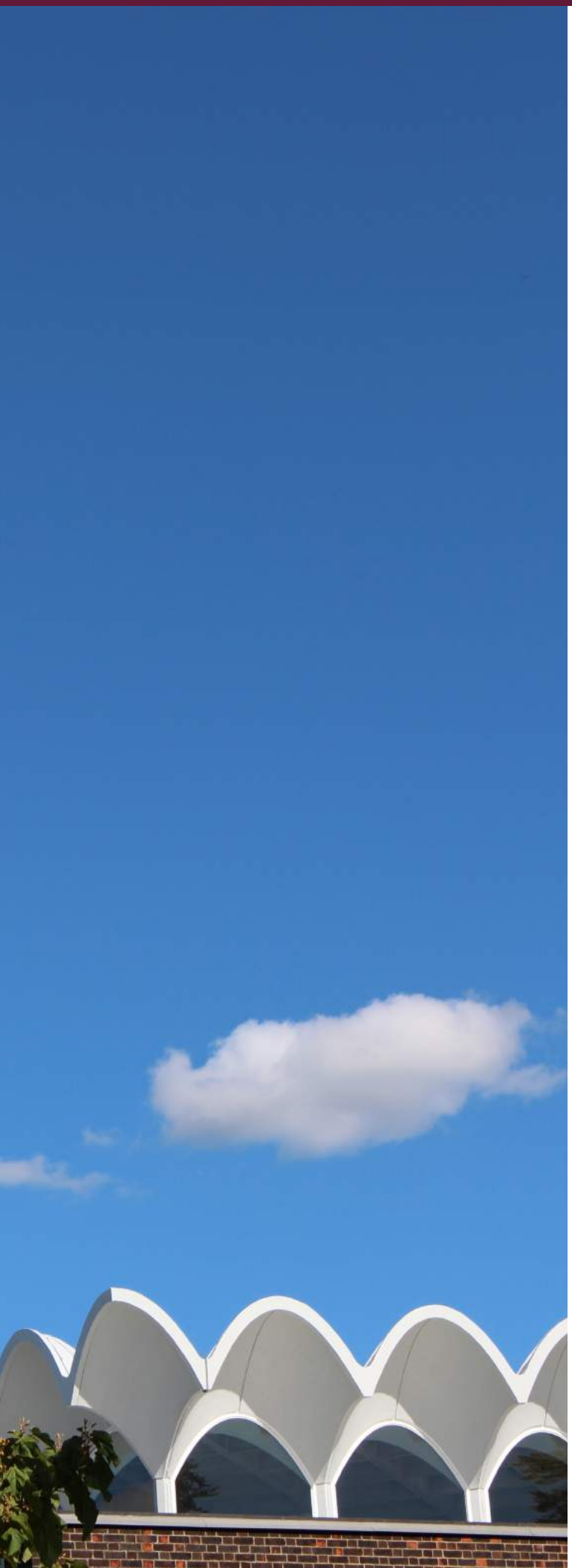
FAREWELL TO FITZ

JUNE 2020



Dear Graduands,

We are sorry to say goodbye to you, especially in such strange circumstances. Well done on coping with the stress of the last few months - it hasn't been easy, and it's unfair that you are unable to enjoy, for now, the excitement of the end-of-term and graduation. Nonetheless, we hope you can go out into the world with strength, bravery and determination. You will always have the support of your College, and now you join our community of alumni.

In these pages, you will find their messages of support and goodwill. May they bring you good cheer, a sense of community, and encouragement when you need it. Keep in touch, remember to update your details when needed via our website, and we hope to see you back at Fitz soon.

Nicola

Dr Nicola Jones
Director of Development & Alumni Relations

Look for opportunities everywhere. Keep striving to meet and connect with a diversity of people. Continue to ask questions, never stop learning and challenging yourself. The world needs new ideas. It needs fresh and inquiring minds that are humble, open to collaborating and sharing successes. You are at the beginning of an uncharted path, as each and every graduand is each year. You will carve out a path for yourself - believe in yourself. Push yourself. Ask for help and advice along the way. Most importantly, cherish yourself and your loved ones everyday.

FLYNN LEBUS, SPS 2003

I do hope your time at Fitzwilliam within Cambridge University has been challenging, invigorating and wonderfully happy. Whatever you do, always be proud of the College, treasure the times you have had, and keep the friends you have made. I send you my congratulations and best wishes.

DAVID EAGLES, 1961

Congratulations on your graduation. Remember, these challenging times will pass, but your Cambridge degree will always stand you in good stead. Keep thinking and behaving with the intelligence, flexibility and determination that you have learned at Fitz, and keep smiling and having fun.

MICHELLE FROST, GEOGRAPHY 1982

Graduation is a rite of passage but it is important to remember that this rite of passage has been earned by none other than you. You have worked so hard through the most unusual unforeseen circumstances and have thrived. I am so proud of you all and all that you do everyday. You should be too! While I am sure this has been a HUGE challenge for you socially, emotionally and mentally, after some time, you will look back at this time and miss the highs and lows, the moments you scraped it by, the laughs and sorrows and you'll laugh at all of this like a distant memory and will be able to tell everyone you survived this at what is now one of the toughest times the world has faced. But don't stop working hard because life exists beyond those posh formals, black gowns, life-draining supervisions and college parties. And the world will need your valuable contribution to make it a better, sustainable, diverse and vibrant place. I wish you all the best for the future!

SHAAN A. A. PATANKAR, SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY 2018

Don’t worry... Fitzbilly buddies are for life, not just for Uni years. It’s so sad to be missing out on your final term, but trust me, there are years of fun and friendship ahead. Good luck.

SUE JENKINS, ECONOMICS 1982

You don't know me but we share a common bond, as alumni of a quite fabulous college and perhaps the very best university on the planet. You must have so many feelings and emotions stemming from the current uncertainties. Hold onto the hope. The pandemic, its knock on implications and all the issues that stem from them will pass. It will take time but these current dislocations will pass. What will persist however are the skills, experiences and techniques you have fine-tuned during your time at Cambridge, which are the gateway to the rest of your life, in whatever sphere you choose to apply your talents. It took me a long time to realise, a quarter of a century perhaps, that Fitz made me. It shapes us all, in so many ways that unfold over many years. Use your head and follow your heart. Do things you enjoy. Be kind to yourself. And of course when the time comes, enjoy the party.

MATT ATKIN, NATURAL SCIENCE 1993

Look to the future. Whilst not being able to leave Cambridge this year in a blaze of glory, treasure your experiences and memories of the last three years; they will help you through the present turmoil and through your life yet to come. Do not be downhearted, this too will pass and the coronavirus will quickly become history and a blip in your lifespan. Have confidence in the future, both of the world and of yourself. The future is yours and will be there for you when all this chaos is over.

SIR KENNETH EATON, MECHANICAL SCIENCES 1954

Congratulations for passing on to the "other" side as alumni. I hope that you shall look back at the time spent at Fitz, as the best times of your lives. I surely do!

A. MUMIT, ECONOMICS 2010

My message to graduating students - explore, explore explore! Explore your own talents, explore opportunities to help others, explore continents (when permitted), be creative every day, live in a different culture, immerse yourself in a challenge. Avoid total, immediate immersion into a chosen career by 'exploration' around it to broaden your perspective in readiness to expand your mind, your career opportunities and your abilities.

As an architect graduating from Fitz way back, I entered my profession ill-equipped in many areas - basic business, contract law, the legal profession, accounting, structures, materials, marriage guidance even! (Yes and who signs the cheques!) Several years after graduation I was ready to practice my profession which I now continue 50 years later, having lived in the UK, Canada and France - never too old to learn and to change. Good luck to all of you, congratulations on graduating and stay healthy - this will pass. I would be delighted to hear from any Fitz-graduating architects. The college has my email. Best wishes to all...

MALCOLM JOHNSON, ARCHITECTURE 1963

I feel bad for you that you in a sense have been 'short changed' with your time in Cambridge, at Fitzwilliam. Such a precious time of life and contains many different aspects, from the Freshers' week at the start to the final leisurely time and freedom when the final exams are finished. Many of you will have not been able to say goodbye properly to the friends you made and will be feeling cheated of this more than maybe the experience of the exam room, and the enduring uneasy dreams', to reference Kafka, that ensue from that.

Please do not lose time in any bitterness about this, but please concentrate on what you want to do next and strive for it in a competitive spirit, whether it is more education or the start of a career. There will be unemployment in the market which needs soaking up as we come out of this at the same time as taking on new graduates. Please don't be bitter about the fact that this will make job searches harder for many of you. In many cases people with numerous dependents have lost jobs and are not even able to sleep well at night, and for sure your turn will come before many of theirs does.

Most of all, if I may give one piece of advice from what I failed to do myself - please do not lose contact or neglect to keep up with friends you made at University. This is your friendship group and one of your greatest assets, which you might not understand until later in life, for sure I did not and I wish I had understood it earlier. Hence my desire to say it to you.

