

Castellum



*So. Farewell then
John the Maid
You were the Castle*



No.78
2025/26

THE MAGAZINE OF THE DURHAM CASTLE SOCIETY

COMMITTEE

DURHAM CASTLE SOCIETY

(as at March 2026)

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Nick Butt (2024-27)

Society Representative on College Advisory Board and Society Representative on the University College Durham Trust

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Change of Address

To ensure the Society has your contact details (postal, phone and email), please notify any changes to the **Alumni and Development Manager at University College, The Castle, Palace Green, Durham, DH1 3RW** or castle.alumni@durham.ac.uk



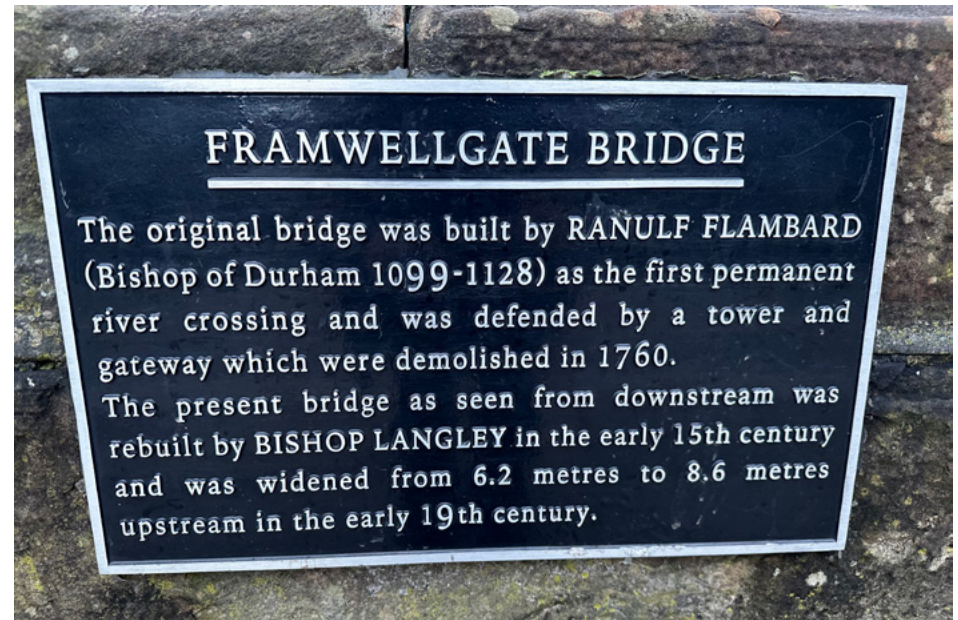
EDITORS JOTTINGS

The award to Durham University of the Sunday Times University of the Year was a highlight of the past year, and although it is an award to the University as whole, it is amazing how many pictures illustrating the fact show the Castle and its students above any other college.

Here, the news was overshadowed by the death of John the Maid at age 81, and - ever loyal to Castle - the timing of his death last February enabled me to stop press and put news of his funeral in the Cathedral in both the magazine a year ago and on the address carrier.. The Cathedral was appropriate for John was

a regular communicant there and after retirement spent time as a Bedesman. We had many tributes to him and a small group selected roughly one-third for publication which can be found with the obituaries in "Lives Remembered ". They show the love and respect in which Mr. Atkin was held. Some, for whom John was not their "cup of tea", may think we have gone overboard printing so many tributes, including the eulogy and a special appreciation from Jonathan Pearson. But in fact, for most students, he was more significant than even the Master. May he rest in peace.

After many years of accepting a sub-optimal situation, we have tackled the issue of subscriptions, which is £10 per member per annum. Flyers have been placed in the envelopes of those who are paying less (as little as 10/- [50p] in some cases) in order to improve the revenue position. Members agreed to raise the subs to £20 at the last AGM, but we will be able to avoid this if those paying less top up their payments. Thanks to Paul Everson, our incoming treasurer, for his attention to this longstanding problem. Don't be embarrassed: we're not seeking back monies, just an amendment to your standing order for the future!



FRAMWELLGATE BRIDGE

The original bridge was built by **RANULF FLAMBARD** (Bishop of Durham 1099-1128) as the first permanent river crossing and was defended by a tower and gateway which were demolished in 1760.

The present bridge as seen from downstream was rebuilt by **BISHOP LANGLEY** in the early 15th century and was widened from 6.2 metres to 8.6 metres upstream in the early 19th century.

Good to see that a 21st Century pantechnicon can safely cross a 16th Century bridge.

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME 2026



My time in Castle was very special to me, and I've enjoyed coming back to annual reunions almost every year since I graduated. Last year's reunion was another well attended and successful event, but I also took a couple of additional opportunities to visit Durham in slightly different circumstances.

On the August Bank Holiday weekend, when the city was filled with far more tourists than students, I drove my

1963 Africa Rally Volvo 122S up from Sussex for the Durham Classic Car Show. Cars of all ages were on display everywhere, from Palace Green, to Elvet Bridge, to the Market Place and down to Framwellgate Bridge. A big show, with many keen and friendly owners happy to show off their prized vehicles and to compare notes on the work they've done to keep them on the road.

In October, I joined many other alumni at the grand opening of the remodelled Fellows' Garden. During my time as an undergraduate the Fellows' Garden was mostly out of bounds, with access perhaps a couple of times a year for a summer JCR meeting or a performance by Castle Theatre Company. With the growth in numbers of students in recent years, there's pressure on every bit of recreational space, so to have a new venue for theatrical and musical performances, as well as other types of event, is a great addition for Castle. When it isn't being used for performances it remains an attractive garden and lawn for quiet enjoyment. This is also one of the few spaces in College which is properly accessible, with a lift from the Barbican and a disabled toilet, so we will probably see a wider programme of events to which members of the public can be invited, strengthening the bond between the College and the local community.

