where he was shot in the leg by



an angry Mosuto fed up with hearing about 'the word of God' (it was five days before a doctor could reach him). He was an army chaplain in the war, when he met a young nurse, ditched his wife, and renounced the priesthood. His first novel, *Simon called Peter* (1921), based on the love affair, became a bestselling succès de scandale, enabling him to devote himself to writing (and to live with lovers in Tahiti.)

5      **KEABLE'S NOVEL PERADVENTURE.** The opposing influences that Arthur and Hugh Benson exerted on Keable's religious beliefs are transparently fictionalised in his 1922 novel, *Peradventure; or The Silence of God*, where ACB is 'Mr Tessor' and Hugh is 'Fr Vassall'. Here Tessor (ACB) congratulates Paul (Keable) on resisting Fr Vassell's (Hugh's) attempts to convert him to Roman Catholicism.

6      **DIARY ENTRY, 6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 1906.** Keable attends a séance. *“That odd boy Keable, after a lot of spiritualistic experiments, gazed in a crystal, & saw a door & a man in a peaked hat look out. Then they tortured someone in a dark room – & he broke off with a cry of disgust ‘Good God, what have I seen!’ The men thought he was humbugging, but he was taken with a sudden faintness & they had to give him brandy & fan him. He said he had seen the Inquisition. He is a great Protestant & I suppose highly imaginative. But he must be warned against this.”*

7      **THE FIRST PEPYS DINNER MENU CARD.** The newly-instituted annual Pepys dinners, which were themed to match Pepys’ various interests – the navy, music, the Royal Society etc., - featured speeches, music of Pepys’s time and readings from the Diary. They were intended to raise the College’s profile within and beyond the University. Benson used his celebrity to secure distinguished guests and famous speakers. The first Pepys dinner, at which Edmund Gosse proposed “the immortal memory of Samuel Pepys”, had a modest seven courses.

8      **DIARY ENTRY, 6<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 1907.** By the time ACB moved to Old Lodge in October 1907, his set of rooms, featuring the College window, had become a tourist attraction for bookish (mostly American) visitors. The set was allocated to Prince Leopold of Battenberg, Queen Victoria’s haemophiliac grandson, newly arrived as a Magdalene undergraduate. On 6th October ACB recorded with amusement a paragraph in the Observer newspaper congratulating the Prince “on the literary associations of his rooms,” to the likely indignation of Princess Henry, his mother as Benson notes: “her idea would be to congratulate me on being succeeded by so distinguished a person”.

9      **TORTOISE SHELL.** Benson succeeded A G Peskett as President (equivalent of vice Master) of the College in October 1912, which then was something of a ‘sinecure’ which nevertheless delighted him: *“glory without usefulness – just what I have always desired.”* In 1914 the (unexplained) discovery of an empty tortoise-shell in the part of the gardens formerly the President’s property intrigued ACB enough to have it mounted. Despite its increasing fragility, custody of it is now one of the less burdensome responsibilities of successive Presidents.

10     **FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW.** Almost as soon as he moved into rooms in Magdalene’s Pepys Building, ACB began a series of articles in the Cornhill Magazine, “From a College Window”, in the persona of a reclusive dweller in academe, reflecting sweetly on the world from cloistered seclusion. The essays appeared in book form in May 1906, and just three weeks later Punch magazine satirised it in a parody “From a Stodger’s Window”. It would however prove Benson’s most famous and most lucrative book, running through nearly twenty editions before 1914, though he had no illusions about his readership, - *the people who read my books & love them – who think them original & high-minded & sincere & beautiful – who like the donnish & the aristocratic flavour – the flavour picked up in episcopal palaces, & county society, & Eton, & Cambridge – & believe they have really found the charm of culture. It is humiliating in a sense....* (The displayed copy is open at the book’s trenchant criticism of Etonian education).

