The last time the role of Congregation and its procedures were reviewed was as part of the North Commission of Inquiry, whose report was published in 1997. What was said then happily remains true and is perhaps of even greater significance now, in these challenging times, than twenty years ago.

“One of Oxford’s most distinctive characteristics, much valued by many, is that it remains a self-governing community of scholars, whose members, in theory at least, enjoy the opportunity for a high degree of direct involvement in its governance. Thus... the University’s ultimate sovereign body is Congregation, essentially comprising its resident senior members.” (4.45).

“The existence of Congregation as the University’s ultimate governing body provides a fundamental expression of Oxford’s nature as a self-governing community of scholars and gives members of that community the opportunity of having a voice in government; it is the means whereby the University’s executive bodies and its Vice-Chancellor are held accountable to the University as a whole.” (5.9)

As editor of Oxford Magazine, I would not normally want to dwell on my own situation since the Magazine is there to provide for the expression of the widest possible range of viewpoints from across the whole University. But recent events make my individual experience relevant to the standing of Congregation.

Shortly before the first debate on the EJRA in Congregation this term my University card happened to be coming up for renewal. I duly applied to my department, in good time and as I had done regularly before, asking them to organise an updated card on my behalf. I was informed that I was no longer a member of Congregation and that I would have to select an alternative card status, either as “academic visitor” or from among five categories of “retired staff”.

By that point time was running out and I was aware that my access to email and to University buildings would soon cease. So I hurriedly made my choice and my new card arrived within days. (Somewhat to my surprise it was free of charge: others had recently had to pay £15. My email continued to work and I could still get into libraries but I was locked out of my department until, after further enquiries, the card entry system was adjusted). Two weeks later, out of the blue, I was informed in an email from the Council Secretariat that I was in fact still a member of Congregation and that I could collect a replacement card.

This sequence of events meant that I could not attend (or vote in) the first of the two meetings of Congregation on the EJRA this term. But there are rather more worrying aspects to this sorry tale. Firstly, nobody had told me I had been deemed removed from membership of Congregation; the first I knew about it was when I applied for renewal. This strikes me as inconsiderate, to put it mildly.

Secondly, I wanted to know who makes such decisions, on what grounds, and how aware Congregation is that such procedures exist. I have now asked Wellington Square to explain the procedures involved in Congregation membership to me and how it came about that I was reinstated when others, as I understand it, have not been. So far, after two weeks, I am none the wiser because my email enquiry has not been answered and not even acknowledged.

In an article below Gill Evans, who is not a Congregation member, has researched the situation as far as it is possible for a non-member. As she says, all may possibly be explained as the result of the extra work entailed during the moving of the Card Office into the Council Secretariat.

T.J.H
This may be the moment for Oxford to revisit the possibility of becoming a private university. Given the state of the government’s finances as the country emerges from the longest recession since the 1930s, and the growing amounts of money needed to keep the NHS afloat with an ageing population, it seems unlikely that any government in the future will be able to lavish increasing sums on higher education. Oxford might have greater flexibility to expand in the way that it wants if it were to cut itself adrift from the national system. At the very least, it would no longer be under pressure to show immediate practical benefit of its research to UK plc, and could make up its own mind how far to emphasize ‘third-leg’ activities. The usual response to the suggestion is that the University is still highly dependent on state funding and that it could never raise the necessary extra endowment it would need to make this possible. At first glance this seems to be incontrovertible. Oxford still receives 50 per cent of its income from HEFCE and the national research councils. The University would need to increase its endowment by upwards of £8 billion simply to cover the HEFCE grant of £200 million. However, in the light of the University’s confidence that it can raise £3 billion in the present campaign to fund a variety of novel ventures and obligations, it may not be outside the realm of possibility to raise such a sum, if the advantages of independence were carefully and plausibly explained to alumni and donors. There are several ways in which money might be raised: many American universities raise capital by selling bonds.

As it is, Oxford is likely to find its present status far less congenial in the coming years. It is hard to see how the University can continue to benefit as handsomely from being a member of the national system of higher education as it has hitherto. At present, Oxford and Cambridge get the best of both worlds. Their endowment and good facilities help them to dominate each round of the RAE: this provides the income to do more high-quality research which in turn attracts more private funds. For the two universities, it is a virtuous cycle. To outside observers, it is manifestly unfair. Public money is flowing towards those in clover rather than those in need. In a national system, limited funds should be distributed more equitably and with an eye to sustaining national research priorities rather than maintaining Oxford and Cambridge’s international eminence. It can only be a matter of time before the other members of the Russell Group put this point forcibly to government, and the government of the day, whatever influence the two universities can bring to bear, accepts that Oxford and Cambridge should have less of a call on the public’s research purse.


If we want to overcome Britain’s enduring social divisions, we will need to give people real opportunity and make Britain the world’s Great Meritocracy. That will require government to take on long-ignored problems like Britain’s lack of training and technical education, as well as long-lasting injustices, such as the lack of care for people with mental health problems, and the inequality of opportunity that endures on the basis of race, gender and class.

We are already the fifth largest economy in the world, the biggest recipient of foreign investment in Europe and the fastest growing economy in the G7. We have three of the world’s top ten universities and, despite forming less than one per cent of the global population, we boast more Nobel Laureates than any country other than America.

Our long-term prosperity depends upon science, technology and innovation. The UK has an outstanding science base and many world-leading tech companies. We now need to go further. Our ambition is that the UK should be the most innovative country in the world.

At the last autumn statement, we announced a significant increase in government investment in research and development. We will deliver this and ensure further growth so that overall, as a nation, we meet the current OECD average for investment in R&D— that is, 2.4 per cent of GDP—within ten years, with a longer-term goal of three per cent. We will increase the number of scientists working in the UK and enable leading scientists from around the world to work here. We will work hard to ensure we have a regulatory environment that encourages innovation.

...Our world-beating universities will lead the expansion of our R&D capacity. We must help them make a success of their discoveries—while they have a number of growing investment funds specialising in spin-outs, we have more to do to replicate the success of similar university funds in the United States. To fix that, we will work to build up the investment funds of our universities across the UK. We want larger, aggregated funds to increase significantly the amounts invested in and by universities. We want universities to enjoy the commer-
We want to see universities make their full contribution to their local community and economy, sponsoring local schools and being creative about how they can open up opportunities for local people, especially those from ordinary working backgrounds.

...We will make it a condition for universities hoping to charge maximum tuition fees to become involved in academy sponsorship or the founding of free schools.

...For too long in this country, technical excellence has not been valued as highly as academic success. We want British technical education to be as prestigious as our world-leading higher education system, and for technical and academic fruits of their research, through funds that are large enough to list, thereby giving British investors a chance to share in their success.

...Our institutions of education, old and new, will be critical to spreading success. It is why we will back new scientific and technical institutions. It is why we want to see universities make their full contribution to their local community and economy, sponsoring local schools and being creative about how they can open up opportunities for local people, especially those from ordinary working backgrounds.

Labour believes education should be free, and we will restore this principle. No one should be put off educating themselves for lack of money or through fear of debt.

There is a real fear that students are being priced out of university education. Last year saw the steepest fall in university applications for 30 years.

Since the Conservatives came to power, university tuition fees have been trebled to over £9,000 a year, and maintenance grants have been abolished and replaced with loans. The average student now graduates from university, and starts their working life, with debts of £44,000. Labour will reintroduce maintenance grants for university students, and we will abolish university tuition fees. University tuition is free in many northern European countries, and under a Labour government it will be free here too.

The ability of universities to attract funding to maintain top-quality research activity and deliver the best teaching depends on being open and outward looking. The ability to attract and retain the best staff and students in our world-class universities is vital. Brexit undermines these at every turn. In government, Liberal Democrats established a fairer system such that no undergraduate student in England had to pay a penny of their tuition fees up front or pay anything afterwards until they earn more than £21,000 per year. This meant that only high-earning graduates would pay their tuition fees in full, and eliminated systematic discrimination against part-time students. We now have the highest university application rates ever, including from disadvantaged students. But the Conservatives are threatening to undermine opportunity by ending student bursaries, freezing the repayment threshold and raising the level of fees.

We will:

• Reinstate maintenance grants for the poorest students, ensuring that living costs are not a barrier to disadvantaged young people studying at university.

• Establish a review of higher education finance in the next parliament to consider any necessary reforms, in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on access, participation and quality, and make sure there is no more retrospective raising of rates, or selling-off of loans to private companies.

• Ensure that all universities work to widen participation across the sector, prioritising their work with students in schools and colleges, and require every university to be transparent about selection criteria.

• Reverse the damage to universities and academics by changing the country’s course away from a hard Brexit.

• Recognise the value of international staff to universities and promote international collaboration.

• Fight to retain access to Horizon 2020 and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions funding.

• Reinstate quality assurance for universities applying for degree-awarding powers.

...Protect the science budget, including the recent £2 billion increase, by continuing to raise it at least in line with inflation. Our long-term goal is to double innovation and research spending across the economy. We would guarantee to underwrite funding for British partners in EU-funded projects such as Horizon 2020 who would suffer from cancellation of income on Brexit.

Extracts from the Labour Party Manifesto 2017

Extracts from the Lib Dem Party Manifesto 2017
The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 passed into law on April 27th. But the ease with which it slipped through both Houses in the week before the dissolution cannot disguise the fact that its passage through parliament was exceedingly rough. Between December and March the bill was subjected to well over 500 amendments before a version was arrived at that both Houses could accept. What can we learn from this process, and where does it leave universities?