With work now completed it's great to see all the temporary hoardings

finally removed

While Durham University maintains the fabric of the Castle, any major project to enhance College facilities has to be funded by the generosity of former students and staff of the College, through legacies or charitable gifts made to the College, or to the charitable trust that was set up by the Durham Castle Society. University College Durham Trust, registered charity number 1151821, was established by in 1990, independent of the University. Its trustees are all alumni of the College, who give their time voluntarily to ensure that donations are properly invested and managed for the benefit of the college and its students, gradually building an endowment fund that can contribute to capital projects and to scholarships and other student support. The Trust employs an Alumni and Development Manager, Julia Bonner, to maintain relationships with our graduates, to organise events in Durham, London and elsewhere and to manage fundraising. At a time of staff cutbacks across the University, it's great that we have someone based



in the College who looks after us all as alumni, so a big “thank you” to Julia. There are many of you who already make a regular donation to the Trust, or who have supported specific projects, but I hope that seeing this latest project come to fruition will encourage more of you to consider donating.

This year we have experimented with having regional alumni events, most recently in London and Norwich. If you can offer a low cost venue in another part of the country (or world) we are always interested in hearing your suggestions.

I look forward to seeing many of you at this year’s reunion in July. We hope that the summer date will mean that there’s more accommodation available for us to stay in College. Next year, 2027, will be an important milestone for my peer group, who came up to Durham in 1977, and to the First Ladies who came up to Durham in 1987, as well as all the men who outnumbered those brave women in Castle’s early years as a mixed college. All alumni are welcome at every reunion, but perhaps those who came up in 2017, 2007, 1997, 1987, 1977, 1967, 1957 and earlier may like to use the special anniversary as an excuse to encourage more of their cohort to meet up in Durham next year, and to enjoy the familiar yet always special experience of a meal in the Great Hall, followed by the College Song. Now’s the time to start reaching out to re-establish contact with those you may not have heard from for many years.

I’ll close by thanking our Society Committee and our Charity Trustees, drawn from all different generations of Castle graduates, who give their time to ensure we continue to thrive. It’s great for those of us who’ve been around a while to see new people putting themselves forward to provide a balance of experience and continuity with fresh enthusiasm and new ideas. And a “thank you” also to the College staff who actively engage with us and always make us feel welcome.

Floreat Castellum.
Kevin Hawes



PRINCIPAL'S LETTER



Greetings Castle alumni near and far,

I write this while on a train to London to catch up with many of you at gatherings in both London and Norwich. What a true delight it is to meet such interesting and enthusiastic alumni. Each one of you speaks fondly of your time at University College, recalling beloved friends, meaningful activities, hilar-

ious shenanigans, and poignant examples of your personal development along the way. Your stories make me laugh, touch my heart and sometimes highlight how dramatically modern health and safety regulations have changed (does scaling the Castle walls to access the roof sound familiar?). With nearly six years' experience here, I marvel at the common thread across the eras and despite the changes — no matter your backgrounds or contemporary context, you developed a sense of belonging in the college community which supported your intellectual, social, and personal growth.

In today's era of difficult financial circumstances and increasing well-being concerns, cultivating belonging in larger and more diverse college communities is admittedly more difficult but remains our top priority. Each edition of the Castellum demonstrates the collaborative co-creation of today's student experience at Castle. It takes all of us—JCR, MCR, SCR, alumni and staff—to create the conditions in which today's students can connect, thrive and achieve. For instance, our College Advisory Board recently affirmed a new Vision and Values Statement after two years consultation with student leaders, staff, SCR members, and alumni reps. You'll see further evidence of how we partner in community development as you make your way through the following pages, so I'll take a moment here

to illuminate some of the broader University and sector context impacting our College today.

Our Shared Vision

Inspired by our enduring heritage, University College aspires to be welcoming and inclusive learning community dedicated to empowering individuals, foster a deep sense of belonging, and enabling all to flourish through service, scholarship, and shared purpose.

Our Core Values

• *Kindness* • *Integrity* • *Collaboration* • *Progressive Spirit* • *Selfless Ambition*

Durham University has committed to maintaining (not growing) student enrolment at approximately 22,000 students, with the goal of increasing the proportion of postgraduate students for research, community and financial reasons. The first of seventeen DU colleges today, University College is home to nearly 1600 students including 500 postgrads and 550 residential students. A few harsh realities from across the sector include: international recruitment is sluggish, balancing institutional budgets requires difficult reductions, funding one's higher education is increasingly challenging for students and families, aging infrastructure demands investment, government regulations are expanding, political tensions and mental health needs are on the rise, and competition for research funding is tremendous. At the same time, our economic, workforce, and societal pressures continue to require HE to produce graduates who can help regional, national and global communities respond to these challenges. Here at Durham, we have seen 240 staff leave the university through last year's Voluntary Severance Scheme which has resulted in several organizational changes impacting departments, colleges and the student experience. Sadly, further budget reductions are necessary this year and next.

Though colleges continue to face changes to our operating model, including increased centralization and reduced autonomy, I believe our collegiate

system still provides the best learning environment for today's students. I am, however, concerned about the unintended consequences of current financial realities and reorganization on students and our ability to deliver the award-winning* university experience they deserve. With less formals and other community dining events, limited space for returning students to live in College, fewer staff onsite, increasing costs for club/society involvement, and smaller operating budgets, we are seeking to be more creative and transparent with student leaders, colleagues, alumni volunteers and donors. Preserving the student experience we all value now depends on alumni support enabling scholarships, bursaries, internships, involvement opportunities, and College events. Your engagement now is more important than ever before.

With a final edit of this message following our time with many of you in London and Norwich, please know how grateful I am to lead this amazing learning community and to get acquainted with our impressive alumni. Connecting, reflecting and laughing with you helps us maintain focus on the primary objective – accompanying today's students on their university journey so they can go out and change the world.

**Stay in touch,
Floreat Castellum!
Wendy**

Remembering Rosie Roche, a beloved Castle Student who passed away last year. She was a talented, kind, and valued member of our community and is missed greatly by her friends.

*Durham University is the Times and Sunday Times University of the Year 2026

SAFEGUARDING CASTLE'S FUTURE: THE CUSTODIANS' APPEAL

University College Durham has always been defined by its people. From the friendships formed within its walls to the quiet moments of reassurance offered during challenging times, Castle has long been a place where connection, care, and shared experience matter.

