

The Master's Report



The Revd Dr Jeremy Morris
Master

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Once again we can celebrate a year of solid achievement for the College with the opening of a new building at WYNG Gardens, the former St Clement’s, providing over 70 state-of-the-art student rooms as well as conference facilities; continued success in various ways academically, socially and culturally; celebration of the 40th anniversary of the admission of women; the advent of a promising group of new undergraduate and graduate students; and the recruitment of new Fellows. You will read much of the detail of this elsewhere in the Review, and I want to register here praise and appreciation for all of those who have contributed to this in one way or another.

But as historians know well, sometimes significant changes do not attract much attention. This year we have something mundane but nonetheless hugely important to celebrate – the complete revision of the College’s Statutes. The Statutes were revised comprehensively

in the 1970s, with a major addition to reflect changing employment law in the 1990s, but they were always an awkward mixture of the general and the specific, and over the years they have been found no longer adequate on specific issues. Furthermore, the application of charity law to the College, via the Charity Commissioners, left the old Statutes looking somewhat obsolete. The revision began under my predecessor, and was led by the then Vice-Master, Professor John Clarkson. It has been a long work, not least because, in place of one set of Statutes, we have developed a three-tier structure of College law, echoing that of many other colleges and of the University itself – Statutes, stating broad principles; Ordinances, applying the principles in general terms; and Regulations, making detailed provision for the application of the Statutes and Ordinances. The Statutes required the threefold approval of the Privy Council, the Charity Commissioners, and the University, and will only be altered in





The Master's Lodge

the most exceptional circumstances. The Ordinances required approval by the Charity Commissioners and the University, and again alteration would need to be rare. The Regulations effectively summarise the decisions of Governing Body and can be altered at will by the Governing Body. Final approval for the Statutes and Ordinances came through in early 2017, taking effect from 1 October 2017. There will be no thunderclap, no loud adulation, no dramatic celebration to mark this – just a quiet sense of satisfaction that the work has been completed, and that we have a regulatory framework which is, in that well-worn phrase, 'fit for purpose'.

Work on the Statutes enabled me to refute categorically the assertion sometimes made that the Statutes forbid the presence of a dog on College grounds. Nonetheless, the tradition endures that a dog on College premises must be deemed to be a cat (cats being kept traditionally to keep

the rats at bay), and the Governing Body sportingly did so for my dog, marking at last my family's move into the refurbished Master's Lodge. For me, that has probably been the biggest material change of the year, and I look forward to welcoming more of you to the Lodge for future reunions and other social occasions.

But of course the Review offers a chance to look forward, as well as back. The recent general election has blown open what I had thought a relatively settled state of affairs as far as student finance goes. I do not think it likely that we will ever see a return to full state funding for undergraduate education, not least because the proportion of 18 year olds going to university is now much higher than it was in the those fast-receding days. But the future of the current loans for fees system is back on the agenda nevertheless. I expect to see continuing debate on the question of student finance. The current burden of

debt students are incurring is almost certainly unsustainable in the long run. But what could be put in place of the current system? Nothing I have seen so far makes me want to reconsider my belief that the way forward for Trinity Hall is to continue to build up our reserves, and to extend the provision we make for student support, including undergraduate as well as graduate studentships. It would be wonderful to think that we could be in a position one day to guarantee full funding for all those we want to admit to the College and who might otherwise be deterred from coming here by lack of means. But that is a long-term goal. In the meantime, we must press on and do what we can. At the same time, we face significant challenges from central government on access and inclusion, and the work of our Admissions team is vital to the College's future success. They do truly remarkable work for the College even as things stand.