

FRONT COURT

Trinity Hall Cambridge



HIGHLIGHTS

[The Cambridge sermon that shook the nation](#)

[Seeing yourself here: why outreach matters](#)

[Taking farce seriously: behind the scenes of student theatre](#)



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Design and Print Management:
Andy Harvey Design Limited

Front Court is produced using paper fibres derived from pre- and post-consumer waste and is FSC® certified. It is printed with vegetable-based ink and sent to you in biodegradable, compostable film derived from vegetable starch.

Cover image: David Chataway (History, 2024) playing the role of Selsdon/Burglar in *Noises Off* at the ADC Theatre.

Photographer: Anna Gungaloo (@gungaloo photography)

Message from the Master

by Mary Hockaday | Master

As Master, I find myself chairing and sitting on a good number of committees, in College and across the University. One of the busiest this year has been our Buildings Committee, chaired by Fellow in Medicine Professor Ian Wilkinson, where we oversee the general maintenance of our sites and commission new projects.

New things are underway on at least three fronts. Builders are on site at Bishop Bateman Court (BBC), for a major refurbishment which will degasify the building and make it fully accessible. We're also engaged in detailed calculations about energy provision at Central Site to reduce our dependency on gas, either by joining a city-wide heat network project or generating our own air, ground or water heat. And, very excitingly, we're running a competition to select architects to rebuild Cherry Tree Court and create a new lecture and performance space, along with a new café and bar as a social hub for the College. These projects are all part of the Masterplan, and rely on your support. You can read more about our Masterplan progress and plans on page 10.

That said, students recently overcame the Lecture Theatre's narrow stage to put on a great production of *Assassins* by Stephen Sondheim. The Trinity Hall musical is now a firm annual fixture and I was blown away by the various talents on display. You can hear from one such talented student, director Tom Barry, on page 12.

A highlight of 2025 was, of course, the incredible event at the Barbican to celebrate our 675th anniversary. It was wonderful to bring so many of the Trinity Hall community together in one place to reminisce, celebrate what College is today, and look ahead to an exciting future. I know the press coverage in January cast a pall, but it's the Barbican spirit which represents the real Trinity Hall.

Our wonderful outreach officer, Xanthe, was in the Southwest recently, where we support state schools across the region to raise aspirations and target Oxbridge, including Trinity Hall. I particularly want to celebrate this work in light of the misleading press coverage. Let me reassure you once again that our admissions policy has not changed, nor our commitment to widening participation. I hope you'll enjoy the piece by Florence Assetto, which I like to think shows that our actions can speak louder than distorting words. Your support is what makes so much of our outreach and widening participation admissions work possible.

© Natalie Sloan Photography



> Mary Hockaday and guests at *The Spark of the Reformation* event, December 2025

Looking ahead, we're beginning to make plans to mark the 50th anniversary of women at Trinity Hall, from October this year. We'll share more with you in due course, but meanwhile, do read Joanna Wade's reflections on page 4. It was another age.

There's even deeper history on page 6. I hugely enjoyed Professor Alec Ryrie's lecture marking the 500th anniversary of the 1525 sermon given in the Trinity Hall church on Peas Hill, long seen as igniting the English Reformation. With the dark oak pulpit and period music from our choir, it was easy to imagine Tudor Cambridge, where religious controversies raged in the candle-lit shadows of St Edward, King and Martyr.

Finally, a word or two about Honorary Fellow Mark Tully, who died in January. I had the pleasure of working with him when I was a junior producer at BBC World Service many years ago and always admired his considered, expert reporting of India, delivered in that beautiful voice. I'm sure you'll enjoy reading the tribute by his fellow Trinity Hall student, Dr Vic Forrington. Such long, deep friendships are forged here. 🍷

The first women

by Joanna Wade | 1977, Law



> Joanna Wade

From the moment I arrived, I realised I had chosen the right college and that my reason, the informal explosion of flowers outside the Old Library, had found me a college of just that character. The contrast with the rather sterile rows of lavender at Clare was no accident.

It was a great time to be growing up at university because feminism was in the ascendancy and I felt empowered as a 'first woman' (I don't recall ever being called 'girl', which I was not) who had been made so welcome to fight fellow students with the wise old College on my side. It is incredible to me now that so relatively recently fellow students saw the futures of their female contemporaries as being lesser, but they did, and we enjoyed loud discussions about a woman's place late into the night. This culminated in a series of feminist plays in collaboration with Trinity Hall's Preston Society, which I acted in and then directed: *Brute Farce* and the *Mummy's Curse* (about Dracula and menstruation!) amongst them.

It is also remarkable, thinking back, that I never picked up the slightest hint of sexism from the College staff. Traditional as they were, Ken Golding the Head Porter, rosy faced and jovial, Ron [Chapman] who had been a typist at the Nuremberg trials and who we loved, welcomed us all and chuckled at our requests and eccentricities without fear or favour. They and our lovely bedders were our extended family and they made us feel safe and special.