The University College Durham Trust (Charity number: 1151821), established through the generosity of our alumni community, plays a vital role in sustaining this ethos. Chaired by the Principal and managed by alumni Trustees, the Trust has been instrumental in helping the College build resilience, continue to support its students, and reaffirm what has always defined Castle: a community of care.

Over the past five years, thanks to alumni support, the value of the Trust's investment has doubled and now stands at £2.4 million. This growth is a powerful testament to the commitment of our alumni community. However, to plan responsibly, continue supporting our students, and sustain our alumni activity, we need to raise a further £2 million.

In conversations with alumni, we are often reminded of the many ways Castle supported them during their time here. For some, it was the reassurance of a friend or staff member during a difficult term. For others, it was the opportunity to join and shape clubs and societies, or simply the comfort of belonging. These experiences are not incidental; they lie at the very heart of what Castle is.

Today's students arrive with the same curiosity, ambition, and hope that previous generations carried with them. They too seek connection, reassurance, opportunities to grow, and a place where they feel supported. Yet the environment in which the College operates continues to evolve, bringing new challenges alongside new opportunities.

As highlighted in Professor Wendy Powers' remarks, these challenges mean that alumni support matters now more than ever. Ensuring that every talented student—regardless of background or circumstance—can truly feel at home at Castle requires sustained commitment.

Through the Custodians' Appeal, alumni play a vital role in safeguarding the College's future. Regular contributions help ensure that no student feels alone; that opportunities for learning, travel, and personal growth remain accessible; that wellbeing initiatives continue to strengthen our community; and that the traditions that define Castle are preserved for generations to come.

Support for the Custodians' Appeal, no matter the size, makes a meaningful difference. Those who are able to contribute are helping to ensure that Castle remains a place of belonging, care, and opportunity—today and for years to come.

Julia Bonner
Alumni & Development Manager

Alumni can join the appeal by following the link provided or by scanning the QR code.

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/30038>



NOTES FROM THE VICE-PRINCIPAL

Over the past year it has been a delight to see the wide range of learning, cultural events and opportunities to connect across Castle. Here are some of the highlights:



Yuetong Zhao at the Student Employee of the Year awards.

Student leaders being recognised at a University level: our Lowe Librarian, Yuetong Zhao, won student leader of the year at the Student Employee of the Year awards in May 2025. As Lowe Librarian in 2024-25, Yuetong led our fabulous team of student Assistant Librarians who oversee the College Library. In addition, Castle JCR Outreach Officer Ele James was awarded Student Volunteer Leader of the year at the Volunteering Awards in June. Among other achievements, Ele founded the Warm Hearts initiative at Durham.



Ele James wins Volunteer Leader 2025

We've continued to welcome different community groups into Castle, including our partnership with Southmoor Academy through Castle alumna Claire Porter, who leads the aspiring scholars stream at the school. This year as well as a Graduation ceremony for the year 10 students, we added a matriculation ceremony in the Tunstall Chapel to

mark their entry into the programme. In late January we were thrilled to welcome back alumnus Chris Blandford OBE FLL, President of World Heritage UK, who led a thoughtful exploration of his career in heritage in a special fireside chat and outlined some of the challenges and opportunities facing World Heritage Sites in the UK.



Chris Blandford's fireside chat, chaired by Senior Student Olivia Grace Smith

Sadly, we've faced a number of challenges following university-wide Voluntary Severance measures, including limitations imposed on the number of catered events (community dining) as part of the College calendar. However, we spent a productive day with JCR and MCR exec leads in the summer to navigate these limitations and prioritise events such as formals which bring the whole University College community together.



Sophie Holland (VP, Ustinov) led an energising session at our student/staff away day in June



Lastly, as a Durham alumna myself, it was a real honour to be an invited celebrant at the History graduation in July. As a French Historian I spoke about fin-de-siècle French socialist Jean Jaurès's call for students to 'search for truth and tell it', a refrain that is increasingly relevant in today's challenging world.

Dr Ellen Crabtree
Vice-Principal

NOTES FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



I'm Natalie, and I joined University College as Assistant Principal six months ago. As someone new to college life, these last few months have been full of firsts for me. First matriculation (my ears are still ringing from the pots and pans!), first formal (gown kindly donated by Grays of Durham), and most recently my first Castle graduation ceremony. Having spent many years working at the University, I thought I under-

stood our collegiate system, but it is only since being part of the college community over these past six months that I've begun to appreciate what truly makes Castle such a unique and special place.

My focus is on student wellbeing, inclusion, and building a strong college community where everyone feels welcomed and supported. I've been working closely with our JCR and MCR welfare teams and our community liaison and consent interns. We are now well into the first year of our revised Castle Mentoring Programme which, as well as providing valuable support and guidance to Castle students, is also really strengthening the connections between them and our SCR mentors.

As an adopted Northerner and a first generation scholar, supporting access, belonging and inclusion feels especially important to me. It influences how I think about the role College can play in helping students feel confident and supported, for example where commuter students might

need a bit more help to feel part of the wider community, or where students who join us from non traditional routes may need extra reassurance that they belong here. I've also seen first hand how alumni generosity benefits Castle students, opening doors to transformative opportunities they might never have otherwise experienced and alleviating financial pressures that can be equally life changing.

I feel so privileged to be part of Castle's long tradition, and to work alongside an inspiring team who bring real creativity and momentum to it. The enthusiasm of our students makes that work even more rewarding, and I'm really looking forward to everything still to come this year.

Dr Natalie Craig
Assistant Principal

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE YEAR IN REVIEW 2024-25

Read our University College: Year in Review and see the wide variety of learning, engagement, events and activities which happen across our College community.

durham.ac.uk/university.college - head to 'About us' and click on 'values'.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Academic year 2025-26 has seen a great start for student support. There's been a myriad of changes, including the view from the offices in Fellows' Garden. Often, student support meetings begin, "Can I have a quick look? Oh wow, it's beautiful!". That's entirely thanks to the generosity of yourselves, Castle alumni, together with contributions from the University College Durham Trust (Registered Charity 1151821), leading to the redesign of a space which is beautifully combining our theatrical talent and energy with the calming presence of nature.

