Fitzwilliam came into being as a College by Royal Charter in 1966, not as a new creation but after nearly a century of evolution. This year marks 50 years as an independent college in the University.
Introduction

Fitzwilliam’s roots lie in University reforms in the nineteenth century. These reforms included the admission of undergraduates without their needing to become members of colleges, which were expensive - students had to buy their own furniture, for example.

The reforms culminated in 1869 in the setting-up of the Non-Collegiate Students Board to oversee students without colleges and to regulate their teaching. The cost of being a ‘non-collegiate’ student at Cambridge was less than half that of being a member of a college, and at the same time access to the University was widened.

Advertisements were placed; one in the Birmingham Daily Post of 1869 reads:

‘Many parents who desire to give their sons the benefit of a University education, at moderate cost, will be glad to know that the University of Cambridge has made very liberal arrangements for the admission of non-collegiate students. Hitherto, students have been received only as members of some college at the University, but henceforth they will be allowed to keep terms by residing with their parents or in lodgings duly licensed, thus escaping the cost of collegiate residence. At the same time all the privileges of the University will be open to them.’

Eight students were admitted in Michaelmas 1869: six were new entrants to the University and two were migrants from colleges. At least six were mature students; two schoolmasters, a surgeon and a man who had lectured in Edinburgh and London.

All ‘non-collegiate’ students lived in lodgings, and Fitzwilliam Hall (later renamed Fitzwilliam House) - opposite the Fitzwilliam Museum on Trumpington Street - was where their social and some of their teaching needs were eventually met. While Fitzwilliam Hall was regarded by some as inferior to the colleges, its members continually strove to enhance its standing. Student numbers grew; in 1874 there were nearly 100; in 1920 over 300. But the process of changing its status from what was technically that of a University Department to a full College was slow. In 1944, the Non-Collegiate Students Board stated explicitly that a new and larger building was needed, and by 1960 land had been purchased by the University and an architect, Denys Lasdun, had been appointed.

Fitzwilliam moved to its current site in 1963, and in 1966 it was granted a Royal Charter and became an independent college. Fitzwilliam College has charitable status, and is now a community of around 430 undergraduates, 320 graduates, 60 Fellows and over 100 staff. The Master is Mrs Nicola Padfield.
The following excerpts are taken from Chapter 6 (Survival in the Post-War World) in *Fitzwilliam: The First 150 Years of A Cambridge College* edited by Dr John Cleaver, with a foreword by Dr David Starkey.

**House to College**

The transformation of Fitzwilliam House from a University Department to an independent body had foundered on its need to be financially self-sufficient. This was linked to the need for new buildings, since it was recognised that the Trumpington Street building and its Fitzwilliam Street neighbours were completely inadequate for a body with 300 Junior Members. In the later 1950s, these issues were transformed from separate difficulties compounding each other to linked aspects of a common solution.

The person who put the aspects together was S.C. (later Sir Sydney) Roberts, Chairman of the Non-Collegiate Students’ Board and a member of the Council of the Senate. As early as Michaelmas 1955, before the Memorialists’ initiative had collapsed in acrimony, Roberts and the Board began to consider whether provision for an administrative building for Fitzwilliam House might be incorporated with high priority into the University’s Statement of Needs for the quinquennium 1957–62. There was an immediate issue: funds would come from the University Grants Committee, and its remit was to fund Universities, not independent colleges or similar bodies. Representatives of the Council of the Senate and of the Negotiating Committee met in late March 1956 and it was agreed that an approach should be made to the UGC since, although the grant would be made to the University, it should not be assumed that the University would not be permitted to use it for a building for Fitzwilliam House – even though, by the time the building was complete, the House might have become autonomous. This seems ever so slightly Jesuitical, but it should be remembered that it was taking place in a very expansive era, in which a long-overdue increase to the woefully inadequate university capacity in England led to a group of new universities such as Sussex and Warwick.

At the end of May, the Registrary reported that the soundings had been successful. The long-running investigation of potential locations for new buildings had settled on the Huntingdon Road site of The Grove. Thus the complementary elements of the scheme were in place and a submission to the UGC could proceed. In March 1957, the statement of needs for 1957–62 had as its second-placed capital-project request an administrative building for Fitzwilliam House, to cost about £200,000 and suit an institution with between 350 and 400 students (who would not be accommodated in the building).

