

# St Mary's College Society Newsletter

## Christmas Supplement 2019



# Editorial



Seasons' greetings from your new Editor. This Christmas supplement is a "trial run" for me before taking over the full Newsletter for Summer 2020. After seven years as the SMCS Secretary, I welcome a change of responsibility on the Committee. English was my first degree subject, so it ought to suit me well, and has always interested me as a role, though with the very high standard of Steven Spencer's last newsletters over the past years, I know he will be a hard act to follow!

This Michaelmas Term we have welcomed the College's new Principal, Professor Maggi Dawn, to a busy and vibrant term for the students and staff. A word from her on these pages. We've also had another fascinating SMCS Lecture, as well as a wealth of developments among the Arts, Sport and social activities. The Committee has met to consider how to continue supporting our present students, especially those experiencing financial hardship. Included are reports from our JCR and MCR Presidents, Nuriya Shuro and Aiden Patterson, on life in College.

The state of the art facilities at the University have proceeded apace, with the wonderful new teaching and Learning Centre opening right next to Mary's. I've included some images. And we feature the biannual "Lumière" festival, better than ever this year.

Wishing everyone a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

**Christine Wright**  
Editor

# President's Christmas Message

Christmas is a time for celebrations in most households, and college is no exception. It is remarkable in the life of an institution to celebrate its centenary, and this is what we are doing this year. Our history as a college is impressive for we were one of the first institutions in England where women could graduate with a degree. Long before women could vote women were studying at the Women's Hostel that in 1919 became St Mary's College.



We were one of the few places where women could step out of what seemed the pre-ordained roles of women in the domestic sphere. Those first plucky women at the end of the nineteenth century, and in the early decades of the twentieth must have had nerves of steel in order to break the moulds of the day. We should applaud their determination. Mary's was nicknamed then the 'Dovecot'- was that term used with a kindly smile or a sneer?

Now, when we take higher education as a natural progression from school for both men and women, it may be important, even imperative, to look for new horizons, new challenges for St Mary's. Our college was for pioneers.

Was it natural for ours to be called St. Mary's College? If we look at the Christmas story we may gain an insight. Mary was a young woman from a village in a remote part of the Roman Empire. She may not have had much of an education outside the domestic sphere. The biblical narrative implies that she had known the scriptures. She also knew something of the facts of life. Yet, the one thing we can say for sure is that she was open to the call of God, and ready for the sneering that might meet her as her pregnancy developed in the face of possibly prurient neighbours. It was this courageous young woman who was entrusted with the care of the one Christians call the Saviour of the World.

Christmas offers all, believer or agnostic alike, a message of peace and good will. The sign of peace is the dove. Let us hope that our college (once known as the Dovecot) will remain a place of goodwill and acceptance for all our members- current students and staff and alumni. But most of all let us hope we retain an openness to challenge and a readiness to change for the good of all.

**Elizabeth Fisher**  
**SMCS President**

# St Mary's College Society Essay Competition 2019

## Introduction:

The competition was established for the 2018/19 academic year and first run in the Epiphany term. Only two entries were received, of which the judges decided that neither was quite worthy of publication. Both contestants were given an award of an aerial photograph of St Mary's College.

The competition's purpose is to encourage students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, to develop and explore new forms of writing, in terms of subject content and style. It benefits the Society by making it more visible in college life. This may, in turn encourage students to choose to be members upon graduation. The publication of the winning article (and potentially others) in the newsletter and possibly in other relevant outlets, will provide the Society with more student generated content; this should foster enhanced links between current students and alumni.

## The 2019 Summer Competition:

The SMCS Committee recommended that the competition should be run again in the summer term with a post-exam deadline – writing is a form of relaxation too. This was done in June with a deadline of July 20th (the middle of the summer holiday), and with guidelines slightly amended for clarity. Three entries were received – all respected the 1000-word limit and selected the topic “Being alive in 2019” rather than “A message for the people of Mary's in 2019.”