Another wonderful change is our welcoming of Dr Natalie Craig as Assistant Principal. Natalie has already brought a wealth of experience, insight and innovation from Careers to our team, of which our students are already reaping the benefit. We are privileged to continue our ardent support for students and are thankful to Natalie for her leadership and guidance moving forward.

Our students are as engaged as always. The piano in the anteroom sees regular practice these days, to the delight of staff, students and guests. Charity engagement has been discussed a lot in the Great Hall, a testament to the ethos of our College and your continued kindness as alumni. Our students are well aware that your kind donations give them opportunities they simply wouldn't have access to, or help them out of a financial bind, when technology fails or they need to travel home in an emergency to be with loved ones. That support does not go unnoticed. Giving not just their heartfelt thanks, more and more of our students turn their attention to ways that they can give to the community, within our College and without.

With that, we thank you sincerely for the trust you put into us in looking out for the welfare of our youngest generation of University College. In turn, we remain ever thankful for your generous support and for every student whose experiences are improved as a result.

Non nobis solum

David Myers, Assistant Student Support Officer

THE CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

If Cuthbert Tunstall could, from his portrait high on the wall of the Tunstall Chapel, gaze down on the chapel he built, what daily activity would he see? Certainly he would be surprised by the groups of tourists guided through every afternoon, marvelling at the historic space (and engaging in their hourly pondering of the mystery of the rosary beads missing from his hands). But much of the chapel's pattern of life would surely be familiar. He would enjoy the quiet of the morning: the housekeeper dusting the pews, and the Chaplain and others individually passing through to say prayers or spend a silent moment in reflection. He would note the Sacristan, Jamie Holland, stopping in to check on supplies for the coming service. That evening, would he raise an eyebrow as the choir gathered cheerily before their rehearsal, and then marvel at the music – in styles both familiar and unheard of in his day. And last the Porter on his or her rounds, pausing briefly before switching off the lights and locking the door; darkness descending for some hours before another day begins.

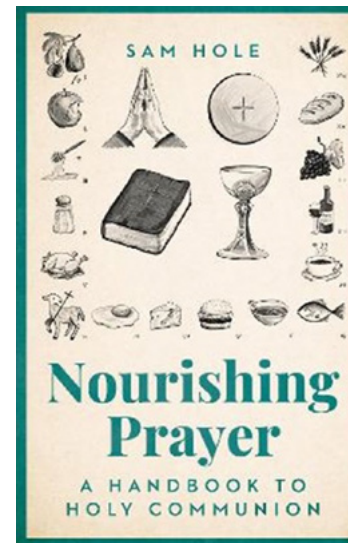
That familiarity across centuries is no accident. Much of the life within the chapel is deliberately repetitive: a rhythm of prayer in speech and song that plays quietly underneath, and interlaced with, the melodies of our daily lives. Still today, the life of the Tunstall and Norman chapels is grounded in the occasions during the week when members from across the community – though now not the Bishop's household but students, staff, alumni, SCR, and visitors – gather for worship: on Thursdays at 5.45pm for Choral Evensong, and 5pm on Sundays for the Eucharist. Over the course of the year, special services – Ash Wednesday, Remembrance Sunday, Christmas Carols – mark the passing of the seasons. We are always delighted to welcome returning members of the College to any and all of these services.

Alongside that repetition, of course, last year saw various one-off moments in chapel life. We enjoyed a trip across the Bailey to a joint evensong with Chad's. Closer to home, I always left the termly services of Choral



Compline in the Norman Chapel feeling like I had been transported back several centuries (the spell only broken too quickly on the occasion when we headed to the Undie to discover a rock band had been booked...). The Undie was also the venue for a rather enjoyable Beer and Carols event in the week before Christmas; we will work on the singalong bits this year! My grateful thanks to the SCR for financially supporting a number of these events which enabled us to gather the college community together.

On a devotional level, I was delighted to resume the Chapel Retreat – now at Alnmouth Friary – for the first time since Covid. Members of the chapel community also enjoyed a half-day retreat for Advent Sunday at St Antony’s Priory in Durham. (For any readers who are looking to take a retreat, do consider St Antony’s with its newly-refurbished self-catered rooms in the heart of Durham.) Students led a series of Lent prayer events from different Christian traditions. We remain ever grateful for the friendship of alumnus and Vice Dean Michael Hampel, who again this year invited a group of Castle students on an after-hours twilight pilgrimage around the Cathedral. And during Easter Term the Norman Chapel was the venue for ‘Simply Silence’, a series of lunchtime periods of silence, open to those of all faiths and none.



A lively and intellectually curious approach to faith is also at the heart of chapel life. And so I was particularly pleased that last year’s Epiphany Term sermon series will shortly be published commercially. In the sermon series, a range of academics and local ministers chose a figure from the Bible and considered how that individual faced or handled power and privilege, going on to relate that to contemporary dilemmas for Christians and the Church. The resultant volume of essays, entitled Profiles in Power and Privilege, will be published later this year by BRF.

And before then, Canterbury Press will publish my Nourishing Prayer: A Handbook to Holy Communion, a devotional introduction to the Church of England’s eucharistic liturgies.

The Chapel Choir have, as their separate article demonstrates, been in very good voice over the last year. In their Director of Music, Barney Howard, we are blessed with someone who combines great musical ability with creativity, generosity, organisation, and a can-do spirit. Members of the congregation have been kept on their toes as introits were sung from the Tunstall Gallery; Renaissance anthems were kept in time by the banging of a big stick (if anyone knows the origin and purpose of the 10-foot high sticks in the vestry, I would be glad to know); and the choir showed their finger-clicking ability to Iain Farrington’s Nova, Nova. Rumours that the new ‘beer break’ in the middle of Tuesday evening rehearsals have anything to do with this ingenuity remain pure speculation.

