

Fiona Floate:

Why I am leaving a legacy to Regent's



In the summer of 1988 I applied for the position of Personal Assistant to the Principal – then Dr Barrie White – and was appointed. Barely three weeks into my new job, in November Dr White announced that he would be standing down as Principal in the summer of 1989 and generously let me know ahead of the public announcement, in case I might decide I'd prefer to look for another job; I said I would stay and see what happened. I have just retired after almost 36 years here, serving four Principals and one Interim Principal. *Having given 36 years of working life to the College, why would I want to leave it a legacy?*

Regent's has been so much more than a job, rather it is a community of friends and family. I have made friends with staff, students, and overseas visitors, past and present, keeping in touch with them on a personal as well as professional level. I have visited alumni overseas for holidays, and even made bridesmaids' dresses for an alumna's wedding, both bridesmaids also being alumnae of the college! In the early 1990s there were quite a few ministerial families living in College, one or two of whom I met with socially. I held the new-born twins of one couple when they were about ten days old. Eighteen years later I welcomed one of those twins to college as a student, who often came to my office just to have a chat or ask advice, or even to ask for a hug!

It is through people that I see the real work of the College and the importance of that work in providing an environment in which people can pursue education at various levels while exploring and learning more about themselves. It is easy to see how this applies to most undergraduates coming to college at 18 or 19, straight from parental home, or perhaps after a gap year; they have come to receive tertiary level education, but they are also experiencing the transition from teenager to adult.

College can provide not only the education they have come for but the support needed in this time of change, particularly for those who find it a more complicated and challenging process. It is harder to see how it might apply to more mature post-graduates or visiting researchers, but it does. The College is a friendly, welcoming community in which most people feel at home very quickly and are able to explore new ideas, sometimes with a freedom which their own home situation might not encourage.

On approaching retirement, the College afforded me my own cream tea on the day of the Gaudy in September. It was such a delight to see so many former students and staff and I had a great time talking to them – I think I managed to talk to all of them! But even more delightful was seeing them reconnect with each other across year groups and meet alumni from other years too. The reminiscences of student days and competing stories of student exploits contrasted with the sharing of subsequent careers and positions of experience and responsibility alongside family life which followed. The joy of meeting up again at College was real evidence of the Regent's spirit and community.

I am so grateful to this College which has given me so much over the years, and continues to give as I volunteer in the Archives. **I want to see it continuing to provide a friendly and welcoming place for education and research in an atmosphere of academic freedom, while also offering a supporting and sensitive community in which all are able to grow and discover new things about themselves.** It is certainly what I have been able to do and, I hope, have been able to help others to do through my work here. I hope to be able to continue supporting the College through volunteering while I am fit and able, and I want to be able to carry on playing my part in the future through my legacy.

