An appreciation of the last ten years
FOREWORD
AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE PRESIDENT

Professor Andrew Harvey became President in January 2018. He is the fourth President during Stuart Laing’s Mastership. The previous Presidents were Professor Christopher Andrew, Professor Richard McMahon and the Master elect, Professor Christopher Kelly.

Stuart Laing became Master of Corpus in October 2008. The late Oliver Rackman had been Master for the previous year and had succeeded in restoring peace to the College after a somewhat turbulent period. However, Oliver had no desire to become a permanent fixture in the Lodge and he was more than happy to hand over the Mastership, provided a suitable candidate could be found.

Stuart’s Mastership has been an extraordinarily successful one, in that he has made the College a happy, inspiring and productive place to be. He and Sibella—for they are very much a team—have been a vital presence at the heart of the College and have created a welcoming atmosphere for Fellows and students alike.

Stuart came from a diplomatic background, not an academic one. But he was a Corpuscle, having been an undergraduate at the College in the late 1960s. As a result he came with a strong commitment and loyalty to the College. He did not come with an agenda and a desire to make radical changes in his first one hundred days. Instead he gradually got to know how the College worked and helped it to move forward. When he chaired committees, he listened carefully to different views, facilitated the reaching of a consensus and thereby forged policy. Of course he became more pro-active as time went on and because he chaired so many committees, he was soon able to grasp the bigger picture.

Stuart has been remarkably conscientious in running the College. He does his homework and as a result meetings run efficiently and smoothly (by the standards of a Cambridge college). The fact that governing body meetings lack the drama and entertainment value of certain periods in the not too distant past is a good signal. As a rule people only notice how meetings are chaired when things go wrong. Quiet competence rarely draws attention to itself.

The experience he gained as a diplomat in various parts of the world provided Stuart with a wealth of ideas and experience, which he was able to draw on when he started to embark on various academic projects. In particular he was able to use his first-hand knowledge of the Gulf to produce two books. His first, joint with Robert Alston, was Unshook till the end of time, a book on the history of Britain’s relationship with Oman. More recently he published Tippu Tip: Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa. The book is a biography of an Arab ivory trader in East and Central Africa in the late 19th century. As the author himself put it ‘. a rollicking story, though I say it myself!’

Stuart was awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy in 2013 for his thesis on the political history of Oman.

Stuart clearly has a love of the outdoors. He has climbed many of the Scottish Munros (mountains over 300 feet high). He also embarked on an epic cycle ride from Land’s End to John O’Groats, which he started in 2013 and completed in 2014. I should say that he wasn’t away for a whole year—all is explained in the fascinating contribution by Jonathan Nicholls. He is a talented musician. Just how talented, I hadn’t realised until I read the piece by Nick Danks.

We will miss Stuart and Sibella. I hope the articles in this Pelican will serve as a reminder of all they did and all they meant to us. They will always be welcome back in Corpus (presidential permission not required).

Andrew Harvey
President
Looking back on ten years

By Stuart Laing (m1967), Master

The easiest changes to note are the physical ones. We have seen a good number of these in the last decade. I arrived in the Master's Lodge just a month after the celebrations of the opening of the Taylor Library and the unveiling of the Chronophage, and I remember thinking, “Why didn’t I think of this requirement: Corpus has been an object lesson in failure to keep on top of maintenance. There are too many cautionary tales in student accommodation. There are too many of them all.

Over 90’s Lunch, October 2017.

Young musicians from Hong Kong performing in Corpus Chapel, July 2017.

Stuart and Sibella on a College trip to Hong Kong, March 2015.

Looking back on ten years prompts questions about change and continuity: what has changed, and what has stayed the same? These questions are especially relevant when we think about ten years in the life of a centuries-old institution.

The easiest changes to note are the physical ones. We have seen a good number of these in the last decade. I arrived in the Master’s Lodge just a month after the celebrations of the opening of the Taylor Library and the unveiling of the Chronophage in September 2008, since then we have also been fortunate in having a marvellous Maintenance Team, who have often undertaken complex project work, so reducing the need to go out to contractors. I pay tribute to them all.

In this decade the College has seen important non-physical and thus less visible change as well. In 2008 our published accounts showed a significant deficit in the operational budget, unsustainable if not addressed. Through a combined effort – led by our Bursars Paul Warren and now Tim Harvey-Samuel, but supported across the College – we have now restored the income and expenditure to where it should be, that is a modest surplus that allows us to add to our endowment in some years, and to have a buffer to fall back on if circumstances run against us. At the same time, by careful stewardship (and drawing on advice from alumni sitting on our Investment Committee) we have seen the College’s investment and property assets weather the storm of 2008 and grow steadily at rates superior to our benchmarks.

The College has been assisted by a number of generous gifts and bequests, mostly from alumni and parents of alumni, who have given large gifts as well as a steady stream of regular donations. Our 21st century benefactors are the latest in a stream that goes back to the earliest days of the College, and they enable us to carry through the successes of the past into the generations who follow us, and particularly to support those students who suffer from financial stress in these days of high fees and living costs. It has been a great pleasure during my term as Master to welcome into the College family a number of extremely generous benefactors as Guild Fellows, our category of Fellow which recognises exceptional benefaction. Sir Andrew Cook, LS and Wai Phin Kwee, Drs Louis Cheung and Hong Siau and Sarah Colclough, widow of Fellow Christopher Colclough, have all been admitted in recent years and form a welcome part of our community. I compliment Liz Winter and her colleagues in the Development Office who have done so much to strengthen our alumni network, our communications and of course expand our fund-raising so greatly.

Are there areas where things are as they were ten years ago? Well, numbers of Fellows and students and graduates have not changed significantly. In the Fellowship, our Governing Body has about the same number now as ten years ago, although we have a few more Class F Fellows (By-Fellows in other colleges, and not Governing Body members) to support College teaching, and three more Research and Teaching Fellows, as a result of endowments by benefactors. Our undergraduates have increased slightly, partly because of the growing number of four-year courses; and post-graduate numbers have increased, in line with a University policy to aim at 10% growth in post-graduate students over five years. In the University, post-doctoral researchers have increased in number, now to about 4,500. About half of these are from overseas and have no previous connection with a Cambridge college; and we now have about 30 Research Associates, as a way of giving college affiliation to those who seek it.