Of course, as Barney himself would immediately say, he has benefited from the support of an excellent team. Our Senior Organ Scholar, Alan Erdelyi, works marvels with the chapel order. Kate Ryan was a stellar Choir Manager in 2024-25, while as Social Secretaries Ed Kirker and Harry Gordon arranged a lively social life. This year, Sofia Lang and Edie Tunnicliffe have admirably taken on that management of the choir.

In the chapel more broadly, the aforementioned Jamie Holland has been a committed and faithful Sacristan. Aelfthryth Stewart was a trustworthy and dependable co-ordinator of readers, a welcomer, and did chapel social media. This year, those various roles have been taken on by Lily Collis, India Jubb, and Nat Wanthanom, all of whom are doing excellently and bringing their own distinctive style to their responsibilities, while others including Alec Bell, Jeremy Wang, and Belén Mattos Castañeda continue to contribute regularly. I feel very fortunate to enjoy such a wonderful team – they are all a Chaplain could ever hope for.

Finally, as Chaplain my role of course is lived out most of the time beyond the chapel walls. Much of this takes the form of one-on-one pastoral listening and conversation. But now two years into my role, I have enjoyed working alongside various student leaders. Chaplain's Coffee, run in conjunction with Jessica Dailey and the JCR Welfare Team, has been a fun social occasion each Wednesday – many thanks to the SCR for letting us use their space. In Michaelmas Term I was pleased to bless the Boat Club's two new boats, of course using water from the Wear. And more recently, the installation of a Peace Pole in the newly-renovated Fellows' Garden has offered a focal point for multi-faith commemoration; on Holocaust Memorial Day I led a short vigil there, on what will doubtless be the start of many occasions.

Above all, I remain thankful for the support of our Principal, Vice-Principal and other college staff in supporting this vibrant chapel and chaplaincy. It continues to be a delight to serve here, attending to the heart and soul of the Castle community.

Sam Hole
Chaplain and Solway Fellow

A WELCOME AND TOAST TO THE GRADUATES OF JANUARY 2026

This January, we were delighted to welcome a new cohort of Castle alumni into our graduate community. It was a pleasure to meet these new graduates, hear their reflections on their time at Castle, and learn about their hopes for the future.

The Great Hall was filled with celebration, as many graduates were joined by friends and family to mark this important milestone together. Moments like these are a powerful reminder of the strong sense of connection that defines the Castle experience.

I thought you might enjoy reading the reflections of Atoosa Fakher, which she shared as part of a toast to the graduating class of 2026:

“It’s a real privilege to stand here tonight and to speak on behalf of my fellow graduates at University College, Castle, this remarkable place that each of us, despite our different backgrounds, came to admire, rely on, and find countless reasons to call home.

Tonight feels like the right moment to pause and remember how it all began, the welcoming email telling us we’d been allocated to Castle, the first time we walked into this place and felt, almost immediately, as though we’d stepped onto a Harry Potter set, or the surreal experience of dressing up, wearing our gowns, and attending our first formal in this Great Hall.

Those moments gave us a sense of belonging, not only to the history of the many brilliant minds who have studied here, but also to the generations that will follow. We became part of a larger family. We shared experiences that will stay with us well beyond the walls of Castle: the friendships we formed; the compassion, kindness, and generosity we learnt from one another; the wisdom we gained through conversations in seminars, common rooms, and corridors; and the teamwork, resilience, and strength we built alongside joyful moments in our sports teams.

The Castle community values have become an inseparable part of our identity, and in turn, our individual contributions have strengthened and enriched its growing tradition.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Professor Wendy Powers, our lovely Principal, and the amazing Dr Ellen Crabtree for their leadership in shaping Castle as a place of belonging, care, and shared purpose.

My thanks also go to David Myers and the Student Support Team for their kindness, reassurance, and steady support whenever students needed help navigating challenges along the way.

On behalf of the graduating cohort, I'd like to thank the entire College team. Your commitment and belief in us have had a lasting impact, often in ways we only fully appreciate now.

And now, to my friends: tonight may look like an ending, but it's just a transition. We should be proud, not only of what we've achieved, but of the standards we've been held to, the challenges we've faced, and the people we've become along the way. These experiences have opened doors, created

possibilities, and prepared us for what comes next.

As we move forward, may we use our abilities with confidence and purpose to pursue what's meaningful to us, and to help others succeed, because what we do is not for ourselves alone."



**Atoosa Fagher and
Julia Bonner,
Alumni and
Development Manager**

LONDON GATHERING FEBRUARY 2026

The latest in the series of London Castle alumni gatherings took place on Thursday 5 February. Some thirty-five alumni braved the elements on a very wet evening to meet at the Chapel Market Tavern in Islington to swap stories, catch up with old friends, and perhaps even make new ones. Castle alumni from the 1960s through to the 2020s packed out the upstairs bar, enjoying trays of very tasty mini burgers and excellent cheese boards, needless to say washed down with a few drinks. It was great that Professor Wendy Powers and Julia Bonner were in London and so able to attend, and a good time certainly appeared to be had by all until it was time to stumble off into the still soggy night.

The London gatherings certainly seem to have become a regular feature of the Castle alumni calendar, following other events in recent years at venues such as Leighton House, the Royal Automobile Club, and the church of St Batholomew the Great. Keep an eye out for future events as they are advertised, and please do come along!

**Oliver Lendrum
1995-99**

EAST OF ENGLAND ALUMNI REUNION FEBRUARY 2026

Our recent East of England alumni reunion in Norwich was a truly special occasion, bringing together 24 alumni—an extraordinary turnout given that we have around 35 alumni in the region. The evening was a wonderful reminder of the strength and closeness of the Castle community, and of the enduring bonds that connect generations of alumni.

Highlights included meeting a recent graduate alongside Castle gentlemen who were with us in the 1950s, as well as two of our very first Castle ladies. The stories shared, the memories recalled, and the affection for the College were deeply moving, creating a real sense of continuity and community that spans decades. Once again, we were blown away by the strength of connection our alumni feel to Castle and to one another.

