

## St Edmund's College Cambridge

### 1896 – 1996 - A Commemorative History

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#### Part One – The Present and Recent Past

On 19 February 1996 the Council of the Senate of Cambridge University signed a report in support of the recognition of St Edmund's College as a full College of the University. It was to be discussed by Senate on 5 March. Dr Richard Laws, St Edmund's eleventh Master in a hundred years, had prepared a speech. He listed the College's achievements. Just before he became Master there had been only 47 students: now there were some 200, half of whom were studying for the Ph.D., and a quarter for one-year postgraduate courses, mainly the M.Phil. Less than half the students come from Britain, while almost a third came from developing countries. The bias of the Fellowship of 29, the Master's speech indicated, was strongly towards the sciences, including among their number two Fellows of the Royal Society. There were imaginative plans in place for a vast expansion of the College's facilities, and its income from its endowment of £4.5 million, at more than £1,000 per student, compared very favourably with other Cambridge Colleges.

It was a persuasive argument, but it was not needed. There was no debate. The change in status from that of Approved Foundation was readily agreed, to come into force at four o'clock in the afternoon of 22 March, subject only to the approval of draft Charter and Statutes by the Queen in Council.

Such approval will come as a fitting climax to the College's centenary year, and to the Mastership of Dr Laws, just as he retires after more than a decade of service to the College. Yet when his predecessor, the tenth Master, was appointed in 1976, St Edmund's College had just been promoted from the modest rank of Approved Society to the only slightly more permanent status of Approved Foundation. It was, moreover, still officially known as "St Edmund's House", and as such a largely Roman Catholic institution governed by an Association independent of St Edmund's itself with a highly clerical – not to say episcopal – membership. Over the two decades since 1976, then, the change in the nature and governance of St Edmund's, leading up to the grant of full collegiate status, has been remarkable.

In 1977 Fellows of St Edmund's published *Bishops and Writers*<sup>1</sup>, a volume celebrating the Mastership, then just ended, of Garrett Sweeney, a priest of the Roman Catholic diocese of Nottingham. Several essays by Sweeney himself were included, and at the beginning of one of them he commented that "On 20<sup>th</sup> March 1973 a body representative of the Catholic Church in this country did something rather uncharacteristic of the Church which it represented. It signed away assets of considerable value in Cambridge and handed them over for the establishment of a small postgraduate College in the University"<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps uncharacteristic, but not precisely unique. The Jesuits had recently done something rather similar when they set up Heythrop College, their house of studies of philosophy and theology whose remote origins, similar to those of St Edmund's, lay in the sixteenth-century exiled English Catholic community, as an independent school of the University of London. The two colleges shared a further link in John Coventry who, after a distinguished career which included a stint as the Jesuits' British Provincial Superior, had been teaching at Heythrop's Oxfordshire, and then its central London, location.

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by Adrian Hastings, a Fellow of St Edmund's. It was published by the firm of Anthony Clark, Weathampstead.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 235.

In London University terms, he was a “recognised teacher” in the Faculty of Theology, and a member of its Theology Faculty Board. In 1976, at the age of sixty-one, he was within twelve months of what was then the first of the University’s two retirement ages. At the beginning of April that year he received a letter from the Vice-Master of St Edmund’s, David Wallace, saying that his name had been proposed as a possible replacement for Sweeney, and would he “allow [his] name to be considered in the list of candidates”. With the consent of his religious superior he agreed, and on 22 April visited the House for the first time. He was nominated on 10 May and formally elected on 23 June 1976. Adrian Hastings, subsequently Professor of Theology at Leeds, was the moving force behind the nomination: it had proved difficult to find a candidate.

“We accepted your suggestion that it was highly desirable that the next Master should if possible be a Clerk in Holy Orders”, Professor Jack Hamson, a member of the Association of St Edmund’s House, wrote in May to George Patrick Dwyer, Archbishop of Birmingham, and the Association’s President. “The candidate must also be of an intellectual (and preferably academic) standing which enables him to take his place among the masters of existing Cambridge Colleges”, he added<sup>3</sup>. The Association, in making the appointment for five years in the first instance, from July 1976 to September 1982, had no difficulty with the choice itself, but it certainly seemed to them that they had little to say in the matter, and had been presented by the Fellows with a *fait accompli*.

Coventry’s appointment was particularly significant because, although he was indeed a Clerk in Holy Orders, he was not a diocesan clergyman, and therefore not directly responsible to a bishop. Despite the constitutional changes introduced in 1973 against considerable opposition<sup>4</sup>, the Catholic hierarchy of England and Wales still retained a considerable interest in St Edmund’s House. Coventry, as a Jesuit, was much more independent of them than a diocesan priest ever could be. If the Fellows were wishing to make a break with the tradition of a clergyman as Master – and they had considered the possibility of breaking the practice of three-quarters of a century by appointing a Catholic layman<sup>5</sup> – the choice of John Coventry was a half-way step in that direction.