**11      BENSON'S SERVANTS IN THE OLD LODGE (photograph).** Benson brought his own servants to the Old Lodge in Magdalene. His live-in valet/butler, Jesse Hunting, a



former farm labourer coaxed away from service as butler in Wellington College, would remain with him till his death - with Fred Benson Hunting would be chief mourner at ACB's funeral. Hunting's wife Eliza was cook-housekeeper, and the maid was "*the good Sharpe*". Benson thought Hunting "*one of the very best men I have ever met....one of the great blessings of my life, & I am not worthy to untie his shoes*". The photograph probably dates from the 1920s, by which time the housekeeper was Ellen Spicer, and the Huntings had their own Cambridge house, so the white-haired woman here may be Ellen, rather than Eliza Hunting.

**12      DIARY ENTRY 13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 1918.** One of Benson's paranoid terrors during the early months of a mental breakdown of 1917-1922 was that the Old Lodge would be besieged, and the Huntings starved to death:

*"I had visions of the Old Lodge being sacked & burnt & myself lynched [. . .] Then I had visions of my servants dying of starvation shut up in the Old Lodge, & all the time I wrote letters to everyone at Magdalene imploring them to save the servants from death."*

## Display case 3

### Man of Letters

1      **BENSON'S "GREAT ROOM" (NOW BENSON HALL)** – (Photograph in centre of case) Benson moved into the dilapidated Old Lodge at Magdalene on the death of its incumbent, Professor Alfred Newton, and over the next few years demolished two neighbouring pubs to extend and transform it into one of the grandest residences in Cambridge. His "great room", now Benson Hall, became a hub for his many friends and colleagues from the world of the arts.

2      **ARCHBISHOP BENSON'S INKWELL.**    ACB kept many memorabilia of his father in Old Lodge, none with commercial value, among them the archbishop's inkwell: it is now the sole survivor of a pointless burglary in the College in April 2006.

3      **THE DESK.** The inkwell can just be made out in the photograph of the Drawing Room and Benson's desk.

4      **EDMUND GOSSE (PHOTOGRAPH).**    Benson's longest and closest literary friendship was with the autobiographer and critic, Edmund Gosse, probably the most powerful figure in the Edwardian literary scene, whose (rather conservative) literary opinions could make or break careers. Their friendship, maintained in a thirty-year correspondence, foundered however, largely because of Gosse's waspish personality and ACB's sensitivity. Gosse was however a brilliantly gossipy correspondent, and Fred Benson's burning of all Gosse's letters to ACB in 1925 was a major loss to literary history.

5      **DIARY, ENTRY ON GOSSE 14<sup>th</sup> FEB 1906**

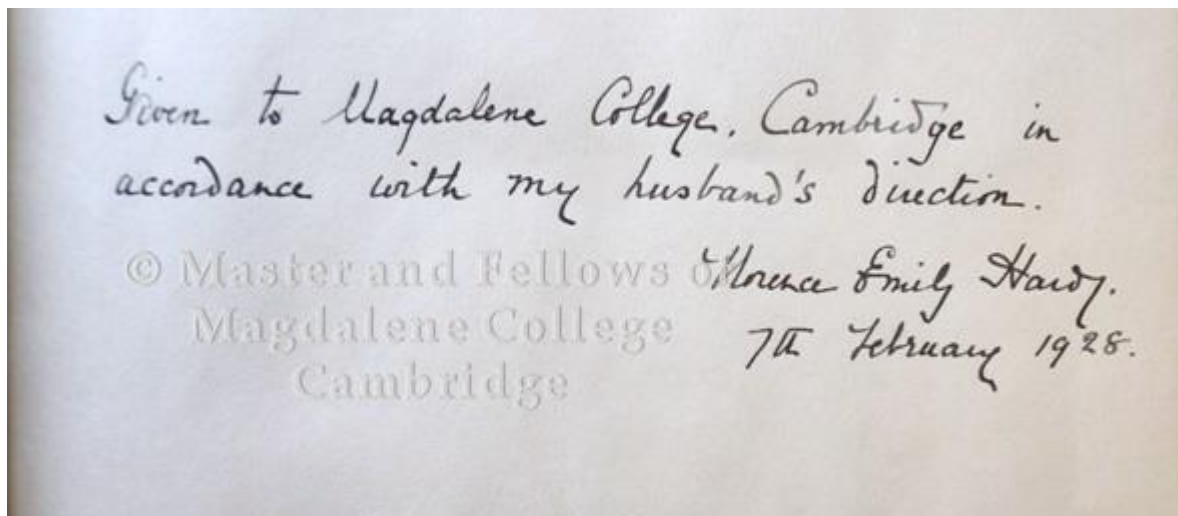
*"(James) raised his hands again & again to heaven in protest; & closed his eyes in meek acquiescence. "Poor dear Gosse – a man with whom one becomes aware that any increase of intimate relation is an increase of personal danger, of danger – I could relate instances to you, but no matter . . His frivolity, his incurable frivolity! – his felinity, his instinctive, his deep-seated felinity! – & yet the poor fellow is affectionate, caninely affectionate. He loves you, even while he defames & endangers you! – I am sure of that" – & so on with quick glances at me – it was incomparably amusing & all too short. He promised to come to Cambridge, "so long as I may linger & loiter, in my own hopelessly futile way, at an inn!"*