What are the high points, looking back over this ten-year stretch? We have had lots to celebrate, in the achievements of our Fellows, students and alumni. Selecting those to mention is a hazardous game – I can already hear the “Why didn’t you point out X or Y?” I’ll take a chance, and pick out Dr Richard Henderson’s award of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2017; the achievements of our lawyers Terry Etherton (Master of the Rolls), Patrick Hodge (Supreme Court Judge) and Chris Vajda (European Court Judge); the
moving occasion. Christopher
in the liturgy – a solemn, splendid
the Augustine Gospels for their use
of the Archbishop, to accompany
installation in Canterbury Cathedral
(Donnelley Fellow Librarian) at the
special event was my attendance
and personal high points. A very
There are some other more subjective
academic results in the Tripos.
ranking in the tables that record
of all, our (mostly) consistent high
races; and, probably most important
bumped in either the Lent or the May
year when no Corpus boat was
Bene’t Club evenings in the Lodge;
articles published) by our Fellows;
advancements achieved (and books/
Stuart-Smith; the professional
knighthoods conferred on Professor
Paul Mellars, Mark Elder and Jeremy
Stuart-Smith; the professional

•  7
Stuart the cycling Ambassador
By Jonathan Nicholls, University Registrary 2007-2017

It was typical of Stuart and Sibella that the idea arose during one of their wonderful dinner parties bringing together people from within and without Cambridge. The idea was that Stuart had determined to cycle from Land’s End to John O’Groats (LEJOG in cycling parlance) in the summer of 2013. He wanted to be tested by the ride, but also wanted to raise money for books for undergraduates in the College Library. He was looking for companions for some or all of the stages. I had done several cycle sportifs and personal histories of Stuart and Sibella’s friends and family, many of whom offered us dinner, showers, and beds en route. Evening conversations with these delightful people were always a highlight. This network of supporters meant that we followed a slightly eccentric route but it was all the more pleasurable for that. As a metaphor of how Cambridge used to be, Stuart (the College) led and gave directions, and I (the University) followed. Occasionally I was permitted to race ahead but the College always pulled the Registrary back into formation! We got soaking wet in Cornwall, shared a room and a late night above a noisy pub quiz on 60s music, saw the devastation of some northern towns, and had a glorious evening after one leg of 100 miles with our wives in Ludlow who travelled over with fresh supplies. In the end, for Stuart it was mission uncompleted since he had to pull out in Biggar because of injury. Undaunted, he completed the remaining stages of LEJOG the next year. I am only sorry that I did not have his companionship for the rest of my ride – through his beloved Scotland in glorious weather and with many fascinating encounters and adventures.

The journey was the thing as it so often is. Arrival and departure mattered less. And so it is with Stuart and Sibella. Their journey in Corpus has touched so many people’s lives and left familiar marks on the landscape for others to follow and remember them by. They are a very special couple and I feel privileged to have known them so well and to have shared such an intense experience with Stuart during one hot August five years past.

A 2015 study showed that more members of the British public consider their dog a closer member of the family than their mother-in-law. While this doesn’t entirely pertain to Corpus, it does reflect the ability of pets to draw people together. A case in point is Flapjack aka Jack, Stuart and Sibella’s wonderful cocker spaniel, who has become a central figure in the College community. It all began a few years ago. As a result of injury, Stuart and Sibella were unable to walk Jack, and a girl in one of the chapel offices suggested an online spreadsheet so that students could sign up to walk him. It has continued by popular demand ever since.

When asking my peers why they valued Stuart and Sibella, the resounding answer was that having the Master’s wife to be DJ’ing a slack of surprises. Given its size, one might expect Corpus to be a close-knit community, but you certainly wouldn’t expect the Master and the Master’s wife to be DJ’ing a slack. You might expect them to be familiar with the students, but you wouldn’t expect Sibella’s impressive ability to greet every student by name. This dynamic duo turned their traditional roles into something more inclusive, fun and student-oriented – and this is what their time at Corpus will be remembered for.

Stuart and Sibella both clearly care about the welfare of their students and try to support them in any way they can. When Jack Brady and I participated in Jailbreak last year to fundraise for Cambridge RAG, we rang Sibella from Ankara airport to desperately ask for help with fundraising. In the knowledge that we were very close to winning, Sibella’s competitive streak emerged, and she managed to fundraise £200 in under an hour at the Nicholas Bacon Law Dinner! This is but one example of the many ways in which Stuart and Sibella support student endeavours every day. So many other Corpus students have their own stories about Stuart and Sibella, and are equally grateful for all their support.

Jack’s popularity at Corpus is testament to the fun that our very own dynamic duo have brought to their roles, but also to their genuine attention to and support for the welfare of students. It is little wonder Corpus feels like a family when they are around. Stuart, Sibella – and of course, Jack – you will be sorely missed.

Missing Jack
By Nina Jeffs (m2016, HSPS), JCR President

It is little wonder Corpus feels like a family when they are around. Stuart, Sibella – and of course, Jack – you will be sorely missed.
The long walk to Ely

By David Bagnall (m2017, Theological & Religious Studies)

My first meeting with Sibella couldn’t really have been more different. As an ordinand (one training for priestly ministry) I was back in Cambridge, and had been put on placement at Corpus chapel. Imagine my delight then, when after my first evensong I made my way over to the Master’s Lodge for a glass of sherry, and was greeted at the door, glass in hand and beaming, by my erstwhile companion on the dusty highway. Recognition dawned on both of our faces, and our friendship thus re-kindled, I have been blessed by her and Stuart’s companionship ever since. Indeed, the sight of Sibella at the Master’s Lodge door and the sound of Stuart laughing within is characteristic of their approach to College life, and particularly to the life of the chapel. College chapels can be funny things; as essentially private worship spaces, their raison d’être is to serve the college community, and if the head of that community is disinterested in the life of the chapel, then it can become somewhat rudderless. As someone who works in Corpus chapel, then, I have been profoundly moved by the support, generosity, and dedication that Stuart and Sibella have shown towards the life of the chapel. Not only are they present at nearly every service, often reading, preaching, or doing the prayers, but they have also consistently welcomed the congregation community into their home after Sunday evensong. Such is not the norm for Oxbridge chapels, although it feels so at Corpus, for through their generosity and love, Stuart and Sibella have made the chapel an integral part of College life. You will be profoundly missed by the chapel community, Stuart and Sibella, and we wish you every blessing for what lies ahead.

Exhuming the Gravediggers and more

By Aurélien Gueroult (m2013, Medicine)

On 6th June 2014, after decades of inactivity, the Gravediggers were exhumed. One of the College’s oldest societies, it was founded in 1879 as a play-reading society deliberately including Fellows and students in its membership. Resurrected by Julius Green (m1983), the newest incarnation of the society met on this occasion in the Master’s Lodge to perform The Mousetrap. Gathered in the living room, wine in one hand, madeira cake in the other, Fellows and students spent a delightful evening in each others’ company. No one expressed it better than one of the play’s more mysterious characters, Mr Paravicini:

“What stupendous good fortune! What an answer to prayer. A guest house, and a charming hostess... immediately - despair turned to joy.”

Stuart and Sibella have always shown the greatest generosity and hospitality in hosting events in the Lodge. Rather than being the Master’s ivory tower as it can often appear, students have felt overwhelmingly welcome there. It is a focal point of College where students relax and play croquet in the garden, have a glass of sherry after evensong and are invited to showcase their musical talents in informal Master’s Lodge concerts. It is a place for Fellows and students to come together in a more informal setting than a Director of Studies meeting. The Lodge has served a crucial role in giving Corpus its strong sense of community and none of this would have been possible without Stuart and Sibella.

