

It is a great privilege to speak about the character and services to Trinity of such a loyal and devoted member of the Fellowship as Denis Marrian.

Stuart Warren (who was Denis's outstanding research student and later a Trinity Research Fellow) has eloquently described the full flowering of Denis's early fascination with chemistry, how he came under the benign influence of that giant among modern chemists, Alex Todd, how he moved from Manchester to Cambridge with Todd, and how in Cambridge he encountered the Trinity organic chemist F.G. Mann through mutual golfing involvement with the famous so-called Rutherford 4 and supervised some of Mann's pupils including Stuart himself. Stuart – never easily impressed – found Denis's supervisions superb and mentioned this to Mann, who was nearing retirement and recommended Denis as his successor.

So in 1959 Denis became a Teaching Fellow of Trinity and energetically continued his excellent supervisions. His temporary room overlooked the Bowling Green. He watched Rattenbury, Broad, Fox and Binning skilfully playing there, and with typical enthusiasm went off to the London Docks and chose a fine log of lignum vitae for forming a set of bowls, thus adding yet another game to his extensive sporting portfolio.

His keen interest in his pupils resulted in his appointment as a Tutor 4 years later in 1963. In 1964, the then Senior Tutor, Mark Pryor (outstanding zoologist, supremely independent mind, and great debunker of bureaucracy) suffered a tragic car accident; and after nearly two years in a coma he sadly died. Denis succeeded Mark as Senior Tutor in 1964. Despite taking on this vitally important post after only a year of tutoring, Denis made a great success of the exciting period which was to follow – and which was to include high spots like the Prince of Wales and low spots like the student troubles. Denis records that the eldest son of Lee Kwan Yu, outstanding Prime Minister of Singapore, was the brightest mathematician he admitted – and that's saying a lot in Trinity. But his most notable undergraduate was of course Prince Charles. I never forgot the day he went to the Palace to meet the Prince's Equerry, David Checketts, whom he found making the coffee in a semi-basement with Nescafé, powdered milk and saccharine. Informality could hardly go farther; this seemed to set the scene for the whole of Prince Charles's time here. Denis devoted particular effort to liaison with David Checketts and a senior local member of the Press in order to ensure that the Prince was relatively free of Press attention, which could have been

so troublesome. But there were a number of amusing incidents of course – as when the Prince commented on disturbance from loud early morning noise of dustbins being emptied – and Giles produced next day a cartoon depicting a haggard looking Denis in mortarboard and pyjamas negotiating by lantern light with burley corporation employees. And then shortly before Charles's installation as Prince of Wales at Caernarvon, Denis was asked by the BBC to record an appreciation of the Prince in case the latter was blown up. So Denis detoured from the Lords' Test Match and gave an off-the-cuff 20 minute provisional obituary. Denis records that when the Prince heard about it from Denis, he fell about, acting out what he imagined to have been Denis's tearful expressions.

Constitutionally the most important event during Denis's Senior Tutorship was the period of student troubles 1969-72, when many other Colleges and the University were experiencing much student unrest – some quite violent. Here unrest was not violent – nor should it have been, seeing how well our students are looked after. But we had a major Working Party of senior and junior members of massive Open Meetings in Hall presided over by Rab as Master (he sat for much of the time with arms folded and eyes shut, but woke periodically to utter a cogent comment showing he had heard every word). Negotiations were helped by the wisdom of Keith Moffatt as Senior Treasurer of the College Union and Michael Proctor as a shrewd and active Secretary of its Committee – both now pillars of the establishment! We also had the Magpie and Stump solemnly debating the motion "This House demands co-residence – backdated to October 1<sup>st</sup>." We did not add junior members to the College Council and College Meeting. But we did create a new and substantial Liaison Committee of junior and senior members which has for 35 years done good work on a wide range of matters of direct interest to junior members. Credit goes to Denis in all this for his common sense and skilful approach in student relations. As he remarked in his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday speech, "In more ways than one we were the envy of many other Colleges".

Gareth Jones followed as Senior Tutor in 1972. But when Gareth became a Professor, Denis stood in as Senior Tutor again – till Tony Weir ultimately succeeded him in 1976. It was a halcyon period for Senior Tutors, and other notables were to come.

With tutoring complete, Denis went back to full-time chemistry. The admirable Frank Hayhoe, Head of Haematology, invited him there, where he spent some successful years synthesising radioactively-labelled drugs, using techniques he had developed in his earlier work.