This is going to be a test, the rest of this year. Be faithful to the values that brought you this far. Or if you need to reassess them, please do so carefully.

And all the best.

DAVID J. JAMES, MML 1983

Although the circumstances are extremely unusual, this must not overshadow your exceptional achievements over the whole course of your life so far. You are remarkable and made more so by this extraordinary experience. Congratulations and thank you for all you will go on to contribute to the worldwide community we share.

JR, 2002

The Fitz motto is drawing the best from the old and the new. Right now, you have the challenge of drawing the best from the present. The dramatic changes you see around you will create opportunities that none of us could have anticipated but you couldn't be readier for after your time at Cambridge. You have a fine education, a unique life experience and now - a global network to draw on. Congratulations on your graduation and achievements and all the best taking your next steps into this brave new world - please call on all of us who went before for connection and support.

ALEX SNELLING, HISTORY 1995

It must be strange. I imagine it feels disappointing, disorienting, perhaps a relief, perhaps eclipsed by the vividness and intensity of life right now. Maybe it feels like you're missing something you never got to have. Maybe it feels meh. I guess it will also change for you over the coming days, weeks, months.

I graduated in 2001 and I was stressed. The night before, I stayed up until 2am, dying my scarlet hair back to an acceptable shade of brown. I'd heard stories of graduands being plucked out of the procession and ordered back to college for infringements of shoe or hair slide. So I was worried. And I had two divorced parents who would be converging on the same small piece of land for the first time in many years, and that worried me too. I worried I would trip, or blush, or not understand the instructions in Latin.

Then it all happened and it was fine. Just a moment. Just a day.

Almost 20 years on, I rarely think about that day. But what I feel, almost every day, is a sense of gratitude for the years I got to spend at Fitz. I struggled sometimes when I was there. But as I got older and understood more about other people's experiences at university, or outside it, I understood better what an extraordinary gift my Cambridge education was. I was taught to think deeply, critically and radically. I was taught to argue clearly. I learned not to be afraid to ask questions. Those things have empowered me and nurtured me and continue to do so.

I also made beautiful, kind, wonderful friends. They've stayed my best friends in the world (apart from my friend Rebecca. And my friend Stef. And Laura. But you get the idea). We've been to each other's weddings and played with each other's kids and talked in person and digitally about politics, depression, theatre, honeymoon destinations, music and beer. At the moment, it's my Cambridge friends who I find the biggest source of comfort. Not everyone else out there is like Fitz people. You might not realise it until you're gone, and among others, but then you'll feel it. Maybe you'll stay among Cambridge people for much of your future lives. I didn't. (I married a Leeds graduate! Leeds! My mother was outraged.) I have a lot of great people in my life, including the Leeds graduate. But when I'm with Fitz friends, I feel a sense of being at home, a sense of connection, an understanding, and a strength. I belong.

So my wish to you is that you will also feel that sense of connection, even in this disconnected present reality. You graduate without ritual and without ceremony and without crowds. But that's only one day. And for the rest of your lives, you'll have the years of education and the years of friendship and that's what's important. That's the real gift.

I hope you find ways of making this transition meaningful for yourself as an individual and yourselves as a group. I'm sure your post-graduation lives won't be quite the way you were planning, at least not to begin with. But then life never is quite the way you planned it. It's better.

So graduate the way you can, work towards your goals as you can, treasure your friends and treasure the beautiful brown bricks of Fitz. It's an education.

CATHERINE GROSVENOR, 1997

You all have my heartfelt sympathy for the abrupt end to your time at Fitz. True, you will not get to experience first hand the trials and the joys of your final term. Nevertheless, with the advantage of youth, you have the best chance, not only to survive this experience but also to gain from it, making your own unique contribution to life after university in the short and long term. Your experience at Cambridge is irreplaceable, a terrific stepping stone to the future. In years to come the current situation will be remembered as a serious but surmountable interruption to life as you planned it.

Stay safe. Stay well. Thrive.

ROGER ADAMS, MML 1996

Congratulations to you all for your achievements in completing your studies. Stay positive and look to the future, this is a testing time that you will one day look back on and be proud with yourselves for your resilience and determination.

RACHEL DIMAMBRO

Although it is a truism that final terms are memorable for a range of obvious reasons, my continuing relationships with Fitz and university contemporaries (and in some cases, their children!), near fifty years on, are rooted in the vast range of life lessons shared and learned together over previous terms, and indeed, through vacation activities.

That golden trust sustains me as much now as ever, and in the best sense, can be taken for granted.

So, go well, travel on, recall often how your journey was shaped, and be thankful.

STEPHEN KINGSNORTH, ENGLISH AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES 1971

I can only imagine what a pain it is, and how sad and disappointing not to be able to go out with a big bang, all together in June. However, nothing can take away the great friends you've made, all the wonderful things you've learned, some of them the hard way, but all of them in a truly awe-inspiring place. You have already made friends for life. This is just a moment in time.

Best wishes for your finals, and lives in the future.

AMANDA ALEXANDER (NEE JONES), 1981

I speak from experience, wisdom, and my view is very distinct from your view of work, but one thing above all is to be honest to yourself, your family and colleagues. We are only here once and this virus perhaps has focused all our thoughts, often negatively. But we will survive, you will progress and if you be confident, honest and fair in your approach then you will go far.

You need luck, opportunities and good decision making but in the end life tends to push you one way or another and go with that.

DAVID HIDER, A LONG TIME AGO, SHALL WE SAY THE 60'S?

Congratulations on completing this educational moment in your life pilgrimage. To be sure you will want and need to continue studying, learning. Nevertheless, I am sure your work at Cambridge has provided you with a strong base on which to build your vocation and hopefully the values to use your education to make the world a better place. Microsoft's Bill Gates is reported to have said: "I'm not worried that we will have ever-improving technology. We will. I am concerned that we may lack the values to make wise use of it." You can make a difference. Go for it.

DR EUGENE ROOP, BIBLICAL STUDIES 1978

I missed my graduation; yet lessons learned continue to serve and friendships made shine brighter than ever.

(I practice Zen Buddhism in Japan.)

GEOFFREY CURRIE, HISTORY OF ART 2011

'Forecasting is difficult - particularly of the future.' That has always been the case, even though we humans like to believe things are much more predictable. This year's graduands have the misfortune to be going into a world where that is much more the case than it has been for the past 75 years, if not more. The key perspective to keep in mind is that your future is in your hands. You are gifted with greater ability than most people, and you can apply that effectively to almost anything you turn your hand to. I know that may sound glib and facile to you, but it is the truth. People like Steve Jobs and Elon Musk (Isaac Newton, Stephen Hawking...) didn't get to where they did by sitting back and hoping the world would be nice to them; they got stuck in, overcame obstacles, and achieved great things. You can do the same; take a deep breath, dive in and go for it. All the best.

DAVE EVANS, BIOCHEMISTRY 1965

My hard slog through finals in 1996 was rewarded by the blowouts of May Week, and for you to be denied that collective celebration is regrettable.

You will, however, as Arnie says, be back. I was lucky to have two sets of finals, as a medic, but I also went back for the MA graduation, and then my wedding in 2006, and then several Fitz careers events.

For a while, you may be glad to be away, but the nostalgia gets you in the end. Embrace it.

You may never fully get closure, at least I hope not. I look forward to meeting you at Fitz sometime soon.

ZOE NEILL, 1993

I wanted it all to go on for ever, but I'm glad it didn't. And so will you. Good luck!

DAVID WILSON, HISTORY 1971

Before anything else happens in your academic life, you are destined to be a remarkable part of history. You are the group that has experienced the most varied teaching ever supplied by the university, with the most disrupted study ever known, and that has tackled head on the challenge of managing final studies and Part II exams remotely.

If this is sometimes more of a challenge than you prefer, please remember that the rest of Fitzwilliam is rooting for you. We cannot help you remember the facts or construct the arguments, but you know already that students from Fitzwilliam are forthright, determined and strong - and you are too. The Fitzwilliam Society, which is to say all the Fitz alumni stand with you, wishing you well.

This year, along with your studies, the main social events of the Society have had to be postponed. When the lockdown is over and life is - are far as possible - back to normal, I hope you will join us for the London drinks or for the formal Society Dinner so that the rest of us can hear about the extraordinary experience of this Easter Term.

Sending best wishes and the very best of luck,
Yours,
Judith Bunting
President of the Fitzwilliam Society 2019-20

What a shame you won't be able to have your final summer term at Fitz! That said, enjoying the social season, sport etc is not the same in finals year because of the minor matter of finals!

Amazingly it will be 48 years this Sept since I first went to Fitz. I have the happiest of memories. The really lively thing is the close friends the handful of us doing medicine became and have remained, our own WhatsApp group and most years a reunion somewhere. I am sure you will be the same; the bonds you have formed at Fitz will last a lifetime.