The Laings are very supportive of Corpus students in all their endeavours. Whether it is in the chapel’s pews or on the pitch side at the Corpus challenge, they are a constant presence. Both are polymaths with interests in language, theatre, sports and music. Stuart has been particularly supportive of the musical activity of the College, serving as patron, hosting the many concerts in their home, playing in the orchestra, accompanying the choir on overseas tours and even composing a psalm setting. Stuart has also been known on many occasions to delight gentle company with his accordion playing.

I am very fortunate to have been a student at Corpus during Stuart’s Mastership. I would like to thank the Laings for their inestimably valuable contribution to the Corpus community, which made my and others’ time here so special. They will be missed, and I wish them all the best for the future. Floreat Antiqua Domus!
How I learnt to stop worrying and love travelling at the last minute

By Liz Winter, Director of Development & Communications

Shortly after Stuart became Master he and I made a trip to New York to see alumni. Sibella agreed to come too and add her wonderful mix of sociability and fun. Never having travelled with them before and being a pathologically neurotic traveller I booked a car to Heathrow with enough time to allow for several motorway holdups, a flat tyre and a failure in the security scanners and still allow us to catch the plane. Sibella was flabbergasted. She declared she had never got to an airport so early and probably didn’t have enough books to read to fill the hours before our flight. She was nonetheless very gracious about how long we sat on plastic seats in the scrum of Terminal 5 and I realised both that I needed to chill at airports and that this diplomatic pair could run rings around me where travel was concerned. Fortunately we travelled together many times after that; we always got there; we always had fun and alumni were always delighted to see us.

Fun is a word I associate with Stuart and Sibella. There has been plenty of serious stuff too, of course, and some difficult and sad times but overall, this past decade has been coloured by its enjoyment, warmth and fun. We all needed it after a very difficult period for the College, but the way Stuart and Sibella have woven and melded us together as a family has been so subtly done we’ve hardly noticed them doing it. They have used their extraordinary ability to create a home for the whole community, and embraced Old Members, parents and friends into the emotional geography of Corpus in a relaxed and natural way. It has had a big impact on everyone and made difficult times seem very far away.

They were the first Master and spouse to dispel the myth that dogs are not allowed in Corpus and brought Jack into our lives. He has become an integral part of College, loved by the students, staff and Fellows alike. He is a beautifully behaved hound though in his early youth he showed an eagerness to be part of meetings in a startlingly original way. I remember on several occasions having my legs sniffed and licked during large meetings round the Spencer Room table and just hoping it was the dog.

As Development Director I have greatly appreciated Stuart’s unfailing willingness to meet people, have them to dine, talk to them and visit them over the last ten years. Together we have put the case for support to many and won over doubtful benefactors who could not resist Stuart’s blend of personal involvement (for he is an alumnus too) and his uncompromising presentation of the facts without embellishment. He never exaggerates; he is always completely straightforward and donors respect this. I usually hop around behind him adding the adjectives but I know I can rely on him to tell it like it is. Over his ten year Mastership the College has received £27m in gifts and legacies to support Fellowships, bursaries, buildings and the endowment; something to be very proud of.

On a personal note I, like many people, have experienced their warmth and kindness at difficult times. When I was very ill a few years ago I once had to call for help because I was housebound and couldn’t fetch some urgently needed medicine from Boots. I was reassured that someone would bring it and an hour or so later I was immensely grateful when the doorbell rang. To my surprise and embarrassment it was Stuart on the doorstep holding out my bag of drugs. He had cycled to Boots and then to my house, interrupting his much more important duties for an hour or so. I’ve never forgotten it. It gives you a glimpse of the man who has no side and whose humanity is always visible before any sense of importance or rank.

I will miss them greatly but wish them a wonderful time in the next adventure in their lives. They will always remain part of the Corpus community and we hope to see them often.
At home and abroad with the Master and Sibella

By The Revd James Buxton, Chaplain and Dean of Chapel
2007-2017

I am delighted to have been asked to contribute to this special edition of the Pelican, and am writing this piece from Izmir (Smyrna) in Turkey where I am the Chaplain at the Anglican Church of St John the Evangelist. I have so many fond recollections of the Master and Sibella since the very day they arrived in Corpus for Michaelmas Term 2008. The hospitality of the Lodge is rightly legendary. They are amazing hosts. The warmth, genuineness and sheer style of the welcome was unvarying, whether they were hosting freshers to a welcome dinner, Peers of the Realm, senior ecclesiastics, staff, Fellows or the weekly invasion of the Lodge by the Evensong congregation and choir on Sunday evenings. Do not forget the wonderful musical soirees twice a term, literary evenings (Pelican Poets and Writers), and countless one-off events.

Grace, humour and enthusiasm for people are the hallmarks of the Laing welcome, and I often wondered how on earth they kept it up.

The Laings are also terrific travellers. Diplomatic life had of course led them to many different parts of the world prior to ‘the Corpus years’. They were enthusiastic participants on many of the trips I arranged during my time at Corpus. These ranged from outings to interesting and beautiful places in London and East Anglia, to much longer trips abroad. The Master and Sibella joined the College trip to Istanbul and south east Turkey in September 2014, and to Georgia (in the Caucuses) in 2016. They both joined choir tours to Lombardy and Normandy in the past three years, and the Master accompanied our 18-day marathon tour of Singapore, New Zealand and Hong Kong in the Christmas vacation of 2016.

Stuart and Sibella are amazing travelling companions. Always energetic and game (even on occasions when the Dean might have been a bit over ambitious about how much you can actually cram into one day), always fascinated by new sights and experiences, and always surrounding their fellow travellers with care and friendliness. They are more or less unrufflable, though it should be pointed out that the Master does get ruffled when people stand too close to the edge, say of a cliff, or on the roof of a very tall building. And of course they bring to every fascinating place great knowledge and understanding gleaned from their postings in eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Heartfelt thanks from me for all the hospitality I was shown personally too. Every blessing to them as they leave Corpus and embark on a new phase in their life together.
Fun to go voting with the Laings! A short trip down Pembroke Street to vote in the EU referendum of 23 June 2016.

Upon the walls of Diyarbakir, South East Turkey 2014.

Almost the only thing that ruffles Stuart is Sibella (and others) scrambling around above dangerous drops! This is above the great Syrian Orthodox Monastery of Deir Ez Zeferen (South East Turkey 2014).

With senior members of the Collegio Borromeo, Pavia, Italy. The Master and Sibella joined the choir tour to Pavia. The Collegio has an exchange agreement with Corpus.

The Master stirring a huge jar of wine, in a traditional winery in Georgia, September 2016.

Sibella on Mount Nemrut, South East Turkey, September 2014.
The Master and Sibella were terrific supporters of the life of the chapel. This is them with other worshippers on our Name Day 2017.

The Master and Sibella with the Corpus group at an ancient troglodyte city near Tbilisi, during the College trip to Georgia in September 2016. Undergrads, grads, Fellows and Fellows’ spouses may also be spotted in the group.

The Master and Sibella stretching their legs during a long journey in Georgia, September 2016.

With the head monk of Deir Ez Zefferen monastery South East Turkey 2014.