The sense of community was, however, far more powerful than any faction. I learned from Trinity Hall that a small community is a precious thing to be treasured and enjoyed.

Whilst we did have to climb a slippery wall by the bike shed to get back in after the College had locked its doors at night, it didn't have to happen very often because there was plenty going on inside. I loved all the different things I did – tea parties with tens of friends squashed into my

tiny room drinking horrible, powdered coffee (which my mother had stock-piled due to the world coffee shortage), cooking mung bean curry on a gas ring, posing around at the Asparagus Club, rowing – and above all drama. And the Trinity Hall community was wonderful at lending a hand. We all assumed we could manage our academic work *and* row or learn lines or, if an engineer, construct a safe, many-tiered auditorium. And we did. The downside is that I have often been disappointed when people I have met since do not understand that community is important, or do not have the energy for it.

I'm afraid that in the face of the exciting contemporary world I gave up on history and changed to law as a more likely instrument for changing the world. I was not influenced by the Trinity Hall legal tradition, at least I do not think I was, because I saw that as way too conventional, but I was very excited to discover from a Trinity Hall PhD student that law was a tool which could be used to challenge the maladministration of the executive.

Although I do, and always will, suffer from 'impostor syndrome', Trinity Hall was a gentle place which taught me that it was safe to have a go at sticking your neck out. I remember Jonathan Steinberg saying that the motto of the Trinity Hall Music Society was 'Oh well...' Difficult pieces were performed with confident enthusiasm and quite a few mistakes, a way of living which worked for me. So I left Trinity Hall with a great desire to embrace life and give it a go and no one has sniped at me, then or now, when I get it wrong.



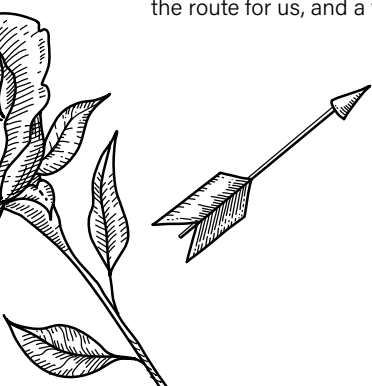


> Preston Society production of Romeo and Juliet with Joanna Wade (right)



I made my way through the legal world as a solicitor and, rare at the time, became a female equity partner (albeit in a small, alternative firm) thus keeping up my role as a 'first woman'. I then became an Employment Judge and as one of the early group of out gay judges have been able to make a difference in a small way to how the judiciary runs and is perceived. I have also worked for a charity and spent years as a volunteer running Crisis's Open Christmas for homeless people with various Trinity Hall friends joining me along the way.

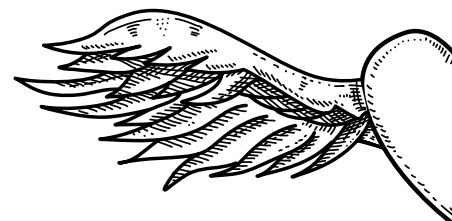
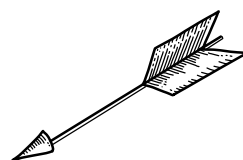
I am very proud of what we women did 40 years ago. What we did was blaze a trail – but above all what the Fellows and staff of Trinity Hall did in welcoming us so well was mark out the route for us, and a very fine route it was. 🍷



An excerpt from *The First Women* book, produced in 2016 to mark the 40th anniversary of women at Trinity Hall. Edited by Dr Sandra Raban, one of the first two female Fellows to join Trinity Hall, and available to buy at trinhall.cam.ac.uk/gift-shop.



The 50th anniversary of women at Trinity Hall begins in October 2026.





> The Revd Dr Stephen Plant

The Cambridge sermon that shook the nation

by The Revd Dr Stephen Plant | Dean of Chapel, Runcie Fellow, Chair of Trustees of the Charity for the Emolument of the Vicar Chaplain at St Edward King and Martyr

In 1525, Christmas Eve fell on a Sunday. At the Church of St Edward, King and Martyr at Peas Hill, Cambridge, Hugh Latimer of Clare College, who had been due to preach, swapped pulpits with Dr Robert Barnes of the Augustinian Friary. The swap was arranged by a Fellow of Trinity Hall, Thomas Bilney, who had been pressing Barnes to make public views they had discussed privately concerning various abuses they believed were being perpetrated by senior Churchmen at the expense of the poor. The sermon that followed is credited by some as lighting the touchpaper to the Protestant Reformation in England.

The church dedicated to St Edward, King and Martyr is built on the site of a Saxon foundation, but the building that survives is the result of rebuilding undertaken around 1400. In 1446, as part of his programme to build King's College, Henry VI demolished the Church of St John Zachary, which had been in use as a chapel by Clare Hall and Trinity Hall. As compensation, Henry gave them the church of St Edward.