The UGC funding gave sufficient expectation for continuity that the Council of the Senate decided that the post of Censor should be filled, after a four-year gap. The new Censor, who took office in January 1959, was Dr W.W. Grave, a Fellow of Emmanuel and Principal of the University College of the West Indies – a man with vast university-administrative experience.
The remaining steps towards independence now proceeded briskly, aided by a number of very favourable – and completely unpredicted – external circumstances. If Fitzwilliam was to be endowed and also able to afford the later phases of its buildings, more funds would be needed. The Non-Collegiate Students’ Board proposed to the Registrary that an appeal should be undertaken. The Council of the Senate assented, and the Board launched the appeal in July 1962, sponsored by Sir Maurice Bridgeman, then Chairman of British Petroleum. The target was £900,000, but only £200,000 had been raised by 1964. Not enough for both buildings and endowment, but fortuitously it was not necessary to fund buildings: the University had allocated resources for the comprehensive replacement of science buildings on the New Museums Site, and the scheme had collapsed – but Fitzwilliam Phase 2 could be undertaken immediately to avoid the loss of the funds. So the proceeds of the appeal were not needed for buildings, and could go into the endowment.

More potential misfortune was turned to good advantage. March 1962 brought the publication of the Report on the Relationship between the University and the Colleges, from the Syndicate chaired by Lord Bridges. One issue was the number of University Teaching Officers without college Fellowships, so an increase in the number of Fellowships was proposed. This was perceived by the Board as untimely and a threat, since many of the best available Teaching Officers in popular subjects might be taken up before Fitzwilliam was able to make its own appointments. So they proposed to the Council of the Senate that Fitzwilliam House might be allowed to appoint up to twenty-four non-stipendiary Fellows. This was approved by Grace in December 1962. Another collegiate attribute had been acquired.

One final step was needed. The University Statutes were constructed on the assumption that an institution would hold the intermediate status of Approved Foundation before it became a College. But the authors of a further Report in 1964 considered that collegiate provision across the University could be improved simply and quickly, and recommended: ‘because it has been for many years collegiate in character, the Council now think that it should be unnecessary for Fitzwilliam House to seek recognition in the first instance as an Approved Foundation, and that it would be more appropriate if it were included among the Colleges listed in Statute K, 3(a), as soon as arrangements can be made’.

**Fellows and Statutes**

The Non-Collegiate Students’ Board lost no time in implementing their new-found authority to elect Fellows for Fitzwilliam House. Only a month afterwards, on 17 January 1963, the first group was elected, those entitled to Fellowships *ex-officio*. The very first was the Bursar, W.W. Williams, immediately followed by a group of Tutors and Directors of Studies: Dr S. Dickinson (Agriculture), R.W. Haywood (Mechanical Sciences), Dr C.L. Wayper (History), Dr T.W. Wormald (Physical Sciences), R.N. Walters (Tutor; English), J.E.G. Utting (Economics), Dr R. Kelly (Assistant
Tutor; Modern Languages), B.M. Herbertson (Assistant Tutor; Medicine) and Dr J. Street (Assistant Tutor; Modern Languages). G.F. Hickson, Secretary of the Board of Extra-Mural Studies was also elected.

Less than a fortnight later, they continued, electing A.G. Hunt (Classics) and Dr A. Lazenby (Assistant Tutor; Agriculture). In addition, they broadened the field beyond the ex-officio appointments, to: Dr D. Kerridge (Biochemistry), H. Nicholson (Engineering), and Dr G.M. Blackburn (Organic Chemistry). Further elections took place during 1963, with: Dr S.G. Fleet (Mineralogy), Dr P.J. Padley (Physical Chemistry), B. Hall (Theology), P. Haggett (Geography), Dr H.J. Hudson (Botany), Dr J.M. Coles (Archaeology), and finally Dr A.V. Edwards (Physiology). The elections up to October 1963 put in place many who were to play key roles in the House and the College for the next three decades.

An early action of the Fellows of Fitzwilliam House was to prepare the Statutes: collegiate status would be manifest by the issuing of a Royal Charter and the approval of the Statutes by the Privy Council. This was undertaken briskly, but with some controversy – and some decisions were unfortunate. The first draft was based on the statutes of existing colleges, predominantly Dr Grave’s Emmanuel. In the debate, the Censor had – and was very conscious that he had, and was exercising – the advantage that he alone had prior experience as a Fellow of a college.