The issues the bill was designed to address are complex. It was apparent to all factions in the parliamentary debates that, following the introduction in 2012 of a funding system for teaching that is primarily based on tuition fees and loans, the regulation of the higher education sector needed some adjustment. The more that students are required to invest financially in the courses they take, the more they need an appropriate regime of consumer protection. And since universities had been encouraged by the financial incentives established in recent years to concentrate on research, which was where the real kudos for academics lay anyway, it could fairly be argued that some action was needed to redress the balance and ensure that adequate time and attention is devoted to teaching.

The reforms proposed by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), which is where the responsibility for higher education lay at the time, did not end there, however. The bill presented to parliament in May 2016 also included measures to reorganise the research councils and incorporate them into a new overarching funding body, along with the agency that acts as a facilitator for the practical application of research outcomes, Innovate UK. It also sought to make it easier to establish new university-level institutions (“providers” in the language of the bill) offering training in the particular specialised skills considered necessary to drive the economy forward. Beyond that point, however, an extraordinary muddle seems to have been generated by the insistence on subordinating educational requirements to a very crude application of economic logic.

When soliciting support for the idea of applying the dynamics of the market to higher education in 2010, the Browne Review offered the mollifying reflection that competition “generally raises quality”. In the plans that BIS subsequently devised for universities, however, that proposition hardened into the dogma that the only way to gauge the quality of a higher education institution was in terms of its throughput and customer satisfaction ratings. As a result, universities were confronted with the so-called “Teaching Excellence Framework”, a scheme that lacked any effective means of assessing the excellence of teaching and relied instead on statistics which strongly correlate with other factors—e.g. social background, personal motivation, the state of the job market—but which, as the Royal Statistical Society warned BIS in July 2016, bore no reliable relation to the quality of teaching that the scheme purported to assess.

In the drafting of the bill, moreover, the Government’s desire to encourage private investment in higher education gave rise to further perversities. Since evidence already existed of the risk of fraudulent activity by private for-profit providers, the new regulator—the “Office for Students”—was to be equipped with powers to take action in cases of perceived fraudulent activity—powers that would apply equally to all universities and would include the authority to enter and search the premises of higher education institutions. And since, in an open market, there was also the risk of institutions failing to maintain the high standards that are customarily expected of British universities, the regulator would be equipped with the authority to deprive them of their degree-awarding powers; and this authority, too, would apply equally to all universities. In this way, what was described in the bill as an Office for Students grew into an Office for Everything Else: a regulator whose powers of intervention in the sector extended to the power to validate degrees awarded by the institutions it regulates, an enforcer of the market approach to higher education which also carried ultimate responsibility for quality and standards.

It was left to the House of Lords to exercise the due care and attention that had been palpably lacking in the original design of the bill; and this they did during the first three months of 2017 in the course of debates lasting well over 60 hours. The amendments carried by the Lords would, if they had been allowed to stand, have:

- Established a clear sense of what a university is and of the nature of its role in society;
- Ensured that rigorous independent scrutiny was applied to any scheme for evaluating the quality of education and teaching in universities;
- Prevented the creation of consolidated league tables of English higher education providers on the basis of any such scheme;
- Decoupled the fixing of course fees from any such ranking procedure;
- Made the authorisation of any new provider by the Office for Students subject to an assurance from its Quality Assessment Committee that the institution in question is able to maintain the standards expected of a UK degree;
- Strengthened the scope for an institution to appeal at law against a revocation of its degree-awarding powers by the Office for Students;
- Given students a statutory entitlement to be added to the electoral roll; and
- Ensured that international students are not counted as long-term migrants to the UK.
None of these amendments was accepted by the Government—and it was rumoured that the Government would have rather seen the bill as a whole fail than accept the last one. But in the parliamentary “wash-up” at the end of April a number of compromises were made. What, then, is the situation that universities are left in now that the bill has become law?

The conception of the TEF has not changed significantly and its underlying purpose remains the same; but a new clause requires the Secretary of State to appoint “a suitable independent person” to conduct a review of its procedures, its metrics, and its impact on institutions, in the course of the next twelve months. The provision for ranking universities on the basis of their scores in the TEF and thereby to stigmatise many of them in the eyes of the world also remains; but the use of this process in the setting of differentiated fee levels will be deferred until 2020, apparently in the hope that the evaluative procedures developed by then will be such as to command greater confidence. And in an important limitation of executive power, any ministerial decision on the setting of fee levels will now also be subject to the express approval of both Houses of Parliament.

The Office for Students retains its power to revoke universities’ degree-awarding powers as well as to grant them, but there is now clear provision for institutions to appeal at law against what they see as an unfair decision. The Office for Students is now also required to obtain advice from the body responsible for quality assessment on matters relating to the quality of provision in institutions seeking registration, thus reducing the potential for conflicts of interest a little—although the body in question is not established as independent within the Act, but will be “designated” by the Secretary of State on the recommendation of the Office for Students. Also, while there is to be no uniform process for adding students to the electoral roll, there will be a procedure for encouraging institutions to facilitate this process.

The thorough revision that this legislation underwent has, then, given universities and those who, like Council for the Defence of British Universities (CDBU), campaign on their behalf some breathing space and the opportunity to press for more sensible approaches to quality assurance before the TEF begins to bite in 2020. Vigilance and persistent advocacy will be needed in the months ahead, however, if the capacity of universities to educate is not to be strangled by an ill-conceived and inappropriate regulatory regime. In the meantime, the news of planned redundancies at the University of Manchester that broke on May 10th suggests that the mere prospect of the TEF, coming on top of other financially significant developments, is already prompting university managements to treat selected members of their staff, not as integral components of the academic community under their charge, but as assets that may be disposed of on the basis of purely financial calculations. Whatever reassuring gestures the new law makes towards academic freedom and institutional autonomy, its overall effect will add nothing to the value of a degree course, but a great deal to the precariousness of an academic career.

A shorter version of this article appears on the website of Prospect Magazine under the title “What will change under the Higher Education and Research Act?”: https://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/politics/what-will-change-under-the-higher-education-and-research-act

**Colleges and the new HE Regulator**

**DAVID PALFREYMAN**

So, we now have the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (‘HERA’). The various amendments proposed by the Lords were largely swept away as the Act was rushed through before Parliament closed down for the June general election. These amendments, *inter alia*, included universities being ‘free to act as critics of government and the conscience of society’.

Academic freedom is protected by the references to the requirement for the Office for Students (OfS)—as the new HE regulator (replacing HEFCE as funder and latterly regulator)—‘to protect institutional autonomy’, defined as ‘freedom’ in deciding what to teach, how to teach, who should teach, and whom to teach. And the same constraints upon the Secretary of State in issuing ‘guidance’ to the OfS apply as now for him/her guiding HEFCE—the SoS, for instance, is not able to tell HEFCE/OfS to interfere with specific degree courses at particular universities; in other words, English universities remain, as ever, independent of government and are not public bodies in the way that, say, US state universities are or as are most European universities.

In addition, the 1988 wording from the Education Reform Act (ERA) concerning academics having ‘the freedom within the law... to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges’ is repeated twice within HERA, both under the ‘General duties’ imposed upon the OfS and also by way of a ‘Public interest governance condition’ that it in turn can impose upon the ‘higher education providers’ registered with it.

But are the Oxbridge colleges ‘higher education providers’ that must register with the OfS—and pay its annual subscription fee? Or are they below the OfS radar screen as merely constituent parts of the two federal institutions of Oxford and Cambridge?—each of which will, of course, need to register. Even if they do not need to register with the OfS, does the University’s OfS registration imply that it should expect from the colleges of the collegiate University commitments to behaviour that are required by the OfS of it?—and a contribution to its OfS annual sub!
For example, the OfS can require a registered provider to supply ‘a student protection plan’ setting out what will happen to the existing students were the institution to fail. Thus, Cambridge University will perhaps have to explain how its 20,000 or so students will be ‘taught out’ or transferred to another provider when it goes bust—but will it also need to explain how the students of any insolvent college under its federal umbrella will be looked after? Will colleges have formally to agree in advance to bail out the winding-down of their bankrupt brethren?—or at least to share out among them the hapless undergrads of the failed St Jude’s as the college site is flogged off as a Disney theme park or as an upmarket retirement complex or as Harvard’s other Cambridge campus?

What is needed to become, or to have to become, an entity within the OfS filing cabinets? The OfS has to construct a ‘register of English higher education providers’ with ‘provider’ being defined as an entity providing ‘higher education’ by way of a ‘higher education course’ fitting the ‘description mentioned’ within Schedule 6 of the Education Reform Act 1988. So, off we now go to ERA88.

The Oxford colleges do not themselves provide a degree ‘course’ as defined by ERA—they offer to their students tutorial teaching that (one hopes) will assist them in following the degree course set by the University of Oxford and hence lead to their passing its public examinations so as to earn the degree to be awarded by the University when their College presents the relevant students at a degree ceremony. One assumes much the same applies at The Other Place.

Thus, the Oxbridge colleges are not eligible to seek registration with the OfS even if they wished to. Similarly, they are not ‘customers’ of HEFCE since they do not (directly) receive teaching grant or other HEFCE funds—and hence HEFCE is not their regulator on behalf of the Charity Commission as it is for English universities as exempt charities and the Oxbridge colleges since 2011 are each formally registered with the CC.

Or are they potentially eligible to be an OfS customer under certain circumstances? There is a section within HERA labelled ‘Designation of other providers of higher education’ under which the Secretary of State, not the OfS, may designate ‘a provider of higher education’ who would not otherwise be regarded as an institution for the purpose of HERA and of the OfS. Is providing tutorial teaching for Oxford’s degree courses in the way noted above enough to be ‘a provider of higher education’ for the purpose of the SoS designating St Smug’s?—but why would St Smug’s want to be on the OfS register anyway? We will have to wait for the SoS to make ‘regulations’ concerning ‘the making of applications for designation’ and on ‘the making of [such] designations’ to find out whether the Oxbridge colleges can one day ask to and be allowed to join the OfS register.