In December 2025, in a weekend of events commemorating Barnes' sermon and its consequences, Dr Alec Ryrie (1990), Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of

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> Trinity Hall Chapel Choir led by Andrew Arthur



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© Natalie Sloan Photography

> Dr Alec Ryrie at the St Edward King and Martyr pulpit



© Natalie Sloan Photography

> Guests at the event

Durham and an alumnus of Trinity Hall, set the sermon in context and explored its repercussions:

“This was not an ordinary sermon. There is no doubt that Dr Barnes was trying to start something, although I also think there is no doubt that he started more than that.”

Barnes was not the first preacher, nor indeed the first Augustinian Friar, to court controversy by articulating a robust critique of clerical abuses. In England, the followers of the late 14th-century preacher John Wycliffe, who had acquired the pejorative moniker Lollards or ‘mumblers’, had been cruelly persecuted. Several of Wycliffe’s teachings, for example on the meaning of Lord’s Supper and the importance of making the Bible available in translation, were echoed in the teaching of the outspoken Augustinian Friar and Wittenberg Professor Martin Luther. Eight years before Barnes’ sermon, Luther had published theses condemning the abuse of the practice of issuing indulgences from penitential and purgatorial punishment by the Church for money. While Barnes’s Christmas Eve sermon did not mention Luther, he reiterated his arguments against the selling of indulgences and blessings of churches for cash by Bishops. Such practices, Barnes argued, resembled nothing so much as the selling of sheep and cattle in the London market of Cheapside. In Barnes’ sights was one particular senior churchman, whom he was prudent enough not to name, but who was easily recognisable to his congregation. “I will never believe, nor ever can believe,” Barnes declaimed, “that one man may by the law of God be a bishop of two or three cities, nay, of a whole country”. Cardinal Woolsey, who was Bishop of Durham, Archbishop of York and Lord High Chancellor of England, could be in no doubt Barnes had him in mind. In all these abuses, it was the poor who suffered while the prelates rode their backs like donkeys.

Cambridge’s close community of scholars got wind that Barnes was likely to say something worth hearing, and among his congregation were several armed with paper, pens and ink to record what he said. Within hours, the Vice-Chancellor

acted to prevent Barnes preaching a sequel the following Sunday. His caution was more than understandable. Doctor Luther’s radical preaching in Germany had unintentionally led, in the year preceding Barnes’ sermon, to the worst social unrest Europe had ever known, or would know again until the French Revolution, with the Peasants’ War resulting in the deaths of as many as 100,000 people.

Read with calm hindsight, Professor Ryrie suggests that Barnes’ sermon was not so much Lutheran as an intensified version of views associated with the Humanist scholar Erasmus: critical of abusive Church practices certainly, but not doctrinally out of order. In the strictest sense, therefore, to characterise the sermon as the first Protestant sermon in England is misleading. Yet Barnes, who foresaw in the sermon that views such as his would lead to a new era of Christian martyrs, really did seek reformation of the Church. Moreover, his sermon unleashed revolutionary theological ideas that would ultimately prove impossible to suppress. Barnes’ Trinity Hall friend Thomas Bilney would be among the first to pay a price: he was burned at the stake in Norwich in 1531. In 1540, after delivering a sermon denouncing Bishop Stephen Gardiner, at the time Master of Trinity Hall, Barnes was tried and condemned to death. King Henry, who was even-handed in his dislike of heretics, had Barnes dragged to his execution on a hurdle strapped to a similarly condemned Catholic priest. In 1555, two more of Barnes’ Cambridge friends, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, were executed in Oxford by Henry’s daughter, Mary. These were times when religious convictions demanded a heavy price.

The association between Trinity Hall and the Church of St Edward King and Martyr is overseen today by a charitable Trust established by the College two decades ago. Its Trustees, nominated by the Governing Body and the Church’s Chapter, oversee a separate charitable fund providing for a Vicar-Chaplain and ‘the maintenance of public worship’. It remains a link that Trinity Hall members and alumni may be grateful for. 🙏

Seeing yourself here: **why outreach matters**



> Florence Assetto

by Florence Assetto | 2023, Law

I got involved in outreach in my first year when I helped out with the first *You'll Fit In* residential at Trinity Hall. At the time, I was the JCR BME Officer, so I had been invited to take part, but I found that outreach work was something I kept coming back to. I had such a good time and, more importantly, I realised very quickly how meaningful the work could be.

Cambridge is unique, but a lot of it can feel inaccessible from the outside. The application process, the academic expectations and even day-to-day life here can seem opaque. For me, outreach is about breaking that down and making it feel more possible, especially for people from underrepresented backgrounds. When I was applying to Cambridge, I didn't know anyone from my area or background who had gotten in, let alone someone who looked like me. Navigating that, particularly from an intersectional background, felt especially difficult, which is why this work was so important to me from the beginning.

A lot of what I enjoy most about outreach is quite simple – I love being able to speak to prospective students about applying to Cambridge, and Trinity Hall more specifically. Over time, being here can make it easy to forget how exciting and unusual it is – you settle into routines and it all becomes very normal. When you speak to students who are thinking about applying, you're reminded of the prestige, and the joy and the whimsy of it all. Those conversations help me to reconnect with that perspective, reminding me how lucky I am and how much I have to be grateful for.