The Master and Sibella with some of the sporting heroes of the College.
Corpus seems to stand apart from many other Cambridge colleges because of its small size and the compact, intimate nature of its buildings. Some applicants choose it in part for those qualities: it is easily comprehensible as an institution. There is a family atmosphere because everybody tends to know everybody else in the Old House. For the last decade Corpus has been a remarkably happy family, and it has been so not least because of the influence of Stuart and Sibella Laing. Their shared background in the diplomatic service – Stuart as an ambassador and Sibella as an ambassador’s wife – was the perfect preparation for Stuart’s mastership of Corpus, and for ensuring it was a success.

The College had been through a period of change before the Laings arrived and, as after all such phases in the life of an institution, consolidation was important. Stuart’s diplomatic skills won the confidence of the governing body; Sibella’s skills as a hostess made the Lodge a place of unfailing welcome to students, Fellows, old members and visitors. Sometimes those of us who visited were treated to Stuart’s piano playing; but there were always interesting fellow guests, and the Laings always ensured introductions were made, and no-one remained uninvolved in the conversation; it was often like being at a rather good party, which indeed it often was. At High Table both the Laings ensured that anyone attending would hurry to go back; in every respect their leadership of the College was exemplary, and they never failed to act in its best interests. Over the last ten years they have provided continuity and strengthened the collective memory and ideals of the College. During my year as a Fellow Commoner in 2010 I saw the lengths to which the Laings went to get to know the undergraduates and to involve them in College activities – and to ensure that all members of the College felt comfortable in Corpus. As Cambridge graduates themselves – Stuart a Corpus man – he and Sibella understood the importance of a college providing the right environment for study and scholarship, but of also allowing and encouraging other ways of developing potential – as actors, musicians or sportmen and women. Stuart and Sibella were programmed to be sympathetic and helpful, and to put people at their ease. They took inordinate pride in the accomplishments of students inside the exam room, and outside; and were as adept at providing consolation when life offered a setback. In that respect they reminded me very much of the occupants of the Lodge when I became an undergraduate – Sir Duncan and Lady Wilson, he also a former diplomat of great distinction, and both hugely popular in the College.

Stuart has always taken the deepest interest in, and given strong support to, the College’s development activities, recognizing – as an Old Member himself – the vital importance of maintaining strong links with all Corpus graduates. As well as being a strong presence at the biannual reunion dinners, and taking the trouble to get to know as many of them as possible, he has travelled the world – several times – in pursuit of strengthening those links. In this way and in countless others he has expended a huge amount of time and energy in seeking ways to raise the College’s profile and secure benefactions to help future generations of undergraduates.

Equally important, he has ensured that new Fellows are quickly made to feel part of the College family, with a refreshing informality and a determination to celebrate their achievements and to encourage more of them. Stuart set his own example by taking an MPhil, squeezing the work in amongst his many duties at college and university level. His work on University committees was widely praised by other heads of house and won Corpus a high reputation in Cambridge: under his mastership, Corpus was the least isolated or stand-offish of colleges, exuding a spirit of openness and participating to the utmost extent in the life of the University.

Yet the secret of Stuart and Sibella’s success is not their energy, nor their warmth, nor their gregariousness: it is their love for the institution Stuart has led, a respect for its long history and traditions, and their commitment – a successful commitment – to leave Corpus in even better shape than they found it. While Corpus has changed in many ways in our lifetimes – almost all of them for the better - the fundamentals remain more or less the same, and the Laings have worked to preserve all that is best about the College and to keep it the intensely special place that it is to all of us. We were immensely lucky to have them. For that, all Corpus men and women owe Stuart and Sibella our heartfelt thanks, and wishes for a long, happy and fruitful retirement.

Bringing a spirit of openness

By Simon Heffer (m1979)
Gathering the Corpus family together

By Graham Pink, Head Porter

It doesn’t seem possible that ten years have passed since the Master and Sibella returned to Cambridge to take occupancy of the Master’s Lodge in New Court.

During those ten years lots of changes have taken place in terms of people and building refurbishments but my lasting memory of the Laings will be the energy, enthusiasm and hard work they have brought to the College.

Stuart and Sibella have worked tirelessly to bring the Corpus family closer together and this has been greatly appreciated by the College community.

The team of porters were invited to join them for lunch on several occasions which we thoroughly enjoyed.

The Laings opened up the Master’s Lodge and garden for a wide range of events and activities which were enjoyed by both College and University members.

Stuart has led from the front setting a standard for others to follow.

Speaking with Stuart and Sibella after a recent lunch I know they will not be resting on their laurels. I am sure in addition to whatever challenges they decide to take on, there will also be plenty of cycle rides, dog walking, book writing, seeing family and friends and of course return visits to Corpus.

I wish them both a long and happy retirement and want to thank them for their huge contribution to all that is Corpus.

From real tennis to Governing Body;
five years of warmth and friendship

By Tim Harvey-Samuel, Bursar

The ball came fizzing back over the net, at a perfect length and with a cut that made it irretrievable; it struck me just how fit and resilient this real tennis loving Master was. I had already noted that he possessed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the arcane rules of the game and a diplomat’s perfect sense of their interpretation. Since that day in the autumn of 2013 we have enjoyed many games, usually quite close, and those first impressions proved accurate. Stuart’s resilience shows in his extraordinary ability to get off a long haul flight, return to Cambridge and hold a series of meetings immediately while lesser mortals would be struggling to maintain consciousness. His immense commitment to alumni relations and fund raising has been received with enormous support and goodwill across the worldwide Corpus family.

As a close colleague he has always been extremely supportive of our financial, operational and investment strategy which has been particularly appreciated.

He has presided over a College that has prospered academically, renewed itself emotionally and generated the resources and the discipline to plan and build strategically for the future, confident in its own position. Stuart and Sibella have made the Lodge a very welcoming place for the entire community. Whether it is a grand dinner in ambassadorial style, student suppers or the children’s Christmas party, all those who enjoy their hospitality feel completely welcome there and I know that the staff have hugely appreciated Stuart and Sibella’s commitment to making Corpus a universally friendly community.

When working with Stuart day to day one is always aware of his enormous personal kindness, his intense concentration on doing the right thing and his respect for all points of view. The consistent but unshowy manifestation of these qualities throughout his leadership of the College has been an essential ingredient in this very successful Mastership, alongside his deep and evident love of all things Corpus. I am sure Stuart and Sibella will be frequent visitors to Cambridge and wish them every happiness in Wiltshire.
Corpus is incredibly lucky to have had a Master who performs, composes and loves music. Indeed, the Master and Sibella’s support of music in Corpus has made such a huge impact on College life. Their generosity in hosting Master’s Lodge concerts twice a term has brought people together and helped to form many fond memories, with the Master regularly performing and accompanying others. He often got the old accordion out for Corpus’s unofficial anthem, ‘Trumpington Street’ to the tune of ‘London’s Burning’, which he penned himself and was always great fun. Possibly the best aspect of the Master’s Lodge concerts – similarly to Sibella’s Pelican Poets and Writers – was the way in which they created an atmosphere of homeliness and community, which was incredibly valuable and a real hallmark of Corpus life.