In the unlikely event that an Oxbridge college became subject to the OfS what of the OfS power not only to deregister an errant HE provider but also to terminate the degree-awarding powers (DAPs) of a university/college whose quality and standards it has grave concerns over, as much discussed during the passing of the HER Bill? (An Oxbridge college wanting to join the OfS is ‘unlikely’ indeed—unless, say, a collective of colleges sought to escape from their federal collegiate University and wanted their own degree-awarding powers as in effect a US-style tiny liberal arts institution...) Certainly under HERA the OfS can, by way of a Statutory Instrument and then subject to an appeal process to the First-tier Tribunal, ‘vary or revoke an authorization given to an English higher education provider’ by way of a Statute (the means of creating the post-92s ex-poly universities, those few universities created under the Companies Act, and each of Oxford or Cambridge recognized by their own 1923 Act) or by way of its ‘Royal Charter’ (how most pre-92 universities and most Oxbridge colleges are created)—but only where this ‘authorisation’ is ‘to grant taught awards or research awards’, and (as yet), of course, the Oxbridge colleges do not have degree-awarding powers. So, Coketown Met or the University of Barsetshire could be deregistered and its ‘authorisation’ varied/revoked in relation to its DAPs, but could perhaps carry on some kind of business in some way or other; and, if Oxford were deregistered and stripped of its DAPs, then presumably some of the constituent colleges might seek to become the US-style liberal arts college noted above. One assumes, however, that Oxford (or even Cambridge) losing DAPs is fairly unlikely!
Membership of Congregation

G.R.EVANS

How secure is your membership of Congregation?

One of the special privileges of academic life in Oxford is membership of its sovereign body, Congregation, which can both initiate and reject legislative change. The personal right to vote is precious in this parliamentary microcosm. When the press reports a development in another university where academics find themselves helpless—as in the case of those affected by the recently announced intention to axe hundreds of academic jobs at Manchester,1—members of Congregation may breathe a sigh of relief that they could, collectively, prevent that happening in Oxford by using their votes.

Membership of Congregation may have come automatically when you were appointed to a senior academic or academic-related post. Or it may have involved an invisible process of negotiation, initiated by your College or Department, of which you may have been unaware. Most weeks throughout the year the Gazette carries a section headed Council of the University: Register of Congregation, in which the Vice-Chancellor reports that the following names have been added to the Register of Congregation.2

A relatively new system seems to have been set up from 16 January this year,3 transferring responsibility for administration of Congregation membership from the Card Office to the Council Secretariat. ‘Nomination’ forms downloadable online4 are to be ‘authorised by the head of college, head of department or faculty/divisional board secretary and returned by the college or department administrator to the Congregation Membership Administrator’.5 The criteria then to be applied may be read online.6 They are made up of a mixture of requirements specified in statute or regulation and apparently, in some cases, involving decisions whose authority is not made clear (see Annex). The successful receive an email ‘inviting them to become members of Congregation’.7 The unsuccessful apparently have no avenue of recourse if they wish to appeal against the decision.

The existence of this area of uncertainty has a special importance at the time of writing. Among the proposals of the EJRA Working Group was the recommendation to confine the EJRA in future to those graded 8 or above, and thus essentially to members of Congregation.8 So if your post falls into a grey area with respect to your entitlement to become a member of Congregation the decision may make you subject to the employer justified retirement age, while everyone else may go on working at will. You might prefer in that case to refuse that email ‘invitation’.

Can you lose your membership of Congregation?

When members of Congregation retire they may continue as members even though no longer employees. Emeritus Professors9 are stipulated, and they keep their membership and the right to debate and vote until they are 75. Yet the reality for some years has been that the annual publication of the Register of Congregation in January required under Statute IV,4 (1) has kept upon it a number of retired members who did not previously hold Professorships. The only published criterion, though it is not clear on what authority, seems to be that the candidate for continuation should still be ‘active in teaching and/or research’.10 However, that leaves the voter at risk of being removed from Congregation at any time before the terminal age of 75.

There has recently been a cull. Some long-standing retired members have had a shock when informed that they have been removed from the list and are no longer members of Congregation, well ahead of their 75th birthdays. The Register of January 2017 does not yet appear to have been published, only a gathered list of additions for the year.11 No list of removals has been published. Perhaps this is connected with the transfer of the whole business to the Council Secretariat. It would be helpful to know.

Are members of Congregation no longer equal?

A result of the existence of this grey area—where membership of Congregation seems to be a matter of the exercise of administrative discretion out of sight rather than of right—has been the inadvertent creation of an untidy and unofficial hierarchy in Congregation, dividing those with unquestioned rights to be there and those with a right to membership until they are 75, from those less secure in either right. There are clearly constitutional implications to any form of potential manipulation of a franchise of which Congregation should be aware.

There are further potentially confusing class-distinctions, of those whose membership is ‘academic’ from those who are classified as ‘academic-related’. These last form several sub-classes. Some hold senior research posts, such as RSIVs (whose holders may not realise they no longer count as ‘academic’ staff). Some are librarians or research staff in roles where they supervise doctoral students, conduct and publish research, teach, and would regard themselves as ‘academic’ on any sensible definition. Others are in administrative roles, which formerly constituted a senior civil service for the University but now perhaps tends to see itself as ‘managerial’. Some might claim to be still active in teaching or research, some not.

In the still-recent process of revision of Statute XII it was noted that:

‘The balance of staff in the University has changed dramatically in the lifetime of the present statute, with a large increase in the proportion of research and administrative staff. Now the vast majority of posts in the University are covered by a statute requiring extended and complex procedures originally intended to protect the employment security and academic freedom of academic staff.’12
The change in the balance of numbers between the category historically comprising Congregation—the permanent teaching-and-research academics—and the other categories with other interests who now outnumber them, is potentially important to the running of the University's ancient democracy. A parliament predominately composed of academics and a parliament composed of academics, the genuinely 'academic-related', and their 'managers' may vote differently, especially if the managers happen to outnumber the academics present at a live debate.

Oxford is not alone in facing increasing difficulties about consistency in the grant of its franchise. Cambridge is facing very similar difficulties. It is beginning a Review of Regent House membership (among other constitutional concerns), with a consultation on: 'the current membership structure of the Regent House, its size, and its representation of the staffing groups in the University, and whether and what changes should be proposed as a consequence.'

Although Cambridge has the advantage that membership of its main academic and senior administrative community is easily defined by the possession of a University Office (Statute C), it shares with Oxford the complications of the entitlements of those with College posts (though not joint appointments) and the growing proportion of those in what Cambridge calls 'unestablished' academic and academic-related posts, especially as researchers on fixed term contracts.

Annex

The reader who likes to be able to find things may take a moment to look through the following information about the authority for the grant of the franchise to some but not others. Statute IV provides a list of those Congregation 'shall consist of'. This includes a catch-all item allowing in:

'Any other persons or classes of persons admitted by or under regulations made by Congregation.'

Those Congregation Regulations (made in 2002) have been amended several times, in 2007, 2011 and 2013. They now specify an additional list of specific postholders and persons, including ‘the Emeritus Professors who are under the age of 75 years’, and another but different catch-all at Section 10: ‘all persons working in any university department or institution who hold posts on, or assessed as equivalent to, grades 8 and above’. The original form of words of section 10, as agreed in 2002, had been:

'All persons working in any university department or institution who hold posts on Administrative, Senior Library and Museum, and Computer Staff Grades 3 and above, on Research Staff Grades II and above, and on any equivalent grades for academic-related staff.'

The change of 2007 altered this from a listing of specific posts to a simple ‘grading’:

'All persons working in any university department or institution who hold posts on grades 8 and above.'

That change had been necessitated by the introduction of the new pay and grading structure, approved in August 2006, as an explanatory note made clear. The phrase which now seems to create a grey area (‘or assessed as equivalent to’) was added in 2011 to ‘affirm’:

‘That staff who have transferred to the university under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) and are on grades assessed as equivalent to grade 8 or above are eligible for Congregation membership.’

It is that ‘as assessing as equivalent to’ which appears to permit the frequent addition of short lists of individuals to membership of Congregation throughout the year. Council can also do its own ‘assessing’ under Section 11, which adds to the list of categories of Congregation membership the further catch-all:

‘Such other persons as Council shall determine.’

Council ‘determines’ this under its Standing Orders, Annex E, para.29:

‘Council has determined under section 11(1) of Congregation Regulations 1 of 2002 that persons appointed to offices which entitle them, or will entitle them on confirmation of appointment, to hold fellowships under section 12 of Statute XIV, Temporary Tutors in the Department of Educational Studies, members of the Finance Committee of the Delegates of the University Press, the Peter Moores Dean of the Said Business School, the Principal of Ripon College (Cuddesdon), the Clerks of the Market, the Vicar of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, and the Editor of the University Gazette hold posts which qualify them for membership of Congregation.’

The fact that there is an ill-defined grey area with limited provisions for transparent procedures governing the fate of a particular individual, may become even more important if the Legislative Proposal published on 23 March and considered at a Meeting of Congregation on 2 May is approved in the forthcoming postal vote whose outcome will be known after this issue of the Magazine has gone to press. One of the changes to Statute XIV, 15 (4) would add the wording underlined:

‘Every employee of the University who holds a post on, or assessed as equivalent to, grade 8 or above.’

Those so ‘assessed’ and entitled to membership of Congregation, will have to do battle with the EJRA ‘procedure’ to be framed by the Personnel Committee under new Statute XIV, 15 (2), in order to continue in the University’s employment.


