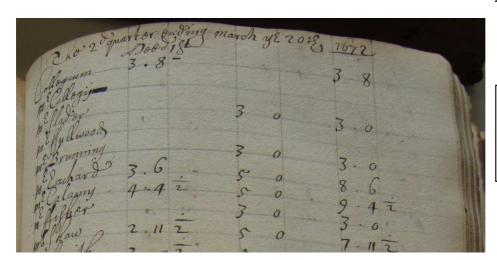
The Master that never was

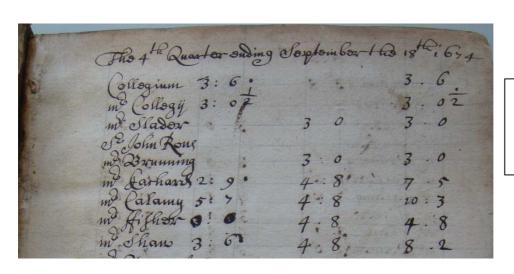
On 7th July 1697 John Eachard died. He left the Mastership vacant and a College in an unsettled state. Despite Eachard's efforts at reconstruction (he was responsible for the completion of the rebuilding of the College, with the exception of the Chapel), he was not seen as a good influence on the College, with contemporary accounts describing the College as 'debauched'. He left the Mastership vacant and a College in an unsettled state.

Peter Fisher was elected to succeed Eachard on the 12th July 1697. Fisher came from Suffolk and was admitted to St. Catharine's in March 1661. He gained his BA in 1664/5 and his MA in 1668. He went on to be Vicar of Shephall in Hertfordshire (1679-1991) and Rector of Bennington also in Hertfordshire. He was latterly incorporated at Oxford (1671).

Fisher was elected to a Fellowship from 1672-1677. Here can be seen two extracts from the Fellows' Account books, one from the year Fisher was elected and a second for 1674. Other familiar names such as Eachard and Calamyⁱⁱⁱ can be seen.

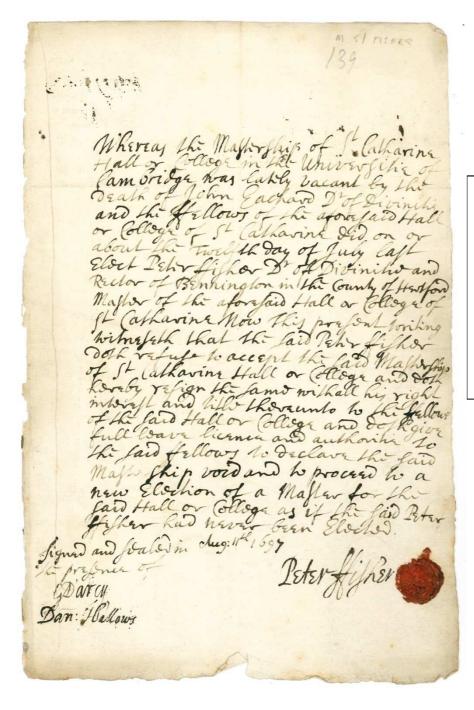


Extract from a Fellows' Account Book, 1662-1674 Reference: L/74



Extract from a Fellows' Account Book, 1674-1793 Reference: L/75 Bennington was was the home of the Caesar family, who had sent four members to be Fellow Commoners at St. Catharine's between 1667 and 1701 (Charles, Charles, Henry and Thomas). Perhaps the College was trying to curry favour with the family by appointing the local Rector, we will never know.

Having been an undergraduate and Fellow he would have been familiar with the workings of the College, but perhaps also its politics, and that may have given rise to his resignation of the Mastership. It is unclear why he would have allowed his name to go forward though, if he did not wish to take on the position. Perhaps something happened in the month after his election?



Fisher's letter of resignation.

Note that no reason for the resignation is given; Fisher simply asks that the College proceed "as if the said Peter Fisher had never been elected." Reference: M/5/Fisher/1 Fisher does not seem to have harboured long-term ill will to the College. His son Charles was admitted to the College in July 1711, formally matriculating in 1712.

Fisher continued as Rector of Bennington until his death in 1718. His will was made on the 8th July 1718 and is now available in the records of the National Archives.^{iv} It proves instructive about his family life; no wife is mentioned probably indicating that she predecessed him, he also gives legacies to his son Charles, 2 daughters and a grandson, William. He also had several servants who were left money too. Money was also left to the poor of his Parish. A record of probate is also present, though this is recorded in Latin.

The Archivist is always pleased to answer questions about the College and its members. Enquiries should be directed to archivist@caths.cam.ac.uk, or call 01223 338343. The Archivist only works for the College on Thursdays and Fridays so there is sometimes a delay in being able to answer queries.

ⁱ W. H. S. Jones, 'A History of St. Catharine's College Cambridge', 1936, p. 110.

W. H. S. Jones, 'A History of St. Catharine's College Cambridge', 1936, p. 307.

For more information about Calamy see Jim Spivey, 'Calamy, Benjamin (bap. 1646, d. 1685/6)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4354, accessed 25 April 2014].

^{iv} Fisher's will can be accessed via the National Archives website, or directly at http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUl/image/Index/D680370.