In 1982 Denis took early retirement from research, offered by a favourable University scheme. But he continued in the important post of Senior Proctor for a year and retained numerous honorary posts, including membership of the Governing Body of Westminster School – we was welcome there and supported our precious Tudor links with that leading establishment which gave us Trinity giants like Edgar Adrian, Master, Andrew Huxley, Master, Will Hawthorne, Head of University Engineering, and Robert Rattenbury, Registry.

On the sporting side he remained President of the University Golf Club, member of the Real Tennis Club Committee, and Fixture Secretary for University Rugby – if you missed an international on TV and wanted to know how Jonny Wilkinson won for England with a last-minute drop-goal, you could rely on Denis for an account of the decisive moment.

Denis also made time for a thorough reorganisation of the College Wine Cellar, as Secretary and, later, Chairman of the Wine Committee. He never bemused you with connoisseur jargon; and his quiet efficiency solved many problems. When the cellarman was unwell in late 1992, deliveries accumulated in the cellar and cartons disintegrated from falling condensation. Denis enlisted the help of a like-minded Committee member, Brian Mitchell, and between Christmas and New Year the two of them, with help from their families, spent every morning clearing up the mess, carting the bottles mostly to the far end of the cellar and stacking them in the bins. Denis's liver withstood countless commercial wine-tastings, some unspeakable, but undertaken stoically in the interests of the College! He started the famous draw bin-end wines at the Master's Christmas party; caused cheese to be served with wine in the Combination Room; and asked the Council to investigate Spouses' nights on the first Saturday of every month. If Trinity had a Social Secretary, Denis would certainly have held that post!

His love of wine was so deep-rooted that it even penetrated his sailing. For many years he sailed a conventional 14 ft Wayfarer dinghy with sturdy multipurpose qualities rather like Denis himself. But in 1975 he graduated to a 32 ft cruising catamaran (one of the twin-hulled lighter group of boats which sail very fast in good conditions); and because of his devotion to the ineffable Château Laffite claret he named the catamaran "Cat o'Lafite", which must have puzzled many fellow sailors, but would certainly have won any competition for the most ingenious catamaran name.

Sailing was a relatively infrequent holiday pleasure. But Denis's golf continued regularly on Sunday mornings with the so called "Rutherford 4". Originally this was Rutherford (who had been taught golf by J. J. Thomson) plus various trios of Rutherford's friends, such as Aston, Fowler and G. I. Taylor, but gradually it had transmuted via F. G. Mann, Jack Roughton, Gordon Sutherland and others to a membership of Denis, Richard Glauert, Michael Berridge and Peter Lawrence. Here yet another of Denis's little-known talents flowered. He blossomed into comic verse about his fellow players; and I quote only two of many such verses. Here's one about Richard Glauert; and to enjoy it fully non-golfers like me need to know that hitting the ball up the middle of the course is good, but that you may occasionally be constrained by unexpected defects in your clubs, or "irons". It's entitled "Ode to the Junior Bursar".

The saving grace of Richard G.:  
 Though up the middle off the tee  
 Suspect irons his game constrained  
 Accounting for his outcries pained  
 But on the green his putter magic  
 Oft erased those errors tragic.

And another on Michael Berridge entitled "RIP Sir Michael Berridge".

Stranger, as you pass this tee  
 Spare a thought for Michael B.  
 At top of swing he backward swayed  
 By hip-kept wallet overweighed.  
 The moral's clear – in simple parlance  
 Dispense the wad and keep the barlance.

Of course if you will go on winning one big international science prize after another you must expect to have a weighty wallet – and in extremes of golfing exertion to lose your balance – or "barlance") with Denis's poetic licence. But Michael gets his own back each Christmas with brilliant pin-man illustrations and comment about his colleagues at play – his manuscripts would be equally at home in the Fitzwilliam Museum or at the Wren Library and Denis looms large in them.

Clearly Nature had dealt Denis a full hand of sporting talent; and for a fine all-rounder like him cricket, lawn tennis, real tennis, golf embellished with comic verse, bowls, rugby football, sailing and ski-ing are eight natural bedfellows. But you may be agreeably surprised to learn that D's wide-ranging sporting talents were accompanied by an unusual farther talent for lecturing on musical appreciation! He attended classes at the University of the Third Age on that subject; and ended up giving for them courses of sixteen lectures on the structure of Symphonies and Concertos from Haydn to Sibelius. He knew nothing of the subject when he started; and could neither play an instrument nor read a note of music. Yet the lectures drew audiences of 100 or so, including notables like Owen Chadwick, theologian-philosopher, and David Harrison, chemical engineer and academic politician, both – as it happens – former holders of Endowed Chairs and Masters of Selwyn.