Throughout my degree, I have been involved in all sorts of outreach activities, from tours to panels and webinars, but the core is always the same. Most of my time is spent talking to prospective applicants about what Cambridge is actually like – my course, my experiences, and anything they're curious about. My conversations tend to be quite informal, and that is one of the things that makes it most effective. Outreach works best when people are honest and real about their experiences, and both parties are willing to give equally.



> Visit to the University Library, *You'll Fit In* residential April 2025



> Experiencing life at College, *You'll Fit In* residential September 2025



> Enjoying a Formal Hall, *You'll Fit In* residential September 2025

One experience that has really stayed with me goes back to that first *You'll Fit In* residential. I remember speaking to a student about how nice it was to see people who looked like us at Cambridge, and how much she enjoyed hearing about my experiences. Months later, I saw her again at interviews. She told me that her experience at the residential, and our conversation, had made her feel she could apply not only to Cambridge but to Trinity Hall because of how much she loved her time here and the people she met. That moment really stuck with me. It was the first time I felt like I had made a real difference to someone, and I think that is what really motivates me to keep doing outreach.

For me, the effect on the young people that I work with keeps me coming back. There's no doubt that Cambridge can be daunting, especially if you don't see yourself reflected in the 'typical Cambridge student'. One of the most valuable things about being a student here is the ability to share your experiences and perspectives. When I was applying to Trinity Hall, I made a list of questions I wanted to ask so I could understand what it was really like here. Outreach is, in many ways, about being that person for someone else.

Outreach work has also had a noticeable impact on me. It has given me a greater understanding of a range of perspectives, and the chance to grow in confidence speaking in front of groups. More than that, it has made me realise that my experiences matter - they can matter to other people, as well as to me. It has given me a new sense of confidence and gratitude.

More broadly, outreach is essential to maintaining what makes Trinity Hall such a special place. One of the things I value most about Trinity Hall is our diverse and tight-knit community. As a smaller college, you really do get to know people, their backgrounds, their perspectives and the small differences that come from being from different places. For that to continue, it is so important that Trinity Hall continues its commitment to outreach so we can welcome people into our community from all kinds of backgrounds, with all kinds of perspectives and skillsets. No-one wants to feel like they won't belong, and outreach plays a huge role in ensuring that we are not looking for a single, monolithic 'type' of Cambridge student.

Looking ahead, I hope that Trinity Hall continues to be recognised for the incredible work done by the outreach team. I would love to see more people involved in outreach throughout their time here, and for the College to continue to be shaped by the perspectives of its students. A big part of that is remembering those who helped us when we were applying and wanting to pass that on. As I start to think about moving on from Cambridge, I am excited to see Trinity Hall continue to grow, and I hope that outreach remains central to that. Outreach is one of the clearest ways we have of shaping not just who comes here, but what kind of community we build, and of making sure that the next generation of Trinity Hall students can see themselves belonging here from the very beginning. 🍀

> *You'll Fit In* residential attendees, April 2025



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MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Building for the next 675 years

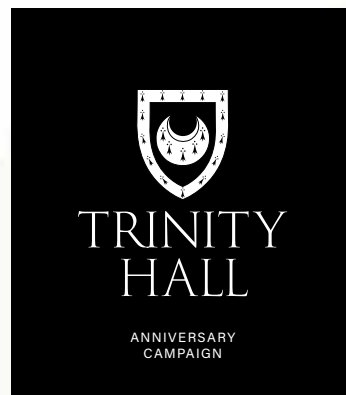
On a bright Michaelmas day in 2025, a group of first-year undergraduates stepped from the gravel path surrounding Latham Lawn into the freshly refurbished O Staircase. Above the arched back gate, the rooms on the staircase arguably have some of the best views in Cambridge, now with interiors and sustainability criteria to match. This marked the first completed phase in the College's Masterplan.

The Masterplan is ambitious and has the clear purpose to secure Trinity Hall's future by thoughtfully strengthening the environment in which our community lives, learns and grows. With Phase 1 complete, Phase 2 well underway and Phase 3 entering a pivotal stage, we are delighted to share our progress with you.

Why a Masterplan?

Our buildings work hard to meet the demands of daily life at College, each one needing to support a modern community, no matter its age. The Masterplan reflects how we believe the future will shape College life and how our buildings and spaces should develop to support it. Our focus is on greater accessibility, more efficient and sustainable spaces, better accommodation, and communal areas where students can study and connect in ways that earlier generations could not.

The Masterplan brings everything together into a clear sequence of projects that protect the unique character of our estate while allowing it to evolve.





PHASE 1

O Staircase – Complete

O Staircase was the first big test of this approach, and seeing it finished has been hugely encouraging. The building has been sensitively brought up to date, preserving its historic charm while improving energy efficiency, comfort and accessibility. The thermal performance of the roof, external walls and ground floors has been improved, the windows reglazed, secondary glazing installed and the interior fully refurbished. The success of this first phase creates a strong foundation for those that follow.