We also have fond memories of the Master joining us on the Chapel Choir tour to Singapore, New Zealand, and Hong Kong in December 2016. He certainly threw himself into the experiences, dipping his toes into the hot pools at Rotorua, co-habiting a Marae with the whole choir (a brave decision) and providing us with a continual flow of banter. His musical talents have also been witnessed in Corpus chapel services themselves: the Master wrote psalm chants for the choir to perform and played voluntaries on the organ. In his final May Week as Master, we enjoyed a performance of Brahms’ Liebeslieder with members of the choir and singers from the Cambridge University Musical Society, accompanied by the Master and Nick Danks. The traditional May Week Concert starred Corpus’ famed duo as the charismatic narrators in a performance of Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf. In the upcoming tour to Malta, we are very lucky to be benefitting from Sibella’s links with the island; it seems that, with Sibella and the Master, a warm welcome is to be had anywhere in the world!

In the wider College sphere, the Master and Sibella have also made the most of their musical flair, especially by DJ-ing at slacks. Their choice of tunes was almost as good as their dance moves. Other highlights include the Christmas fundraiser Open Mic Nights in 2016 and 2017, where they gave rousing performances of Band Aid’s ‘Do They Know it’s Christmas?’ and ‘I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus’ in full costume with student bands. Their generosity giving up their own time for events like this is part of what has made College life so enjoyable.

On behalf of everyone who has experienced music in Corpus, we would like to extend our gratitude to both the Master and Sibella. The recent standing ovation at the last Master’s Lodge concert is testament to how much your hospitality, warmth, and sense of fun is valued here in the College. You will be greatly missed by us all, but we hope to see you back in Corpus for many more tunes!
Jack, the Chronophage and the haggis

By Ewan St John Smith (m2003), Fellow in Pharmacology and Custodian of the Corpus Chronophage

The Chronophage adorns the corner of Trumpington Street and Bene’t Street chomping its way through time, each minute devoured, never to be had again. This can appear rather macabre, but we must remember that time does not simply disappear; instead, events are recorded to produce history.

Looking back on the years of Corpus under Stuart Laing’s Mastership, which began soon after the inauguration of the Chronophage in 2008, there will of course be a number of events that will outlast both his Mastership and indeed the lives of many of those who carry on studying and working at Corpus after Stuart has left. Most notably perhaps are those things that one can see: the Kho building, for example, made possible by a generous donation from the Kwee family and opened in 2012 on the Leckhampton site. This is a building that not only provides extremely comfortable accommodation for single students but that also boosts the number of flats for couples to reflect that changing nature of the postgraduate demographic. In the last 18 months significant rebuilding work has been undertaken to refurbish the kitchens and dining hall within the Old House, a project that is set to finish at the end of this calendar year.

I was admitted as a Fellow in 2013, having been a graduate student here in 2003, and quickly came to appreciate Stuart’s way of managing a variety of matters across College. Corpus is an enjoyable place to work and a lot of that stems from how Stuart has played his hand as Master – clearly a diplomatic background must be beneficial in trying to oversee the various aspects of College life and ensure that students, staff and Fellows alike continue to live and work alongside each other to reach their goals.

A key part of this is how the Master’s Lodge has been utilised in the past ten years as a welcoming place for all. Whether drinks before a Matriculation Dinner or Feast, or for more informal gatherings, the Lodge has always been a place where one immediately feels at home and this is of course not just due to Stuart, but to Sibella who has always been welcoming and keen to get to know everyone associated with Corpus. Early on in my Fellowship, both I and my husband Kaveh were invited to a dinner with a few other Fellows and their partners, and events such as this have helped maintain a sense of belonging to a community, rather than being seen as just another employee. I think the same can be said from a student’s viewpoint; Stuart and Sibella have joined in with all aspects of student life, from the music of the Bene’t Club, cheering on rowers during the Bumps and, perhaps uniquely among inhabitants of the Master’s Lodge, to jointly DJing at Slacks in the Bar!

One can also not forget the third presence in the Lodge; Jack. On a cramped evening with everyone adorned with gowns, one sometimes wonders where a brush against the leg could have come from, until one sees Jack excitingly whizzing around! Jack was also responsible for me almost missing a Fellowship Committee meeting when I was passing through the Lodge and got waylaid by him prostrating himself in front of me and insisting on a belly rub!

A memory that will persist is of events in College to celebrate Burns Night in 2017. For the Leckhampton sit-down dinner, Stuart gave the formal address to the haggis, which left me, and no doubt many others, with tears of laughter in their eyes. To the words:

"Is there that owre his French ragout, Or olio that wad staw a sow, Or fricassee wad mak her spew"

Dishes were thrown away with a clatter before the haggis was disembowelled at the poem’s culmination. Due to the success of this spectacle, the President duly requested that Stuart repeat his address at High Table for the Friday Formal Hall. With a small stage to assist, Stuart delivered the address with much gusto and glee leaving students, Fellows and guests alike in smiles.

When Stuart steps down in August, he and Sibella will undoubtedly have left their imprint on Corpus. I am sure that many hundreds of students, staff and Fellows will look back on the Laing years with great fondness and will no doubt support me in saying thank you for all they have done over the last ten years and wishing them both a very happy and long retirement!

The Chronophage adorns the corner of Trumpington Street and Bene’t Street chomping its way through time, each minute devoured, never to be had again.
Whenever I think about the Master and Sibella at Corpus, I remember my first week as an undergraduate. After the excitement of freshers week (all three days of it) and my first Cambridge supervision, I came down with the inevitable freshers’ flu. Tired, sneezing and feeling sorry for myself, I met Sibella coming through New Court. The next thing I knew I was bundled up on the sofa in the Master’s lodge, a cup of tea in hand, listening to other students discussing their poetry. Little did I know that this was to be the first of many lovely evenings spent in that beautiful house in Corpus.

Throughout my time at Corpus, the Master’s Lodge was always incredibly warm and welcoming. The Master made an effort to make it feel like we could pop by at any time; whether that was to collect Jack (the energetic spaniel) or to head into the garden to read on the lawn. In any college this would be a delight, but in Corpus, which is so small and familial, this was particularly special.

The Master’s involvement in the students’ experience of the College went beyond inviting us in for termly dinners. Sitting in the boat minutes before the starting whistle in May Bumps, I would regularly look over at our bank party to see the Master supporting us along with the Boatman and the Coach. As a member of the Boat Club, he would of course join us for the celebratory Boat Club dinner at the end of term. A particularly enjoyable dinner involved the Master producing an accordion and proceeding to play a song which involved all of us standing on our chairs and singing.

The Master and Sibella have been a huge presence in Corpus over the last ten years and it’s hard to imagine what the College will be like without them. We have been very fortunate to know Corpus during the Master and Sibella’s time and I look forward to seeing them both at many Corpus events and dinners in the future.