We were also delighted to hear from Professor Wendy Powers, who shared College news and exciting new initiatives, and spoke powerfully about the difference our alumni make to the College community every day. Our sincere thanks go to Jonathan Pearson for so generously hosting the gathering at Norwich School, where he serves as Director of Development. Jonathan also led a fascinating tour of Norwich School Chapel and its crypt—set beside the magnificent Norwich Cathedral—which provided a memorable and fitting backdrop to a wonderful evening.



**Julia Bonner
Alumni and
Development
Manager**



SENIOR STUDENT'S REPORT 2025–2026

Dear Castlemen,

It is my absolute pleasure to write the annual report for our Junior Common Room. This year has seen changes on a scale unprecedented, but the spirit and vibrancy of our College endures.

I will begin with Easter Term 2025, just as I was stepping into my term as Senior Student and tiredly walking out of my time as Social Chair. A personal highlight of mine was the success of Castle Day: glorious weather, a delightful amount of Pimm's, and the annual Castle Ranger challenge. This year was a special one, 75 years since the first. Of course, we followed up with June Ball 2025. The theme was 'Seven Deadly Sins', featuring fabulous live entertainment, decorations galore, and a Survivors Photo so large I briefly worried we'd need another risk assessment. I then graduated from my History degree! You'd think I was done with Durham, but I'll be around a further two years for my Heritage MA, suggesting I might not have learned anything at all. Ever heard the phrase that three years is too



short and four years is too long? Five years is quite possibly overstaying my welcome.

Over the summer, Freshers' Week planning began in earnest, and a huge thanks must go to the Frep team that helped move everyone in, kept everyone going, and showed the new students the highlights of Castle in a very fast-paced week. Matriculation was another standout, including my first speech as Senior Student followed by 'Gentlemen of Castle' sung by a chorus of (about) 470 new undergraduates, which was both surreal and made me hoarse by the third time around. Starting as we meant to go on, the pace never truly slowed down, and the leadership's flexibility and tireless work kept things running through the chaos. Thanks to Coco Pollard (Social Chair) and her committee, who deserve both credit and a lie-down, Freshtival was a final triumph. Freshers and returners alike headed to the one club night that finally let the Freps enjoy their night rather than standing outside until 2:30am in the cold and rain.

Michaelmas then proceeded with the usual principle that if there is a week available, we will fill it. Coco delivered again with the Halloween and Christmas Hounds, which saw the Undie rammed with students, beer, cocktails, and horrific karaoke. Our Welfare and Campaigns officers (Jess Dailey and Evie Miller-Soleil) were also at full speed, including a fully funded trip to Beamish, and all executed with care and real impact. Meanwhile, our charity initiatives have continued to thrive, being rewarding experiences and great nights for our College. The Castle Community Action (CCA) Auction, overseen by Outreach Officer, Patrick Timmins, and led by Natalie Andrusyshyn, was a great success. Toria Manifold



Jess and Evie at
Ladies' Night 2025

has been appointed Charity Fashion Show director, for which planning and rehearsals are well underway for another fantastic evening raising money for Olivia Inspires and Suicide&Co, two charities close to our hearts. Castle Dresses remains popular, with free rentals for every ball and black tie event, with an expanded collection this year.

To take one moment away from the highlights and the temptation to pretend everything is fine and dandy in the land of the JCR, I should note two of the year's more pressing challenges. The first is the limitations on formals and other catered events. Put simply: University centralisation and voluntary severance have led to caps on the number of community catered events available to colleges each term. The intention was that Head Chefs would be 'shared' between colleges, with Castle being paired with Hatfield, and further catering cuts to help repair the University's deficit meant that events had to be cut too. In practice, that means a shift from the rhythm many alumni will remember. In my time, we have had weekly formals, alongside balls and smaller catered events, but now we are limited to five 'community dining' events per term. With formals and June Ball prioritised, we have externally dined for events such as Ladies' Night and Halfway Hall and limited our formals to around four or five per term.

The contrast is stark. Formals are among the most affordable College events and one of the simplest ways that bring all years, common rooms, and backgrounds together over food and conversation. With the catering reductions and the increase in students, it means that less Castlemen get to experience these valuable traditions as tickets become ever more competitive. This matters not only for our community, but accessibility and Wider Student Experience that extends well beyond the formals. The limitation has reduced bar income and therefore threatens the future of funds such as We Are Castle and the Ball Fund. Alongside other JCR Presidents, we hope to work with the University to review this decision, but I hope you can understand our frustration and sadness as alumni that see the value in what these dining events that happen within our college space do for our community.

The second challenge will surprise absolutely nobody who has read

Castellum in the last seven or eight decades: accommodation. Castle is at capacity, and the cost continues to rise. This year coming, an ensuite room is set to increase by another 8%, reaching £12,020, a figure that risks pricing students out of Durham altogether. This is something I am passionate to question and confront at University level, as this effects students' access to university and then squeezes their ability to participate in any extracurricular activity at all. As the University plans to expand yet has suffered a decrease in their staff and continue to cut budgets that impact the Wider Student Experience, I am sure this will be a continuing topic in issues to come.

In the meantime, and on a brighter note, we move to sports and societies.



I will not dwell too heavily on them, with Mimi Mclean-Brown's (USO) collection of reports following in the pages ahead. However, it would be remiss not to note that 'Team Castle' continues to thrive, even if winning is not always our defining feature. Performances have been strong, spectator support loud, and talent

has been displayed across the board. In a huge moment for our College, we bought two new boats, one of which was named after alum Guillame V, The Grand Duke of Luxembourg. The Ambassador Georges Friden, UCBC President Mack Jenkins, and Chaplain Dr. Rev. Sam Hole conducted the naming ceremony, with current students and alumni present. This was a proud moment for Castle, and a testament to the hard work of our students as the club continues to grow.

The social side of our College remains thriving, with regular team socials with great uptake and many Castle students still wearing questionable costumes around Durham. Whilst not related to the JCR, some alumni may be heartened to know that participants in Lumley and 1987s returned to enthusiastic crowds, The Shakespeare remains a College favourite,

anti-trophying efforts have been successfully regenerated, and a variety of brightly coloured shirts continue to appear across the city. The Van Mildert Club, now hosted externally at The Cellar Door due to catering restrictions, continues its 76-year tradition of recognising exceptional contribution to college life. My thanks to William Nielsen and Georgia Toms for organising this under challenging circumstances.