PHASE 2

Phase 2: BBC – In progress

Work is progressing steadily on the Bishop Bateman Court (BBC) refurbishment, the second phase of the Masterplan. The project centres on revitalising this key accommodation through environmental and accessibility improvements. The solar panels on the roof have been entirely funded by your generous donations during our 2025 Giving Day. Once complete, BBC will provide 50 high-quality rooms in the College’s first entirely degasified residential building.



PHASE 3

Phase 3: Cherry Tree Court – Selecting the architect

Looking ahead, we are turning our attention to Cherry Tree Court as we move through the exciting stage of choosing an architect.

The current 1970s building no longer serves student life as well as it once did, so this phase of the Masterplan focuses on creating flexible spaces for learning, performance and collaboration. New spaces will include an all-day café, a multi-functional studio and performance space for productions, lectures and screenings, and enhanced supervision and seminar areas.

As the architect selection process progresses, we look forward to sharing more information with you about this transformative phase of the Masterplan.



YOUR SUPPORT

Together, these projects move Trinity Hall in a positive direction, reflecting our continued commitment to become a more sustainable College that provides exceptional spaces to live and study.

Your support has already helped shape the Masterplan’s progress so far, and it will be essential as we look to future phases. If you would

like to learn more about how you can help bring the next chapter of Trinity Hall to life, we would be delighted to speak with you.

Together, we are building a College ready for the next 675 years.

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Noises Off

Taking farce seriously: behind the scenes of student theatre

On the first night of *Noises Off*, as the house lights dimmed and the familiar pre-show hush settled over the ADC Theatre, Tom Barry sat in the audience with a feeling he knows well but never tires of. “Once the curtain’s up,” he says, “it’s no longer the director’s show. It belongs to the actors and techies. I get to sit there and enjoy it along with everyone else.”



> Tom Barry

Theatre has flourished at Trinity Hall and across the University for as long as anyone can remember. Generations of students have stepped into rehearsal rooms and onto stages here, some going on to build lives as professional performers, directors, writers and all kinds of creatives. Today’s students are part of the same living tradition that grows through decades of experimentation, ambition and the shared joy in creating something together.

Tom, who arrived at Trinity Hall in 2023 to study physiological sciences, likes to say his journey to directing *Noises Off* began with a “white whale.” Years ago, he narrowly missed being cast in the play, and ever since, the farce had lingered in his imagination. “The show had become something of a ‘white whale’ in my theatrical consciousness,” he explains. “Both one of the funniest scripts I’d ever read, and also one of the most challenging.” When the ADC Theatre began programming certain shows far in advance, opening up unusually long production periods, the opportunity suddenly seemed real. Eight months of preparation, unheard of in most student theatre timelines, offered the breathing room needed for something technically ambitious. “Given I was about to enter the final year of my undergrad,” he adds, “I figured now was the moment to throw my hat into the ring for one last big directorial outing.” The production opened for a five-night run at the ADC Theatre on 27 January this year.

What Tom wanted, above all, was laughter. “I wanted the audience to laugh. At a recent Hesperides Society dinner, I found myself discussing farces with a Trinity Hall alum who is a writer himself. He suggested that *The Importance of Being Earnest* wasn’t a perfect farce because it drifted too far from reality, and, by that logic, he assumed he wouldn’t enjoy the unapologetically silly world of *Noises Off*. But to his surprise, he loved it, precisely because it commits so thoroughly to the mechanics and madness of farce. That conversation captured exactly what I hoped people would feel: the delight of watching something so meticulously chaotic that it becomes irresistible. The joy of *Noises Off* is in its complete dedication to silliness – a show that takes great pleasure in exploring no subject matter at all.”

Directing fellow students, and especially fellow Trinity Hall students, has been one of the great joys of Tom’s time at Cambridge. “It’s rare to be put in any position of power at my age,” he reflects, “let alone a position where fifty people are working endless hours on top of their degrees to enact your personal vision.” Many of his closest friendships began under the bright stage lights and during late night run-throughs. “We are blessed in Trinity Hall with an exceptionally theatrical student body,” he says. Within his year alone, students have taken key roles across Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club (Camdram), Footlights and Cambridge



> Isaac Sallé (English, 2025) playing the role of Garry/Roger in *Noises Off*

University Musical Theatre Society (CUMTS), and students in the years below are already stepping forward to continue the tradition.

The production also offered the chance to revive the ADC's revolve, the rotating stage element essential for the multi floor, multi angle set of *Noises Off*. Tom had prepared alternative staging ideas, expecting the revolve might be too complicated to resurrect within student theatre constraints, but a group of four seasoned technical directors stepped forward. "They made it clear they wanted to be the ones to bring the revolve back," he says with admiration. "The danger with an ever changing student body is that certain skills get lost when people move on. I'm very pleased I could be part of maintaining the collective knowledge on this one extra fun set element."