Stuart came up to Corpus as an undergraduate to read Classics in 1967, the year after me. I found out quickly that he is a force to be reckoned with. In a fit of inappropriate and uncustomed familiarity, I called him “Stew”. He fixed me with his steely blue eyes and said with much authority “it’s Stuart!” I didn’t make the same mistake again.

Stuart is the complete all-rounder. A polymath, as witnessed by his research and written work, a musician and a sportsman and annoyingly good in all fields. Much has been written about his distinguished and high level career in the Diplomatic Service. Slightly fewer people know what an accomplished musician he is, specifically on keyboard instruments and the oboe. Possibly even fewer people know that he is a sportsman and hill walker too.

He played rugby for the College First XV on occasions, played real tennis and rowed for the College in eights ranging from the fifth to the first VIII. Here is a selection of the boats in which he rowed. Mays 1968 5th VIII (Gentlemen’s); Lents 1969 1st VIII; Mays 1969 4th VIII (The Vulgar Boatmen when I was Cox and Stuart was Stroke) and Lents 1970 5th VIII (The true Blue Boat). I don’t believe Stuart had a hand in the naming of any of those eights. His other sport is golf and he has been and is a keen supporter of the College’s Alumni Golf Day, held on the day before the September MacCurdy Dinner each year.

There is no doubt in my mind that Stuart has moved the College on significantly during his ten year tenure as Master. I served for six years on what was originally called the Corpus Association Committee, (under His Chairmanship), and saw at first-hand how he operates. He is measured, unflappable, considered and always gives 100% and is just the sort of person you would want at the helm to run our College. I do hope the College will remain in good heart, (a favourite phrase of Stuart’s), as it has been during his time as Master. I also hope that he and Sibella have a well-earned, long, happy and fulfilling retirement.

By Imogen Franklin (m2013)

By Mike Spencer (m1966)
Music in the Master’s Lodge

By Nick Danks (m1993), Fellow in Music

It was fairly certain that the Laings’ Lodge would be filled with musical making. Stuart, like so many Corpus alumni, had clearly relished the active, varied and much-loved musical traditions of the College whilst a student here and British Embassies have a proud record of not only promoting our musical heritage abroad but often cultivating a vibrant culture of informal music-making amongst the diplomatic and expat communities they served. One of my favourite musical anecdotes Stuart tells of his time in the diplomatic service was whilst based in Prague. Stuart had negotiated for some access to a local church to do weekly organ practice on a Friday morning: feeling he ought to raise the issue, he asked his secretary anxiously approached him, feeling she ought to raise the issue of what this regular block of time was being used for. Stuart felt he ought to come clean. “That’s such a relief” she replied “I was worried you were having an affair.”

On arrival as Master, the layers of Stuarts musical prowess were gradually revealed. We knew he was a keen organist and singer; then it was revealed that, in April of this year, the College took delivery of an exquisitely crafted instrument from Lammermuir Pipe Organs.

Stuart’s contribution to University music-making should also be acknowledged here, for his retirement as Master also sees the end of his tenure as Chair of the Trustees of the Cambridge University Musical Society (CUMS). Stuart took a great interest in the development of young performers at the University and was a great supporter of CUMS concerts. He would also regularly host, in Corpus, the distinguished guest conductors who worked with CUMS, kindly creating opportunities for our music students and others to meet and chat with these artists during their stay.

One final innovation to mention, again thanks to Stuart’s persistence and enthusiasm, was a more formal recital given this May by the Master and Fellows of the College in the Chapel. Realising that there was an often hidden depth to the musical talents of the Fellowship, Stuart was keen that, as well as occasional informal appearances at the Sunday evening Master’s Lodge Concerts, these talents should be heard in a more formal recital. And so it was that an audience of 70 assembled in the Chapel at 6.15pm on 11 May to hear an hour’s programme featuring: Bach and Buxtehude on the new chamber organ, Mozart’s 4th Horn Concerto played on Basset Horn (with Stuart accompanying) and classic French flute repertuare. For the other item in the programme it was my privilege to partner Stuart in a performance of one of Schubert’s finest works: his F minor Fantasia for piano duet. I believe I am the third Fellow of the College to take on the prime role of “Steward of the Master’s piano duet technique” during the past ten years: a role which has been great fun and from which I have also learnt a lot.

I would personally like to record my sincere thanks to Stuart and Sibella for the tremendous support they gave to me in my roles, formerly as Director of Music and, latterly, as Fellow and Director of Studies in Music; and I can be quite confident that ten years worth of Bennet’s Club presidents, College organ scholars, music students, instrumentalists and choral singers would express similarly sincere sentiments, along with the wider resident and alumni College community. There has always been a particular ethos of, yes, high standards, but also inclusivity, fun, innovation and variety to Corpus’ music-making. Thank you Stuart for your fundamental role in remembering, capturing and inspiring this; preserving this ethos for the next generation of College members.
A bright beacon of civilisation

By Sir Andrew Cook, Guild Fellow

My first encounter with Cambridge as an 18 year old schoolboy half-heartedly seeking entry to Trinity College was not a success. I was rejected, and for good reason. I wasn’t up to the challenge and didn’t demonstrate the necessary qualities of high intelligence, sparkle, enthusiasm and the Oxbridge ‘je ne sais quoi’. It was no surprise and no disappointment. So when my own son won a place at Corpus and I proudly accompanied him on a post-acceptance visit I had mixed feelings. Would he be alright? My own unhappy school days had been free of those aspects of school life which had caused me to reflect on how I myself had never encountered. Nor have I ever experienced a nicer, more rounded religious service than the service he took each week in his lovely chapel. Every Sunday morning his services would be enriched by the beautiful music of the organist and singing of the choir; a choir composed entirely of men. Wearing gowns, probably for the first time in their lives, the freshers bravely broke the ice among themselves. Then into the uneasy social mix came the Fellows. Be-gowned but smiling, their sole objective being to welcome the new students and make them feel comfortable and at home, and showing a real interest, they set about introducing themselves to their new charges. William plunged in fearlessly and never looked back. It was safe to leave him to it.

Over subsequent months I encountered many more of these fine qualities of Corpus. An occasional church-goer, I enjoyed attending the Sunday chapel service, where I met James Buxton, the College Chaplain. A nicer man I have never encountered. Nor have I ever experienced a nicer, more rounded religious service than the service he took each week in his lovely chapel. Every Sunday morning his services would be enriched by the beautiful music of the organist and singing of the choir; a choir composed entirely of College young students of the highest quality who enjoyed their music so much they had no hesitation in getting up on a Sunday morning in time for the 10.30 am service. Seeing and hearing those bright young men and women singing so beautifully, and enjoying it, caused me to reflect on how I myself was privileged to be witnessing an aspect of enduring civilisation at the highest level - and this due entirely to the inspiration of James Buxton and the ‘Spirit of Corpus’.

First to put me at my ease was the porter. We were greeted warmly by a kind, intelligent-faced avuncular gentleman. I introduced us and he took a look at William. “I’ll remember you when you come up in September”, he said with a smile. Which he did, and so did William. From the outset, William felt he was assured of the help and kindness of the porters in finding his way around this new and ancient world of learning, customs and traditions.

