



THE EMMANUEL NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

We're delighted that our students are returning for Easter term. We really want them back, and they want to come! Who wouldn't, after missing last summer and being in lockdown since January? And of course some of them are here already, especially the postgraduates, but also undergraduates who can't work at home or who had other special reasons for returning during Lent term.

This last year has been horribly disrupted for us all, including for members who were due to return for Gatherings, MA ceremonies or simply a social visit. We're now focused on gathering our community together and re-establishing as much of Easter term as we can, subject of course to social distancing and other rules.



It's my last term, too, which I'm finding it hard to get my head around. I didn't expect my last year to be like this! But I've had such a happy time at Emma, and I'm determined to stay in touch, and come back regularly as a Life Fellow. And this term I'll be helping the Master-elect, Doug Chalmers, get to know the college, our people and how things work.

We'll all be watching our brilliant *Emma enables* project take shape. There's a huge hole being dug behind South Court, the South Court bar has gone, to be replaced by our beautiful new hub, the refurbishment of Furness Lodge (containing the new bar) has begun, and of course there will be an elegant new residential court. The new buildings and – even more important – the new facilities and programmes we'll be able to offer as a result of them, are very much in our minds.

However this term works out, or even next year, Emma will still be here. Always beautiful, always welcoming, and stirring the heartstrings of our community. Whether you were at Emma decades ago or just last year we care about you and your memories, experiences and achievements. And we look forward to welcoming you back just as soon as we are able to.

Dame Fiona Reynolds
Master

Emma Gives

Emma gives, our second Giving Day, took place on 16–17 March and once again it was a really exciting 24 hours! 550 members, Fellows, staff, students and friends from all around the world helped raise an incredible £168,551 for our Access & Outreach and Hardship funds. We were overwhelmed by how many of you joined in and we loved hearing why you chose to support *Emma gives* this year in your messages on our donor wall. We warmly thank everyone who donated, helped to spread the word, or came along to our Virtual Quiz. Your support will make a very real and long-lasting difference to our students.



ELECTION OF THE NEW MASTER

We are delighted to announce that we have elected Doug Chalmers, currently the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, to succeed the present Master, Fiona Reynolds. Doug will take up the appointment on 1 October 2021.



In his role as Director of Operations for the Ministry of Defence, Doug provides advice to Ministers on the range of defence operations while integrating with partners across government, along with allies, to deliver the UK's national security objectives. Most recently this has seen Doug orchestrate the defence response to the COVID pandemic in support of the Department of Health and Social Care.

Doug says: 'It is a privilege and honour to be elected to lead Emmanuel College. I have been struck by the college's academic reputation coupled with your genuinely open,

supportive and forward-looking approach. Helen and I are excited to be joining such a wonderful and vibrant community.

'Having spent time advancing diversity, equality and inclusion in defence, I share Emmanuel's values of tolerance, respect, sociability and inclusivity. They provide very firm foundations for the

future and I am committed to doing all that I can to build on Dame Fiona's work and advance these values collaboratively with Fellows and students.'

In January 2021 Fiona Reynolds became the Chair of the National Audit Office (NAO) and will continue in this role when she leaves the Mastership in September. She says 'Emmanuel is a wonderful college, and I have loved my 8 years here. I'm delighted to welcome Doug to his new role.'

FLIGHTS OF FANCY: *Archivist's Blog*

The main residential buildings at Emmanuel are arranged, as in most of the older Cambridge colleges, on the staircase rather than the corridor principle. Today, each stairway is designated by a letter and the rooms leading off it by numbers, producing 'addresses' of D3, Z6, etc, but this handy form of notation was not used until relatively recently; before that, room locations had to be described using very cumbersome terminology. Preserved in Emmanuel's archives are two volumes listing room occupants for the years 1702–84, in which individual chambers or sets are identified by tortuous descriptions such as 'New Brick building second staircase towards the Field: Second story upon the Right hand 3 studys in the Chamber' or 'The Old Range of building in the Quadrangle opposite to the Master's Gallery: the uppermost story in the stone staircase the chamber on the left hand'. No wonder a snappier form of identification was eventually devised!

The exact date at which Emma adopted the alphanumeric system is surprisingly difficult to pinpoint, but it must have been in the mid-1890s or soon afterwards, since the stairway letters of the Hostel (H, J, K) cannot have been assigned before 1894, when the building was extended and the number of its staircases increased from one to three. The new designations had certainly been introduced by 1900, when they make an appearance in a tutor's

admissions notebook. Incidentally, the reason that L and M staircases are located in so recent a building as South Court is that these letters were originally assigned to flights of stairs near the Hall Screens and in the north-west corner of New Court, respectively, for there were a few residential rooms above the Kitchen until it was rebuilt in the 1950s.

As well as providing an important record of chamber occupancy, the eighteenth-century room lists contain other fascinating details, such as the changing nomenclature of various parts of the college. Front Court, for instance, was then known as 'the Quadrangle', and the Paddock as 'the Piece'. The medieval range on the western side of Front Court, demolished in the 1770s, was called the 'Cloyster building' (its replacement, the Essex Building, also incorporated a cloister). In 1749 a chamber on the ground floor of Old Court was designated 'The Prayer Room', the provision of which, if we accept the name at face value, is puzzling, for the chapel was only a stone's throw away.

Two other rooms in Old Court acquired names that were unquestionably fanciful. Directly above the Prayer Room, on the first floor, right hand, of what is now called F staircase, was a set rejoicing in the sobriquet 'Castle of Otranto'.

This name must have been conferred after 1764, the year

continued overleaf

...



E, F, O, Z staircases

in which Horace Walpole's seminal Gothic thriller *The Castle of Otranto* was published. It is to be hoped that no skeletal apparitions afflicted the occupants of Old Court. The novelist Hugh Walpole, a distant kinsman of Horace, came to Emma in 1903; as a subsizar he would have been allocated a room on the top floor of either F or G staircase – so not in, but perhaps close to, 'Otranto'.

On the top floor, right hand, of G staircase was a chamber christened 'Parnassus'. In ancient mythology Mount Parnassus was home to the Muses, and thus associated with the various arts and sciences practised by those nine goddesses. The room's name, then, may have been an *homage* to scholarship, or more mundanely, an allusion to the fact that after ascending three steep flights of stairs the occupants felt they were truly up among the gods. There is a third possibility: Mount Parnassus was also sacred to Dionysus, the god of wine and wine-making, who in his Roman incarnation was the origin of the word 'bacchanalian'...

The room lists do not indicate how long these two chambers were known by their whimsical names, nor

which of their occupants bestowed them, but whoever they were, they clearly had a taste for the fantastical.

Gothic horrors and classical Immortals – whatever their inspiration, the names have a far more romantic ring than F3 or G6!

Amanda Goode
College Archivist

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Do sign up even if you graduated relatively recently, as advice on applications, surviving interviews and getting started in a new job can all be really valuable.

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