His own university background, other than his training in philosophy and theology which took place at Heythrop, was at Campion Hall, Oxford, where he read “Greats”. His knowledge of the workings of the University had therefore to be learnt on the job: he was the only Master who had no previous experience of Cambridge. It consequently took him some time to work out how the Cambridge system worked, coming to the conclusion that nobody really knew in any case, and this left a good deal of freedom all round<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> This letter is to be found in the Archives of St Edmund’s. Up to the appointment of Coventry the files are arranged in boxes in excellent chronological order, and material is easy to find. To avoid constant repetition to these files I have attempted, every time a letter or other archival document is cited, to indicate their date in the text. This should be sufficient to identify the box in which the item is located.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. below, pp.94-97

<sup>5</sup> David Wallace, “John Coventry’s Mastership – A Fellow’s Eye View”, in the *St Edmund’s Record* [hereafter SER]. 1 (1984-85), p. 51. According to Wallace the Fellows had even considered the appointment of a non-Catholic layman, though only “hypothetically”. In face a number of names had been canvassed, including at least one long-time member of the Association, but none felt ready to take on the role of Master.

<sup>6</sup> John Coventry, SJ, *Account of Stewardship 1976-85*, p. 15. Fr Coventry’s twenty-five page account, to be found in Box 25 of the archive, is untitled, but is located in a file with the above name, under which is inscribed, in Coventry’s own hand, “Thought too racy for general publication”. It is referred to in the footnotes as *Stewardship*. There is surprisingly little other information about Coventry’s Mastership, apart from this account.

One way in which he learnt to untangle the complexities of Cambridge University administration was through the Colleges' Committee. Each Cambridge College represented on it through its Master or his or her deputy. Coventry was therefore a member by right. In 1977, however, he took on the role of its secretary. There were those in the University who still thought of St Edmund's as a seminary or theological college, which, despite its ecclesiastical origins, it never had been. As the secretary of this Committee Coventry was in an excellent position to disabuse them, and to make the true nature and status of the House better known to all and sundry. Through the Master's activity in this regard the House became more thoroughly integrated into the University world.

In the first couple of years of his Mastership while he learnt his way about, Coventry could concentrate on domestic matters. For six months of the period between the end of his term of office as Provincial and starting to teach at Heythrop he had served as "Minister", or domestic bursar, at the Jesuits' London headquarters. One of his first tasks at St Edmund's was to reorganise the domestic arrangements, a task made more pressing by the departure of the nuns whom Canon Corboy, the eighth Master, had introduced in 1946 to look after the cooking and cleaning<sup>7</sup>. It was decided to appoint a full-time bursar from August 1978 to replace the part-time commitments of two of the Fellows, one of whom looked after the investments, building and grounds, and the other the catering, cleaning and general internal maintenance. A professional recruitment company was employed, but the brief was somewhat restrictive: because the House had so little money, the only possible candidate would be someone already retired and on a pension, who might do the task in return for accommodation in a maisonette, and a small salary. As it turned out it was not difficult to find candidates, though it proved more difficult to keep them. The first had to retire from the post because of the illness of his wife, the second resigned in mid 1981 after constant complaints by the Fellows over the cost of the College catering, by this time in the hands of an outside catering firm and losing the House some £10,000 a year. He was replaced, in more traditional fashion, by a Fellow as bursar – but in this instance by one especially recruited for the purpose, who already had considerable business experience before he had chosen to return to academic life and a research degree.

Coventry clearly considered his reorganisation of the administration of the House one of his main contributions to its life, and in that David Wallace, at that time its Vice-Master and one of the Foundation Fellows, concurred:

With his background of school and community administration he found our rather *ad hoc* mass of overlapping groups and committees frustrating. When the smoke cleared, we had our present [Wallace is writing in 1985] structure, with ordered membership, clear lines of responsibility and on the whole decisions arrived at after due deliberation. The fact that the Master was also present at, if not chairman of, most of the committees did facilitate liaison, though at times business did take on the form of a monologue. To me, one of the greatest benefits was that Council business occupied finite time and ended when advertised<sup>8</sup>.

In one important respect, that of numbers of student members, St Edmund's stood still throughout Coventry's years. The total of postgraduates, undergraduates, and visiting scholars remained fairly constant, reaching a high of 90 in the academic year 1979-80. When he arrived for his first academic year of 1976-77 it had stood at 67, when he left in mid 1985 it was 74. But these raw figures disguise some real changes in the nature of the student body. The House had judged it ought to admit women students: there were 8 when Coventry arrived, 23 when he left (with a deleterious effect on the prospects of fielding a football team, he remarked<sup>9</sup>.)

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. below, p. 67-68

<sup>8</sup> Wallace, art. cit.