Tom is no stranger to the technical side of things. He has spent years getting to know the inner workings of student

theatre, taking on all sorts of backstage roles. Earlier this year, he was the Technical Director for Trinity Hall Music Society's production of *Assassins*, which was performed in the Lecture Theatre. Working in that space taught him how much the room and equipment shape a show. He mentions the "challenge in the Trinity Hall Lecture Theatre", a space never designed for the demands of modern performance but used again and again as students find inventive ways to make it work. Experiences in these different spaces shaped the way Tom approached *Noises Off*, making him even more aware of how collaboration, space and technical problem-solving all feed into the final performance.

The Thursday performance of *Noises Off* stands out most for Tom, with a sharp, responsive audience and a cast that maintained a deft balance between comfort on stage and energy. "There's nothing quite like the feeling of sitting in a crowd in stitches at your and the whole company's work," he says, "laughing along with them." 🎭

Five minutes with a Fellow

We're delighted to welcome Professor Valeriya Malysheva back to College as Bye-Fellow in Computational Biology, four years after her time here as a post-doctoral research associate. A biophysicist by training, Valeriya now leads a Computational Neurobiology lab exploring how brain cells make decisions, both healthy and harmful, through an interdisciplinary lens. We caught up with her to hear about her research journey and what it means to return to Trinity Hall.



> Professor Valeriya Malysheva during a biohackathon

What first drew you to studying how brain cells make both normal and abnormal decisions, and why is this work so important right now?

I've always been interested in how complicated behaviour can come from simple parts working together. During my biophysics and maths training, that meant looking at systems where a few basic rules create surprisingly complex patterns. When I moved into molecular and cellular biology, I realised the same perspective can be applied to the brain.

At its core, the brain is made of individual cells that make decisions in response to external and internal stimuli: whether to divide, differentiate, activate or remain inactive. In healthy systems, these processes are remarkably well coordinated, but in disease, they can get out of sync. Understanding why this happens, even in a simple way, and figuring out how we might fix it felt like an important challenge to advance our knowledge of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and motor neuron diseases.

You come from a biophysics background and now work across computation, systems biology and neuroscience – how do all those pieces come together in your lab?

In practice, these areas feel less separate than they might appear. Biophysics shapes how we think about quantitative reasoning and the identification of underlying structure. Systems biology emphasises that cellular processes and mechanisms are inherently interconnected, while neuroscience provides the biological context that motivates many of our questions.

In our lab, computational and mathematical approaches bring these perspectives together. We develop models and data-driven approaches to better understand how regulatory processes operate within brain cells. This often involves generating and working with large, high-dimensional datasets and collaborating closely with experimental groups. Our aim here is to uncover the key regulatory mechanisms underlying neurodegenerative diseases and to pinpoint the causal events that trigger them, as well as identifying potential drug targets and early warning biomarkers.

What is a big question your lab is excited about exploring at the moment?

We're especially interested in how a cell's identity in the adult brain is established, maintained and sometimes disrupted in disease, with a focus on genomic variability between cells within the same type. Many brain cells can remain stable for decades, but this stability can break down, and we may begin to see the early stages of neurodegenerative diseases. More broadly, we want to go beyond describing how cellular

identity changes to understanding the mechanisms that drive these changes, using causally-grounded mathematical and machine learning approaches.

You were once a postdoctoral research associate here – what does it mean to you to return to the College community in this new role?

Returning to Trinity Hall as a Fellow is truly incredible. As a PDRA, I benefited greatly from the College environment not only through academic exchange but also through the broader sense of community, taking part in its vibrant cultural life, music and sports. Coming back now brings a sense of continuity and feels like coming home. It is a privilege to be part of such a fantastic community where conversations extend across disciplines and career stages. I look forward to contributing, giving back, and supporting students and early career researchers as they develop their paths.

One of the strengths of the collegiate system is the chance for frequent informal exchange across fields, and joining Trinity Hall gave a real boost to such links. I am especially excited about new collaborations with Fellows in neuroscience, machine learning and art. Teaching and supervising students is another extremely rewarding and exciting aspect. I truly enjoy teaching and learn a lot from the students. I am also excited to help students who may be considering paths that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries. Having moved between fields and connected academia with industry, I know it helps to see such transitions are possible.

Looking ahead, what do you think is the most exciting direction for computational neurobiology and how is your lab getting ready for it?

There is a great deal of momentum in combining different types of biological data across individual cells, tissues, organs and organisms. Integrating these layers in a meaningful way remains a significant challenge, but also presents a very promising direction. I expect that progress will also come from combining data-driven methods with mechanistic frameworks that are causally grounded. In particular, developing and applying causal theory and causal machine learning approaches will play a major role in advancing many areas of biology, not just neuroscience. So, as a group, we are developing methods that are flexible and powerful enough to work with complex multimodal datasets without compromising robustness or interpretability. It is an evolving field, which is part of what makes it so engaging to work in.