2 A revised Register is required to be published each year in January and may be found in the annual list of Supplements to the Gazette. Cambridge requires its Registry to publish the Roll of the Regent House on the first weekday in October and:

‘At the time of publication of the list the Vice-Chancellor shall fix a time and place for publicly hearing objections which any member of the University may make to the inclusion or omission of any name (Ordinances, Chapter 1, Section 3),’

The decision of the Vice-Chancellor regarding any such objection shall be final but at least there is a route by which a decision not to enfranchise someone may be challenged.


7 http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwadminoxacuk/localsites/councilsecretariat/congregation/Congregation_membership_Notes_of_guidance.pdf.

8 http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2016-2017/23March2017-no5164/congrega tion/#250401

9 Defined at: http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/185-084.shtml.

10 http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwadminoxacuk/localsites/councilsecretariat/congregation/Congregation_membership_Notes_of_guidance.pdf

11 How frequently can be seen from a list of these episodic additions recently published: http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2016-17ContentBySubject/registerofcongregation/, though not apparently forming part of the 4 May issue of the Gazette.


This revision included staff at grades 6 and 7, who were not automatically members of Congregation, but some of whom might conceivably become so with the appropriate backing from a Faculty or Department or College, but remain at risk of losing their franchise in the same way.


14 https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/781-121.shtml.
Whoever it was who first coined the phrase “lies, damned lies and statistics” probably did not imagine that one day educated people would find themselves so easily led astray by faulty statistical analysis. A common defence against being misled in such a way is simply to ignore statistics or mathematical arguments altogether. This is sadly an attitude that seems to pervade the thinking of many colleagues in Oxford University. But why does it matter?

It matters because we have a responsibility to set an example to society by basing policy on evidence not prejudice. The danger is that when faulty statistical analysis leads to conclusions that resonate with prejudice then a series of unfortunate consequences can follow. The report of the Review Group on the EJRA (Employer Justified Retirement Age) contains serious statistical errors and makes claims that the EJRA is having a “substantial” effect when, in fact, a proper statistical analysis shows that there is no evidence of any such thing. Council’s decision to accept the Review Group’s recommendations was informed by the Group’s faulty analysis. This led to Congregation being encouraged by Council to adopt a policy on the basis of these statistical errors. This policy, now at the point of occurrence, is required in order to reflect the nomenclature in the new salary structure. The change in nomenclature preserves existing arrangements and entitlements; http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2006-7/weekly/220207/agen.htm#2Ref.

An amendment to the Congregation Regulations concerning Membership of Congregation is required in order to reflect the nomenclature in the new salary structure. The change in nomenclature preserves existing arrangements and entitlements; http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2006-7/weekly/220207/agen.htm#2Ref.

Notably, the report is guilty of comparing percentages that have the effect of being misleading. The underlying problem is that the EJRA can have, at best, only a marginal effect on the rate at which vacancies occur. Simple arithmetic shows that, using the Review Group’s own data and reasonable assumptions regarding the length of an academic career, the EJRA will produce a change in the rate of vacancies of only about 2%. Specifically, these figures are based on a 37 year career limited by the EJRA and an average 40 year career without an EJRA, i.e. those who chose to extend their working do so on average for only 3 years. If the extension is for 5 years the change increases only to 3%. Even if the highly improbable figure of an average extension of 10 years is assumed, the effect is still marginal. These figures are statistically insignificant especially when it is recognised that the rate varies by plus or minus 20% (approximately) from year to year. It is like trying to measure how much the song of a bird adds to the noise whilst standing beside a busy motorway. This “2% argument” completely undermines the assertion that the EJRA is having an effect on diversity. None!

Figuring out the EJRA

PAUL EWART

Council’s representatives in the debates have still not explained why the University’s Statistical Consultancy service was not asked to carry out the analysis of the data collected by the Review Group. It would appear that they relied upon other sources within the Administration for the statistical analysis. Since the Consultancy service is available to any member of the University I asked the unit to make a study of some of the data in the report. The request focussed on a few key questions relating to the most important claims in the Review Group report; specifically, what evidence is there, in the data, to support the claims that the EJRA is having an effect on the proportion of women in: Associate Professor and Statutory Professor grades? The Consultancy Report’s conclusion is that there is no evidence to support the Review Group’s claim that the EJRA is having an effect on diversity. None!

The underlying problem is that the EJRA can have, at best, only a marginal effect on the rate at which vacancies occur. Simple arithmetic shows that, using the Review Group’s own data and reasonable assumptions regarding the length of an academic career, the EJRA will produce a change in the rate of vacancies of only about 2%. Specifically, these figures are based on a 37 year career limited by the EJRA and an average 40 year career without an EJRA, i.e. those who chose to extend their working do so on average for only 3 years. If the extension is for 5 years the change increases only to 3%. Even if the highly improbable figure of an average extension of 10 years is assumed, the effect is still marginal. These figures are statistically insignificant especially when it is recognised that the rate varies by plus or minus 20% (approximately) from year to year. It is like trying to measure how much the song of a bird adds to the noise whilst standing beside a busy motorway. This “2% argument” completely undermines the assertion that the EJRA significantly improves opportunities for young academics.

Almost as worrying as the empty promise in the Review Group report of an “evidence-based” approach is that the Statistics Consultancy found evidence of incompetence and basic errors in statistical analysis in the Group’s analysis. Notably, the report is guilty of comparing percentages—a practice that has the effect of being misleading when the percentages refer to different numbers. To understand this error consider the percentage change resulting from adding one woman to a group of two men and two women; the proportion of women changes by 10% i.e. from 50% to 60%. Compare this with the percentage change increases only to 3%. Even if the highly improbable figure of an average extension of 10 years is assumed, the effect is still marginal. These figures are statistically insignificant especially when it is recognised that the rate varies by plus or minus 20% (approximately) from year to year. It is like trying to measure how much the song of a bird adds to the noise whilst standing beside a busy motorway. This “2% argument” completely undermines the assertion that the EJRA significantly improves opportunities for young academics.

Almost as worrying as the empty promise in the Review Group report of an “evidence-based” approach is that the Statistics Consultancy found evidence of incompetence and basic errors in statistical analysis in the Group’s analysis. Notably, the report is guilty of comparing percentages—a practice that has the effect of being misleading when the percentages refer to different numbers. To understand this error consider the percentage change resulting from adding one woman to a group of two men and two women; the proportion of women changes by 10% i.e. from 50% to 60%. Compare this with the percentage change increases only to 3%. Even if the highly improbable figure of an average extension of 10 years is assumed, the effect is still marginal. These figures are statistically insignificant especially when it is recognised that the rate varies by plus or minus 20% (approximately) from year to year. It is like trying to measure how much the song of a bird adds to the noise whilst standing beside a busy motorway. This “2% argument” completely undermines the assertion that the EJRA significantly improves opportunities for young academics.

Almost as worrying as the empty promise in the Review Group report of an “evidence-based” approach is that the Statistics Consultancy found evidence of incompetence and basic errors in statistical analysis in the Group’s analysis. Notably, the report is guilty of comparing percentages—a practice that has the effect of being misleading when the percentages refer to different numbers. To understand this error consider the percentage change resulting from adding one woman to a group of two men and two women; the proportion of women changes by 10% i.e. from 50% to 60%. Compare this with the percentage
change from adding one woman to a group of two hundred men and two hundred women; a change of 0.25%. The number of women has changed by the same amount but the percentage change is 40 times bigger in the first case!

Another underlying problem is that some people, including some of our intelligent colleagues, find difficulty in accepting these figures because they do not support pre-conceived impressions. The simplistic notion, informing the speeches of many of the Council’s representatives and members of the Review Group, was that without the EJRA the stream of vacancies would dry up. This naïve concept feeds into the view that the shortage of posts for young academics is caused by the refusal of older people to retire. Couple this with the anecdotal impressions of how difficult it is to get rid of those who are not performing, whatever their age, and the EJRA seems like a simple solution to all our problems. But the “2% argument” shows that the EJRA has little or no effect on intergenerational fairness. No matter how passionately our colleagues speak “on behalf of those who have no voice”, the simple fact remains that the stream of vacancies will continue to flow and the EJRA has no significant effect.

One thing is clear, however, and that is how pervasive and powerful is the emotional pull of the argument for the younger generation, no matter how disproportionate it is to rely on the EJRA to solve these problems. No one who advocates abolishing the EJRA has any argument with the aims. Indeed, many who wish to continue working, especially in the sciences, work very hard to create more opportunities for, and give time and energy to mentoring, young academics to give them the best chance for an academic career. But having aims is not sufficient to justify a policy. The policy must be shown to work and the EJRA has not been shown to work.

Some examples from the recent Congregation debate illustrate how difficult it seems to be for some of our colleagues to understand arithmetic and statistics. Prof Surrender declared that the “2% argument”, based on the whole academic career of an Associate Professor, was wrong because for Statutory Professor grades, with an average career span of about 15 to 20 years, the effect would be much larger than 2%. This is like saying the answer to question (1) is 2% and the answer to question (2) is different, so the answer to question (1) is wrong! It is hard to know how to deal with this kind of illogicality— as someone once said of a similar argument, “It isn’t even wrong!”

Professor Tarassenko, another member of the Review Group, repeated the claim that a control group did not exist for statistical comparison with Oxford. The University’s Statistics Consultancy unit could have told him and the rest of the Group, if they had asked, that there are statistical methods available, such as a ‘multi-level random effects model’ to deal with differences in retirement procedures between different universities. He went on to assert that they needed another 5 years of data to find the effect they sought, thus ignoring the fact that the change in the vacancy rate of 2% is independent of how long you look at it. It will still be 2% after 10 years or even 100 years!