Good luck to you all!

CHRIS SWINBURN, MEDICINE 1972

40 years on I still celebrate my time at Fitz. Not because of a degree certificate (although quite helpful I guess), but because of the lifelong friendships and experiences; and for introducing me to rowing, a sport I still enjoy at a very poor level. The hurt of graduating in these times will pass quickly. The hurt of being denied some bumps may last forever!

Congratulations and good luck.

NICK FRANCIS, 1977

Sending you all the warmest wishes and love. I'm so sorry you are missing out on the joys of post-exams summer term. However I want you to know that you have many bright and warm summertimes to look forward too. Misfortune and moments of sadness are the texture that brings beauty in life.

ANON, 2018

Terrible shame for you all to be missing the term and particularly the free time after exams end. But there is life beyond Cambridge and plenty to look forward to even if things takes a while to normalise. Keep safe and keep your spirits up!

JOHN AUSTIN, 1974

For several weeks now I have been thinking of those in their last year and the things that will have been missed. A blue, 1st May colours for those who row and all the similar pinnacles in every aspect of the culmination of your last year. However you will have memories that none of us can imagine which in many ways will I hope be unique. I expect there will be all sorts of innovative ways That you will find to share these last months with friends who will remain so for the rest of your life.

Fitz, I know, will not let any of you down and I wish all of you the very best for the future. For me and all my contemporaries our days at Fitz (House) in my day are recalled with affection and I trust that this crisis and disruption will not destroy that.

My best wishes to all

IAN CODRINGTON, LAW 1956

Dear 2020 graduates: a few words of congratulations and encouragement from Paris. I can testify that being a member of the Fitzwilliam College community is for life. Beyond the current situation, what you have achieved in your Fitz years will always be with you: excellence, friendships, growth as a person, and the desire to make a difference. And you will.

As the health crisis and economic difficulties fade away, and they will, only the good things will remain. What you have built in your time in Cambridge will be with you in each major step in your life. It has for me.

Last time I visited our college with my family, my class picture was on the wall of the Grove, more than 20 years later. That sense of belonging is invaluable. Don't be afraid, be bold! The Fitz family will always be yours.

PASCAL A. RAYER, LAW 1994

Congratulations. 'May the road rise up to meet you' as the Irish say. It surely will.

NIGEL, 1976

Life goes in cycles; economy goes in cycles; if you lived long enough, you would have figured out that everything goes in cycles. You are graduating at a worst time of global pandemic but congratulations because when the worst happened, you are going to start off your career with nowhere to go but only UP!

DAVID WANG, 1993

No worry, Cambridge and College is for life, be sure to return for the reunion dinners...

ANON

The first few months after graduation felt so strange: let loose! But for what?! It was many years before I fully realised that summer holidays were a thing of the past. But the rich memories built up over the years I was there stay with me still, and it's not the May Balls or the ceremonies that reach across the years. It's the late night conversations in corridors, the life outdoors, the friends, and the banter and the discovery of a way of being and thinking that was new to me until then. Losing your last term and its final flourish is really hard, but you will never lose the college experience, it's writ right through you. Good luck, enjoy, feel proud. This messy world is your oyster, and you can improve it no end!

LEAH THAXTON, 1997

I was just a bit before you (1959). So what is my message? First of all, well done all! Believe me, graduating from Cambridge takes some doing. And you've been spared those ghastly finals!

At this uncertain time I daresay you will be wondering what lies in store for you. I was very much the same, only I had a new wife, a newborn son and no idea what I should do! Now, drawing on my own life experiences, I have these few words to say to you all. Believe in yourself first and last. Trust in the fact that your hard work and determination to get into Fitz in the first place will last you a lifetime, and the effort of getting a Cambridge degree will give you a deserved edge.

In my lifetime things have changed out of all recognition. And will in yours too. So to finish, the only thing that really matters in the ups and downs we all experience is: stay true to your core beliefs and don't let anyone put you in their pocket! Remember my father's old RAF regiment's motto: nil carborundum illegitimi! Latin students will help you here.

So, graduate with these words ringing in your ears, which were spoken by my son's USA sky-diving teacher when he was about to do his first solo jump: "I know you can do it. You know you can do it. Now get out there and do it!"

Wishing you every future success and happiness. We know you can do it!

DES EVANS, 1959

You must be thinking that life is most unkind and that your futures are depressing and sabotaged by Corona. Well, in the short-term, you are part right. Long-term visibility is clouded by short-term mishaps. And boy, do we all have some of these, what with Corona dominating news, politics and 24 hour life patterns.

It's perhaps difficult to project yourselves longer term but in 3-5+ years' time, you'll be reminiscing about life at Fitzwilliam and what an event-packed time you had. The word 'Corona' will fade away and be replaced increasingly by 'Cambridge' and all that it offered. The value of the name will become increasingly powerful with the years and open many a door in all walks of your future lives. It'll be your best global passport and which you will possess for ever.

GRAHAM NUTTER, GEOGRAPHY 1966

At this time in any other year I would wish for you all of the May Balls, punting, and fanfare rightfully due a Cambridge graduate. You should expect nothing less at the end of your well-earned college career.

However, take it from someone who graduated when the Porters' Lodge was on Huntingdon Road, even without those final rites of passage, you already have within you the stuff of great college memories.

When you are in college, the milestones (exams, grades, events) command your attention. But with the benefit of time (at least for me), the small, almost insignificant moments take centre stage in your snapshots of memories.

To this day I smile thinking of the night an otherwise quiet classmate stood up in the college bar (after a few pints) to deliver an impassioned oration. When I smell freesias, I am reminded of Spring days cycling along the Backs. When my dad passed away, one of my sweetest memories of him was of him test-driving my wobbly new bike in the Fitz car park before he left me at college (much to my then embarrassment but now appreciation).

You will have your own memories, both unique and timeless. You have achieved a dream that is rare and that will yield benefits for the rest of your life. Congratulations and welcome to the wonderful community of Fitz alums!

MELISSA ALLEN, 1984

Congratulations on completing your studies in less than favourable circumstances. Whilst I know it must feel disappointing to reach the end of your Cambridge journey without the flourish of a ball, garden party or celebration, you've actually only just begun your Cambridge journey. After Cambridge, I spent five years in postgrad study at Manchester; and much as I have huge affection for Manchester, I've discovered more and more over time why Cambridge is so special.

Firstly, your Cambridge degree will last you a lifetime: you have been to one of the best universities in the world, and as you will soon discover, others will still be wowed by this years after you have left. Secondly you were not just at Cambridge, you were at Fitz, and Fitz will last you a lifetime too. As you will also discover, Fitz really values its alumni, and will always be your college. It is always lovely coming back, and seeing how our college is growing and thriving. Thirdly, you've lived in some of the most beautifully conceived architecture in the country; and if you watch Building Fitzwilliam College on the college YouTube channel, you'll see what I mean!

So again, congratulations and enjoy the next exciting chapters of your lives.

JOE BULLOCK, COMPUTER SCIENCE 1989

The world is still there and waiting for you to arrive and make your mark, large or small.

LIZ, 1981

Always remember that although one door may close behind you another will open in front.

But I'm sure although these months are not as you expected the Fitzwilliam door will be open for you, literally and in your hearts. It's almost five decades since I left and it remains a friendly, welcoming and supportive community. And community is exactly the correct word.

JIM THOMSON, PHD ENGINEERING 1968

Heartiest congratulations on graduating. I think that is the most important thing. The ceremonies and events are a moment in time, however memorable. The achievement itself, and all you have learned leading up to it, is for life.

For international students. For many of us, graduating is not just the end of our time at Fitzwilliam College, nor at Cambridge. It is the end of our time away from our home countries, experiencing things and people in a way we never have before, and may never again. Many of you will have had to end that experience prematurely, without a chance to say your goodbyes in person. For various reasons, many of you will not be able to return to the College or University for any late celebrations in the future. I hope that you will stay in touch with all the people who made a positive difference in your life and that this will be enough.

JEREMY YEO, LAW 2003

"You was robbed!" If enduring Finals (but more particularly revising for them) was the loneliest time I can ever remember, the feeling of elation at the end of the last exam (however bad that paper may have been) was the best time. But it was only made so by the strength of the Fitz friendships which contributed so much to that period of relaxation and reflection in and around College in the summer of 1980. And the friendships which you have made in the last 3 years cannot be taken away from you and will, in some cases, last a lifetime. So set your sights on finding ways and the time, in the months to come, to relax with your own Fitz friends and celebrate the most important and significant 3 years of your lives. You deserve that reward.