## Judging and the winner:

Sandra Ward (SW) chaired the judging panel which included three alumni, Jane Roscoe (JR), Sue Simson (SS), and Christine Wright (CW). All judges responded promptly and had obviously scrutinised each entry carefully against the three defined criteria with incisive and informed comments viz:

1. Quality of written communication (including grammar, punctuation, spelling, style, register, vocabulary and structure).
2. Effectiveness of conveying knowledge, understanding, meaning and/or argument to the intended audience.
3. Originality (in the sense of both individual creativity and inventiveness)

Recommendation: It was decided by the Panel that Matthew Warren should be awarded the Essay prize. All the essays evidenced interesting thinking, “No Home” was the most original and creative; the arguments were clear; the ending excellent; and this essay could be published and enjoyed with minor edits.

**Edited from a report by the competition organiser, Dr Sandra Ward.**

## The Winning Essay No Place, by Matthew Warren

‘There's no place like home.’ It's a wish for solace in turbulent times. It cries out to be taken away from the disturbing shifting sands of whatever upheaval we are living through and begs for the solid earth of a place of comfort and stability; a place where troubles are left at the door as the familiarity of the smell of home cooking welcomes us over the threshold. It is a plea for sanctuary in a world whose wanton persecutions seem senseless and unjust. It is a place where neither tornadoes, nor wicked witches may harm us; a place which time will not weather nor the revolutions of the world over-run; a place whose inhabitants will neither age nor die. There is no place like it.

Given the importance of our early attachments in fostering healthy and resilient minds, it is little surprise that this idealisation is such a ubiquitous utopia. When life is hard and consists of continuous struggle, who can say they have not wished for the rapids to give way to still waters? This attachment comes with a corresponding bereavement that is brought about by changes to that home. Moving house, family upheaval, or leaving home

oneself all trespass on the sanctuary of the ideal, unvarying home. The challenge is how we deal with this loss of home?

Consider our ambitions. Amongst the desires to do well academically, get a good job and make a difference to the world, one also finds the ambition to start a home, and often a family. We dream of a return to our sanctuary, of establishing a place of safety populated by those we love and by whom we are loved constantly. In other words, home is not just that from which the tornado uprooted us, it is what we dream of for the future - it is why we follow the yellow brick road - and it is the mantra "there's no place like home."

A curious thing is that there is actually a No Place. Go down to North Road, to the bus station, and climb aboard the number 16 bus to Stanley. From there, just six stops on the number 8 towards Sunderland. Or cycle out through Pity Me to Beamish and then just a few minutes further and you will find five streets of terraced houses. It is only by the sign at the roundabout coming out of Beamish that one would know its name: No Place.

The word "utopia" was coined by Thomas More in his 1516 fictitious description of the fictional society of Utopia. "Utopia" has an ambiguous derivation, played upon by More, translating from the Greek as either "good place" or "no place". The work illustrates an idea of a good society - wealthy, just and egalitarian - but it is also a fiction, a no place. In literary utopias, characters go on some sort of journey to find Utopia - in Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone*, this involves a flight in a chariot pulled by "moon geese". In each case, we don't find Utopia coming to us; instead, we have to step towards it, motivated by the desire to find a better way of living. We will never make it, but that's in the nature of a utopia; it is a no place, an intention, a bearing. It is something to navigate by.

Communities that are often called utopian - those that seek to radically reimagine the organisation of society - are also known as "intentional communities". Here, the imagining of a utopia can replace the *ad hoc* development of society through the winds and currents of social and economic forces with an intention to move in a particular direction. It gives the helmsman sight and knowledge of the stars. And yet, utopia is so often a dirty word, seen as synonymous with a naiveté that excludes the values expressed from consideration.

The idealised home, as we have said, is a prevalent utopia. If things could be just so, and always stay that way, all would be well. That would be a good place. And the utopia of Home is not a bad thing *per se*; a solid foundation of healthily stable attachments allow us the resilience to cope with a turbulent world. However, when "home" becomes a fetishised vision based on the comfort of a well trodden path, we risk refusing to contemplate change. In a world which is facing threats of unimaginable scale, our concept of home cannot stay in the past; it must look to what it will mean to live in the future in which we will make those homes. As individuals and as a society, we should not simply fall back to the ideal of home that provides the easiest, most visceral reassurance of an eternal sanctuary based on what we have lost; as new challenges come, and as we face up to old injustices, home cannot look the way it did. Instead, we must make our home in a No Place and then put our hearts where that home is.