If we can understand more about how biological layers are connected, we can understand more about how changes at the cellular level will impact the organism as a whole. Ultimately, this could lead to earlier identification of disease and advanced personalised treatments. 🧠

THA Secretary's Report



> Lizzie Iron

by Lizzie Iron | 1977, English, THA Secretary

This time last year, I asked if 2025 would be a year of geopolitical shift. The answer definitely seems to be 'yes', while current news suggests that 2026 will be no less turbulent.

I'm also reminded of the 2014 film, *Her*, which presented a vision of artificial intelligence that's evolving into reality as I write, with the arrival of Moltbook, the social network for AI agents. By the time this issue of *Front Court* is published, the Master will have held the first of the annual Spotlights talks, themed this year around AI. These talks will no doubt reinforce the recognition that new generations of students and alumni live with norms that some of us are still getting to grips with.

Trinity Hall's 675th Anniversary has been a powerful reminder that institutions *can* adapt and survive, combining the stability of long held traditions with the excitement of looking to the future. There are few English traditions as longstanding



as the 800-year-old Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London, and the THA promised to reprise last February's popular visit. We are excited to have secured the date of 3 February 2027. Numbers will be limited so, if you were unable to attend the Ceremony last time, look out for the opportunity and do sign up promptly. Other approaching milestones include 50 years since the admission of women and 200 years of the Trinity Hall Boat Club, anniversaries which the College and the THA will invite alumni to celebrate.

Meanwhile, back to this year. The sold-out 2026 THA Annual Regional Dinner will be held on HMS Warrior in Portsmouth on Saturday 23 May, while the AGM and THA Dinner are scheduled for 19 September, in College. Do save the date!

We're always delighted to hear of alumni activities overseas. Karsten Wenzlaff (2007) is on the committee of the Oxbridge Society in Hamburg, and he makes a point of drawing Trinity Hall alumni together whenever he can. January saw his committee involved in three different events, including the Berlin book launch of *The Airlift/Sweet Victory* by Trinity Hall alumnus Joseph Pearson (1997), which takes a fresh look at the Berlin Airlift three years after the end of the Second World War. Like other alumni groups, the Oxbridge Society in Hamburg staged an opportunity to watch the Boat Race together on 4 April. Why not let us know if you're in a similar group somewhere in the world?

A cheerful start to February included the THA Committee gathering for our first meeting of the year, arranged to allow some of us to exercise Dining Privileges and dine at High Table. If you haven't taken advantage of this opportunity, do consider booking in on a Thursday or Sunday during full term and see who you meet and what unexpected conversations arise.

Now, after recent weeks of apparently endless rain, let's hope the floods will drain from the fields, the gardens will soon dry out and we can welcome spring as we look forward to another year of alumni connections. ☺

Sir Mark Tully

A personal tribute

by Dr Vic Forrington | 1955, Mathematics

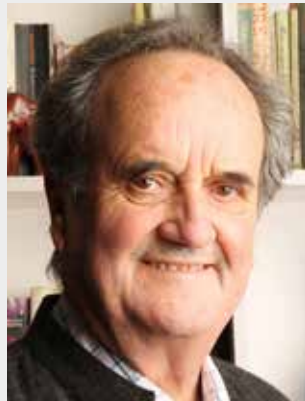
I first met Mark Tully in a pub in Cambridge and was introduced to him by his roommate at Trinity Hall, who described him as 'a rather jolly chap'

Mark was in his first year reading theology after a public-school education and National Service, and I was a second-year mathematics student who had come straight from grammar school. Seemingly, we had little in common. That we became and remained close friends for nigh on 70 years says a great deal about his character. He collected friends of all ages, backgrounds, vocations (or lack of) and beliefs. He remained intensely loyal to these friendships, whatever successes or downfalls they might encounter.

At the Hall, believing then that he was destined for a future in the Anglican Church, he lived life to the full, with gusty enthusiasm. He was extremely popular with his peers for his somewhat spectacular misdemeanours and wild and often noisy wit. He showed little interest or pretensions of a scholastic or sporting nature, and nobody, probably not even himself, expected that he would become anything but an eccentric and well-loved country parson. However, his intense interest and rapport with people of all backgrounds, and his great facility with words, would perhaps have hinted at a future in journalism.

What was eventually to change his life was his successful application to the BBC for a position in the Appointments Department in London. During this period, he developed an enthusiasm to go to India, the country of his birth, so when the opportunity arose to transfer to the BBC's Delhi office, he jumped at it. Although this new job was an administrative post, he soon began to undertake journalism and broadcasting tasks primarily for the BBC India service, where he soon developed a large local following and popularity. He became fluent in Hindi and Urdu.

His term in India came to an end in 1969, and he returned to the Eastern Service of the BBC External Services, firstly as head of the Hindi Service and later in the Topical Unit. He covered the Bangladesh War before returning to India as Chief of Bureau and South Asia correspondent in 1971. As his exposure in Britain increased, particularly on television, he became a 'personality' rather than just another regional reporter. He was somewhat embarrassed at being recognised in the street, but was always warm, polite and courteous.