David Kerridge recalled a meeting ‘where the Censor and I had a major difference of opinion over one statute, a situation not helped by the fact that we are both fenmen and therefore stubborn. Geoff Hunt, later University Draughtsman, came to our rescue with a form of words satisfying honour on both sides. At the end of the meeting ... Grave came up to me and said “Kerridge, have a beer. You know what the trouble is. You’ve not served on enough committees, and I’ve served on too many”. It was the perfect way of defusing a difficult situation.’ And the new Fellows tried to improve the odds, a small group gathering regularly to plan the line to be taken at the next meeting. Often the younger Fellows would meet in Tony Edwards’ room in College after Hall, accompanied by malt whisky.

Debate started with the very first clause of the first statute. It was only to be expected that an attempt would be made to resurrect the name of Fitzwilliam Hall; there was a large majority of 15 to 6 in favour of Fitzwilliam College – expressing unambiguously the long-awaited status.

Nomenclature was to surface one last time, during a Discussion in the Senate House on 23 November 1965 – a session that should have been purely formal, and which in that spirit had already provided Grave with the opportunity to give generous thanks to the Non-Collegiate Students’ Board and to the central Officers of the University for their support over many years. Haywood – expressing personal opinions rather than the common purpose inherent in Governing-Body membership – declared that it would ‘have been a source of pleasure for me to see us revert to our earlier title of Fitzwilliam Hall, while retaining the title of Censor. When this was discussed by the body of Fellows, however, I had no success in bringing them round to my
view and, in the belief that a rose by almost any other name would smell as sweet, I bowed gracefully, though perhaps a little sadly, to their greater collective wisdom.’

Consideration by the Fellows of the next clause of the Statutes, which restricted College membership to men, gave rise to a much closer debate and in retrospect clearly to the wrong outcome. The possibility of mixed colleges was becoming a live issue, not just amongst eccentrics and rebels – in 1964 the Council of the Senate had mooted the possibility of institutions open both to men and to women. The opportunity for Fitzwilliam to achieve a unique position as the first mixed college with undergraduate members (more than a year before King’s College eliminated its gender-restrictive statute) was closely defeated, by 15 votes to 12. The defeated proposal was to add a final phrase ‘except by a two-thirds majority of the Governing Body’ to the draft ‘No woman shall be eligible to be Master, Fellow or Scholar, or shall be a Member of the College’, enabling the College to become mixed without needing to change the Statutes. So the College was condemned to statute revision more than a decade later – and to become an also-ran amongst the mixed colleges rather than having the advantages of being the pioneer.

It took eight long meetings closely packed into four weeks early in 1965 to go through the Statutes. Every clause in each of the sixty-one statutes was looked at in detail. Care was taken to define the arrangements for the Master, and note was taken of changing social mores: **College Servants** became **Assistant Staff**, for instance.

Also needed was the Charter. With this, the objectives of the College were defined. Some were inherent:

(a) To advance education, religion, learning and research in the University;
(b) To provide for men who shall be members of the University a College wherein they may work for Degrees in the University or may carry out postgraduate or other special studies at Cambridge provided that no member of the College or any candidate for membership thereof shall be subject to any test of a religious, political or social character;

but others derived from the special circumstances of Fitzwilliam:

(c) To acquire and take over such property and liabilities of the University as the University may transfer to it;
(d) To acquire and take over the properties and liabilities now vested in the limited company known as the Fitzwilliam Hall Trust.

So what assets were to be inherited? The Censor wrote to the University Treasurer to establish the fate of the Trumpington Street building, and requested the transfer of the balances on all relevant funds. The response was prompt and positive, declaring: ‘the University’s intention ... to transfer to Fitzwilliam College the site and buildings of Fitzwilliam House, together with the proceeds of an appeal issued in 1962 ... . ... The Council intends to transfer to the new College the various balances at present held in the Non-Collegiate Students’ Board accounts, and to make an allocation from the Chest to meet the payments to Dr Grave, during his tenure of the
Mastership of Fitzwilliam College, of the stipend appropriate to a Professorship, which he has been receiving as Censor of Fitzwilliam House.’ The accumulated cash balances were of the order of £50,000.

With the last few adjustments to the Statutes approved by the Privy Council on 2 June 1966, Her Majesty in Council approved on 28 July the grant of a Charter of Incorporation to Fitzwilliam House, under the name and style of *The Master, Fellows and Scholars of Fitzwilliam College in the University of Cambridge*. The Charter received the Great Seal on 9 September, and the next day the Statutes came into effect.