The threats we face are not so often dangers of malicious action so much as sleep-walking into crisis. It is a lack of intention rather than ill-intention that allows us to pillage the natural world, to drift into climate crisis, to propagate widening inequality, to fall into conflict. In the fight for intention, there is no adversary. Instead we have to find it in ourselves to imagine the good society and pursue it, not allowing ourselves to be perturbed by the accusation of utopianism. If we refuse to make our communities intentional, then we extinguish the utopian guiding star from our thinking and leave ourselves with no bearing.

So let's leave home. Step out of the front door, and push our imaginations out of the comfort of familiar surroundings. Get your bike, take a bus, harness a moon-geese and we'll tap our heels together and whisper a wish: "Let's find a home like No Place".

# St Mary's New Principal: Professor Maggi Dawn



Professor Maggi Dawn is responsible for the overall direction, leadership and development of the College. She chairs several committees within the College, represents the College at Colleges' Board and is a member of University Senate. She is also a Professor of Theology (Teaching) in the Department of Theology and Religion.

Maggi studied Theology at the University of Cambridge in the 1990s, where her PhD research explored S. T. Coleridge's theological language. Her ongoing research interests are the role of voice and form in the creation of theological meaning, and the role of the arts in theology and liturgy.

Maggi's first career was in the music industry as a songwriter, guitarist and singer. She recorded five albums under her own name, and was a session player in numerous other bands. She began her career in academia as college Chaplain and teaching fellow at the University of Cambridge. She has five books in publication, one of which was quoted in Parliament in 2012 to launch a Private Members Bill. She comes to Durham after eight years as Associate Dean, and Associate Professor of Theology and Literature, at Yale Divinity School and the Institute of Sacred Music, Yale University.

Welcomed to the September Reunion as she took up her post, Professor Dawn commented on the collegiality of St Mary's and the loyalty to College expressed by students and alumni.



"Ask any Durham student about University life and it's likely they'll mention that one of the best aspects of studying here is our collegiate system. One of Durham's 'Hill Colleges', St Mary's occupies imposing neo-classical buildings with a wonderful view of the city and its Cathedral. Originally founded in the 19th century, St Mary's retains the traditions of a long-established College in supporting and nurturing academic excellence, whilst also encouraging students to take advantage of the many opportunities available to participate in music, art, drama, sport and community projects. Elsewhere in these webpages you'll find details for the wide range of extra-curricular activities and how you can become involved in College and University societies.

All the staff at St Mary's across the various teams - Operations, Catering, Admissions, Administration and Welfare - are dedicated to supporting your studies, your interests and your wellbeing, ensuring that your time here is happy and productive.

"The College is one big family. Everyone is friendly and welcoming"; not my words, but comments from a Student Experience Survey."

Adapted from Professor Maggi Dawn's words on the St Mary's College Welcome Page.

# SMCS Reunion 2019

In what seems like an age ago, on this November morning, but was only in August of this year, St Mary's College Society held the annual reunion for Mary's alumni, within Mary's towers. For three days from Friday 30th August until Sunday 1st of September, Marysites with matriculation dates that ranged from the 1950s through to the noughties, as well as former staff members, three past principals and the incoming principal, Professor Maggi Dawn, gathered to begin a year of celebration marking 100 years of college status.

It was in November 1919 that a decision of the University Council bestowed the status of 'college' on what had been the women's hostel, from its formation in 1899. The name of St Mary's was subsequently chosen



**Full Hall Formal**



**After Dinner Entertainment**

and the rest, as the saying goes, is history. It was fitting to have people who remembered so much of the college's history back within our hallowed walls, as we reflected on a century of providing a home to so many learners advancing through their formative years.