MIKE HIGGINSON, LAW 1977

My matriculation into the then Fitzwilliam House some 55 years ago was the start of many years of friendships, hard work, fun, achievements and a life too long to expound on here! My 3 years at Fitz were a fantastic time I will never forget, so I have a great deal of emotional sympathy for the cohort of 2020 graduands, studying online, on their own for the most part, and missing May Bumps, May Balls, and other summer events. I do hope, however, that you take away from Cambridge and Fitz the same sort of quintessence that moves me and (even at nearly 75) drives me along. You will have your own memories to treasure, for sure, and a Cambridge clutch of bons mots. I hope to meet some of you at future events this year and 2021 when the pandemic is hopefully a thing of fading memory. Valete omnes et carpe diem!

ROBIN BELL, CLASSICS AND CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGY 1965

I salute all of you who've had their final year curtailed. I'm sure this feels very disorientating to say the least. However there will be time in the not too distant future to celebrate your achievements and there will be time to reflect on your time at Fitz. Above all your time there will always remain with you. And if you choose to you will always have a sense of belonging to the Fitz community.

To put it in perspective I left in the early 80s and have only recently got back in touch and how pleased I was that I did. I came back at the invitation of the indefatigable Cat Groom to direct last year's production of The Marriage of Figaro. I was struck by the changes but also by a sense of continuity. The new buildings and courts were impressive, the theatre magnificent, the gardens so imaginatively designed (and thoughtfully captured on camera in the early weeks of lockdown by a PhD student who was staying in college). But the spirit of the place that I remember somehow remained. There was still a strong sense of community and during my week-long stay in college I was struck by how happy and supportive everyone was. And this was at a time when exams were just around the corner. If you have enjoyed your time at Fitz nothing can take that away from you. And you will always have the chance to remain connected with those memories if you choose to be - even if like me it takes you 35 years to value the connection!

I'm sure for most of you it will not. Meanwhile here's wishing you all the very best of luck in your exams and all your other endeavours.

PAUL SCHLESINGER, 1978

Hello from a thoroughly Fitz family! My husband Ian and I met at Fitz 30 years ago and have recently celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. And now our daughter is very much hoping to take up an offer to study Maths this October. Like you, she's having to adjust to studying at home and a summer term without all the usual exams and celebrations. But STEP still looms on the horizon! So we have an inkling of what it must be like to be facing Finals at a very strange time.

We've really enjoyed the JCR's message to offer holders, the virtual tours of the lovely Fitz gardens and the warm messages of support from the college community. We really do still feel part of things, even though our days of milling about in New Court are long gone. Hang in there and know that you have bright futures ahead and Fitz will always be part of you.

JANE SMITH, LAND ECONOMY 1988

As Fitz Graduands of 2020, you are members of an exceptional community whose 'esprit de corps' is second to none in its continuing appreciation of the values and aspirations which the Fitz ethos embodies. My own appreciation of Fitz has only grown with the passing of the years, and I wish all of you of the 'Class of 2020' a future of fulfilment for which your time at Fitz will have laid the foundation.

ANDREW POCOCK, MML 1965

I find it hard to imagine the disappointment that fate has thrust upon you. That must be paramount in your consciousness at the moment. But, as the years go by, this will be forgotten and you will be able to dwell, with great satisfaction, on the fact that you are a member of one of the finest universities in the world. From all accounts Fitz is a very happy place which it was in the primitive days. So you are doubly blessed. You are very privileged. Enjoy your careers.

LLOYD RANKIN, 1946

Congratulations as you reach your graduation time and very best wishes for your futures. On reflecting about my own experiences at Cambridge, three items stand out:
1] The importance of the friendships made and keeping them up thereafter;
2] The challenges of thinking outside your particular disciplinary boxes when you are really not that sure of what is in them in the first place!
Education is a life-long challenge. Cambridge is a great environment in which to learn how little one knows.
3] Whatever you eventually end up doing, I would encourage you, not least in these difficult times, to volunteer to work in support of proven volunteer organizations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent. You can really quickly encounter opportunities to make a difference!

ANON, 1962

I am sorry about the abrupt end but hopefully this will reinforce the fact that having been at Fitzwilliam, you never cease to be a member of the College as my matriculation date indicates. Foremost among everyone's thoughts at this time is our own health and that of our loved ones so you have my best wishes for this. But close behind, especially for you in the graduation group, will be your professional plans for the future. I hope that these have not been upset. If they have, be confident in your talents and be resilient in making something else happen; you never know it may turn out better than the original plans would have done.

JOHN ARCHER, NATURAL SCIENCES 1970

I thought that my cohort's graduation day was strange as we'd just found out that the UK had voted to leave the EU, but your class has definitely topped it for the most historic and unusual graduation day! I'm sorry that this won't be the day you'd imagined but I hope you still do something to celebrate such an incredible achievement and remember that your hard work over the last few years doesn't come down to just one day. Congratulations on getting your degree! I hope you have a brilliant celebration with your classmates when you can all get together again, but for now, do something fun to mark the occasion. You did it! Well done! And good luck in the next steps of your career.

KATHERINE PARKIN, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES, 2013

It must feel very odd to have worked all this time towards a goal, and then for that goal to shift so decisively and so late in the game. Even if finals and waiting for results wasn't something you were exactly looking forward to, it was something you'd planned your life around for three or more years.

And then there's all the other lovely stuff you won't now get to do to decompress and take your mind off things - bumps, balls, punting and garden parties.

All our hearts, I'm sure, go out to you. Mine does, for sure. Fitz days are happy days, and it's a shame not to end on exuberant, joyful days.

But while this is the strangest time in all of our lives (even those of us who were at Fitz 35 years ago!), it's been made easier by us old folk adopting the technology that you, as graduands, have run your lives through since - well, since forever. That has made it possible for us all to stay connected, to remember and talk to our dear friends, to continue to expand our minds, and to carry on with some semblance of normality with our daily lives and our creative goals.

And that's really what your time at Fitz has been about. My dearest friends to this date were at Cambridge with me. I talk to them now probably more than ever. My greatest inspiration was always the stories we tell (which is what drew me to read History) and the books that express and shape who we are. No change there, despite our current circumstances. And the ability to keep going, even when times are challenging and the goalposts are morphing into handcuffs or a barred gate - to see that they could be shifting into a track, taking you forward... that's what your days and nights at Fitz have prepared you for.

With the benefit of the hindsight that the graduates of yesteryears can now acknowledge, we know that this is an extraordinary period in our history. From your personal perspective, it may not be the hardest. You will be tested again throughout your life, many times before the ultimate 'finals' - and you will be able to rise to meet those challenges because of who you have become today. In that, you have graduated already.

As we say in New Zealand where I now live - Kia Kaha. Stay strong. Stay safe. Stay on track.

JILL MARSHALL , 1984

My best wishes to you all as you come to the end of the first stage of your Fitz life. I feel for you in these difficult times, but despite the sadness of not experiencing the usual excitement of your final term, rest assured that Fitz will remain with you. There are so many moments that I remember so clearly 55 years on: sitting in the Oxford Road pavilion after first rugby training making new, now life long, friends; that trepidation of the first tutorial, and organising the first Fitz 'March Ball' to be different from all those May Balls. 'The best of the Old and the New'; that's Fitz. So good luck, look forward to the next stage whatever that may be, treasure your own memories, and welcome to the lifelong community of Fitz.

DICK LIDWELL, LAW AND ECONOMICS 1965

To all those of you missing out on the experience of your final term at Fitz I can only say how sorry I am. I am though a great believer that we are dealt a hand of cards in life and always have to use those cards to best advantage. Look at what opportunities your hand of cards provides you with now and go for them. What cannot be taken away from you is your Fitz experience to date. Use that to make you more determined to succeed and enjoy what is yet to come in life.

Chins up one and all, life goes on, you are still very much a part of the history of the college we all regard with so much gratitude and affection for what we gained from our time at Fitz. Let this adversity drive you forward into even greater success in the future.

NIGEL DAVIS, LAW 1969

Ladies & Gentlemen, I'm sure that you have thoroughly enjoyed your time at Fitz and met many fascinating and entertaining people and are great friends with many of them.

One piece of advice that I would give to you all is - STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR FRIENDS. You have so much in common with them, you have shared good times and no doubt some not so good times, so why should you say goodbye to them now and go your separate ways. Bonds of friendship should last a lifetime, so stay in touch - but be aware, you have to work at it and make the effort.

As for me, in these very strange days of self isolating, I am looking forward to yet another of our weekly beers with six Fitzbilly old boys at the 'Laptop Arms' tomorrow evening. Cheers!

BOB BARLTROP, LAW 1973

Sorry that you will not experience the joys of your final term at Fitz. I remember that it was hard back in 1978 in the knowledge that I would be leaving such a wonderful place and wondered where my four years (including a PGCE) had gone. It seemed over in flash and every day was a joy to be part of such a friendly community up on the hill.

I am sure that the college will do everything it can when we are clear of the restrictions to invite you back and enable you to celebrate in style both your degree and the time you spent at Fitz. Enjoy that day when it comes.

You will want to keep in touch I am sure in the years ahead and look back at some great times.