<sup>9</sup> SER 1, p. 49

Archbishop Dwyer, as President of the Association, complained at the 1977 Annual General Meeting that the decision for “co-residence”, as he called it, should have been decided by the Association rather than the Fellows’ Council. According to the Sex Discrimination Act, commented Peter Glazebrook, a Cambridge lawyer and member of the Association, the House had no right to deny them entry. In contrast to the increase in women students, and perhaps more to the point, was the relative decline of Catholic priests who were students, from eleven when he came to only three when he left. As the Dean, Dr Michael Winter, remarked, in that final year there was not a single British Catholic priest among the student body, the first time this had occurred in the history of the House<sup>10</sup>.

Roman Catholic priests have in fact continued to be members of the House (and College) down to the present day in significant numbers, and many continue to see St Edmund’s as the obvious location for (usually) postgraduate studies at Cambridge. Yet it is difficult to avoid the impression that the dramatic decline in numbers of clergy registering at the House towards the end of Coventry’s Mastership was a reflection of the final break which he helped bring about between St Edmund’s and the Catholic hierarchy which came in 1984. That break was linked, though somewhat indirectly, with the financial situation of the House.

At the AGM of the Association in November 1979 it was argued that “The aim of the House was to become a better version of what we were rather than to alter the status of an Approved Foundation, which would require a considerable increase in size and a large building programme”. When Coventry succeeded to the Mastership, whatever endowment there had existed had been spent on the flats and maisonettes built in the latter years of Sweeney’s governance. Though they would, in time, pay for themselves through rents, or so it was thought, in the meantime there was a deficit of £40,000 which was covered by an interest-free loan from Mr John Hastings who was, in 1977, made an honorary Fellow for his generosity. An appeal was launched which neatly coincided with the oil crisis, and completely failed to raise significant revenue. As Coventry calculated it, “our capital was minus £38,280”<sup>11</sup> when he came into office. At the end of his period as Master the debt to Hastings had been considerably reduced, there was money in the bank, and St Edmund’s endowment fund, investments amounting to more than three-quarters of a million pounds, were bringing in £66,600 a year. The purpose of the endowment income was to support, in a modest way, the Fellows, to fund research fellowships, and to support overseas students. There were also legacies, from Garrett Sweeney himself and from the widow of the long-time Secretary of the Association, Charles Goulden, to assist Catholic clergy studying at St Edmund’s.

This significant turn-about in the funding of St Edmund’s came very largely from the other Colleges of the University. There had been a common fund, to which the Colleges contributed, which helped to pay for the central administration of the University. In the heady years of the expansion of tertiary education in the 1960s and 1970s this fund was no longer needed because the Government was supplying the necessary revenue. It was decided, therefore, that the richer university Colleges should assist the poorer ones, and among those to benefit was St Edmund’s, in all to a total, in Coventry’s time, of nearly £700,000.

It was, therefore, the University, rather than the Association of St Edmund’s House<sup>12</sup>, which was now the more significant partner in the development of the House, though the Association’s executive committee had to be gathered together four times a year to approve decisions which the Fellows’ Council had made, and confirm elections to Fellowships. The arrangement was, in Coventry’s eyes, an unnecessary time-, and paper-, consuming piece of red tape which, as was typical of his character, he believed ought to be abolished.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> *Stewardship*, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> The Grants from the University were highly appreciated, said Professor Hamson at the 1979 AGM of the St Edmund’s Association – he was then its chairman – but the generosity of the Hierarchy in their gift to the University should also be recognised.

He took advice of Frank Wild, Fellow of Downing, who was a long-standing member of the Association, and at this point its chairman. Wild arranged for a meeting between Coventry and the Registry of the University<sup>13</sup>. The primary requirement for St Edmund's to become a College, said the Registry, was for it to be completely self-governing. To that aim Coventry turned his attention.

The first thing to be done was a revision of the existing Articles of Association so that the Master and Fellows should own and govern the House, and that the Visitor, the Archbishop of Westminster, should no longer have power of veto over the election of the Master – though his approval would still be required for the appointment of the Dean. The Dean was to be a Roman Catholic priest in good standing, who was to have charge of the worship in the Chapel. The worship was to be in the Roman Catholic tradition.

Any alteration to the Articles had, of course, to command the assent of the Association. There was a preliminary discussion of those proposed changes at the Association's Annual General Meeting in November 1982. Collegiate status had been discussed, Coventry told members, and he outlined the conditions for moving towards it, as required by the Registry. He also outlined the benefits. It would, he believed, improve the morale and standing of the House; it would involve only a small change to the Articles because the granting of Approved Foundation status had effectively stripped the Catholic bishops of any real authority over the House. And as for the Roman Catholic ethos, though it was not under threat, there was in any case nothing in the Articles then in force to ensure that it be maintained.