A particularly sad feature of the debate was revealed in a well-delivered and emotional speech by the Vice-President of OSUS. She recounted how depressed she had been when told by her tutor how difficult it would be to get an academic job, buying into the idea that the problem was caused by the refusal of older academics to retire. Again, this ignores the facts; i.e. that mandatory retirement has been in force all along, it has always been difficult, the number of posts will always be limited, it is simply impossible to give everyone who wants one an academic job and the EJRA will make no significant difference to this situation. It saddens me that a tutor should pass on such woolly thinking to the younger generation such that in Oxford University, from the top to the bottom, people show such a wilful disregard for figures.

Apart from these underlying misunderstandings, many colleagues harboured an underlying fear about the “enemy within”, those aging unproductive academics that would be difficult to remove without an EJRA. Better to make everyone retire than deal with the messy business of dismissing someone for incompetence or the unforgivable sin of academic staleness. It is true that the procedure for dismissal of an academic is hedged about with conditions that the employer will find difficult to meet. These conditions are there, of course, as legal safeguards to protect us all from dismissal without good cause. The EJRA has the effect of circumventing these legal protections at the point of becoming 68 years of age.

We are all, young and old, engaged in the battle for academic excellence. It may be that occasionally the cohort of older colleagues will include a small number of unproductive members. These weaker members, the “enemy within” are, however, dramatically outnumbered by active and valuable “soldiers” in the same age group. The EJRA is analogous to killing all the willing and productive soldiers in this cohort for the sake of ridding us of the tiny minority. This is crazy! Apart from the obvious fact that unproductive academics can be found in any age cohort, there are other ways of dealing with such situations. The University, however, has resolutely refused even to consider alternatives. Meanwhile the other UK universities continue to prosper without operating draconian retirement policies and are experiencing none of the disastrous consequences predicted by the supporters of the EJRA.

This essay is a plea for everyone to take another look, or perhaps a first look, at the objective factors—the arithmetic of the “2% argument” and the absence of any supporting evidence that the EJRA is having any effect as shown by the University’s own Statistics Consultancy. Secondly, rather than accepting uncritically the bare assertion, made by an academic lawyer, that the EJRA is proportionate, colleagues should read the detailed forensic analysis by Dame Janet Smith, one of the most senior judges in the land, for an impartial view of the policy’s lawfulness. The judgment is now freely available to read. Finally, this is a plea to reject emotive arguments that play upon ageist prejudices and ill-founded preconceived notions and to work together for an approach to retirement that makes the most of our world-leading academics for the benefit of both old and young.

1 This quotation is sometimes attributed to Benjamin Disraeli.
2 DJS, Dame Janet Smith in the Appeal Court case Galligan vs The University (2014). The full judgment may be viewed at http://www.oxforddejragroup.net/Content/local/Dame_Janet_Smith_Judgement.PDF
3 DJS, op. cit., paragraph 6.
4 http://www.oxforddejragroup.net/Content/local/Stats%20report.PDF
7 DJS, op. cit., paragraph 32.
The educated choice

Unit 10, Oxonian Park, Langford Locks, Kidlington, OX5 1FP
oxuniprint.enquiries@oup.com
Behind the lines 1914-1918

BARRIE JUNIPER

This is not a brave tale. This is not a story of frightened young men, at the sound of whistle, with Lee-Enfields in their hands, scrambling up crude ladders and charging across the thick mud of Flanders’ fields. This is just a picture of some of those few men, and a majority of young women, who made victory possible. They survived and their story has to be told.

Edward ‘Archie’ Juniper was born in Bedford on Christmas Day 1889. His father Ted was a jobbing carter and coachman and his mother a seamstress. He seems to have done pretty well at school (the Sir William Harpur) and we still have some of his prizes. He was apprenticed to his first love, the then rapidly expanding motor-engineering trade. He was also fascinated by wireless and, by family tradition, built the first vacuum tube, as opposed to crystal-set receiver, in Bedford just after the 1st World War.

Along with many of his school mates, ‘it will all be over by Christmas’, he lined up at the local recruiting office in August 1914. Of that school class at the Harpur Archie thought that just three of them, only, came back alive, uninjured or not to have suffered a period of imprisonment. The medical officers at the recruiting office were, as is well attested, horrified at the physical condition of these young volunteers and rejected 40% outright. Later they were less fussy. They took one look at Archie’s already ulcerating varicose legs, and then at his c.v. Archie was not going to the front.

The War Office was already alarmed, at the outbreak of hostilities, that Britain was completely unprepared for total continental war. They could never have envisaged the magnitude of the task ahead of them and that millions of men, supported by thousands of artillery pieces, would pound each other to pieces on the Western Front. They also assumed, mistakenly as it turned out, that the Kaiser’s Zeppelins would be able to pin-point the established large-scale munitions factories in England, such as there were, and destroy them with a few accurate aerial bombs. It would be impossible. But near railway lines. For Oxford readers one such munitions factory was constructed, along the railway line, between the Kennington Road and Upper Road. Some of the older houses there are built over 19th century railway carriages hauled in as temporary accommodation. The carriage interiors are still there! Young Archie was given immediate authority to requisition whatever machine tools were required. He needed lathes, drilling machines, tapping and threading units, compressors, a big power source, premises and trained staff. He was given an empty factory just off the Broadway in central Bedford. At least he and the girls didn’t have far to walk. He accumulated all that he needed and, ironically, and inter alia, stripped the workshops of the school that I later attended. He set to work to train the staff. What he got were laundry maids, secretaries (Gladys) and shop girls. But the pay seemed good. Slowly Archie built up his trained work force. He opined, discretely, that one or two of the first projectiles might have gone up sideways, but they improved rapidly. Archie was a perfectionist.

The rough shell castings came down from the Sheffield foundries. Archie’s father, pulled out of retirement, probably helped with his horses and carts to shift the metal back and forth. He also had another important job. The girls had to fine-turn the rough castings, in and out, to perfect dimensions, lathe-turn the two grooves for the copper driving bands, and compress in the soft copper, tap out and thread for the nose cones and fuses, and lathe and thread and fit the base plates. Then the shells were painted with the essential diagnostic coloured rings for their next assignment—H.E., shrapnel, smoke and gas. Yes – my gentle, civilized, thoughtfulness was made to do the most brutish of tasks.

There were no transfer machines in those days. Each shell was lifted by hand to the next station. The girls must have ached to their bones for the first few weeks but they built muscle quickly. A large gas-engine was installed just outside the main shop that ran virtually continuously for the whole war. Long, horizontal, wooden shafts pierced through the ceilings of the machine shed and down from these rotating shafts looped great belts of leather driving the separate machines. Occasionally one belt would break, lashing like a demented serpent across the factory floor. Then my grandfather, wise in the craft of re-building harness, would move in, repair and start the shafting again. Nobody, according to Gladys was ever hurt in those dramatic breaks, but she, driving too hard with her lathe, broke the machine tool and sent a steel splinter through her left palm. The local hospital stitched her up and, still bandaged, she went back to her machine. She wanted her bonus.

The British Government, desperate for shells, had set a piece rate for munitions. Little wonder that Britain went bankrupt after the 1st World War. Government had no idea how fast and eager, and so soon, were Archie’s trained and hungry girls in rapid action. Gladys said if, and it is a very big if, every transfer went smoothly, every machine worked perfectly, the blanks arrived on exact schedule and nothing broke, that, with overtime, she could earn £6-10s a week! That was probably four times as much as her father was earning. The more perceptive of our readers will have realized that there was a Piggy-In-The-Middle. That poor piggy was my father, the only trained fitter in the shop, limping between one machine and another, re-grinding machine tools, re-setting tolerances, repairing his antiquated equipment at every step. Odysseus between Scylla and Charybdis had it easy compared to Archie between the War Office and the generals, on the one hand, and some twenty boisterous, aggressive and hungry young women on the other.

Little wonder that Gladys walked out of that factory after the end of the war with a purse of £250 and bought herself a house, cash down. Whereas my father went straight into bankruptcy after the 1st World War. Government had no idea how fast and eager, and so soon, were Archie’s trained and hungry girls in rapid action. Gladys said if, and it is a very big if, every transfer went smoothly, every machine worked perfectly, the blanks arrived on exact schedule and nothing broke, that, with overtime, she could earn £6-10s a week! That was probably four times as much as her father was earning. The more perceptive of our readers will have realized that there was a Piggy-In-The-Middle. That poor piggy was my father, the only trained fitter in the shop, limping between one machine and another, re-grinding machine tools, re-setting tolerances, repairing his antiquated equipment at every step. Odysseus between Scylla and Charybdis had it easy compared to Archie between the War Office and the generals, on the one hand, and some twenty boisterous, aggressive and hungry young women on the other.

Little wonder that Gladys walked out of that factory after the end of the war with a purse of £250 and bought herself a house, cash down. Whereas my father went straight into hospital and was in and out for the next three years, and virtually was never able to walk again, and never to return to his beloved motor trade.

Archie’s girls suffered no chemical exposure. They were not the ‘canary girls’ of the notorious filling factories. They survived, livers intact, fit, healthy and rich.

Informants – my father and Gladys Dodd (nee Foster)
Review of three areas of governance: Regent House membership, Council membership, and Discussions

8 May 2017

As noted in the Council’s Annual Report of 2015-16, the Council has commissioned a review of certain aspects of the University’s governance, focussing on three topics: the membership of the Regent House, the membership of the Council, and the format of Discussions.¹ A working group has been appointed to conduct the review; the membership of the group and its terms of reference are set out below. Meetings of the group will commence when the Vice-Chancellor Elect takes up office on 1 October 2017, and it is anticipated that one of the group’s first steps will be to prepare a report setting out proposals for consultation, which will be followed by an opportunity to make comments on that report at a Discussion.