To celebrate this occasion, the centrepiece of the reunion weekend was the Grand Reunion Dinner, held on the Saturday evening and involving a full hall formal, complete with gowns and formal dress. It was wonderful to see 114 alumni, staff, former staff, past principals, guests and the band, all dressed to impress and in Mary's dining hall, to enjoy excellent food, wine and of course, the company of friends, old and new. After dinner, Elizabeth Fisher, our Society President, had the honour of introducing Professor Maggi Dawn, our as then, not quite in post principal, who delivered a speech that reflected strongly the spirit, collegiality and warmth that characterises our community.

With the night still young, the folk band 'Skerne' filled the Kenworthy Hall with tunes, from SMCS Reunion 2019

from local and afar, and also with a large number of dancing alumni, jiggging along to timeless melodies, late into the evening. A great night was had by all and it was not till the wee small hours that college returned to slumber, as the last reveller made it back to their room.

This all followed on from a busy Friday evening, when alumni arrived and after a sparkling reception, were treated to a buffet and quiz, complete with a competitive spirit and a sparkling hostess, Anne Furness. Saturday morning had also been busy, with a very well attended visit to the Chorister School and Abbey House, both former homes of the college, giving all a real taste of our history and revealing many fascinating stories. In the afternoon, the AGM informed alumni about the important work of the Society Committee, complete with reports of the Book Fund, Travel Bursaries, Essay writing competition, newsletter, website, and also, of course, elections, in addition to updates from the Committee officers and College Principal. Those present agreed that the Society does a great with its limited funds and were pleased to hear alumni are such a big part of college life.

A Chapel Service provided a chance to reflect and explore a more spiritual side of college life for some, whilst others availed themselves of the opportunity to use free tickets to the Botanical Gardens and Oriental Museum, or simply to spend time in Durham.

The weekend was rounded off with the now traditional Sunday lunch, complete with speeches to thank the hard-working kitchen, domestic, operational and administrative staff of the college, and also a chance to

round off the weekend. As evening beckoned, college reverted to its sleepy out of term time state, having witnessed goodbyes between old friends and new acquaintances, and many a vow to come back next year.

It is not an exaggeration to say that for most who came, this was the best reunion they could remember, with a vibrant and relaxed atmosphere, activities and opportunities to engage, that all enabled alumni to both return to student days and to experience the college as it is today. It is this combination of reconnection and reminiscing that alumni enjoy at reunions and what prompts many to return year on year.

We hope that even more alumni will come to the 2020 Reunion, which will be held on the 4th to the 6th of September 2020. Details of this event and how to book will be available in the near future. To indicate an interest, please contact the leader of the Reunion planning group, Steven Spencer.

**SMCS Vice President**

**Mr Steven Spencer**

## SMCS Committee Presentation to Professor Simon Hackett

After our November Committee meeting we held a lunch to which we invited Professor Simon Hackett and his wife Helen. As he was unable to attend the Annual reunion, this was the opportunity for the Committee to make a formal presentation to St Mary's former Principal and to thank him for the years of partnership and support for the work of the Society.



**Professor Simon Hackett and JCR President Nuriya Shuro at the Presentation.**

President Canon Elizabeth Fisher made the presentation, speaking warmly of the positive professional relationship between Simon as Principal and herself as President, and of his 7 years of support for and partnership work with the SMCS. He was presented with a book compiled by College and SMCS Archivist Anne Elliott recording the years of his tenure as Principal, in particular in relation to Society events, Reunions and support for students from the JCR and MCR both of which flourished during his time as Principal.

After lunch, the assembled party were treated to 3 extremely varied and interesting presentations from Postgraduates who had received bursaries from SMCS to enable them to present research papers at important national and international conferences. We look forward to hearing more from them in the Summer 2020 Newsletter!



# The 2019 Annual SMCS Lecture

The annual Lecture is now fast becoming a tradition, with 2 extremely interesting presentations by academics in 2017 and 2018.

This year was something slightly different; we were treated to an intelligent, compassionate and probing talk by Gavin O'Malley, Governor of Frankland Prison in Durham. Frankland is situated next to Newton Hall and the Arnison Centre on the Northern outskirts of Durham, and specialises in high security "Category A" prisoners: those most dysfunctional and disturbed inmates for whom escape must be made impossible, and those who have been involved in terrorism and who are a "radicalisation" risk to others.