Epiphany and Easter are set to be just as busy, despite being rudely interrupted with more summative deadlines and exams. Whilst we generally prefer not to think about academics after 6pm, giving ourselves a well needed break, several projects this year have contributed



meaningfully to academic development within College. My sincere gratitude goes to Wendy, Ellen, Natalie, David, Julia, Nicola and the rest of the College Office for spearheading and organising these initiatives. The regeneration of the Castle Mentoring Programme, among many others, has been hugely successful; the work of the staff does not go unnoticed. There are set to be new developments in the refurbishment of the West Courtyard, led by the Bar Team Leader, Duran, which hopefully you will get to see by the time the alumni reunion weekend rolls around in July. I would also like to thank Catering and Operations, led by Jamie, Joanne, and Dan, whose workload has increased exponentially this year and who have continued to deliver with dedication and incredible expertise. This also extends to the staff from the server, kitchen, bar, housekeeping, porters, and everyone else who has a role in our College.

The general day-to-day of the JCR continues as much ever. My incredible Vice Senior, Chloë Everest, has been spectacular in her organisational and administrative efforts. Stash is still widely worn with pride (Jocelyn



Chair (Harvey Ball), Vice-Chair (Robert Jansen-Spence), and VSS (Chloë Everest) hard at work in my room (H8)

and Boe, our Stash Caps, have put in an astonishing number of hours managing handouts), and the archives continue to grow as more and more of Castle's past comes back through our gates. If you have anything from your own days at Castle, whether that be emails,

papers, photos, yearbooks, stash, or other memorabilia, please do not hesitate to contact either myself (castle.seniorstudent@durham.ac.uk) or our JCR Archivist, Morgan Watkins (castle.jcrarchivist@durham.ac.uk). Our Services Manager, Grace Field (our favourite Kiwi, usually spotted wielding a paintbrush and scraper in the JCR room), has done a brilliant job making each formal unmistakably 'Castle' and consistently lively. The Christmas and Burns Night formals, where 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' and 'Auld Lang Syne' were sung with utmost gusto, were especially strong examples for me. Whilst we have managed to cap (or even reduce the prices of formals and balls) and redirected funding to other opportunities, the cost of producing such events continues to rise for the JCR. Our Treasurer, Sharon Alda, has been exceptional in working towards an affordable, accessible Castle whilst safeguarding our long-term financial stability.

This report seems to be so long, yet it only scratches the surface of life at Castle. We still have the rest of this academic year to finish off! I conclude writing it whilst sitting in a lecture (who needs to know about the financial strategies of museums anyways?), and I will finish echoing my predecessors in expressing my honour to be a part of this community. My love for Castle is enduring – though perhaps unsurprising as my fifth year looms – and there is no doubt that the academic curiosity, creative and sporting talent, and engagement of our students will continue to define

the College. As I look to my successor (who will have been chosen by time of publishing!), I hope they continue to serve the JCR and learn, appreciate, and grow. Finally, my thanks go to Alex Nelson and the Durham Castle Society for continuing the connections to Castlemen past and present. It is always a pleasure when alumni come to town, or even just email me, so please do not hesitate to get in touch! As always, I can be found at castle.seniorstudent@durham.ac.uk.

Olivia Grace Smith
Senior Woman 2025/2026



MIDDLE COMMON ROOM REPORT

MCR

Writing this contribution feels like a useful moment to pause, as the academic year so far has moved quickly and, in many ways, quietly gathered momentum. The MCR at Castle continues to be an immensely varied and interesting community, and one of the pleasures of my role has been seeing how postgraduate life here fits neatly alongside the much larger rhythms of the College.

It is easy to forget, simply because it becomes normal so quickly, how extraordinary it is to spend so much of our daily lives in a Norman castle that is approaching one-thousand years old. We work, eat, talk, and worry about our deadlines in a building that predates most modern states. My wife visited recently and remarked that the Castle is close to four times older than her country across the pond, something that I admit I have long since taken for granted.

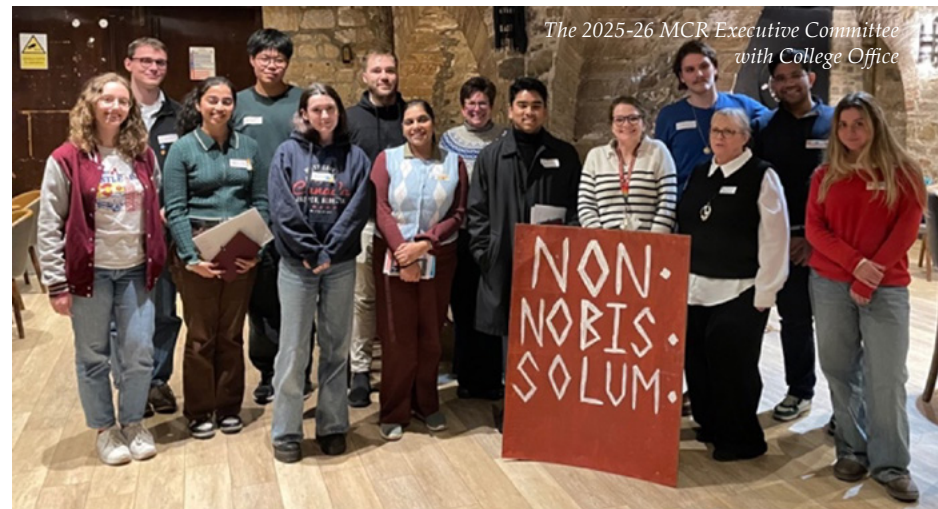
In any case, serving as President of the MCR has offered a perspective on Castle that I have found both grounding and quietly rewarding. The MCR is by no means the most visible part of college life, nor the oldest or largest, but it continues to play an essential role in sustaining the continuity, institutional memory, and sense of belonging that makes Castle such a special college.

