

# The Lightfoot Society

The Archivist was given two Lightfoot Society term cards in 2012, dating from 1953 and 1954. These were the first records that had been given to the College Archives relating to the Lightfoot Society. The Archivist was keen to find out more about this Society, so started her investigations with a search of the College Society Magazines. A report from the 1950 Society Magazine records the foundation of the Society.

## Society Magazine, 1950

*President* : W. G. Burman

*Secretary* : D. J. McGuigan

The Lightfoot Society came into being to fill what the more rhetorically minded considered an outstanding gap in the social life of the College. The Shirley Society had from time to time held debates, but for some people these were not enough, and it was felt that there was sufficient interest in the College to justify an independent society. Enquiry endorsed this, and the Lightfoot Society was founded. The name was arrived at after research into College history had revealed John Lightfoot, a 17th century ecclesiastic, as the one most likely to provide inspiration for the pedestrian speaker.

As these decisions were made during the first few weeks of the Michaelmas term, it was not until mid-November that the Society's first meeting was held. The motion was that 'In the opinion of this House, Cambridge Societies are a menace to Cambridge Society', and speakers on the paper were T. Grenville Jones, D. J. McGuigan, R. G. Waterhouse (St John's) and M. Bridgeland. After a lively inquisition Cambridge Societies were vindicated by the narrow margin of one vote, and the officers and committee of the Lightfoot were accordingly elected.

The second and last debate of the term revolved, in ever-widening circles, around the motion that 'All is not fair in Love and War', which was debated by R. Fursdon, G. O. Probert, D. C. W. Sharp and E. P. T. Crampton, The House, determined to restore the adage to its conventional form, defeated the motion.

The Lent term provided a full programme, and the Society began its activities by debating the motion that 'Equality of the Sexes is neither feasible nor desirable' with the Cabbage Club of Girton College<sup>i</sup>. The Speakers were Miss Paddy O'Loughlin and Miss Alison Blyth, P. D. W. Wickenden and the President, who abandoned the comparative security of the Chair to propose the motion. It was narrowly carried.

After a popular Impromptu Debate in February and an 'away match' with Homerton College, the Society's year reached its climax when Mr C. R. Benstead and Dr H. J. Chaytor, supported by R. E. Turnbull and T. F. Homans, debated 'The Restrictions of this University are both Evil and Medieval'. The Society thoroughly enjoyed a wealth of proctorial reminiscence and such remarks as Dr Chaytor's assertion that the phraser of the motion evidently thought 'medieval' meant 'middling bad'. The motion was defeated.

The last debate of the term – 'The Liberal Party is dead and ought to be buried' -was a Visitors' Debate, and the 'paper speakers' were D. K. Freeth (Trinity Hall), T. Grenville Jones, P. Jenkin-Jones (Trinity Hall) and G. T. Hughes (Corpus Christi). The House concluded that the Party was not dead, and burial therefore premature.

In answer to a request, a second Impromptu Debate was held at the close of the Easter term.

M. Bridgeland has been appointed President for the coming year, and T. F. Homans is the new Secretary.

The Society flourished in the 1950s and 1960s as the term cards below show:

Extracts from the Constitution:

- \* The society shall exist for the discussion of matters of general interest and to provide members of the Society with opportunities for public speaking and debate.
- \* All subjects, without exception, shall be open to debate.
- \* Any member of the Society wishing to speak "upon the paper" shall communicate with the President not less than ten days before the date on which he proposes to speak.
- \* All members of the College shall be ipso facto members of the Society.

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## THE LIGHTFOOT SOCIETY



### PROGRAMME OF DEBATES

LENT TERM, 1953

### OFFICERS 1952—53

*President*

M. G. STOKELL

*Vice-President*

L. J. WILLIAMSON

*Senior Treasurer*

T. R. HENN, C.B.E., M.A.

*Junior Treasurer*

J. W. GARBUTT

*Hon. Secretary*

R. A. BUCHANAN

*Committee-member*

R. MITCHELL

## THE LIGHTFOOT SOCIETY

### LENT TERM

Thursday, 22nd January

"WE LIKE ANARCHY" ✓

Thursday, 5th February ✓

"NONCONFORMITY IS THE MARK OF  
A PERVERSE SPIRIT"

Thursday, 19th February ✓

"GOD BLESS AMERICA"

Thursday, 5th March ✓

PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

"CIVILISATION BEGINS NORTH OF THE TRENT"

All debates will be held in the J.C.R. at 8.15 p.m.  
All welcome. Joint debates with other Colleges  
are arranged

THE LIGHTFOOT SOCIETY



PROGRAMME  
OF  
DEBATES

MICHAELMAS TERM 1954

Extracts from the Constitution:

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- \* All members of the College shall be ipso facto members of the Society.

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OFFICERS 1954-55

*President*  
P. G. HALL

*Vice-President*  
D. WALTON

*Senior Treasurer*  
T. R. HENN, C.B.E., M.A.

*Junior Treasurer*  
A. C. CAPEY

*Hon. Secretary*  
D. J. BOWLER

*Committee-members*  
E. C. MIDWINTER  
D. J. TRITTON

THE LIGHTFOOT SOCIETY

MICHAELMAS TERM

*Monday, 25th October*

"THIS HOUSE HAS EVERY CONFIDENCE  
IN ITS FUTURE"

*Wednesday, 3rd November*

Debate with Shirley Society  
"THIS HOUSE REGRETS ITS EDUCATION"

*Wednesday, 10th November*

Joint debate with New Hall

*Wednesday 24th November*

"FLOREAT MANCUNIAM"

*All debates will be held in the J.C.R. at  
8.15 p.m. unless otherwise advertised. All  
welcome*

Term cards for the Lightfoot Society, Lent Term 1953 and Michaelmas Term 1954.  
Reference: Accession No. 2012/020

The last report of the Lightfoot Society appears in the 1969 Society Magazine, with a note that debates included whether they believed in Santa Claus (they did) and that 'Party Politics were irrelevant to Modern Living' (outcome unknown). What happened to the Society after 1969 is currently unknown. If you can shed some light on its fate please get in touch with the Archivist.

The Archivist is always pleased to answer questions about student societies, and indeed any aspect of College life. Enquiries should be directed to [archivist@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto: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.

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<sup>i</sup> The Girton Cabbage Club, the College's debating society, was set up in 1950. A report in the Girton Annual Review (similar to the Society Magazine of St. Catharine's) notes that in Michaelmas Term 1950 'the club was Lightfooted at St Catherine's, cackled with Jesus' Roosters, found gambling wicked at St John's, and entertained Fitzbillies in the Girton Cabbage Patch.' For further information about the Archives of Girton College visit <http://www.girton.cam.ac.uk/library> or contact the Archivist directly (email [archive@girton.cam.ac.uk](mailto:archive@girton.cam.ac.uk), telephone: 01223 338897).