6      **HENRY JAMES, (photograph).**    ACB first met the great novelist at a Cambridge Long Vacation garden party in 1884, just before he began teaching at Eton, the start of a warm life-long friendship. The diary records many conversations with James, brilliantly evoking the Master's conversational idiosyncrasies. The volume displayed here records a lunchtime conversation in the Athenaeum in February 1906, about their difficult mutual friend, Edmund Gosse.

7      DIARY, 7<sup>th</sup> APRIL 1915. Gosse's anti-Catholic letter refusing to contribute a reminiscence to Cyril Martindale's biography of Arthur's brother Hugh was a milestone in the breakdown of their friendship:

*"He goes on to say that there seems to be a conspiracy to present Hugh as a miracle of genius & virtue, & that he 'presumes' that M. intends to swell the unmeaning chorus. That he is an enemy to all 'waxen busts with tinted cheeks and azure eyes' & must be excused from taking any part in the celebration. It is a really caddish letter. He was only asked to say something about Hugh. His opinion was not asked on the whole affair. It is this entirely loathsome way of giving advice from a standpoint of superior dignity that stamps Gosse as a cad. The letter is infinitely disgusting, full of spite, jealousy & untruth."*

8      DIARY - HARDY'S SIGNATURE. Benson admired Hardy's novels and especially his poetry, and Hardy had taken an interest in ACB's early poetic efforts. They met cordially from time to time in London's clubland, but a visit with Edmund Gosse to Hardy's Dorchester home, Max Gate, in September 1912, brilliantly recorded in a loing entry in the Diary, marked a new phase in their friendship. Through Benson, Hardy was admitted an Honorary Fellow of Magdalene in November 1913. Later, Hardy's widow was to present the College with a manuscript of Hardy's poetry.



Thomas Hardy made several visits to Old Lodge, when, among much else, they discussed whether Hardy should publish the wonderful series of elegies triggered by the death of his wife Emma. On one of these occasions ACB, uniquely in all the 180 volumes of the diary, asked for an autograph.

9      LETTER TO GEOFFREY MADAN, 19th FEB 1925. As ACB told Geoffrey Madan

*"...yesterday, lunch with Housman – and as we lunched, I heard the sound of keys turning and bolts drawn back, and was presently tho' frigidly invited to inspect his inner mind".*

10     **A E HOUSMAN (Photograph).** The one major poet resident in Benson's Cambridge was A E Housman. They often met, and had a civil but constrained acquaintanceship for many years, Benson being puzzled that the "funny little prim, fussy, particular, conventional man, with his little digs & pokes & ironies" could be the author of *A Shropshire Lad*. But in 1925, judging a university poetry prize together over a "princely" (and bibulous) lunch in the poet's Trinity rooms, Housman's reserve disappeared, and he confided to Benson the origins of his poetry in unrequited love (for his friend Moses Jackson), and in ill health.

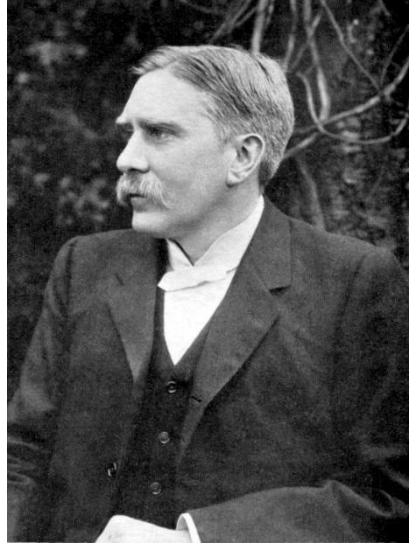
11     **DIARY.** Benson's account of R's [George Ryland's] performance as the Duchess of Malfi.