An extraordinary general meeting was called the following March at which it was accepted, by a majority of 14 to 6, that St Edmund's should proceed to full Collegiate status. Glazebrook proposed, and Bishop Mahon, an assistant to Cardinal Hume in the Diocese of Westminster, seconded that "The Association agrees to inform the Council of the Association that it would in principle agree to the transfer of the ownership and government of St Edmund's House to the Master and Fellows". They would do so on the understanding that

- a) the objects remain unchanged;
- b) there be no discrimination on religious grounds in admissions and appointments and that all such be in accordance with the objects;
- c) the Dean should remain a Roman Catholic priest in good standing;
- d) the Archbishop of Westminster should remain Visitor;
- e) "the Council will give further consideration to ways in which the College might contribute as an Institution funded by the Roman Catholic Church to the University of Cambridge".

All was agreed subject only to the approval of the Visitor, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. This Coventry obtained through an exchange of letters, and the AGM of the Association in November 1983 brought the Association of St Edmund's House to an end. In the course of the meeting Peter Glazebrook explained that the Fellows had allocated £50,000 "to provide facilities for the education in the University of students who are committed to furthering the work of the Catholic Church and to promote the ecumenical dimension of the Catholic Church in relation to all faiths and nations". There was not much point, Coventry pointed out, in spending it on the education of the clergy; the problem as far as Catholic clergy was concerned was in finding them, not in finding money for them.

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<sup>13</sup> It should perhaps be explained for the benefit of non-members of the University, that, at Cambridge, the Registry is not a place but a person.

Professor Jack Hamson, along with Frank Wild among the few long-serving members present, expressed his regret. He thought the money - about which, see more below - a trivial sum. Had Bishop Petit<sup>14</sup> been right after all, he asked, and could (as Dwyer had expressed it in 1966) the non-Catholic Fellows be more relied upon than the Catholic ones? He thought the money was conscience money, a salve, that is, to the conscience of St Edmund's which was no longer prepared to carry out the purpose for which it had been founded. He was not sanguine about the future. He wondered what had happened to the suggestion put forward by Professor Henry Chadwick at the previous meeting that St Edmund's provide a chaplaincy service to the senior members of the University<sup>15</sup>. There were no safeguards, he said, but then there never had been - and for his part he had no specific proposals to make. Yet, despite this sad speech, there was unanimous assent to the question whether the Association was satisfied that the Catholic character of the House would be preserved. The Association agreed to dissolve itself on 30 June 1984. Dr Frank Wild was re-elected chairman to serve out the final six months of the life of the Association of St Edmund's House. "We feel different, a few inches taller, and procedures are greatly simplified", wrote Coventry<sup>16</sup>.

When, after the March 1983 meeting, Coventry had written to the Visitor seeking, as he was required to do, his formal approval, Cardinal Hume responded, "I agree that the time had come when the future of St Edmund's House must be left in the care of the Catholic laity in Cambridge". Clearly, he still thought of the House, even if it no longer fell under the control of the bishops, to be essentially a Catholic institution.

But, as has been seen, whether it was to remain so was a major concern for members of the Association as it wound up its affairs after eighty-six years. In his account of his period as Master, John Coventry remains remarkably optimistic. He details the particularly "Roman Catholic" nature of St Edmund's<sup>17</sup>. It does indeed have a distinctly Catholic membership among the Fellows, far more than could statistically be expected at a Cambridge College. This still remains the case, though the numbers do not suggest that St Edmund's is any longer, as Coventry described it, "flamboyantly RC", still showing "traces of the religious house" with "a row of treasured and loved, but severely habited nuns, [who] knelt across the front of the chapel, cooked, served at table, looked after the house twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, rang bells". Even in his time the proportion declined from thirteen Catholics among the eighteen Fellows to twelve out of twenty-two. The Dean, however, is required to be a Catholic priest "in good standing" with the ecclesiastical authorities, and the chapel remains the only Catholic chapel in an Oxbridge College<sup>18</sup>. The Sunday services there conducted have always attracted a sizeable congregation, not just from the House itself and immediate neighbourhood but from other Catholic dons and their families in the University. Given the money which has been donated to the chapel over the years, it is inconceivable that the College would be permitted by the Charity Commissioners or the Privy Council, even should it wish to do so, to change the nature of the worship which still takes place in Benedict Williamson's building.

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<sup>14</sup> Father (later Bishop) John Petit was Master 1934-46. On the controversy involving Petit, see below, pp. ??

<sup>15</sup> Chadwick had made this proposal saying that he did not want to see any dilution of the Catholic contribution to Cambridge. St Edmund's thought the chaplaincy suggestion impractical.

<sup>16</sup> *Stewardship*, p. 5

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7

<sup>18</sup> The Jesuit-run Campion Hall in the University of Oxford has, of course, always had a Catholic chapel, as have other "private halls" founded by religious orders in that University. They were, however, not technically colleges, nor are they, unlike St Edmund's, in a position to become such.