Finally, belated congratulations to last year's Cricket Cuppers winning team. A great achievement. I captained the 1977 team and we just fell short losing to Downing at Fenners in the final. Great to hear of last season's success.

Best wishes to all of you in your future pathways.

DAVID JOHNSON, GEOGRAPHY 1974

Having been to Cambridge is in itself probably the most important thing you will ever do in your lives, and even with a 2.2 Junior President's degree (as the Bursar described it in a poem he wrote for a pre-graduation review show) I have found the provenance opens innumerable doors, and the friendships last forever. Rejoice that you've had the opportunity desired by so many and achieved by so few.

ANDREW M REES, LAW 1977

Hello and greetings from afar.

I matriculated at Fitz more years ago than I can remember and certainly before the vast majority of you were born.

First of all, congratulations! Congratulations for what you have achieved in reaching Fitz, on what you have done during your time in our wonderful College, and for the exciting new life chapters upon which you are all so soon to embark.

Secondly, I am sorry; sorry that you have been denied the chance to leave on your own terms, with all the trappings, emotions and celebrations (and otherwise) of traditional Cambridge graduations.

But you know what... it won't be as bad as it probably now feels. I can say this with some insider knowledge.

A few years ago I was 'expelled' from a country, declared a Persona Non Grata by a government in line with some Vienna Convention. I was a Country Director working for a United Nations agency, in a country with an enormous programme where we really were "saving lives".

The departure was as sudden as it was unexpected, and, I should add, without reason. I was out of the country at the time. It was a country that I had invested enormously in, in which I loved living, and which I had so many important friends and colleagues, not least in the large team that I ran.

The expulsion was pretty devastating. I was not allowed to head back, to gather my belongings, to bid people farewell and to enjoy the normal festivities of departure. There were times when this really really hurt, and far more than the perceived injustice of being expelled without reason.

But you know what, with time, it did not matter. With time, my memories of my time there, the relationships built, the friendships forged and the feeling of time well-spent, began to burn bright, far brighter than the sense of disappointment and untimely rupture. And in fact, that sense of disappointment slowly dissolved and then disappeared.

And today, it is these positive memories and feelings that burn bright, untainted by the pain and negativity of the terms of my departure.

I was fortunate that a couple of others who had been PNG'd in similar circumstances (it happens...) reached out and told me that this would be the case, however dark things seemed in those first few days. So this is why I pass on similar words and assurances. It is my way of thanking those who showed compassion when it was needed.

So worry not. Please.

RT, TOO LONG AGO TO REMEMBER...

Cambridge will always be with you as you move on, its ethos, its learning and skills, its beauty and memories, so go forward bravely.

KEITH MARSHALL, NATURAL SCIENCES 1955

You made it to this point! What a lovely accomplishment! Thank goodness you are safe and healthy! I know it is sad but saying a proper goodbye can wait for another day. Your lives may be changed because you aren't physically in Cambridge right now to end your journey as undergraduates. Remember, you never know what fate has planned for you because of these unexpected events. Best wishes on Finals!

EVA HARTE, 1996

May I just say that my final term was a blur - the run up to Finals was all encompassing since the system was different then and it was the June exams that counted for everything. Thus, revision (particularly for those who had spent too much of the prior 2 years on the sports fields, in the theatre, in the bars...) was 24/7 for 3-4 months with hardly a breather for a cup of coffee. July was then a different blur of celebration and recovery!

Work can certainly be done from home since fairly solitary at this point but you will miss the end of term celebrations. I am therefore pleased to hear that the College will be organising a proper celebration next year.

I wish you every success in whatever you choose to do and that you be at the forefront of your generation in trying to heal the wounds that afflicts the world we live in. Let this horrible virus teach us to celebrate each day better, celebrate our friends and family more... and those who teach us... and help us create a healthier and more caring place to live and work both domestically and internationally.

I celebrate you and have every confidence that your years at Fitzwilliam will be years really well spent.

GERALD PARKES, LAND ECONOMY 1977

Many will feel the 'unfairness' to themselves personally of COVID-19 and even anger. I hope this tweet which I saw today will offer you a positive thought. 'Journalism is missing the mood the country. We don't want blame, we don't want argument as if this were a General Election, we want a contribution to the national effort to get us out of this crisis. We want hope optimism and faith in our country. We need less negativity.' Having spent so much of my working life in crises around the world, I can vouch for this approach. It works. Good luck.

DAVID LEAKEY, LAW 1971

I can't even imagine how it must feel not to be able to experience your final term in Cambridge... This too shall pass!

We are all rooting for you <3

ANTONIA, 2009

I graduated in the 1970s, the decade that fashion forgot. I can only imagine the great disappointment you all feel at missing the last part of your time at University. Et in Arcadia Ego and Brideshead Revisited come to mind, but that was at the other place whose name I am unable to recall. As your careers develop I am sure you will still look back very fondly at your time in Arcadia, possibly through rose-tinted glasses. All the best!

KEITH CAMPBELL, CLASSICS 1970

This comes with every best wish from a Fitz undergrad of over 50 years ago. It has been a great pleasure since then to see the College and the student experience and activities develop in so many ways, and to see that Billy Pride has firmly taken root and flourished since its rather sporting origins. All this and the friendships created will stand you in good stead for the future, for which every best wish and GOOD LUCK!

JEREMY PRESCOTT, 1967

I left Fitzwilliam in 1983. I still have a great deal of Fitzwilliam in me, even 37 years later. Each one of you will have exactly these same things.

My closest friends are all from Fitzwilliam. Spread amongst the 2 years above and 2 years below my year, as well as those from my year. 3 years of fantastic memories. Some things I did for the first time - some of which I have never done again. And other things that are part of my DNA.

I visit Fitzwilliam at least every other year for the Sports Alumni dinner, as ex Football Club captain and get a buzz of excitement every time when I walk towards the College.

So don't be too dispirited. I hope you had a great time. And don't forget, Fitzwilliam is like Hotel California, you might have checked out for now... but you will never leave. Good luck, from John.

JOHN TOPPIN, ECONOMICS 1980

When all is said and done
You may have missed a May ball or two
Probably avoided a hangover or worse
But your achievement is firm
You went to Cambridge

GARETH ARDERN, 1983

All the very best to you in your futures. I hope you've all greatly enjoyed your time at Fitz and get to celebrate your achievements soon. Good luck with the exams and dissertations!

ANON, CLASSICS 2012

As a Fitzwilliam College alumnus, I would like to give you a few words of encouragement as you graduate from college life in 2020.

First and foremost, whether there is a lockdown or not affecting you when you graduate, engage with life. Seek out opportunities and seize them when you can. When you are knocked down by the unexpected twists of fate, as the saying goes, get back up again. Adapt and you will survive. If you can, develop a knack for getting things done and avoiding procrastination, show your appreciation and love for life, and life will reward you.

On a far lighter note - gosh - what an absolutely weird way to end your university days! Remote exams and assessments, virtual hugs from your friends, virtual job interviews - and perhaps you might be starting your first job in your 'home office', although I do hope we will have a lifting of the lockdown to look forward to by then. We have never experienced anything like this before but already society is adapting and so are you.

So don't go fearfully into your future - yes - it will hold far more unknowns for your generation - but that also means adventure and fun. It is quite likely that as workplaces adapt to the concept of remote working whenever possible, you will have more freedom to travel and work from home when you choose and, hopefully, a stronger sense of community with your neighbours than older generations experienced when they were your age.

Good luck to you all.

DR COREENA BRINCK, 1993

I read this on the wall of the gents' WC in the Cambridge Library in 1971:

Descartes , "Be!"

Nietzsche , "Do!"

Frank Sinatra, "Do be do be do!"

This has always given me a Cambridge perspective on life. I am now aged 82.

COL. PROF. W. K. HARDWICK, MBE, 1972

Hang on to those good memories. Life goes on, with all the usual ups and downs and a few deep downs as well, you will certainly lose contact with most of your deepest friends (and lovers?) - but the memories will be there. Read Michael Frayn's 'Towards the End of the Morning' - about life after 'Going Down'. 'Finals' are NOT Finals, they are just the temporary completion of one phase of life, and then the REAL learning begins. But as long as you have those good memories you can get through a lot. It can be hard when there is no chance to say Goodbye (and I do not count 'social media' as an alternative) and when there is no closure, but you will get past that and over it. Enjoy what is still to come!!!

WALTER ROTHSCHILD, THEOLOGY 1973

Many years ago, I received a simple piece of advice that, throughout my life, has given me encouragement at difficult times and kept my feet firmly on the ground when things improved.

"When things look really bad, they rarely turn out as badly as expected. Unfortunately, when things look really good, they rarely turn out as well as hoped!"

I was first given this advice by an old, wise and very experienced Engineering Manager. At the time, I was the inexperienced manager of a fertilizer plant and the plant had just undergone an upgrade which had gone badly wrong. Instead of increasing production and efficiency, output plummeted. and I was very depressed about it. As plans were put together to rectify matters, I was mighty relieved to hear the first part of the advice given above. I was immediately brought back to earth by the second part, but thankfully things did gradually improve.