I shared a few of Denis's interests – such as cricket, tennis, rugby, sailing and musical appreciation (though all in a much lower key than he attained). And we had some other common interests – as diverse as investment trusts and runner beans. Denis would often phone me for investment trust ideas. And we often compared notes about growing runner beans – that most delicious of UK summer vegetables where the young bean picked fresh from the garden can be so superior to the shop bean. The king of runner bean growing in Trinity is of course John Rallison, who will doubtless publish his special method in the Gardener's Chronicle one day. But Denis was no slouch in this field. He got well ahead each year by starting his beans indoors and cleverly preventing them from getting too leggy before planting them out – a fate which overcame mine when I copied him.

However, I would not like you to think that all this sporting, investment and gardening activity, elegantly gilded with musical appreciation, prevented Denis from continuing to work for Trinity in retirement. In 1984, at the age of 69, he went in to bat again for Trinity – in this case it was an 18-year innings as Praelector, Father of the College, the Officer who in the Senate House presents to the Vice Chancellor Trinity members taking degrees (other than Honorary Degrees) – on the face of it not a huge job, but an important one nevertheless, which has a large audience and must be done in a seemly manner without blunders. Denis not only accomplished that, but also brought to bear the fluent Latin which he had acquired at Glasgow Academy from the master who had so strongly opposed his opting for science. Even more important Denis was really hospitable in his room, in Hall and in the Combination Room to all those returning to take a more senior degree – thus

generating happy memories for the graduands and contributing greatly to good Alumni relations. And all this was out of the sheer goodness of his sociable nature – and long before there was any thought that the University's 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign would be helped thereby.

But Denis's 18 years as Praelector (Father of the College) was important in another way. It was a fine example of what retired Fellows can do for the College and University by taking some of the administrative load off those in mid-career, who must concentrate on Research and Teaching in order to strengthen the University's performance in the vital Research Assessment and Teaching Assessment Exercises – on which we crucially depend for securing Government finance sufficient to help maintain Cambridge's premier position as No. 1 UK and No. 2 World. Other retired Fellows recently helping to free up those battling with the Research and Teaching Assessment Exercises have included Richard Glauert formerly and John Easterling now as Editors of the Annual Record; Chris Morley now and John Easterling formerly in the major job of Secretary of the Council; and John Lonsdale managing Trinity's part in the University's 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign; and there are former Tutors who could admirably do in retirement further five-year stints as particularly experienced Tutors if asked and willing. But Denis's 18-year stint certainly takes the biscuit for length of service in these helpful adjuvant roles.

And now, sadly, I approach the end. Last summer Denis was diagnosed with a fatal thyroid tumour. I well remember my last talk with him at Addenbrooke's Hospital, a few days before his death.

I enormously admired his calm courage. We spoke of sport and wine, investment trusts and runner beans – but only briefly because Denis was dominated by spontaneous reminiscences about his Tutorship. He reminisced about the Prince of Wales, of course; and also about the brightest mathematician he had admitted (which is saying something as bright mathematicians abound here); this was Lee Hsien Loong, elder son of Lee Kwan Yew, and now Prime Minister of Singapore. Denis reminisced too about the old pre-1970 admission system itself. In those days Entrance Scholars and Exhibitioners were chosen by the Teaching Staff (after the Scholarship Exam); and then Tutors accepted numerous good near-misses. These 3 classes of outstanding or high academic quality made up roughly 65 - 75% of the entry and usually kept us at or near the top of such league tables as existed.

For the rest, Tutors – normally in consultation with Teaching Staff – looked for good academic quality combined if possible with considerable other desirable qualities which help

the world go round. Denis felt that Henry VIII would approve such people as being much needed in today's beleaguered world – and that they might be as helpful to us as we would be to them. So he wondered how a modest element of that Tutorial discretion might somehow be re-introduced – though with the main stream guided by the Teaching Staff and with a coordinating Admissions Tutor as now.

He feared that we may be missing a few outstanding people of tomorrow because they are good, but not overwhelming, at A levels today; and that A levels in any case are too subject to State fiddling, to course work, with widespread copying from the web, and to other defects.

He felt that under the old system Trinity was at the zenith of its academic distinction – and the zenith of other kinds of distinction among its alumni. Quite by chance I later came across rather striking figures for certain categories which accord with this view – but of course don't prove it.

John Bradfield

Trinity College Chapel

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