In order more specifically to ensure the continuity of the Catholic tradition in St Edmund's, however, the Fellows decided to create a special fund, named after one of the House's founders. The "von Hügel fund" was allotted £50,000 – approximately the sum, or slightly more, which the House received from Cardinal Heenan in 1968 with the demise of the idea of a Catholic Institute of Higher Studies<sup>19</sup>. An "RC Purposes" committee was established to oversee the expenditure of the money. The intention of the Fellows, when setting aside this sum, was unashamedly to win over waverers among members of the Association, though as has been seen above, at least one Cambridge-based, vigorous protagonist of the House expressed the view that this was only a "sop to salve consciences"<sup>20</sup>. Discussion among the Fellows about how it ought to be spent almost lost sight of this purpose because they could not agree among themselves on the terms of reference of the Committee: they had to sound as undenominational, ecumenical, and generally as academic as possible.

The eventual outcome, though not until after John Coventry had left St Edmund's, was the von Hügel Institute. The Jesuit presence among the Fellows was maintained by the election as Dean, a year after Coventry had retired, of another member of the Order, Dr Christopher Moss, formerly of the Vatican Observatory. He undertook the task of being the Institute's first Director in an acting capacity until Dr Francis McHugh, himself a former Dean, was appointed to the post at the beginning of the 1990-91 academic year. At a meeting on 12 December 1988 of the new Association of St Edmund's, constituted now by its Master and Fellows, the aims of the Institute were defined as being "to assist in the preservation and development of the Roman Catholic tradition as an important aspect of the life of St Edmund's College". It was given the task of fostering

substantial academic work in the field of the relation of Christianity to society. It is currently intended that this work should contribute to a Christian understanding of contemporary society which will assist in the development of more just social structures, and also consider historically the role of Christianity within society.

The work of the Institute is to be undertaken in a wide ecumenical context (which includes non-Christian religions) with the purpose of fostering links between Christians, and between them and non-Christians who share a common concern for a better society<sup>21</sup>.

Under the Institute's aegis fell the von Hügel lectures – originally begun in April 1985, which have a Christian, and in terms of the lecturers largely Roman Catholic, theme – and visiting fellowships, begun in the academic year 1986-87, and again mainly held by Roman Catholic scholars. Members of the Institute have been active in promoting seminars and discussions on matters of theological concern and social justice both within and outside the College.

In a sense this was something of a departure for St Edmund's. The House had never been a theological institution: nothing could have been further from the Founder's intentions. Even though many of the dons at Cambridge may have thought of the House in that way, and successive Masters complained of the fact, there had been a constant effort made to establish its secular academic credentials. When the first Fellows were appointed, however, Garrett Sweeney had considered the possibility of having a quasi official theologian among them: the person he had in mind was Nicholas Lash, scheduled to arrive at St Edmund's in the course of 1968.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. below, p. 72,79

<sup>20</sup> David Wallace in a joint obituary of Archbishop Dwyer and Professor Jack Hamson. Hamson, a member of the Association since 1956, was an Honorary Fellow of St Edmund's from 1976, cf. SER 4 (1987-88).

<sup>21</sup> SER 4, p. 34.

The Archbishop of Birmingham, as President of the Association, was consulted. Archbishop Dwyer took the view that, happy as he was for Lash to study theology at Cambridge, he was unwilling for him to become a Fellow on the grounds that this would make him too obviously a spokesman for the Catholic Church. "If we are to have a theologian at all", he wrote to Bishop Grant of Northampton – the diocese within which Cambridge then fell<sup>22</sup> – in January 1968, "it must be someone of a different outlook from, and a higher standing than, our Nicholas". Lash, who just ten years later was to be appointed Norris Hulse Professor of Divinity at the University ran, together with other priests among the student body, theological seminars and discussion groups with some success through Sweeney's Mastership and into Coventry's. Indeed, almost half the subjects listed under the heading "Research by Visiting Fellows and Scholars, Senior Members and Scholars" for the academic year 1985-86 were religious<sup>23</sup>. There was not, however, nor ever had been, anything as formal as the programme now mounted by the von Hügel Institute.

In many people's mind, however, the Catholic ethos of the House could most effectively be set by the Master. Though the new form of the Association as agreed in 1973 made it possible for a person of any religious persuasion or none to succeed to the Mastership, Coventry insisted to anxious members of the old Association of St Edmund's House with whom he was negotiating, that his successor would be fully in sympathy with the Catholic tradition in which the House had grown up. In a sense this was a problematic undertaking for him to give, because he could have no direct say in the selection of candidates. In the event, the election of Coventry's successor proved to be one of the most controversial events in the House's history, leading to the resignation of a number of its leading Fellows over the next few years, and immediately of its most distinguished, Professor Nicholas Lash<sup>24</sup>, on a scale untypical of Cambridge Colleges.

Writing an account of his years as Master in the first issue of the *St Edmund's Record*, a publication begun in 1985 as a (more or less) annual review of the doings of the College, John Coventry sums up the disagreement over his successor as "a tension arising between academic distinction on one side and Christian commitment on the other: those putting more stress on the latter did so in the conviction that the College owed this to its history, and they owed it to their commitment to the outgoing Trustees on becoming self-governing. The decision in favour of academic distinction led to the resignation of Nicholas Lash"<sup>25</sup>.