In the meantime, as part of an initial information-gathering exercise, members of the University are invited to send any comments they wish to make on one or more of the three areas to be covered by the review to governance-review@admin.cam.ac.uk by Friday, 28 July 2017 (respondents are asked to indicate whether they wish their comments to remain anonymous). Responses will also be solicited from Heads of Schools, Heads of Departments and Chairs of Faculty Boards, and Heads of Colleges.

Terms of reference

(i) To consult members of the University about the current membership structure of the Regent House, its size, and its representation of the staffing groups in the University, and whether and what changes should be proposed as a consequence.

(ii) Taking into account the Group’s conclusions about the membership of the Regent House, to consider whether and what changes should be proposed to the membership of the Council, including the balance between categories, the overall size of the Council, and the arrangements for ensuring that those standing for membership and the Regent House are provided with the best information about the duties, responsibilities, and priorities for the Council. In discharging this term of reference the Working Group may wish to consult beyond the current membership of the Council, including those who have recently served as members or stood for election.

(iii) To consider possible changes to the arrangements for Discussions to ensure that contributions from those members entitled to contribute can be most easily made taking into account options for the use of digital contributions compared with the current arrangements where—except in a few recent exceptional instances—all contributions are read out at the time when Discussions are held.

(iv) To consider any matters related to these terms of reference on which the Working Group wishes to report to the Council.

Membership:

Mr John Shakeshaft, T (Chair, Council member in class (e))
Professor Michael Proctor, K (Council member in class (a))
Professor Fiona Karet, DAR (Council member in class (b))
Dr Stephen Cowley, EM (Council member in class (c))
Dr Nick Holmes, T (Council member in class (c))
Dr Alice Hutchings (Council member in class (c))
Professor Abigail Fowden, G (General Board member not on the Council)
Professor Christopher Young, PEM (General Board member not on the Council)
Professor Mark Elliott, CTH (Professor of Public Law, Law Faculty, as a person with relevant expertise)
Professor Eilís Ferran, CTH (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Institutional and International Relations)

In attendance: the Acting Registrary, the Head of the Registrary’s Office as Secretary to the Review Group, the University Draftsman, and the Deputy Head of the Legal Services Office.

¹ Further information on the Regent House, Council membership, Discussions, and other aspects of University governance can be found on the governance website at http://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/.

Not the Gazette

NB The Oxford Magazine is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.
Every centimetre a king

Mike Bartlett, King Charles III. BBC Two, 10 May 2017.

Mike Bartlett’s theatre play (2014) was transferred to television, with much of the original cast, and also directed by Rupert Goold. It was considerably trimmed in translation, but the essentials remain. Different viewers will have different views as to which was the most unkindest cut of all. The play was and is controversial, and Transport for London absurdly pixelated the image of Prince Charles on the posters. In some quarters it has been regarded as treasonous, but it’s not as disrespectful as the alternative universe wittily created by Hugh Dennis as he does a voice-over for clips of the Duke of Edinburgh on Mock the Week. Well, he has done himself out of a place in the Honours List.

King Charles III would have been impossible in Queen Elizabeth I’s time, when Britain was as unpleasant as any modern police state, and even the abdication scene in Shakespeare’s Richard II (enacting an event from two centuries previously) could seriously annoy her because of its potential allegory. Queen Elizabeth only appeared on stage as an infant, a non-speaking part — that’s what infans means, and that was in Henry VIII, ten years after her death.

Whatever one’s misgivings, political and artistic, King Charles III was a striking production, and a cut above much of the useless pap on television. It imagines the future, just after Queen Elizabeth has died. Charles creates a constitutional crisis by refusing to sign a bill regulating the press. One might have thought that in view of the rocky ride the monarchy has had with the press over the decades he would support censorship, but he sees the move as endangering freedom of speech and democracy itself.

Charles is played by the late Tim Pigott-Smith, who crosses across not exactly as a replica of the real thing, but a plausible portrait in a slightly other dimension. Susan Scott’s Celebrity Lookalike Agency could have provided actors with closer resemblances, but that perhaps wasn’t the point. There’s a weather reporter on ITV who looks more like the Duchess of Cambridge than Charlotte Riley’s portrayal. William (Oliver Chris) is at times uncannily like the real thing (although less formally challenged) and Richard Goulding is a very convincing Prince Hal, complete with an unsuitable republican girl-friend he meets at Boujis. On television we have a woman Leader of the Opposition (Priyanga Burford). And William’s children now appear: Charlotte wasn’t even born in 2014.

What happens is that the family gangs up on Charles, and after a dangerous moment with a tank he abdicates and William and Kate are crowned. In Shakespearean fashion a ghost contributes to motivation, with perhaps a touch of malevolence: the ghost of Princess Diana. It’s all fantasy of course, but there is a nugget of truth in the play: that if Charles as King tried to exercise more power than is acceptable it would provoke a constitutional crisis. Since the play was originally aired in 2014 there has been a crisis of sorts with the so-called ‘black spider memos’ from Prince Charles. And Harry has controversially been courting Meghan Markle, an American divorcée and actress of mixed race—a quadruple whammy there. James Cadbury Reiss (the Press Adviser) would prefer the Harry of the play ‘stick to Sloanish fluff’. Just before the play was on television there was the momentary threat of a Buckingham Palace crisis, but it turned out it was no more important than the Duke of Edinburgh stepping down from staging himself in men’s eyes.

Mention must be made of the stunningly admirable music by Jocelyn Pook.

***

The rest of this review, I’m afraid, will be all academic, pedantic even, and, for many, totally beside the point. I want to look at the medium, not the message, although perhaps it will turn out, thinking of Marshal Mc Luhan (who he?) that to some extent the medium is the message. The play is famously written in blank verse, and all the reviewers have nodded towards it. But, without looking at it in detail—which I shall proceed to do. For many viewers and theatre-goers the blank verse will have passed them by, and they won’t have had much concept that this is what made the dialogue sound funny. There is a history of blank verse being employed in twentieth-century drama, much of it not satisfactory, by Stephen Phillips, Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley (who wrote a prequel to Macbeth and a play called King Lear’s Wife), Yeats, Auden, Christopher Fry and notably T.S. Eliot. In the ‘fifties I saw Schiller’s Maria Stuart on television, and was puzzled to work out why it sounded so odd, but after about half an hour it dawned on me: it wasn’t to do with the wonky translation; it was because it was in blank verse. Imagine contempor ary television putting on such a thing! Bernard Shaw was much aghast blank verse, which he said gave ‘factitious prestige to the platitudes of dullness.’

Blank verse is most associated with Shakespeare, and it makes his plays sound as they do, but one has to beware of regarding it as a blanket concept. Early Shakespeare tended to employ regular, end-stopped lines, and it can get tedious when reeled out at length. Later Shakespeare was freer, with more variation on where the stresses fall, and more enjambment. The Prologue to Henry V, for instance, is 34 lines, of them not end-stopped, all lines 9-13 not end-stopped. And 19 lines are not perfect iambic pentameters. Although even with enjambment there is often a sense of the integrity of the line. What needs to be remembered is that some of the most famous lines of Shakespeare, such as ‘Now is the winter of our discontent’, ‘To be, or not to be’ and ‘The quality of Mercy is not strained’ are not perfectly regular iambic pentameters at all. The blank verse contributes to the overall Shakespearean effect a certain heightening and transformation of everyday reality. This is particularly appropriate in plays dealing with Kings, who are abstracted from the diurnal. It is important to remember, though, that the plays are not entirely constituted of blank verse; a sizeable proportion is in prose, which often registers low-life activity, and the more immediate.

King Charles III then is mostly blank verse, and it helps to establish the distance from reality, creating a sort of ‘as if’ fantasy world. I did not see the theatre production, but I imagine that the artificial environment of the stage is reinforced by the oblique nature of the blank verse, and underlines the fact, which is very striking in the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, that plays in theatres embody ritual elements, rather than literal representations of reality. This used to be the main theme of Hugo Dyson’s lectures all those years ago (one can see a clip of him as a man-of-letters in Darlings: ‘kissed on the lips twenty times by Julie Christie; it’s never too late to fall!’). Television is more naturally committed to verisimilitude and photographic reality, so that it is not naturally hospitable to something as weird as blank verse, and there is a collision between the verbal medium and the naturalistic visual medium.
Sometimes Bartlett’s blank verse is regular:

But now I’ll rise to brace things have to be
The Queen is dead, long live the King. That’s me.

But he is aware that it can be a procu-
stean bed, so often feels free to shake off
the shackles. However, for my money
there are considerable problems and draw-
backs in the whole enterprise. When he
tries to keep the lines regular he employs
the tiresome old bag of tricks which, in the
end, signed the death-warrant for ‘poetry
with a big P.’ They are various, and include
elided syllables (he has ‘cross, ‘tween,
‘casions, ‘low, ‘pon and ‘bout) and the fre-
quent insertion of the irritating make-
weight ‘do’. The convenient stand-by of in-
version is utilised: ‘crisis black’. I suppose
modern actors will draw the line at giving
‘murdered’ three syllables in the line ‘Is ru-
ined, reputation murdered’—which would
regularise it, as Shakespeare does with the
word on three occasions: ‘I hate the mur-
derer, love him murdered’ (Richard II);
‘An hour but married, Tybalt murdered’
(Romeo and Juliet) and ‘Poor Bassianus
here lies murdered’ (Titus Andronicus).

