Wykehamical Foundations

Winchester College

“What William Badger’s notebook reveals is that Christopher Jonson was well aware

of that most important of admonitions to prospective and practising teachers: if

you wish to instruct, you must first entertain – Horace’s ‘*Omne tulit punctum qui*

*miscuit utile dulci*’. Though there are many passages of formal classical Latin in

the four hundred pages, there is also a remarkable amount of levity. This takes

several forms. There are memorable word games: Jonson punned on *ludus*with its

alternative (and to a schoolboy, paradoxical) meanings of ‘game’ and ‘school’, 28

and engaged in untranslatable word-play on *bifidum /perfidum*and *mendaces /*

*mendacia / mendas / mendacem*. There is even a macaronic pun on the English

29 words ‘scholar’ and ‘choler’ which are spelled in Greek letters. There is an

30 acrostic, which, as it deals with the Whitsun holiday, would have particularly

appealed to the boys. And there is a poem purporting to be temporibus Nosnoi 31

regis ‘in the time of King Nosnoi’ which is a transparent reversal of his own

name. There is a poem addressed to the College dog, Willy, and another to the

32 33 scholars’ tame but nameless deer at Moundsmere. Such pets were a feature of

34 Winchester life: from the middle of the seventeenth century for the best part of

two hundred years there was a succession of pet foxes kept on a chain and fed on

sheep’s paunches; and in the eighteenth century the scholars kept a pet eagle in

35 College. There are some rather excruciating Latin puns and one macaronic pun in

36 Latin and Greek forming a nonce-expression *pecunia quasi pecudis*-*νοια*, punning

on the Latin *pecunia*[‘money’] to generate a portmanteau word meaning ‘the

brutish mentality induced by money in men’. The corrupting aspects of a love of

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money were constantly denounced by Jonson. A former schoolmaster, one Clement

Smith, who taught for only two years, 1464-65, is the subject of an extended pun

on Smith – one who beats [iron on an anvil] – and Clement, which Smith certainly

was not. On one occasion the boys appear to have been scrumping grapes. Jonson

38 gave out a dictation which purported to be from the mouth of the vine. The vine

names the villains: It is the truth I tell. Bull, Greenfield, the elder Barker, and Waters, White

from Chilcombe, and both wicked Graves, Oxenforth, another was the little

boy – if only I could remember his name. And Fox was there as well (but a

fox would not eat grapes) and Winter with his name cut in the middle;

another was Best, another Greenhill; and these they were who stripped me

of my grapes so nastily. 39 Winchester College has a comprehensive list of all scholars from the foundation: for commoners the lists only start to be kept from 1653…”

https://www.winchestercollege.org/UserFiles/pdfs/B.%20Wykehamical%20Foundations.pdf