Perhaps had it been quite so straightforward there would have been less of a controversy. In the course of the same meeting of the Fellows' Council at which were reported the concerns of the outgoing St Edmund's House Association that the Catholic character of the House be preserved, a Search Committee was set up to propose a new Master – in practice it was the same committee which was charged with nominations to Fellowship. That was on 12 December 1983. The election of the present Master took place on 21 January 1985. In between much searching did indeed go on. The first problem, as it had been when Coventry was chosen, was the shortage of suitable candidates who were willing to stand. A number of prominent Catholics were approached – including Lash himself – but some felt they were not able to take on this additional commitment, while the Fellows decided about others that, on closer acquaintance, they were not after all Mastership material.

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<sup>22</sup> A Roman Catholic diocese of East Anglia has since been established.

<sup>23</sup> SER 2, pp. 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> "...our most distinguished Fellow, Professor Nicholas Lash, felt unable to remain as a Fellow and his resignation was accepted with great reluctance", Michael J Hambrey in SER 1, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., p. 49.

The Search Committee spread its net wide: even at this stage one of the possible candidates was a distinguished Roman Catholic ecclesiastic. But the Fellows were divided. While all were agreed that the Mastership should go to someone of unimpeachable academic credentials, opinions differed about the degree of Catholic commitment he – or she – ought ideally to possess. Some clearly wanted the Mastership to go to someone wholly in sympathy with the Catholic ethos of the House. Although it was no longer required by statute that the Master be a Catholic, this group believed that in the light of the assurances given to the outgoing Association a Catholic appointment was, at the very least, desirable. Another group were, apparently, sympathetic to the desire to retain the Catholic ethos, but were willing to test whether this might be achieved by means other than the Mastership. A third group did not consider the “Catholic ethos” to be a particularly significant factor in the selection of candidates. The balance among these groups was altered, perhaps decisively, when the Vice-Master, one of the longest-standing of the Fellows, and one closely associated with the House’s development from a House of residence, through an approved society to the status of an approved foundation, chose not to seek re-election to his office. It fell to the newly-elected Vice-Master, Dr Geoffrey Cook, an ordained Catholic deacon, to make arrangements for the smooth transfer of Mastership.

When the election took place in the January of 1985 a short list of four was reduced to two, both of whom answered the requirements of having had a distinguished academic background: one was a Roman Catholic professor, the other Dr Richard Laws, at that time, after a career researching animals both in the Antarctic and East Africa, the Director of the British Antarctic Survey<sup>26</sup> with responsibility for four hundred and ten staff, five Antarctic bases, two ships and three aircraft. To the relatively impoverished Fellowship of St Edmund’s, the fact that under his directorship the British Antarctic Survey, unlike most other research institutes, had received a very considerable increase of funding from the government, must have seemed an added bonus. He was selected, and Nicholas Lash, who had made the matter of the election a resigning issue, left the College very shortly afterwards. Four others, three of them long-standing members of St Edmund’s, resigned their Fellowships in July 1989 after a conflict with the Master over the decision not to renew the employment of the Bursar. The disgruntled Fellows appealed to the Visitor, Cardinal Hume. The appeal was dismissed.

Dr Laws’ period of office began officially on 1 July 1985, but for almost a year he was on leave of absence, fulfilling his commitments to the British Antarctic Survey: he took up his duties in April 1986. Under Dr Laws’ Mastership – a post to which in 1993 he was unanimously re-elected for a further term despite reaching the customary retirement age – the governing body of St Edmund’s set out its objectives for the coming decade, which was to culminate in the celebration of the centenary year, 1996. They were to expand the numbers, expand the facilities, and to achieve increased recognition as an academic institution of distinction. A significant step was made in that last direction by changing the name, on 6 October 1986, from St Edmund’s House to St Edmund’s College. As the Master explained in his regular letter to the *St Edmund’s Record*, the change was made because potential students, both at home and abroad, might misunderstand its status within the University – and the same misapprehension could equally apply to potential donors<sup>27</sup>.

The expansion of facilities began, modestly enough, with the setting up of a computer room with machines for the use of the students, linked to the central University system. The most pressing need, however, was for more student rooms. The earliest part of St Edmund’s was a red brick, gabled building with timber sash windows, running East to West, and terminating, at the West end, with a chapel in similar brick. In the 1930s a building was added at the East end, but running North, so as to produce an L-plan. This had been erected in a buff stone, with mullioned windows, demonstrating little or no attempt to blend the two periods.

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<sup>26</sup> Dr Laws retired as Director of the Survey, and of the Sea Mammal Research Unit which was associated with it, in April 1987.

<sup>27</sup> SER 2 (1985-86), p. 9.