The deployment of all the dubious po-
eticism sits very strangely in a banal en-
vironment where Wetherspoon’s, Waga-
mama, Primark, Sainsburys, Findus ready
meals, Doritos, etc. appear, and where
the language is relentlessly twenty-first-
century: ‘column inches’, ‘clip goes viral’
‘bright white noise’, ‘banner headline’,
Botixed into place. So much modern lan-
guage is dire: great tracts of it can only be
employed with prophylactic inverted com-
mas in place—at least by me. This is the
world in which, ye Gods!, the monarchy is
a ‘brand’. Sometimes Bartlett just doesn’t
bother. He frees up lines so that they have
no sense of what T.S. Eliot called ‘the ghost
behind the arras’ in Reflections of Vers
Libre (1917). He takes freedoms which,
as Pound would have put it, break the
pentameter. He is not the master of the en-
jambment. These could look okay on the
page, but sounded they are a bit of a dog’s
breakfast.

Really he has put himself onto an im-
possibly sticky wicket: remorselessly
regular blank verse would have been te-
dious after a while (‘Too tum-pum at a
stretch’ as Pound scribbled when helping
Eliot to make The Waste Land a decent
poem), and irritatingly mannered, but ir-
regular verse keeps tripping one up, if one
has that inner tune in one’s head. It’s like
hitting a pot-hole in the road. There’s the
odd twelve syllable line. The attempts at
regular lines sometimes produce ef-
facts which one can only describe as not
English, things such as ‘you seem distract
and ingenious’. This isn’t English it: ‘But Kate what on that paper makes/
That look?’ There are occasional remin-
iscences of Shakespeare, such as ‘For noth-
ing comes of nothing said’—which echoes

King Lear: ‘Nothing will come of nothing:
Speak again.’ (I.1) And ‘Then if it’s done it’s
done at once’ is not far off ‘If it were done
when ’tis done, then were well! It were
done quickly’ (Macbeth, L.vii). Bartlett
sometimes ends a scene with a couplet, as
Shakespeare does. Also he has characters
ending a speech with a half-line, with the
response from the next character complet-
ing the line. This in the Renaissance theatre
was a device for making cues smooth.

The whole play is not blank verse; some
of it is prose, and when we first meet Harry
in the low-life equivalent of Shakespeare’s
Boar’s Head prose is the medium. When
Harry gets serious later on he takes on the
mantle of blank verse, and Camilla (Mar-
got Leicester) points this out: ‘I’ve never
heard you speak in such a way! With pas-
sion, strength and rhythm too.’ A piece of
witty fore-grounding which reminds me
of the witty foregrounding in As You Like
It when the sceptical Jacques says, ‘Nay
then, God be wi’you, an you talk in blank
verse’ (IV.v). Bartlett at one point produces
a witty version of the device much loved
by Renaissance poets: the conceit. This is
when Charles develops the image of the
satnav which lets one down in a crisis and
it is necessary to resort to ‘the map, from
years before’. I’m surprised Charles knows
what a satnav is. Actually the satnav did
not find its way into the television version.

Many of the situations have a Shake-
pearean resonance, even if only a mock-
heroic level. I have already alluded to the
comparisons between Harry and the mad-
cap Prince of Henry IV Part I fame. And
like Hal, Harry turns serious in the end,
and rejects his inappropriate girl-friend
Jess (Tamara Lawrence) just before the
coronation, which, although no reviews
I have seen point this out, is a reprise of
Henry’s rejection of Falstaff at the end of
Henry IV part 2. Except that in the modern
situation Harry might be rejecting some-
thing productive and worth-while. There
are situational parallels with Hamlet,
King Lear, Macbeth, suggesting, rightly,
that the themes of monarchy are peren-
nial, even after the Bill of Rights (1688).
At the end, just before Charles crowns
William, there is a moment that is pretty
Shakespearean:

It is much heavier than I thought.
And from the side, bejewelled, it looks so rich
But turn it thus, and this is what you see
Nothing.

We are for a split second in the world of
‘perspectives’ or anamorphs, where ap-
ppearances prove treacherous and variable.
Shakespeare often refers to the device:
‘Though he [Antony] be painted one way
like a Gorgon, the other way’s a Mars’
(Antony and Cleopatra II.v). And there is
this cryptic and almost unintelligible con-
cept in All’s Well that Ends Well:

Where the impression of mine eye infixing,
Contempt his sordid perspective did lend me
Which warp’d the line of every favour;
Scorn’d a fair colour, or express’d it stolen;
Extended or contracted all proportions
To a most hideous object. (V.i)}

Charles’s reflections on the crown did
not make it to the televised version. The
conceit is the first cousin to the emblem,
and funnily enough emblems have been
making a sort of come-back on television,
where an image can underline and sup-
plement an idea. There was something
emblematic about Prince William bor-
rowing his father’s Aston Martin to drive
away ‘that sunny day I married my fair
wife’, but with the hand-brake on. Which
petrol-heads (who have long memories)
will remember. The Aston Martin (but not
named) makes an appearance in King
Charles III when William drives down
The Mall in it, to grasp the nettle of dan-
ger. How did he get the ignition key? An
opportunity for the producer to break out
an Aston Martin and film it all, but too ex-
pensive no doubt, so not done. There was
though an emblem in the televised version
not in the theatre version, when Harry
discusses his future in a greedy spoon, and
Paul regards the kebab with its inner steel
support as an image of a Britain in decline,
being reduced slice by slice.

Any literary work will collect reso-
nances not audible when first produced.
Audiences experiencing the play in 2017
will reflect on Charles’s words in a way not
possible in 2014: ‘They [the people] want/
The leaders they elected standing up/And
making choices they themselves cannot/‘
Because they have not time.’ A just indict-
ment of referendum politics if ever there
was one.

Bernard Richards

The next issue of Oxford Magazine
will appear in Eighth week
From Einstein to J.S.Bach


2017 marks the tenth Oxford May Music, the Festival jointly organised by physicist Brian Foster and violinist Jack Liebeck, offering a unique blend of arts and science, spread around the May Bank Holiday.

This year it takes place within the walls of the Church of St John the Evangelist, now established as the prime chamber concert venue in Oxford, eclipsing the waiting in the rain for conclusion of rehearsals and lack of refreshment facilities at the Holywell Music Room and the eccentric acoustics of the Jaqueline du Pré Music Room.

For May Music, it offers the particular advantage of providing somewhere to pass the time between early evening lectures and 8 pm concerts. This also gives the opportunity to study the associated exhibition, this year of photographs, Treescapes by Kaupo Kikkas. On the Saturday, the photographer led a Photo Walk around Oxford.

The first day, Wednesday 26 April was devoted to Einstein, the inspiration for Oxford May Music. First, his Universe, a presentation by Foster and Liebeck, followed by his Music, a concert of Einstein’s favourite music. On the Friday, an engrossing lecture by Katharine Butler Musicians’ brains are different was followed by a Schubert Gala given by the Myrthen Ensemble. This was the only event I was able to attend.

The Myrthen Ensemble is named after Robert Schumann’s wedding gift to Clara. It has as regular members Mary Bevan (soprano), Clara Mouriz (mezzo), Stuart Jackson (tenor) and Marcus Farnsworth (baritone) with pianist Joseph Middleton.

All these musicians are well-known to Oxford audiences, having performed at the Lieder Festival, the Chamber Music Festival and Oxford May Music. All are rising stars who may be described as in early mid-career. On this occasion, both ladies were forced to cancel. They were replaced at short notice by Gemma Summerfield and Caïlin Hulcup. The soprano Gemma Summerfield won both the First Prize and the Lovejoy Prize in the 2015 Kathleen Ferrier awards. Australian mezzo Caïlin Hulcup, who also trained as a violinist, has, since her European debut in Vienna in 2004, distinguished herself in a number of operatic roles, most recently as Isëult in WNO’s production of Frank Martin’s Le Vin Herbé.

Despite the late substitution the four voices blended perfectly. The singing was characterised by extremely clear enunciation understandable by those with only a smattering of German, in a programme of lesser-known Schubert part songs for two, three and four voices as well as solos, celebrating life in all its aspects. Opening with three religious songs for four voices, there followed songs for each of the four soloists, notably Die Sterne for tenor and Schwungengesang for baritone. Also in the first half the delightful duet Licht und Liebe for soprano and mezzo, the Cantata for the Birthday of singer Johann Michael Vogl for three voices and in conclusion the joyful Der Tanz.

In the Saturday programme Professor Brian Cox, a regular visitor to May Music, introduced a performance of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons. Other concerts were given by the Trio Dal, and Fagioli. The Festival Finale included Dmitri Sitkovsky’s arrangement for String Trio of J.S. Bach’s Goldberg Variations. This was last heard in Oxford at the Chamber Music Festival in 2014.

PETER SCHOFIELD

TO THE EDITOR

Sir – One of the Amendments deemed by the Proctors not to be ‘true amendments’ and therefore not put before Congregation at the Debate on 2 May, was one designed to ensure that in future the EJRA ‘policy and procedures’ would be created as Regulations. It read:

Amendment 3

Delete “as amended from time to time by Council on the recommendation of the Personnel Committee” and replace by “as created from time to time by Council in the form of Regulations”.

On request, the Proctors explained their decision that this was not a ‘true amendment’:

“Proposed Amendment 3 sought to codify in University legislation a very substantial body of policy and procedures that is not currently in legislation, whereas the Legislative Proposal would not bring into legislation what currently is covered by policy and procedure.”

Readers will make what they will of this, but the essence of the proposal was surely of some importance. Every other dismissal of academic and academic-related staff (disciplinary, because of redundancy, for ill-health reasons) is subject to Statute XII and the Regulations which are subordinate to it. There can be no such dismissal without that ‘substantial body’ of domestic legislation being followed. Dismissal under the EJRA’s ‘policy and procedures’ carries no such automatic protections.