Next came matriculation. Parents hovered with their offspring around the edges of Old Court. Wearing gowns, probably for the first time in their lives, the freshers bravely broke the ice among themselves. Then into the uneasy social mix came the Fellows. Be-gowned but smiling, their sole objective being to welcome the new students and make them feel comfortable and at home, and showing a real interest, they set about introducing themselves to their new charges. William plunged in fearlessly and never looked back. It was safe to leave him to it.

Between them, they captured the spirit of the College. A spirit of quiet and profound civilisation. As William approached the end of his four happy years at Corpus, I saw in him a young man now fully fitted for the upper levels of the world stage. He had made many friends. His mind had been broadened, trained and uplifted. Corpus had brought out the best in him, and to give him his due, he had given his best to Corpus. So, it was time for the father to give something back to the Cambridge college which had helped make his son. Most good things work a little better with the lubricant of money. Yet another of Corpus’s great qualities was that it was open to all-comers: rich and poor, from whatever background. But the preservation of this wonderful oasis of civilisation available to all who merit it does not come without a cost. Buildings need to be maintained and academics recruited and paid. I wanted to do something permanent and identifiable, and following some guidance from the delightful Director of Development, Elizabeth Winter, I agreed to endow a Fellowship which will, God willing, endure far beyond my death.

It was with a little embarrassment that as a consequence of my donation I was invited to become a Guild Fellow. I did not really feel worthy of this. After all, what had I done beyond paying up? But in the ceremony of inauguration there, sitting on the ceremonial dias, inaugurating me in Latin, was Master Laing, calm and steady as ever. I was struck then, as I continue to be, by his example and bearing at the head of this solid rock of civilisation, as I was proud and humbled to be admitted as part of it.

Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: a bright beacon of civilisation in an ever more savage and uncertain world, carrying now the Laing imprint to add to the multiplicity of enduring memories of its long history and ancient past. I am grateful that I had the opportunity for giving something back to Corpus, a unique institution which has done so much for so many young people, and for so long. I wish the College, and the Laings, long, happy and successful lives. They both deserve it.
Confessions of the Butler

By Phillip Shephard, College Butler

When asked to put pen to paper about my time working with the Master and Mrs Laing, I thought I should go back to the beginning and confess. How I first met Mrs Laing. I’d been asked to clear the Lodge of odd pieces of catering equipment and leave it as tidy as possible in preparation for the new Master. Chris Le-Vien, the Catering Manager, had said the place would be empty for a few more days before their arrival, so I was going about my business when I heard voices coming from the hall. I went to investigate and found two women standing there looking around and chatting to one another. I asked them in my best Butler voice who they were and it all made for a memorable day and good natured about the drenching fit for the Ark and we suddenly had to open without warning. It was a deluge as the dessert was served the heavens flooded out. Back in 2010 the 1352 lunch stand out in my memory. For example, I was more than a tad nervous that the family soon put all my worries aside. So life in the lodge with the Laings began and right from the start they went out of their way to make everyone feel welcome. Mrs Laing always offered the staff tea whenever we were setting up a function; I don’t think many butlers get tea in the Master’s Lodge. Over the years I have been involved in very many functions there. There are too many to mention but for different reasons a few stand out in my memory. For example, the day the 1352 legacy lunch almost got flooded out. Back in 2010 the 1352 lunch was happily underway in the garden, with all the guests dressed up and sitting at beautifully laid tables enjoying the summer weather and good food. But just as the dessert was served the heavens opened without warning. It was a deluge fit for the Ark and we suddenly had to get 40 guests back into the Lodge under the few umbrellas we could find quickly and clear all the tables. It was of course impossible to achieve it without getting soaked, but in the end everyone was fine and good natured about the drenching and it all made for a memorable day and some amusing photos.

The most memorable occasion I was involved with in the Lodge was the wedding of the Laings’ daughter, Hannah. We had a very early start and I was more than a tad nervous that the day would go off well, but the Laings and the family soon put all my worries aside. There was a great deal of laughing and joking and the whole day was very happy and really enjoyable. As always with the Laings there were plenty of biscuits and tea on tap for the catering staff. It was a wonderful day with a great atmosphere and a real sense of family.

It would be wrong not to mention Jack the spaniel, of course, who will also be greatly missed by all of us who’ve worked in the Lodge. He has added to our enjoyment on many occasions. I would like to take this moment to say that it has been a real pleasure to work with the Laings and their family and thank them for everything they have done for the staff. We wish them well in their life after Corpus.

I can honestly say that my half-decade at Corpus has been truly shaped by the Master and Sibella. It is rare for the Master of a college to have such a direct influence on the lives of students, or for them to be so close and present in the college - but for a Master’s wife, or a Master’s dog? We were often accompanied by Stuart - from singing his psalm settings in choir to performing Schubert songs with him in a trio (Helen McKewon playing clarinet, the Master accompanying on piano and me singing) and even belting out College songs at Boat Club Dinners with the Master’s accordion accompaniment! It has been such a joy to get to know and be supported by these two people. I could never have imagined before arriving at Corpus that I might actually get to know the Master and his wife as real life people, even as friends, but this is exactly what has happened. In rocky times and smooth, they have both been there with kind smiles, or offers of a walk with Jack, or a glass of wine and a patient ear. I hope the next years are happy ones for them, and that they are able to take some time for themselves after working so tirelessly these years for the College, and for us, the students.

Memories of my student years

By Jessica Stewart (m2013, Asian & Middle Eastern Studies)

I have fond memories of being at Corpus. My dissertation was completed here and it was a very happy time full of learning and personal growth. I studied with Stuart and Sibella before they moved to Egypt, but I had the chance to work closely with them in my second year. They were always there to help and support me in my studies and in my personal life. I am grateful for their kindness and hospitality.

One of the most memorable occasions was during my first week at Cambridge. The Master gave me some of his old Foreign Office Arabic language books alongside an encouraging speech; in my second year he discussed possible dissertation topics with me, and on my Year Abroad in Egypt, he and Sibella visited me in Cairo, which they knew from their time posted there, and where one of their children had been born.

My musical endeavours at the College were often accompanied by Stuart - from singing his psalm settings in choir to performing Schubert songs with him in a trio (Helen McKewon playing clarinet, the Master accompanying on piano and me singing) and even belting out College songs at Boat Club Dinners with the Master’s accordion accompaniment! It has been such a joy to get to know and be supported by these two people. I could never have imagined before arriving at Corpus that I might actually get to know the Master and his wife as real life people, even as friends, but this is exactly what has happened. In rocky times and smooth, they have both been there with kind smiles, or offers of a walk with Jack, or a glass of wine and a patient ear. I hope the next years are happy ones for them, and that they are able to take some time for themselves after working so tirelessly these years for the College, and for us, the students.

Sibella, Stuart, Nancy, Kenza and Jessica in a school in Mokkatram (Garbage City).
A decade to delight in

By Sibella Laing

From this preamble it is clear that on arrival for Stuart to take up the Mastership in October, we already loved the Lodge and garden. From the start, the Lodge opened its doors to the College. The first week saw a reception to welcome Freshers, an “open house” morning to meet staff and Fellows, and a buffet supper for the Fellows and partners. “Entertain the home team first”, we were instructed in the Diplomatic Service; and it’s true that it does help morale.