Unlike some Prison Governors who have come up "through the ranks" of working in the service, Gavin O'Malley has a background as a Psychologist; from his 1995 first degree at St Cuthberts Society, through years of work in psychotherapy, and then into the Prison service where his previous post was at Deerbolt Young Offenders Institution. He emphasised the importance of diversity in leading effective prisons.



In a fascinating 3 minute introductory presentation, he demonstrated how society's view of imprisonment has veered between the 2 ends of the spectrum of "punishment" and "incarceration" versus "rehabilitation". In Frankland, of course, many inmates are serving long sentences and some may never be released into the community. So how to square the circle of keeping prisoners locked away for the good of society versus their rehabilitation and improvement?

In a thoughtful and insightful talk, Gavin O Malley outlined his views of successful leadership (even if staff don't always agree, if you are fair, consistent and committed to your views they will by and large accept them) and explored some of the tensions between Leadership and Management, systems and people, firmness and friendliness or the personal touch. He pointed out that staff training now emphasises personal communication and empathy rather than control, as being more effective when dealing with some of the most damaged and dysfunctional men in Britain. He outlined the effects of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences such as abuse, family breakup or violence) in stunting moral, emotional and cognitive reasoning development in many prisoners. Which is not to say that he believes in being "soft" on prisoners; indeed a firm system of incentives, humanely and consistently applied by staff, seems to work best.

Gavin O Malley comes across as a committed, intelligent and passionate professional who paid tribute to the quality staff with whom he works. He has a deep understanding of the tensions in the prison service and in societal expectations of it. Overall he appears to have a positive faith in rehabilitation and redemption, despite the difficult circumstances in which he leads, and in the power of a positive staff culture to run a successful and stable prison. His lecture was fascinating and challenging, as was the way he handled some probing questions at the end.

A highly successful Lecture, in what is now becoming a hugely positive feature of the SMCS calendar!

The Lecture was recorded and is available at: <https://youtu.be/FCmC6hKXTNY>

# St. Mary's College Middle Common Room Michaelmas Term Roundup

The St. Mary's Middle Common Room (MCR) have been off to a great start this year. From the massive success of Induction Week to the wonderful friendships that have formed, we have truly seen the MCR flourish over the course of this term. This is testament to all the efforts of the Executive Team, the Frep Team, and the new wave of members that we have had this year.

Over the course of Induction Week, we had some exciting events which helped to make sure that everyone felt comfortable within the safe space that is our MCR. Although, there was initially some hesitation from the newer members, the Freps planned everything meticulously to ensure that everyone transitioned well into Mary's life. With all the events being inclusive and fun, we bonded over ice breakers, picnics on Observatory Hill, pub quizzes, town tours, trips to Newcastle, a murder mystery night, a grub crawl, and a college tour. We also have a group of members who partake in Durham Park Run on a weekly basis and have been doing so, all decked out in their Mary's stash, from the beginning of term!

The success of Induction Week really showed through over the course of the term as we saw the newer members of the MCR take the initiative to plan their own events. This included trips to the cinema, heading for charity pub quizzes at Mary's Bar and even planning and executing our very own MCR Halloween Party. These events helped to strengthen the relationships between the members and also instilled a sense of belonging for everyone.

Additionally, we have also seen a strong interest from our members for events tailored towards improving them both professionally and academically. As such, we have begun a series of events known as 'Applications and Chill' where we gather in the MCR for a relaxed session where we help each other with job/Masters/PhD applications and more. Another event that we will be holding will be our MCR research seminars which will allow members to present their research ideas for their dissertations or PhD proposals to other members of both the MCR and the members of the Senior Common Room. These events help to ensure that no one is too overwhelmed with balancing all the academic and social aspects of university life while also having to worry about what they will be doing after their degrees.

This enormous amount of organisation, planning, and involvement by the MCR this year, has generated a very wholesome environment amongst our members. This was shown to be true when we held our MCR Elections. With enthusiastic and strong candidates, we were able to see how much the members cared for and wanted to give back to the efforts of all those who had made the MCR feel like home. We hope to see more participation and support over the course of the year from our MCR, under the direction of our old and newly elected Executive Team members and look forward to a very Mary's year ahead!