MARTIN FRANCIS, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING 1964

Congratulations! Your achievements have been hard earned and well deserved. Have no doubt that your skills will always be held in high value and you will have very successful and happy times ahead. Fitz will certainly never short change you. Enjoy your graduation celebration when it arrives. It'll be amazing.

ELIZABETH, ECONOMICS 1984

My generation made a real mess of the world. That's one reason the world is in this mess. People got obsessed about money and forgot the really important things. The rich got richer. People got left without being homes or a wage that that was enough to feed their family. You can do better. You're going to need to. For the planet.

Good luck.

ANON

I am truly sorry that you will not be able to graduate as I did. In those days, jobs were relatively easy to come by but the pay for many of us was poor. My family and I struggled for a good 30-odd years but we gritted our teeth and came through to a measure of comfort. So you see, we too had our struggles.

You must be positive and think in the long term, seize your opportunities - and never forget the place that gave you a good start.

MICHAEL SIMPSON, HISTORY 1958

Your disappointment at the way the year has ended will be severe but you can help the country get back on its feet by your youthful generous response to the new needs as they unfold. You have the brains and the initiative. I pray God you will use them. May the the heroic example of those on the front line combating coronavirus inspire you to be of service.

PETER MORGAN, HISTORY 1967

Hamlet would have said something about suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, but COVID-19 will not define you. Your time at Cambridge, and life at Fitz, will.

Cambridge: the experience, the nurturing of body and soul, the beer and black velvet, the Backs, supervisions that spurred thought from depths you did not know you had. Endless discussions, arguments, enlightenment, fleeting satisfaction with a practical that produced the right answer and an acceptable analysis of potential error. Why isn't Bridge a full Blue sport? Why isn't History and Philosophy of Science compulsory? An experience that has lasted my lifetime. Our Castle-on-the-Hill, the House of Fitzwilliam, ever-welcoming for Hall if you could peddle up the hill, and if you had remembered a gown. (Gowns were like bikes: it was 'a gown'; 'a bike,' - never yours, or at least not for long!) The camaraderie, all together on different paths with different goals. All in the Common Room after a white-glove meal, singing along with Joan Baez or Dusty Springfield.

How do three short years become so formative, so indelible, so irreplaceable? You are about to learn; you will find how this undefinable Cambridge spirit moves along with you, changes you, builds you and supports you in subtle ways. You will find that respect you are given, because you were there, will turn into your determination to achieve, to succeed by whatever measure success is measured, to contribute to your field of expertise, to help your co-workers and understand that you have a great deal to learn from them. There will come a time too, when you will realize how much Fitzwilliam has given you. You will never forget. You will be forever grateful. I wish you a long, happy, rewarding and successful career.

CHRIS BAGNALL, PHYSICAL METALLURGY 1964

We are sorry you missed out on your final term at Fitz but we reckon some of your best Fitz moments are still yet to come. As a group of seven girls we first bonded in 128 Huntingdon Road but we are still in contact daily even though we are now nearing our thirties and spread across four time zones. Our friendships have grown stronger as we have shared all the highs and lows of the eight years post-Fitz - as housemates, travel buddies, bridesmaids and always drinking companions! The first three years at Fitz were just the beginning and today we're sharing our meal snaps and even daily bath updates to get us through lockdown! We're sure the Fitz friendships you've made will see you through these strange times and well beyond!

GIRLS OF 128 2K09

All of you need to make an arrangement to 'make up for it'. More than 35 years on I still remember my last few weeks at college at the most wonderful. OK exams had their stress but the real joy cane afterwards - breakfast parties at 9am. Off your rocker by 10am. Don't let the pandemic take that away from you. When it's all over find a way to get trashed in the morning. You need to look back on that.

SALIL PAJWANI, 1986

I understand that these are very strange times and the expected, time-honoured procedures are now suddenly interrupted or removed. However after this passes you will be and always be a member of a Fitz and that is something that from my experience you will forever be thankful for. Good luck.

NICK OLNEY, 1981

I hope that you've enjoyed your time at Fitzwilliam as much as I did, and appreciate it as much throughout the years ahead. You've acquired and practised skills that have enabled you to join in and contribute to humankind's civilising conversation. People like you are humankind's hope in this world in crisis. Our most pressing conversation is surely "How do we, all billions of us, best live together wisely and well on our small blue planet?"

An antique now, I wish you well in your contributing to that urgent conversation: your lives will surely prosper it - and I hope that, living wisely and well yourselves, personally fulfilled, you help to answer our pressing question. Go into that world in peace, with goodwill.

PETER DOBLE, THEOLOGY 1952

My heart goes out to you at this time. I recall the run-up to finales and exams as a tense and odd time. The days and weeks started to fly by and a new balance between study, revision, lectures and time with friends was found. Friends would mostly become cocooned in their own worlds. Some working hard others worrying hard. Outside the weather became a constant ally and temptress, the promise of a time after exams and this odd period of time and a summer that appeared to stretch on forever.

But whilst missing this time now might feel heartbreaking, looking back at it almost 20 years later, I can tell you that it is but one out of many more vivid and fond memories of my time at Cambridge; and those other memories have dominated my recollections much more over the years. Matriculation, that first Michaelmas term, cycling home from town in the cold and the dark, drinks in the bars and the pubs with friends, Christmas and life during a 'normal', not Easter term, are my fondest. I am sure that it would have been the same for you, had things been different.

But also remember this. This is just the beginning. It might feel like the end of something but it is not. What lies ahead for you is an adventure. A world of wonder and fun. Of amazing times and people. Of new lives and new loves. Of carrying the experiences you had over those preceding terms and years with you into a world that offers you so much more than you can imagine right now.

Good luck and don't forget to keep in touch with College. It is a community that we never really leave.

GREGORY LUPTON, NATURAL SCIENCES 1998

Proud of you for graduating and making it this far in your career! It definitely would not have been easy but it's amazing! You'll definitely be able to say that you had one of the most unique graduations in Cambridge!

ANI PERERA, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING 2013

I've been wondering what I can possibly say that would be of any interest or use or even helpful to you. The truth is that this totally sucks. But you can take some strange pride in the fact that you're living through something completely unique and your experience during this time will stay with you always. What you learn from this difficult and frustrating episode is likely to be much more useful to you later in dealing with challenges. Congratulations on being awesome and getting through this!

MARIE THERESE, ARCHAEOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY 1983

I always look back on my time at Cambridge with the fondest memories ever. I can only imagine how you must be feeling at the prospect of ending your 3 or 4 years at Fitz in the currently challenging situation that we find ourselves in at the moment - what a crazy world it is right now!

I just wanted to say that your time at Cambridge is not defined but one term alone. Whilst I'm sure that you have all been looking forward to spending the first part of a glorious summer with your friends after the rush and adrenaline-fuelled feeling of final exams, the friends that you have made in your time at Fitz will likely be friends for life.

There is nothing more binding when it comes to friendships than spending all the highs (and some lows!) together during your university years. There will be plenty of opportunities to make some totally awesome and unforgettable memories with them once all this madness is over.

In the meantime we are all rooting for you! Wherever you are and whatever you are doing right now I wish you all the very best when it comes to seizing the opportunities that this unprecedented turn of events brings. A life at Fitz gives you all the tools that you need to handle whatever life throws at you - you just need to be confident enough to give them a go... and if you ever need a hand do remember that help is never far away.

Best of luck for the next few months and for your future careers! Take care :)

SHAM, ENGINEERING

I really feel for you in missing out on so much because of these strange times. But remember how much you've already shared and what amazing friends you now have. My offer of support is to say don't let this premature breaking away break the bonds of those friendships. You'll need each other in the so called 'real world' over the next few years when ambitions, bikes, hearts and rent caps get broken. Hold on tight to the people that inspire and warm you and plan now for future adventures together: shared houses, trips to far flung places. You've got so many future stages in life to graduate through together. Mark them with great joy! All the best!

CAROLINE WILLIAMS, 2006

A former Bank of England Governor defended Brexit by exhibiting a graph showing UK economic growth over the last couple of hundred years. It is a diagonal line which rises at a pretty sharp angle from origin to the present day. Careful examination shows the presence of some blips, most notable amongst which are WWI, WWII and the banking crisis of 2008.

His point was that we had nothing to fear from leaving the EU - it was just another blip.

Until College's request for a message for the finalists of 2020 I had only ever felt grumpy about the blipchart. But I have now found a use for it!

Bathetic though the abrupt end to your time at Cambridge is, I can assure you from the vantage point of almost half a century - it's just a blip. All of the experiences which you have amassed since arriving at the greatest college in Cambridge (and therefore the world) are merely a segment of a life which will continue its inexorable journey northeast.