![The Royal Charter](image)

The long-awaited dream of full collegiate status had become a reality and the Non-Collegiate Students’ Board went into honourable retirement, its endeavours over ninety-seven years having provided a route into Cambridge for so many men who otherwise would not have had the opportunity, and having done for them the best that limited resources could provide. Its passing was noted in the *Cambridge University Reporter* of 5 October 1966:

**Statutes approved**

**Statute H**

**Chapter II**

**NON-COLLEGIATE STUDENTS**

(Amended) by repealing the whole chapter
To go with a Charter, a College needs a Coat of Arms. The Amalgamated Clubs and the House had used a combination of the University Arms and the Fitzwilliam Arms since 1887, without the blessing of the College of Heralds. The Heralds had noticed this omission in 1947; their challenge had been deflected by the University Registrary, who informed Chester Herald that Fitzwilliam House was not a corporation but an unincorporated fluctuating body of persons – an expression that infuriated Thatcher!

Nineteen years later, that Registrary had become the first Master; Fitzwilliam College was corporate, and the matter could be put off no longer. At its very first meeting, the Governing Body agreed that authority should be sought to use the existing Coat of Arms. The Kings of Arms responded that they would find difficulty in assigning the Arms to the College unless a link could be formed with the Earl Fitzwilliam. This could be by appointing him Patron of the College. All Fellows except for one radical member agreed that the Master should approach the Earl; he was delighted to accept, but pointed out: ‘The connection between my family and the Fitzwilliam from whom the College takes its name is one which I have failed to unravel. The Viscount Fitzwilliam who founded the museum of that name of course comes from the Fitzwilliams of Merrion and does not in fact appear to have any connection with us, but as the device of our Coats of Arms is the same there must, undoubtedly, be a connection somewhere.’ The Earl Fitzwilliam was appointed Patron in 1972, with little time to spare: he died in 1979 without issue (the last Viscount died in 1833).

The College of Heralds completed the design with a crest which differed from that of the Fitzwilliam family, and the Grant of Arms was made by Letters Patent on 31 December 1973.
The 250-guinea cost was underwritten by the Fitzwilliam Society, as part of their £500 gift to the College to mark the 1969 Centenary.

The Amalgamation Clubs must have taken the Arms from the Viscount, as they took his motto *Deo adjuvante non timendum*. The Fitzwilliam Society favoured its retention, but a competition was launched; the Governing Body and the Junior Members favoured a submission from R.W. Sharples, Research Fellow in Classics, and A.G. Hunt: *Ex antiquis et novissimis optima*.

So an expensive piece of parchment was created, and passed to the Master in May 1974 by Norray and Ulster King of Arms. The College was heraldically legitimate.

**Silver donations to mark collegiate status**

![Silver presented to Fitzwilliam to mark the attainment of collegiate status](image)

Collegiate status was marked in a traditional manner, by gifts of silver from members, from friends, and from other institutions. The College collection was greatly enhanced, as several pieces were commissioned from Gerald Benney, probably the most distinguished twentieth-century British goldsmith and silversmith. Benney was born in 1930\(^1\), studied at the Royal College of Art, and produced both exquisite individually-commissioned pieces and highly innovative designs for mass production. A characteristic feature of his work is the hammered ‘bark’ texture: a very durable work-hardened surface, reducing fingerprinting and tarnishing, and contrasting with plain, highly-polished regions.

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\(^1\) Obituary: *Independent* Wednesday 02 July 2008
The first piece was donated in 1963 by the Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College; it is a deep, rectangular salver, and the least characteristically Benney piece in the collection. The Master and Fellows of Trinity Hall donated a rose-water bowl in 1965; this one of a coordinated group of pieces commissioned by several donors. The Founding Fellows of the College donated the coffee and milk jugs – beautiful, but exceedingly heavy when full; after dinner, it is the custom that the most junior Fellow serves the other Fellows, and serving a large gathering provides a very adequate substitute for a visit to the gym! A cream jug, a sugar bowl and spoon, and a tray, were presented by members of the House resident in Malaysia. A matching water jug was donated by Mrs Armstrong.

To complement these pieces, a pair of candelabra by Benney was donated in 1970 by an alumnus, J.N.G. Findlay (1937); they are very dramatic, with tall, slender spikes.

At around the same time, the Master and Fellows of Selwyn College presented a Loving Cup, and St Edmund's House presented a salver.

To order a copy of *Fitzwilliam: The First 150 Years of A Cambridge College* edited by Dr John Cleaver with foreword by Dr David Starkey for £40 plus p&p please email the Development Office.

Alternatively, you can collect the book yourself from the Porters’ Lodge and save on the postage and packing.

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