**Aiden Patterson, MCR President**

## JCR: Michaelmas Term

Michaelmas Term 2019 has been an eventful, productive and exciting term for the JCR. To kick off the year, the Senior Freshers Representative, Serena Conn, and the Freshers Representatives (known as 'Freps') put on an array of fun and welcoming events over Induction Week, with the theme revolving around the hit American TV sitcom, Friends. Events during the week included Back to School Bop, a thrilling Murder Mystery entitled 'A Night at the Grammys' and Glastonmary's. As JCR President, I am incredibly proud of how hard Serena and the Freps worked this year to ensure that all of the new Mary's students were welcomed with open arms throughout the entirety of Induction Week. Even during move-in day, when the rain would not stop pouring outside, our Freps were dancing outside in the rain with ponchos on and massive smiles on their faces. According to college staff, it was one of the most well organised and smooth-running Induction Weeks to date!

With the new students settled into Mary's, our Social Chairs, Alex and Fran, began to organise a string of formal dinners over Michaelmas Term. We started the year with two Freshers Formals, both of which were

well attended and included a warm and welcoming speech from the new Principal, Maggi Dawn. The Returners Formal was held the week after the Freshers Formals, which consisted of our returning students being welcomed back by an opening speech from our Vice Principal, Catherine Paine. You could tell from the lively atmosphere around the Dining Hall that the returning students were glad to be back at Mary's!

The next event to follow was the Halloween Informal. Our students got incredibly creative with their costumes, with costumes including the Scooby Doo gang, two bunches of grapes made entirely out of balloons, the Winnie the Pooh characters and the Durham Colleges. The Halloween Informal was opened by a dramatic reading of 'The Witches' from Macbeth read by myself, replacing the traditional Grace that is read during formal dinners - this is a tradition continued from Ellie Ng, JCR President 2018/19. Our Social Chairs organised a competition for the Best Dressed Duo, the Best Dressed Individual and the Best Dressed Group, with Maggi Dawn presenting the prizes to the winners in between the meal and the dessert. Everybody had a spooktacular time!

Towards the end of October, our Assistant Female Welfare Officer, Sophie Wroblewski, alongside the Welfare at Mary's (WAM) Committee, organised the first WAM campaign of the year, entitled the 'WAM Mental Health Awareness Campaign'. Activities run by Sophie and the WAM Committee included a mental health language and social media discussion group, a self-care Saturday consisting of colouring and origami in the West JCR, and a Zumba class run alongside Mary's Dance in Kenworthy Hall. Alongside these activities, the WAM Committee provided daily online information to Mary's students via social media platforms throughout the week of the campaign. This specific campaign was organised with the aim to encourage Mary's students to maintain awareness of mental health issues that university students tend to face, whilst also promoting self-care during what is known to be a stressful and busy Michaelmas term for many students.

On Friday 8th November, our JCR Vice President, Helen Paton, organised a wonderful Michaelmas Dinner to mark the 100th anniversary of St Mary's officially being recognised as a college at Durham University. Guest speakers included Helen Niven, Senior Woman of St Mary's College from 1964-65, and Elizabeth Fisher, the President of the St Mary's College Society. Both of the guest speakers gave such inspiring and empowering speeches that were really well received by the attendees. We all ended the dinner by singing Happy Birthday to the college, which was then followed by a ceilidh. I would like to personally thank Helen Paton for organising such a fantastic event to mark the centenary anniversary of St Mary's College.

Over Michaelmas Term, we have had a number of JCR Meetings, run by our JCR Chair, Jonathan Wong. The motions that have been passed by the JCR over Michaelmas Term include the introduction of an Ethnic Minorities Association, the introduction of a Debating Society, the introduction of a Games Society (including board games, card games and online games) and the introduction of a Basement Services Committee to help strengthen communication between those running the Bar, the Toastie Bar and the Shop. We have had relatively good engagement from the JCR in regards to elections, with the number of freshers voting in elections increasing as the term goes on.