The challenge facing the College's architect, Roderick Gradidge, was to provide more accommodation for students and, incidentally, to construct a new and imposing entrance for St Edmund's, while linking together the diverse styles of the earlier buildings. Work began on 15 September 1987, funded partly out of the College's own carefully husbanded resources, but also with the considerable financial assistance of the Colleges' Fund. The Fellows were persuaded that, in order to raise the money necessary to carry out the entire, three-stage development plan, it was appropriate to demonstrate the College's own commitment to the enterprise by launching into it. First, new kitchens were built, and over them three floors of students' rooms, an additional eighteen sets in all. This part of the plan was completed to time in October 1988. The second phase began the following July. Where the old kitchens had been, an entrance hall was made, with College offices and the Senior Combination Room.

The final, and undoubtedly the most striking, part of the development plan was the building of a six-storey tower. The St Edmund's tower looks set to become one of the landmarks of Cambridge. The College itself stands on a prominence on the outskirts of the town; the height of the tower, added to the location of the College, give unrivalled views from the top most room – the highest in Cambridge – over the many and varied institutions which make up the ancient university city. Its building was achieved much earlier than had been thought possible, thanks to a donation of £1.5 million from the Teikyo Foundation, established by Dr Shoichi Okinaga, President of the Teikyo University in Japan. Dr Okinaga's assistance to the College has been recognised by naming after him the air-conditioned conference room which occupies the top storey of the tower.

The donation marked the agreement between St Edmund's and Teikyo University by which the College undertook to admit annually three scholarship students, selected by competition from all over Japan, and an academic from Teikyo University itself. The agreement was signed in April 1991, and the first students under this arrangement arrived in October 1992. Apart from the United States and Germany, Japan now supplies the largest number of non-British students.

Growth in numbers, another of the aims set by the governing body, was also achieved in remarkable fashion, especially among students studying for the Ph.D. who, by 1993, had come to comprise half the total student body. This was a particularly significant development, for the presence of doctoral students, who customarily remain for at least three years, provides considerable stability and continuity among the junior members of the College. Over the first five years of Dr Laws' Mastership the total number of students trebled, and at the end of the academic year 1995-96 stood at 225. The governing body had fixed as a target to have up to 420 students by the end of the century, so long as buildings and infrastructure were in place to support that number. This increase is intended to aid the University reaching its own target for growth in post graduate numbers: the other Cambridge Colleges have contributed very significantly to St Edmund's, donating almost £2.5 million in the course of Dr Laws' Mastership.

The growing size of the student body itself had an impact on the public persona of the College. St Edmund's has managed, over the half-dozen years, to have produced, for a small Cambridge institution, a quite remarkably large number of members of the University's rugby team<sup>28</sup>, fielding no less than six "blues" in the 1993 match against Oxford, four the following year, and five in 1995. It has been equally well represented in rowing: half the winning eight in the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race in both 1994 and 1995 were drawn from the College.

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<sup>28</sup> And internationals in Chris Oti and Tony Underwood. They were, however, not the first members of St Edmund's to represent their country on the rugby field. "May I congratulate you and St Edmund's House on Fr [Thomas J.] Gavin's great success as an Irish International", Cardinal Griffin wrote to Fr Raymond Corboy, the eighth Master, in January 1949.

Such achievements have made St Edmund's more widely known among the student body in Cambridge; Dr Laws' commitment to University administration has done much to make it better understood by senior members. From the time of his election he was, of course, *ex officio* as a member of the College's Committee. In the course of his Mastership he became increasingly involved with the central bodies of the University. From 1989 to 1994 he was a member both of the Council of Senate and the Finance Board. He served as chairman of several University Committees, including the Science Building Committee and from 1990 to 1994 of the important Local Examinations Syndicate. In 1991 he was instrumental in convening for the first time the heads of graduate colleges. Through such activities St Edmund's became much better known, and not only in Cambridge. In March 1992 Green College, in the University of Oxford, entered a "twinning" arrangement, with reciprocal use of college guest rooms, invitations to memorial feasts and so on.

The College's profile has also been raised by inviting to speak there – often in conjunction with the von Hügel Institute – world figures as diverse as Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of Cape Town, and Dr Hans Tietmeyer, then Deputy, but shortly to become Governor, of the German Bundesbank. On 12 June 1987 the Duke of Edinburgh, in his capacity as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, visited the College for luncheon, talked to members on the lawn – it was a fine, sunny day – and was shown a model of the development plan. At that point it was still all to be realised. It was also a sunny day, 30 April 1993, when the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Right Honourable Betty Boothroyd, formally opened the tower and thus marked the end of the development which the Duke had inspected in the form of a model.