So, use the spare time you have unexpectedly been gifted to do something for the less fortunate, celebrate the weird lack of pressure (which will make you the envy of all preceding generations) and fasten your seat belts for the Fitz-powered trajectory that lies ahead of you - occasional blips and all!

SIR KENNETH OLISA, NAT SCI, SPS & ENGINEERING 1971

1) You should never stop learning: graduation is just the end of the beginning.
2) In life don't be blindsided by status nor confuse status with expertise. Wisdom and expertise comes in all kinds of people, irrespective of whether they went to university or not. An expert is someone who is always seeking to know more.
3) Never presume but never be afraid to constructively challenge. Where possible the best way to challenge is to persuade - always try and inhabit different arguments to then understand how best to bring people to your point of view
4) Truth is wealth as are real friends and family. Never do something because you are trying to please others nor squander time pretending (unless you're an actor). When assessing something or making a decision, always judge by what is actually happening, never by you think ought to be happening.
5) Never take people or moments for granted: you will find the greatest satisfaction can lie in the smallest things. You can learn as much from talking to someone over coffee as in training.

ANON

You've worked hard, you've played hard, and now it's time to prove your abilities and to celebrate your achievements and it's all been taken away. This is really hard, and my heart goes out to you. However all is not lost - your abilities and achievements cannot be taken away, and there will be plenty of opportunities for proofs and celebrations. You will always be part of the Cambridge and Fitzwilliam families, and you already have the foundations for a great future. So may you go from strength to strength, and as soon as it's safe, have a great party!

OWEN EVANS, ENGINEERING 1986

Good grief, dear Fitzbillies, as if your final year at Cambridge wasn't mad enough without a global pandemic. There aren't really any words for a time such as this, as I'm sure you are discovering, but a decade out of graduating, and so the next kind of layer up in society, let us assure you that you'll be okay. Nothing will be the same on the other side of a global pandemic, but I know the creativity and ingenuity of a set of Fitz graduands will pull through in more brilliant ways than we can imagine now. What you'll learn on the other side of uni is that it's as much about the life experiences as it is the study – so let it be said, again I'm sure, that this time will be what you make of it. That can mean anything from choosing to rest your body and soul and soak up the sunlight because you've worked so bloody hard to dreaming about what your future looks like and what you feel called to. Cultivate in this season the dreams of things you didn't think possible. Make them possible. By more humane, more 'clapping every Thursday night for those who care for us' than the generation before you and the generation before that. Don't compromise that. Let this bring out the best of you – the parts you've spent hours discussing over cheap alcohol late at night on your staircases – the best worlds you've been studying during those long hours in the library – the slow wanders along the Cam with the people who'll be in your life for a long time to come – bring all those things into the light in this time. Those will be the sticky things, the things that stay. We believe in you – each and every one of you – and we look forward to encountering you once all this is over, and hearing about all the ways you're making the world better over a (better quality) beverage. Both your time and Fitz and this crazy season will play into that in so many ways, and I'm so excited to witness how.

KATIE PURSER, GEOGRAPHY 2007

Graduating from Fitz and from Cambridge is an experience.

Although this year has been different you came to Cambridge and to Fitz to be different, to stand out and to excel. Without adversity, we'd never have opportunities for greatness. You've taken another step on your path to personal greatness. There are new challenges ahead, new adventures and a world that really needs you. All of you.

Well done on your accomplishments.

Be well and be happy.

PATRICK J. SMITH, PHD ENGINEERING MATERIALS 2017

This moment of graduation is just the beginning. Your sojourn here at Fitz has equipped you with the greater competence to tackle what the future throws at you. You will be able to take advantage of the opportunities better than you may imagine. And you are forever a member of our community. It's membership for life. I wish you achieve all to which you aspire, and you move on with our perpetual support. Bonne chance!

ROCERIC LOWE, ECONOMICS & LAW 1969

Hello and best wishes to you all. I am sorry you did not get a proper Fitz goodbye. My own clearest memory of those times is an all-night revision session the night before my final Final, three pints of Guinness after I had done the exam, then falling asleep in my kitchen on Top Y...

These are strange times. I've tried to share for you to consider some thoughts and words that may help, regardless of the precise circumstances.

1. Plan your career with one eye on a lifetime financial plan (I am not a financial planner) - it gets harder the longer you leave it. I used a now partly defunct product called Microsoft Money to get started - no doubt there are better ones now.

2. With the caveat above, the best way to find out if you like things is to try them.

3. Unless you have private means, you will need to work with or for people, and accept less freedom of opinion and action than you have had at Fitz.

4. Jealously guard your physical and mental health, and freely reach out to friends or professionals for help with the latter.

Above all - good luck! If you are an MML graduate, feel free to contact me via LinkedIn or km221173@gmail.com. I come to Fitz Careers Fairs periodically and try to help students or alumni whenever I can (e.g. in a previous role I got an internship for a recent Fitz arts grad, but cannot promise anything like that now owing to being newer at my present firm).

"If you are idle, be not solitary; if you are solitary be not idle." (Dr Samuel Johnson)

“GO PLACIDLY amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection.* Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.”

(Desiderata, Max Ehrmann © 1927)

*Alas - you may need to feign affection at work sometimes!

KIERAN MORGAN, MML 1992

A poem to commemorate your achievement:

Sailing to Ithaka: Riffing on Cavafy and Tennyson and Yeats

For the Fitzwilliam Graduates of 2020

When Odysseus returned, he found nothing of value
Besides the faithful Penelope. So he sailed off into legend.
When Odysseus returned, Penelope found nothing of note
Besides her agéd and baffled husband of ill-repute.

When you sail for Ithaka
Ask only that your way be hard:
Full of adventure, full of learning.
May your thoughts always be noble and your mind seek joy.

When you sail for Ithaka
Ask only that the whale-road be long:
Stop at every port and city
Go to the poor to learn humility and the clever to become wise.

When you sail for Ithaka
Know that your arrival is foreordained:
Don't hurry the journey; reef the sails
Make the voyage last a lifetime.

When you reach Ithaka, you will be old
But rich with all that you have known
Ithaka can give you just a lovely voyage
But without her you could never have begun.

When you die in Ithaka, you will know
That poverty of mind would be a curse beyond enduring:
A tenth circle of Hell;
Far from Beatrice; far from the gates of Paradise;
Closest to those who have no hope;
Right next to Satan impaled upside down in ice.

Be grateful, then, for Ithaka: it is everything,
And all you will ever need.

May you be in love forever with rosy-fingered dawn.

© Toby Widdicombe
April 2020

TOBY WIDDICOMBE, ENGLISH 1974

Dear graduands, despite a challenging time at present, I believe that many things will need to change in the coming years to restore our societies with an aim to pursue a really sustainable way of life and meet the challenges that we are currently facing. Your ideas and knowledge will be thus very valuable. I am sure that you will have a chance to make a difference in this sense thanks to your competences, skills and experience.

Wherever you are at the moment, I wish you all the best from Trieste, Italy - a country that has been hit very hard by the Covid-19 crisis.

MITJA STEFANCIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCES 2004

Just like the rest of us at Fitzbilly you've been able to experience and enjoy all the benefits this society has to offer - well, most of them until the current lockdown. None of it will have been wasted. When you look back on your active life you will become more aware of the effect the ethos and outlook of this College has had on your own relationships. Whatever communities become your settings for life their members lives will be all the richer for having you there. Just keep on making sure that really is the case! Best wishes to you.

BRIAN HIBBERD, THEOLOGY 1955

I just wanted to send a message of support during these difficult times. I have been thinking of you all and the impact of the current situation on your last term at Fitz, with my own fond memories of that time (well, maybe not the exams). All I can tell you is that you will forever be part of the Fitz community and will have made friends for life. There are many more exciting times ahead and memories to make, many of which will be shared with the friends you have made at Fitz and Cambridge, and there will be plenty of evenings of reminiscing and laughing together. I graduated way back in 1985 but whenever I come back up to Cambridge and the college, it still feels like home. I wish you all the best for the future and know that the special bond you have with Fitzwilliam and Cambridge will endure for the rest of your lives. Look forward to seeing some of you at future college events.

DAVID COOMBS, GEOGRAPHY 1982

Cambridge, and Fitz, will always be there: a place so special that it will almost hurt to return to it. In that, there is no closure, because one never really says goodbye to the city or the institution. Nothing and nobody can take your experience of the unique vitality of Cantabrigian life away from you. Savour your memories and, yes, mourn for the loss of what would have rounded off your tenure; most of all, strive to be happy. Congratulations on your time, and good luck for the future.

ANON, LAW

What an unfortunate time to have to finish your time at Cambridge, my commiserations for missing out on Easter term and your chance to end the year in style. But well done Fitz for hosting something when this is all said and done.