In a college as small as Corpus, the scarcity of communal areas and function rooms makes it necessary to use all the space. So the Lodge has continued to function as a relaxed and welcoming venue for a variety of activities over the last ten years. My favourites? Probably the student buffet meals (three or four a term to cover all undergraduates once a year) at which it’s delightful to note the progress from shy fresher to confident sophisticated 3rd year downing the port or playing croquet on Sunday afternoons. At these parties we learn what goes on in the bar, the JCR, or of people’s achievements in fencing, cycling or the Footlights, and also, sometimes, about the tricky times. Students come to the Lodge for drinks after evensong on Sundays; for MCR and JCR Committee dinners; for the traditional Bene’t Club Concerts – 60 students sitting on the drawing-room floor for the Freshers’ Concert; for the revived “Gravediggers” Play Readings; for receptions hosted by the Christian Union or other College societies; and for the Pelican Poets and Writers evenings.

Richard Berengarten (then praelector) and I started this informal society with students, Fellows and friends of Corpus, meeting several times a term to discuss poetry in the Master’s Lodge, helped along by cake and wine. We have been lucky enough to welcome Rowan Williams, Jackie Wilson, Fiona Dunbar, Lee Ann Brown and local poets to discuss their poetry, as well as to provide a forum for new student writing from across the University. Founder members are still part of the group, which consists of a complete cross-section of the College, and it has been a great joy to be responsible for it over the last ten years. I look forward to hearing how it grows and develops in the next generation.

The Lodge dining room is an extraordinarily versatile space. The catering staff turn it from a buffet venue for 30 to an elegant dining room where we have been privileged to host an intriguing array of guests that have ranged from Vikram Seth and Alastair Darling (speakers at the Corpus Literary Festival brought in by Liz Winter, then a trustee of the Festival) to eminent Corpus alumni from the law, music and politics, Master’s Circle benefactors, preachers of the University Sermon and their guests, and many others. We have given tea to Prince Philip and Prince Charles, and given dinners to welcome new Heads of House and their partners – just as we were so warmly welcomed by other Heads when we arrived (despite the teasing for being the third Corpus Christi Master they had met in 2008). Our Lodge dinners have become the bane of the lives of the catering staff and the kitchens – they never end up with the guest list as originally planned, and many is the evening I have caught the eye of Philip or Sylvia, in a mixture of horror and amusement, as someone totally unexpected turns up or guests arrive without their partners; and once again the table plan is surreptitiously altered. We are blessed with a great team – the chefs, butlers and pantry staff, and the Lodge household – Corpus is famous for its high standard of cuisine, even though we on the inside may occasionally eat the same menu three meals running. Phil, the Head Butler, reminded me that his first words to me on seeing me in the Lodge on Day One were “Who are you, and what are you doing here?” (See Phil’s piece for more on this).

Some parties have grown irrevocably over the years. One such is the Christmas party for all the children of the Corpus family. Grown men fight for the honour of being Father Christmas, and here I must pay tribute to Dave Barton, Neil Howard and Jeremy Davies, who have all trudged through the snow (real or imagined) to reach us through the hazardous drawing room window with their irresistible “Ho Ho Ho!” – and to Miguel, Corpus post-grad, bemusing the children with his magic tricks year after year.

Another great annual event is the now traditional Matriculation tea run by the JCR Committee, who make hundreds of sandwiches and serve the tea, for Freshers and their families in the Lodge garden. Clear briefing on sandwich-making is essential, as I discovered when tasting the egg mayonnaise, which was strangely crunchy. I turned to the JCR Entertainment officer with a questioning look only to be told “You said to boil the eggs and then mash them up” – nothing about removing the shells. It’s chaotic, relaxed, and the families love it. Miraculously, with 200+ people in the garden, this event was never rained off.

The garden itself, under the gardeners’ expert care, is the greatest delight of the Lodge, but often complicated for entertaining, being either too hot or too wet. I remember the Honorary Degree lunch in 2010, when as Prince Philip stepped out on to the lawn, to the guests melted back into the shade of the mulberry tree, leaving the Chancellor marooned alone in the powerful sunshine. Too sunny for the Corpus Croquet Coppers team to see the balls; too hot for the Globe Theatre players performing in full Shakespearean costume; too wet for...
"Acis and Galatea", a joint production of the Bene’t Club and the Fletcher Players with everyone taking refuge in the Chapel for Act 2.

As I write this sitting at the drawing room window, a handful of students are revising on rugs in the sun. Sharing the garden with a variety of visitors has been a privilege. It may be members of the College community, but many others also have appreciated the secret oasis behind the high walls – for example, St Bene’t’s congregation members for their summer Hog Roast, charity receptions, or Globe Theatre productions. Sometimes there are happy clashes such as last year when in May Week the LGBT Society, the Fletcher Players and the Croquet Team were all partying in different corners of the Garden – all three somewhat bemused by the others!

Our favourite visitors were the ducks who hatched their 12 ducklings in our room window, a handful of students who humanely led them out of the back door into Free Garden, and through to New Court and ceremoniously led them into the garden and ceremoniously led them into the garden (and through to New Court and ceremoniously led them into the garden) (presumably as a result of prior aerial reconnaissance), where they were (presumably as a result of prior aerial reconnaissance), where they were (once) dispensing gin and tonic needed by a sad student on the steps of the Spencer Room. My involvement in Christian life in Cambridge has also resulted in my becoming a Trustee of Ridley Hall, serving on the parochial church council of St Bene’t’s next door, and participating in the Cambridge Churches Homeless Project.

No retrospective of our life in the Lodge over the last 10 years could be complete without reference to our children, and – especially – to Jack the dog. When we arrived, we had one grandson, a daughter living with us as she finished her PhD and ordination training at Westcott House, while our third child was newly graduated (Master when New Court was built) from Selwyn. Two marriages and five babies born in the family later, we have many new babies in the College community and in the Lodge, as well as the Lodge. It has been the longest term when the President kindly gave me full dining privileges in Hall (what an honour!).

I pay tribute to the people with whom I have worked in my official role as "Master’s Lodge Events Co-ordinator" (as Sue Anger-Brown styled me for HM Revenue purposes) - the staff in the Lodge, the Porters, Kitchens and Catering, the Gardeners, the Housekeepers, Maintenance, the Development Office and all who do so much to support the Master’s Lodge work.

I am also grateful to my colleagues in the other colleges who advised and encouraged me at the outset. As I think about our stewardship of the Lodge, I am very grateful to my predecessors in this role, who have all been generous in their support. I think especially of Kathleen Lee, wife of Sir Frank Lee who was Master when Stuart and I were undergraduates. She is my role model – funny, warm, and welcoming – and I remember, thanks to her, my first visit to the Lodge Garden as the girlfriend of a scholar in 1968, and for all that was set in train from then. A decade to delight in.