Since 1983 the College has had a Duke among its own Honorary Fellows, Miles Fitzalan-Howard, the 17<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk. It was, of course, the 15<sup>th</sup> Duke who had founded the House in 1896, and the Norfolk arms had been displayed at St Edmund's for a number of years, on buildings, ties and writing paper<sup>29</sup>. The debate about armorial bearings recurs regularly in the College's archives. In December 1951, for example, the eighth Master, Fr Raymond Corboy, wrote to the 16<sup>th</sup> Duke seeking permission to use the Norfolk arms "undifferenced" this being, he insisted, the Cambridge tradition in displaying the arms of the College Founder. The 16<sup>th</sup> Duke had referred him to Garter King of Arms, but there, it seems, the matter rested, and although various forms of the Norfolk arms were shown on the College seal, for example, and elsewhere, technically it had not obtained armorial bearings, not least because of cost. In 1985, however, a Canadian benefactor, Mr Norman R.H. Young, QC, offered to meet the charges involved in petitioning the College of Arms for a grant of arms to St Edmund's.

The formal heraldic description can be found in the *St Edmund's Record*<sup>30</sup>. The basis of the arms remained those of the Norfolk family, though differenced with a border to indicate that there was no familial relationship. There was in addition, however, a "canton", or small square division in the upper part of the shield, bearing the arms of Abingdon Abbey as a tribute to St Edmund of Abingdon, the College's patron. The crest, with an eagle and ostrich feathers, is taken from the von Hügel arms, and the motto (in Latin), "Through Revelation and Reason" was culled from a book by St Edmund. The College was also granted a badge which shows a martlet from the Abingdon arms, holding in its beak the trillium flower – the heraldic flower of Ontario – as a tribute to the Canadian benefactor. The trillium flower and martlet are carved into the frieze above the Doric columns forming the entrance porch to the College, supporting the tower.

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<sup>29</sup> At one time during Coventry's Mastership it had even been suggested that the name be changed to "Norfolk College", as sounding less ecclesiastical than the institution being named after a saint. The argument was a little difficult to sustain when there are already, of course, Cambridge Colleges named Trinity and Jesus, as well as St John's and St Catherine's.

<sup>30</sup> SER 3 (1986-87), pp. 49-51

The presentation of the letters patent took place with high ceremony in the College chapel on 29 October 1987. The Duke of Norfolk spoke, both as Earl Marshal and as an Honorary Fellow. The splendidly named Rouge Croix Pursuivant, to whom had been entrusted the task of drawing up the Memorial for, and designing, the arms, then handed the letters patent to the Garter Principal King of Arms. He in turn read them out, and handed them on to the Master. A choir of College members next sang a motet, the words of which were taken from the writings of St Edmund. The music was composed for the occasion by Christopher Moore, a senior member of the College and Director of Music and the University Church. The College arms which now splendidly emblazon the cover of the *St Edmund's Record*<sup>31</sup> differ significantly, therefore, from those which appeared on the first two issues.

The final step in the juridical evolution of St Edmund's still remains to be achieved. The College is looking forward to the grant of a Royal Charter, and establishment with full collegiate status in the University. It will come as the present Master bows out. It is good to be able to say the appointment of Professor Brian Heap to succeed him was a unanimous decision of the Fellows.

Professor Heap, at his election to the Mastership, had recently retired as Director of the Babraham Institute of Animal Physiology. He has to his credit an imposing list of publications in his chosen field of endocrine physiology and, like the outgoing Master, he is a Fellow of the Royal Society. His own record of research will ensure that the emphasis of St Edmund's on academic excellence will continue.

And so undoubtedly, now that the development plan is in place, will the physical expansion of the College. St Edmund's occupies a large amount of ground, over seven acres in all. Next door is Benet House on a further acre or more. The house and land belong to St John's College, but had been leased to the Benedictine monks of Downside Abbey. In 1992 St Edmund's acquired a five-year lease from Downside, and three years later negotiated an option for a 99-year lease from St John's. The same year the definitive development plan was drawn up to make the most of the site's considerable potential. There had been a slight hiccup in the College's project when, in 1993, its grounds were designated a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (a SINC). Had that status been imposed, approval for any new building would, to say the least, have been difficult to obtain. But as Dr Laws commented in his detailed response to the proposed designation as a SINC, for forty five years in his professional career he had been "intensively and extensively concerned with ecological and environmental issues of national and international significance". "In short", he concluded, "there appears to be nothing of any more interest in the College grounds than in an ordinary domestic garden". The SINC designation was withdrawn.

Responsibility for the design for the new St Edmund's has been given to a Jesuit-educated Irishman, Sam Stephenson, one of the Republic's best-known, and most honoured, architects, whose life and work has been the subject of a BBC documentary. His proposal, costed at around £10.5 million, incorporates accommodation for some two hundred members of the College (mainly students but including a dozen Fellows), a Master's Lodge, a new dining hall, a sports pavilion, a library and a music centre cum art gallery in which will hang portraits, recently given to St Edmund's on a long-term loan, which belong to the Roman Catholic Huddleston family of Sawston Hall. In the middle of it all will stand, now terminated at one end by the chapel and at the other by the tower, the building in which St Edmund's House began, the original Ayerst Hostel, purchased by the Duke of Norfolk in 1896.

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<sup>31</sup> And – carved by Richard Kindersley – appear on the tower above the Master's room. The College crest, also by Kindersley, surmounts the tower.