*"the dresses were fantastic, & there was an air of pedantry, & still worse a sense of deep unreality. A play where again & again in a tragic moment a man finds time & heart to spout similes & platitudes! Soon the Duchess [Rylands] appeared, very pale, moving with dignity – but I didn't like the painted eyes & the very stiff carriage of the head. Yet when the Duchess was there, there was always a sense of reality. The young husband Antonio was a handsome boy, & the Cardinal was natural – but the lunatic scene was grotesque, & then the murders began. To see R strangled on the stage, & put kicking & mewling in a great black coffin was grotesque...."*

12     **GEORGE (DADIE) RYLANDS, AS HIMSELF, AND AS DUCHESS (Photographs).** The last of a long series of handsome and talented undergraduates to whom Benson became (chastely) attached was George 'Dadie' Rylands of King's College. Rylands would become a renowned authority on Shakespearian interpretation, and a theatrical director of genius, whose leading actors would include John Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft, Ian McKellan, Derek Jacobi and Eleanor Bron. He was already a pillar of the university's Marlowe Dramatic Society, and Benson attended their 1924 ADC Theatre production of John Webster's revenge tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi*, with Rylands in the title role. He enjoyed the music by Ferrabosco, but detested the play.

13     **E F BENSON, FINAL EDITION.** Benson had nominated his brother Fred as his literary executor, and Fred found Old Lodge packed with a lifetime of ACB's papers: he returned letters to ACB's correspondents who requested them, kept family records, and destroyed almost everything else. Benson's idiosyncratic house was deemed unsuitable for Collegiate use and, apart from ACB's 'great room', demolished or adapted to much meaner student accommodation. In his last volume of *Autobiography, Final Edition*, (1940) Fred describes the slaughter.





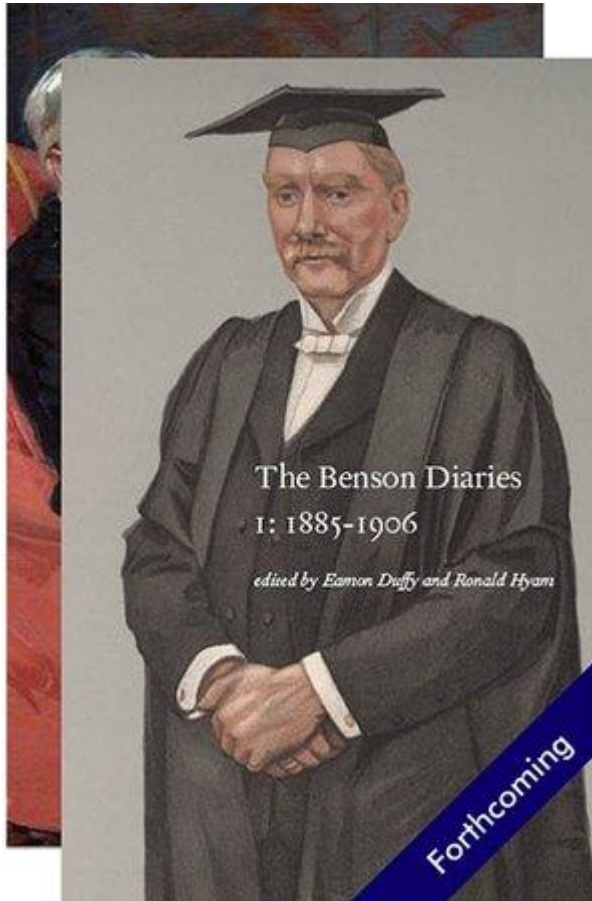
A C Benson

24 April 1862 – 17 June 1925

28<sup>th</sup> Master of Magdalene College



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*The Benson Diaries,*  
by A. C. Benson,  
Eamon Duffy and  
Ronald Hyam

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