His subsequent successes as a broadcaster, writer, lecturer and public speaker are well-documented, as are his many honours. A little less known are the honours bestowed on him by India, which I believe are the highest that can be given to a non-Indian.

His life and beliefs were driven by passion and tradition rather than logic or social evolution, and this is reflected in his works. In his professional life, he would stand up for his position with great vigour.

In later years, I regularly enjoyed the hospitality of this remarkable, warm and hilarious man in London and Cheltenham Spa. In Cheltenham, whether he was appearing at the Literature Festival before a rapturous audience or enjoying the more rumbustious atmosphere of the beer tent at the Cricket Festival, he brought smiles to the faces of all who had the privilege to be in his presence. Not least to me and my partner hearing him singing to himself in his bedroom after the last whisky of the night.

Indeed, 'a rather jolly chap'.



News in Brief

Read more at trinhall.cam.ac.uk/news

SPORT

THBC's standout week of Bumps racing

Trinity Hall Boat Club (THBC) enjoyed an outstanding week on the river, finishing the Lent Bumps campaign with an impressive +8 net gain. Across all crews, THBC secured nine bumps and conceded

> W1 outside the Boathouse after their final race



COMMUNITY

Portrait of the Master unveiled

A newly commissioned portrait of Master Mary Hockaday was unveiled in the College Dining Hall in November, marking a significant moment in the lead-up to the 50th anniversary of women at Trinity Hall in 2026/7. Painted by renowned artist Paul Benney, the portrait is a striking addition to the Hall and part of a broader rehang of its artwork.



only one, a remarkable result for a club with many rowers still relatively new to Bumps racing. Their performances represent one of the strongest collective showings in recent years and highlight the growing depth, confidence and ambition within the Club.

Adding to the success, THBC placed third overall in the Marconi Cup, which ranks the performance of every Cambridge college across all boats. Crucially, it is an

achievement earned by the whole club, with every crew and every athlete contributing to the final result.

Alumni support was, once again, remarkable. Every day THBC supporters lined the course, cheering with such enthusiasm that our rowers could hear the roars of 'Row Hall' as they raced down the river.

See the full results on the CUCBC website: cucbc.org/lents/results

COMMUNITY

Our newest Fellows

This academic year, we were delighted to welcome new Fellows in a wide range of fields, including economics, computational biology, medieval Italian literature and culture, physics, and African politics.



Dr Abelardo De Anda Casas, Research Fellow in Economics



Dr George Fulham, Research Fellow in Chemical Engineering



Professor Teuta Pilizota, Staff Fellow in Physics



Professor Anna Pegoretti, Staff Fellow in Medieval Italian Literature & Culture



Dr Ola Osman, Staff Fellow in African Politics



Professor Valeriya Malysheva, Bye-Fellow in Computational Biology



Dr Zehra Jumabhoy, Visiting Fellow in History of Art



Dr Emma Pooley, Honorary Fellow



Sir Tom Scholar, Honorary Fellow



> Dr Tamsin O'Connell



> Professor Graham Pullan

COMMUNITY

Fellows recognised for significant contributions to chemistry and engineering

Dr Tamsin O'Connell, Staff Fellow in Bioarchaeology, has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry. A chemist working at the intersection of chemistry and archaeology, Dr O'Connell's research searches for the tiny chemical clues in human and animal tissues to examine their ancient diet and the climates in which they lived.

Professor Graham Pullan (1993), Staff Fellow in Engineering and alumnus of Trinity Hall, has been elected a Fellow of The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME). He is at the forefront of engineering innovation, focusing on aerodynamic design and the breakthrough technologies needed to achieve net zero.

AWARDS

New Year Honours for alumni

Congratulations to alumni Peter Brewin (1999, Engineering) and David Hudson (1981, History) who have been awarded MBEs for services to Engineering Materials Innovation and Education, respectively, and to Professor John Marshall (1973, Natural Sciences) who was awarded the Polar Medal.



> A fully AI-generated image from the Adobe Express Generate Image tool, created from the prompt 'River Cam, Cambridge, UK'

TRINITY HALL SPOTLIGHTS AI

After a year of fascinating insights and reflections into the world of outer space during our 2025 theme 'space', this year Spotlights return to Earth to explore the rapidly evolving world of machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI).

Generative text and search tools have been widely adopted, computing and coding power have exploded and researchers and businesses are rapidly developing useful new tools for their work. But there are also fears of machines becoming more powerful than humans, replacing jobs, dulling human thinking and riding roughshod over creative and intellectual ownership.

This series of events with Fellows and alumni will explore the opportunities and challenges across ethics and economy, society and academia, business and creativity.

Through a range of perspectives, we hope you'll gain insight into the innovation that is changing our world.

Browse our upcoming Spotlights: AI events and book: trinhall.cam.ac.uk/spotlights-ai



Save the date

Saturday, 19 September 2026
THA Cambridge, Dinner and AGM



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