

CALL FOR PAPERS

Ascham Conference : Quincentenary of Roger Ascham (1516-1568)

Two day conference (9-10 September 2016) at St John's College,
Cambridge.

Roger Ascham is a figure familiar to early modernists in the fields of English Literature and History. Often classified as 'a great mid-Tudor humanist', he is best known for his role as tutor to Elizabeth I. His most famous works, the *Scholemaster* and *Toxophilus*, have been extensively quarried and quoted in studies on prose style and English humanism. His letters (usually cited in translation) are treated by many as a standard primary resource. However, to excerpt and to categorize is not necessarily to understand, and it is arguable that we have lost sight of Ascham the individual, his interests, concerns, and achievements. The 500th anniversary of his birth offers an inviting opportunity to take a fresh look at Ascham and his writing.

The aim of this conference is to broaden and deepen our knowledge of Ascham. It encourages new perspectives on his more familiar works, but also aims to shift the focus to texts that have garnered less attention over the years. There have, for example, been no critical studies of his *Report on Germany*. Vast numbers of his letters which engage with a range of topics pertaining not just to the University of Cambridge but also to national and international affairs, have been largely ignored.¹ This conference would particularly welcome contributions from Neo-Latinists, for much of Ascham's oeuvre was in Latin and remains untranslated. Consequently, scant regard has been paid to Ascham's poetry composed in honour of various luminaries, and his theological works have been almost completely ignored. Nor has much been done by way of investigating the annotations Ascham made on his own books.² There is only one recent English biography of Ascham, and that

¹ Scholars are alerted to Maurice Hatch's PhD thesis which has not been published and is unknown to many, but comprises a useful translation of the full corpus of Ascham's letters: M. Hatch, 'The Ascham Letters: An Annotated Translation of the Latin Correspondence contained in the Giles Edition of Ascham's Works' (Cornell University, PhD thesis, 1948)

² These include: his Greek New Testament and his volume of Isocrates held at Hatfield House; a copy of Ambrose's treatise on election and justification, now in the

dates from 1968. A comprehensive reassessment of this multifaceted figure is long overdue.

It may also be the case that a fuller review of Ascham will also help to nuance and complicate our current understanding of a range of broader historical issues. The following themes seem likely to yield particularly important insights: Ascham's international relationships, the nature of his involvement in the religious Reformation, his service during the reigns of Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, his knowledge of the Law, and his political activities and connections. Papers might also reconsider Ascham's humanism, taking into account recent historiographical developments in this area, and the extent to which humanism could coexist with other intellectual approaches and agendas, and buttress different types of ambitions. Such analysis may also foster fruitful investigations into 'varieties of humanism', for the humanism of figures like Ascham, who were no Erasmuses, but mediated classical scholarship to students across Europe and embodied the complex interaction between humanism, politics, and Reformation, tend to be radically oversimplified in textbook and tokenistic histories.

The conference organisers will be happy to consider any proposals that aspire to cast new light on Ascham and his context. We hope to publish a volume of accepted papers following the conference. Please email abstracts of c.200 words (and any queries) to:
rogerascham2016@gmail.com no later than 15 May 2016.

Convenors: Dr Lucy Nicholas (King's College London) and Dr Ceri Law (Queen Mary University, London)