In 1964, the Cambridge Review (as opposed to the Trinity Hall Review) ventured that it was a safer bet to imagine an astronaut landing on the moon than to envisage mixed colleges in Cambridge. The Review was correct: the moon landing occurred five years later, but it was not until 1972 that our neighbour college, Clare, together with King’s and Churchill, became the first male-only colleges to admit women. Trinity Hall followed soon afterwards and this past year has seen a series of THwomen40 events celebrating that decision, including the unveiling of a handsome new portrait in the Dining Hall depicting two of my predecessors as Senior Tutor and the College’s first female Fellows, Drs Sandra Raban and Kareen Thorne. Painted by the 2017 BP Portrait Award winner Benjamin Sullivan, the portrait is a first step towards meeting regular objections received when I was an Admissions Tutor from cohorts of visiting school pupils – some contemplating applying for admission – who were baffled as to why there wasn’t a single image of a woman displayed in College. (For what it’s worth, I’d also often wondered, during committee meetings in the Leslie Stephen Room, whether just one of the five images of Leslie Stephen formerly on simultaneous display, could perhaps be substituted for a portrait of one of Stephen’s interesting daughters, Virginia Woolf or Vanessa Bell?) Forty years nevertheless remains a small part of the history of a College that is soon approaching its 675th anniversary…

Creating an inspirational environment remains our raison d’être. In a world increasingly dominated by external metrics, mounting student debt and ‘known unknowns’, such as the impact of Brexit and A-level reform, some aspects of College life remain reassuringly consistent. Sporting performances have been mixed, with notable successes for the women’s football team, coached by Porter Malcolm Pearman. Over a quarter of our undergraduates were elected to academic scholarships based on First Class Tripos examination results last summer, with several undergraduates and graduates winning prestigious University prizes and studentships. As important as league tables, however, is the promotion of wellbeing throughout the Trinity Hall community and generous philanthropic donations now facilitate provision of a College Nurse, Counsellor, Mental Health Adviser and Cognitive Behavioural Therapist, while I remain consistently grateful for the unstinting support provided by the College’s Tutors, Tutorial Office staff and JCR and MCR committee members.

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In this context, the varied and often surprising experiences accrued as a Tutor of Trinity Hall undergraduates will hopefully serve Professor Jane Clarke well, when she takes up her post as the first female President of Wolfson College next year!

Dr Clare Jackson
Senior Tutor