Can this possibly be justified when it would be so straightforward to ensure that they were at least raised to the level of Regulations, automatically published in the Gazette for Congregation to object to if it wished, and thus put on a level with other processes leading to dismissal of academic and academic-related staff (in future, if approved by Congregation, specifically those at grade 8 and above)?

Yours sincerely

G.R. EVANS

Oxford

Sir – The letters pages of the Oxford Magazine may not be the best place to continue the debate about the data analysis performed by the EJRA Review Working Group, but I cannot let Professor Ewart’s criticisms of our methodology go unchallenged (Oxford Magazine, No.384, 2nd week, TT 2017).

I stand by my evidence-based assertion that the age distribution of Oxford academics is not a flat distribution. The relevant numbers can be found in Annex J of our report. For Statutory Professors, the numbers for 2015 (the latest year for which data are available) are as follows: 4 (from age 30 to 39), 39 (from age 40 to 49), 108 (from age 50 to 59) and 92 (from age 60 upwards). The equivalent numbers for RSIV post holders are: 5, 52, 92 and 59. Finally, the figures for Associate Professors are: 263, 426, 347 and 148. These, by any interpretation of the data, are not flat distributions.

I also stand by the point which I made about the unavailability of control group data. If Professor Ewart has access to data from a Russell Group University which does not have an EJRA and does not operate any form of performance management, we would be glad to undertake a comparative analysis.

Yours sincerely

LIONEL TARASENKKO

Oxford
Sir – Since coming to Oxford in 1985 with high expectations of a collective intelligence, I have often wondered whether the corporate inanities of the University reflect a deeper wisdom which is beyond my lesser intellect, or whether in fact they are what they appear to be. I think, for example, of the shambolic introduction of the ‘plastic professorship’, where the title is awarded with no alteration of duty, and, until recently, no difference in stipend (so why bother?); or, looking further back, at the dismemberment of Wellington Square (where I then lived) for the meaningless construction of hideous concrete administrative buildings.

The recent debates on the EJRA are yet another example. I went to the debate on 2 May, not quite up to the mellifluous intellectual standards of the Margaret Thatcher debate in 1985, but impressive nonetheless. What seems obvious to me is that the University has got itself into a morass, which as always it is trying to climb out of using high-minded intellectual arguments. You can’t do it. Retirement by age is now illegal, so just get on with it; but, if you try and justify a retirement age on the basis of, for example, the need to have opportunities for the young, why fix it at 67? Or 68? Why not 60? After all, that would allow all those old academics to vacate their posts and go off with their wisdom somewhere else. In fact, 55 might be better.

It is all just a nonsense. The only serious problem in Oxford is how to alleviate the unbearable strain on tutorial fellows. And actually, the answer here is rather simple. Let us say the salary of a tutorial fellow is £60,000, of which a quarter is from the college. You then require him (yes, or her, I hear you) to be responsible for organising the tutorial teaching, but the individual six hour requirement is abolished; the tutor can use his college salary to pay his team in piece rates. For example, if he teaches two hours a week, you have about 100 hours to find a year, pay these at £40 an hour, and this lowers the tutor’s salary by £4,000. Or something.

It is obvious that, like banning smoking, retirement age will go eventually, so why not get on with it? But the real problem is to fix the tutorial overload, so that I, for example (no longer a tutor), can actually talk to my colleagues while in Oxford, instead of at conferences, which is the present situation.

Yours sincerely
ANDREW FOWLER
Corpus Christi

Sir – The EJRA makes Oxford uncompetitive in recruiting and retaining world-class faculty, tempts Wellington Square into unseemly manoeuvres to bolster a precarious legal position, absorbs valuable time and wastes large sums on legal fees, and damages collegiality through a hostile extension procedure in which ‘distinguished scholarship does not constitute a relevant consideration’. There is little or no evidence that the EJRA contributes significantly to its laudable aims, in particular intergenerational fairness and diversity.

Oxford is more than capable of finding imaginative approaches that do not risk its reputation and which harness the experience of those approaching retirement for the benefit of younger academics. It could explore, for example, voluntary tapered retirement arrangements consistent with holding research grants.

The forthcoming postal vote to abolish the EJRA gives us the opportunity to take a new direction.

Yours sincerely
JOHN BALL
Mathematical Institute

Sir – The University of Oxford has consistently refused, and still refuses, to make available Dame Janet Smith’s ruling in the University’s Appeal Court in September 2014 even though she pointed out that her judgement was based on general issues of principle and law relating to the Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA). Dame Janet’s approach was breathtakingly thorough and her reasoning assiduous in reviewing every aspect of the Oxford EJRA. Her conclusions were crystal clear. She found the EJRA process had “internal flaws” and was “fundamentally unacceptable”.

I challenge anyone who has not read Dame Janet Smith’s judgement to now do so (http://oxfordejragroup.net). Also on this site you can find other relevant documents on the legal status of the EJRA.

Yours sincerely
DAVID PALFREYMAN
New College

Sir – The debate about EJRA seems so often to be between sides which agree on aims and are in dispute about means: whether means will as claimed achieve ends, or even whether they can be justified should they turn out to be effective. I had the misfortune to sit through the Congregation discussion and debate on the proposal to abolish the EJRA and have heard each side talking past the other.

Three or at most four of the eighty or ninety academic posts in my department are ones from which someone has ever previously left at a contractual retirement age, so I concede that we may not be representative of the University as a whole.

I have a modest proposal. If career progression for new academics demands that we prevent statutory professors from hogging their chairs for more than an average of fifteen years, perhaps it would be fairer to all concerned to make senior academic appointments fixed term ones like those of our younger colleagues. This would at
The Petition for an Absolute Retreat

Give me, O indulgent Fate!
Give me yet before I die
A sweet but absolute retreat
Where beneath a busy street
I slip a shilling on a plate
And Mr Charon, quiet in dignity,
Gives a slight bow—a courtesy
From an older to a younger me,
Saying, ‘Yes, I have vacancy.’

The cubicle’s tiled in white and green,
The brass is polished to a sheen,
With tinkling water the cistern fills,
‘Like Faith’ I say, he smiles
As one who’s heard all jokes before
And closes tight the mahogany door.

The walls extending to the floor
I cannot hear the man next door
Give his lavatorial cough.
Graffiti has been scrubbed clean off,
The air is mountain sweet with pine
And this small space entirely mine.

The light falls softly from above
As from the still and hovering dove
Above the saints in coloured glass,
While overhead the thousands pass,
Strangers, friends, weary commuters,
To offices with flickering computers.
There is no signal here, no ‘phone
No buzz, no bleep, no ringing tone,
No maddened finger swipes
Away the hours or, careless, wipes
to trash the living history of our lives,
No sick diversion where nothing thrives
cept entertainment posturing as news.

Here let me rest, as once in abbey pews
Those seeking sanctuary might pause
Exhausted in a time of wars,
And when, rush hour done, the city stalls,
In London squares a finch still calls.

Awaiting me, warm water drawn,
A man’s man to the manner born
Who brushes dandruff from my shoulder,
‘Sir does not look a moment older’
And, with a question I condone,
He sprays me lightly with cologne.
Another coin, ‘Sir is too kind,
Take care, there is a bitter wind,
Steam blossoms when one takes a breath,
Sir does not want to catch his death.’

Let me come blinking to the light:
An afternoon, new penny bright,
And walk my natal city like a tourist,
Or like a lover hastening to a tryst.
Let me go where Johnson walked
All night with Savage and talked
The world to right, and where Hunt
The orator, waving his sabred hat,
Marched with green boughs to confront
The Tories on those they killed at
Peterloo, but never brought a blush
To those who so shamed us.
Thence to the inn where Keats
Drank claret, and the stones where Yeats
Walked through Bloomsbury to tea
And homesick wrote of Innisfree.

O quietness keep a place for me
Under an old green plague-pit tree,
Let me find my fellows there
And Anne’s sequestered friendship share.
Then the petition which I sign
Will be granted, hers (I pray) and mine.

TONY BRIGNULL
How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation
It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (i.e. a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies
Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in Gazette in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

Postal votes
Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present (“on the floor”) at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets
To generate a flysheet for publication with the Gazette, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml
Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the Gazette.
The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.
Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk).
CONTENTS

No. 385 Fifth Week

Our ultimate protection
TIM HORDER 1

Reminders 2

The Legacy of the Bill of BIS
DAVID MIDGLEY 4

Colleges and the new HE Regulator
DAVID PALFREYMAN 5

Membership of Congregation
G.R. EVANS 7

Colleges and the new HE Regulator
PAUL EWART 9

Trinity Term 2017

Behind the lines 1914-1918
BARRIE JUNIPER 12

Notes from Cambridge 13

Every centimetre a king
BERNARD RICHARDS 14

From Einstein to J.S.Bach
PETER SCHOFIELD 16

Letters to the Editor 16

The Petition for an Absolute Retreat
TONY BRIGNULL 18

NOTICE

The Editors of the Oxford Magazine regret that they cannot publish any material submitted to them anonymously. If the author requests publication on the basis that the author’s name and university address be withheld from the readership, the Editors will consider the reasons given and in their discretion may publish on that basis; otherwise the material will be returned to the author.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

- David Midgley is Emeritus Professor of German Literature and Intellectual History at Cambridge
- David Palfreyman is Bursar of New College • G.R. Evans was Professor of Medieval Theology at Cambridge • Paul Ewart is Professor of Physics at the Clarendon Laboratory • Barrie Juniper is Reader Emeritus in Plant Sciences and Fellow Emeritus of St Catherine’s • Bernard Richards is an Emeritus Fellow of Brasenose • Peter Schofield is a retired physicist