I look back on my time at Cambridge with mixed feelings a lot of the time, it was a difficult slog - horrible at times but it taught me a lot, not just about law (I ended up not being a lawyer)! It also gives you a self-confidence that is the real advantage of your experience, the ability to hold your ground in a discussion, to ask for time to think in interviews, skills that you take for granted but that employers really value and are a rarity.

The alumni network is really strong and these shared experiences that are unusual for most will help you make friendships with people, even long after you graduate.

The world is big and scary, there are no deadlines to meet now, no boxes to tick and exams to finish. Focus on yourself, stay healthy (mentally and physically), sleep well and spend time looking after yourselves. Don't be hard on yourself and remember to keep an open mind about what the world haS to offer you. A message I wish I had when I graduated was: what got you here won't get you there, keep learning and growing.

The world is about to change a lot now, so pick a problem and do your best to help solve it. Be kind and kick ass.

Kind regards.

P.S. anyone interested in working in tech and startups - give me a shout and I'll do my best to help out.

JAMES, LAW 2012

Dear Fitz Geographers,

I am sorry that you haven't had your last Easter Term and that things have been so disrupted. I wanted to write and wish you well for the future. I was a Fitz Geographer many years ago and it changed my world! Remember you're always part of the Fitz GeogSoc, however old you are. These turbulent and unsettling times bring into sharp relief just how important your Geography degree is. Geography's the subject that no-one should leave home without. We work out every aspect of events like COVID-19 and integrate them into an analysis like no other subject ever could. So, go out into the world and remember, very few people have the skills that you do. Have confidence in your abilities and the things that you have achieved. Good luck for the future. I've had the absolute privilege of teaching some of you this year and I am sure my colleagues would all agree that teaching is always the best part of our day.

DR FRANCESCA MOORE, 1999

Reach out to your Fitz friends in the coming years, they'll help you out. Also, biscuits don't have calories in exam term :-)

EMMET CASSIDY, 2009 (BOTTOM B TIL I DIE)

It is surprising how large a piece of your life three or four years at Cambridge remains, despite becoming a smallish fraction even of your adult life. I will be 60 next birthday, yet a good few of my closest friends today were made at Cambridge. Although you will in a sense miss your last term, which is of course memorable both for the exams and for the letting down of hair afterwards, I think most of you will find that the experiences you have already had in the two and a half years (or for the lucky few, three and a half) will have built those memories and relationships just as well as those of us who had the whole nine yards.

Cambridge is not just a place. Everyone's Cambridge in a sense is most importantly the people they were there with - in their faculty, in the clubs and societies they join and of course perhaps most importantly their college.

One of my abiding memories of Fitz is the college spirit, and how it embraced and included those of its members who did not fit the stereotype. I was one such - an archetypal tweed jacket-wearing pedant with a fondness for airing my opinions in the Union, and absolutely no use at any sport at all. Yet people turned out to vote in Union elections just the same even if they rarely went there, and despite the hill on the way back. As one said openly to me, "I haven't got much time for Union hacks. But you're our Union hack."

I think that it is little things like that, and the friendships that will endure, which will mean that your Fitz experience will be as full a part of you as it is of me or anyone else.

I wish you all the very best of good fortune for long and fulfilling lives, enriched by your wonderful education of course, but also by the camaraderie of Fitz.

JULIAN LLOYD, LAW (NOMINALLY) UNION DEBATING SOCIETY (ACTUALLY) 1980

I do not envy any of you as you graduate virtually and go forth into a world of uncertainty that we have not seen in many years.

However, I do know that the knowledge and approaches that you have gained will position you to take full advantage of whatever the word brings in the future.

We need young, flexible, and well-trained minds to make sure that the world is a better place for everyone.

NICK LANCASTER, GEOGRAPHY 1968

Whatever you do in later life you will always recall how fortunate you were to have been at Fitzwilliam and Cambridge.

Take it with and forever be grateful.

JOHN RUSH, ECONOMICS & LAW 1964

We are all together in this. With hope, and all the best, for the future.

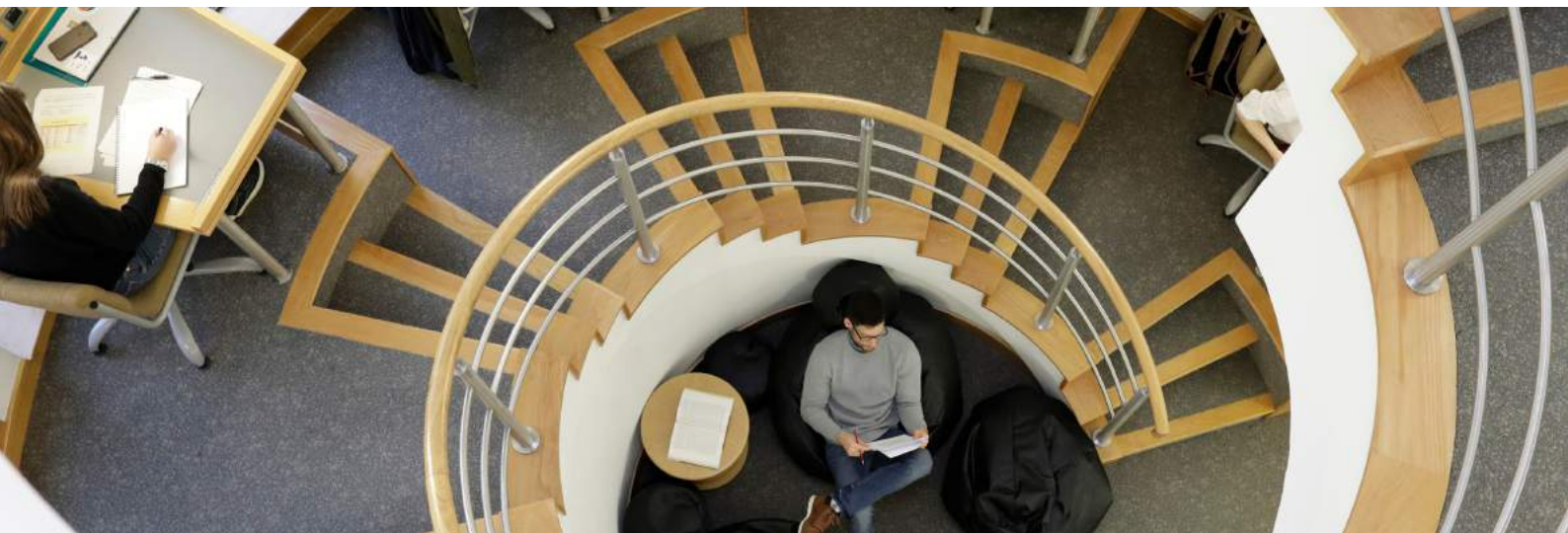
ANON, ARCHAEOLOGY 1989

First of all - congrats! Well done! You most certainly did it! Some parts of it may not be as you dreamt it but it certainly was memorable - wasn't it? There is no point in being upset on things we cannot control. As all the classic (and cheesy) saying goes: life is full of the unexpected and its unpredictability is where we as human beings thrive. When I graduated and left my loving Fitz, my country was in political, economic and social turmoil with more than 2 million refugees and asylum-seekers. I never pictured myself working on asylum, but life brought me to the doorsteps of UNHCR and I had the pleasure of working with countless refugees, with remarkable stories of survival for more than four years. What got me through when things got though, was knowing that us, as a species, need solidarity to survive. Everything we do to better the lives of others, has a cyclical pattern - it ultimately betters life for all of us. I know life seems bleak at the times of pandemic - I recently resigned to move abroad and all international flights were cancelled on the day of our flights. So I know what I mean when I talk about about horrendous timing and plans being out of control! We are to learn constantly, not only traditionally, but also through experiences that life forces us into. Now we learn as a global community on how to react and adapt. I know it is much easier to be bitter at such times, but let's not. Let's seek out others, who may be in immediate need; let's contemplate on our future globally; let's look for ways we can be in touch, consume less but produce more. 2020 graduands, you are witnessing history. I know I am at the zenith of cliches right now, but there is so much you can carry to the next phase of your lives, if we leave the cycle of same-old ways and start observing life as a community. I hope you are all safe and healthy! I wish you all a sustainable future!

OZGECAN, 2014

This has of course been an extraordinary year, and I am sure that you are anxious about your future and not a little disappointed that you cannot celebrate your hard work and success with fellow students as hoped for. Be aware that despite the immediate challenges, you have the benefit of those wonderful last few years at Fitz, and your experience and friendships made will be carried by you for the rest of your life. You will have a bright future, and whichever direction your life now takes you, the Cambridge community and spirit that you have contributed to and enjoyed will be an enduring part of your character and outlook as you go forward. Well done and good luck!

MARTYN LOWRY, GEOGRAPHY 1977

Congratulations for all you have achieved whilst at Cambridge. I hope that you have many found memories to look back on of your time at Fitz and I wish you every success in your next venture.

LUCY LE ROUX, GEOGRAPHY 2010