The newest development in the JCR centres around the Toastie Bar and Shop refurbishment, happening over the Christmas break. This refurbishment has been in the works for a couple of years now, with discussions beginning in 2016/17. The refurbishment will consist of moving the Toastie Bar into the current Shop, which will subsequently become a new facility for the JCR, combining the best aspects of both the Toastie Bar and the Shop. As of last year, the JCR voted to merge the JCR Ex-Officio positions of 'Toastie Bar Manager' and 'Shop Manager' into the 'Toastie Bar and Shop Manager', which was done primarily to ensure the smooth running of the Toastie Bar and Shop before, during and after the refurbishment takes place. This role is currently held by Lewis Robinson, who has been the Toastie Bar Manager for the past three years. We are all very excited to see the outcome of the refurbishment!

Michaelmas Term is always an incredibly busy and bustling term for the JCR - our students have achieved so much in such a short space of time! I am always reminded of how creative, inclusive and energetic our community is here at Mary's and I cannot wait to see what the next two terms bring for the JCR. I wish that all of our Mary's students, present and past, have a restful Christmas break and a happy New Year!

**Nuriya Shoro, JCR President 2019-20**

# New Teaching and Learning Centre Opens

Built on the old “Mary’s Field” next to the Williamson Building, the new Centre finally opened in October this year. Although there was some disruption to College life while the building was ongoing, extra triple glazing for some Williamson bedrooms and considerate construction minimised this, and we now have a tremendous facility right next door to Mary’s, which will probably make the College more popular than ever.



I went in to see the new facility and take some photographs. The Reception area is light, airy and welcoming. Inside, facilities are varied and new: there are state of the art Lecture theatres, and library style spaces with laptops and internet access, but in addition there are lots of smaller learning spaces particularly suited to collaborative learning: “breakout” spaces, project rooms and other small nooks and crannies where pairs or small groups can work together

on a project or a piece of research. Smaller rooms can be booked online.

This is teaching and learning at its best, with cutting edge new technologies and varied, flexible spaces for students and staff.

Of course there is a warm and comfortable cafe where students can grab a snack or a drink between study sessions, lectures or group work.

The new Centre reflects the teaching and learning styles adopted by a prestigious 21st century University and relevant to all kinds of post graduate careers. It comprises around 40% of the University’s teaching and learning space,

There is a video on the main University website.



# Lumière 2019

So we come to the 10th anniversary of the original Lumière light festival sponsored by the County Council and provided by Artichoke.



The festival, which runs for 4 nights from Thursday to Sunday in mid November, has grown increasingly popular, to the extent that tickets (free but must be ordered online or obtained from local venues) sold out this year on the first day of offer, October 28th, for the Saturday session when more visitors to Durham attend.

For the past few years, SMCS has organised the November Committee meeting on the Saturday morning of Lumière, to enable members and

friends/relatives to come to Durham for the festival. It's a popular weekend for alumni to visit.

This year, as befits the 10th anniversary, the 37 installations reflect past festivals with some old favourites repeated, as well as lots of new installations. The planners are improving the spread of the installations so that everything isn't in the tiny area between the Market Place and Palace green, which in the past has caused congestion. Tickets are only required between 4.30 and 7.30 pm when the festival is at its busiest, and only in the central area, so there is



lots to see in other parts of Durham particularly near the racecourse and Court area.



This was one of the wettest Lumière Events ever! Palace Green was like Glastonbury. Waders, wellies and underwater cameras were de rigeur, and photographs were difficult with a sea of Hats, umbrella spikes in your face, and rampant selfie sticks. On Saturday, the path along the river from Prebends Bridge to Milburngate was so congested and flooded that a crowd 150 strong were "kettled" on the bridge. Those of us who slithered

up the path to South Street fared rather better. Still, the exhibits were worth seeing.

One old favourite: the giant snowstorm with "I love Durham" at its heart, surrounds the horse sculpture in the Market Place. There is also a new installation: The giant whale is reprised, further down the river: While the frantic colour displays and the evocation of Autumn light are new.



**Christine Wright, Editor**