A look back at Michaelmas

Michaelmas began, as always, with the arrival of new postgraduates, many of whom were encountering Durham and Castle for the first time, myself included. We had an excellent flurry of events organised by our Freshers' Representatives, and we are all very grateful for all of their work.

A new Executive Committee for the academic year of 2025-26 was elected shortly after the beginning of term. As always, it represents a

diverse mix of disciplines, nationalities, and different stages of academic life; and continues to include a predominance of master's students, closely reflecting the demographics of our growing membership.



Progressing deeper into the term, we enjoyed an excellent array of events as everybody settled into college life, including our Halloween Party, an International Cocktail Evening, a Charity Bakesale, alongside less formal get-togethers including board games nights and our very popular movie nights. Our Sunday Seminar series has also continued this year, where our members have given presentations on their research, covering topics such as Classical Mythology in William Turner's paintings and Triangulations and Friezes, among many others. It goes without saying that College formals, while significantly reduced in number, remain extremely popular fixtures, and there are never any leftovers at our subsequent Port and Cheese!

Looking forward

For the remainder of Epiphany and Easter Term, we are expecting and planning even more events, especially in the summer when it is a touch warmer. Preparations for our Inter-MCR formal at the end of term have



begun, and we are very excited to invite our friends from around the University into the Castle.

We have also begun preparation on our Inter-MCR Ball, with a full Ball Committee ready to get stuck in. It will undoubtedly be a night (and perhaps morning!) to remember, with more details to follow.

There will also be another election in the middle of Easter Term, where we are excited to accept candidates for a range of positions for the next academic year's Executive Committee, along with plenty more events, formals, and good times in the interim.

Cam Reed
MCR President

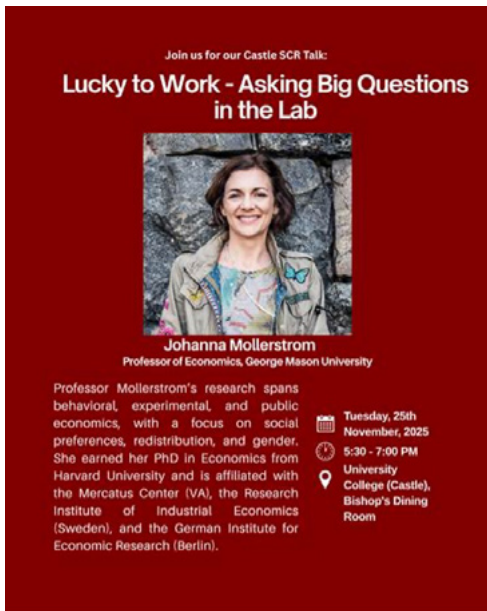
SENIOR COMMON ROOM REPORT



The SCR supported a number of events in Michaelmas Term 2025. On 18th November we welcomed Dr Vicky Fawcett who literally provided us with an out of this world experience on supermassive black holes, providing us with an understanding of how these monster black holes shape their surroundings is crucial to our understanding of how galaxies evolve. She explained the emerging theory which suggests that these dusty black holes represent a key stage in galaxy evolution.

We were also delighted to have a talk from Professor Johanna Mollerstrom originally from Sweden, who has a chair at George Mason University, who gave us a very intermate practical talk about decision making and economic theory.

The highlight of the term for our SCR community was the Christmas dinner. We were delighted to be able to use the Great Hall for this event which provided a truly fairy-tale-like setting for the event.



Unfortunately, recent changes to the number of formal catered for events allowed for in the College per term, as a consequence of the financial position of the University meant that we could not hold the dinner during official University term time. Consequently, we were forced to hold the meal after the formal end of term. Despite this challenge we had good support for the night.

The evening started with a drinks reception where people had the opportunity to renew old

acquaintances and make new friends in the Great Hall. This was accompanied with music by the Dragonfly String Quartet, all students at the University. Many attendees said how the music lent a magical quality to the reception. We had a traditional Christmas menu on offer with alternatives for people who had other dietary requirements. After the dinner guests were able to make use of the Undercroft bar to extend their evening within the welcoming environment within the College.

We welcomed over a hundred people to the dinner made up of SCR members and their guests. It was rewarding to see a range of people at the event, from postdoctoral researchers at the start of their formal university careers as members of staff, to senior academics of many years standing, emeritus staff, and other people associated past and present in senior positions from our local community.

There were also a large cohort of people who were alumni of the College, attending the evening both from the North East and further afield. We were able to use a last-minute cancellation to provide a space for a College student officer who happened to be still resident in the Castle. They were

tracked down by the porters at the last minute, given less than an hour to dress for the evening and also delivered grace before the dinner - but well worth effort to support engagement between generations.

The SCR is very grateful to many of its members, the College staff in both the office and catering department who all worked so hard to deliver the dinner.

David Landes
For SCR Steering Group



SCR Christmas Dinner

DURHAM CASTLE SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE 2025 AGM OF THE DURHAM CASTLE SOCIETY AT 15:00 ON SATURDAY 12TH APRIL 2025

All members of the Durham Castle Society are invited to attend and participate in the Annual General Meeting. "Membership is open to all members of University College, Durham, and all members of the teaching and administrative staff of the Durham colleges and the University who at any time have been resident in the College."

Committee members in attendance:

Kevin Hawes, KH (77-80)	<i>Chair, Durham Castle Society</i>
Charlie McKeever, CM (17-22)	<i>Secretary, Durham Castle Society</i>
Martin Gunson, MG (73-74, 06-16)	<i>Treasurer, Durham Castle Society</i>
Alex Nelson, AN (80-83)	<i>Editor of Castellum, Durham Castle Society, College Advisory Board Representative</i>
Wendy Powers, WP (Virtually due to Injury)	<i>Principal, University College Durham</i>
Julia Bonner, JB	<i>Alumni Development Manager, University College Durham</i>
Alec Blissett, AB (17-01)	<i>Committee Member, Durham Castle Society</i>
Paul Everson, PE	<i>Committee Member, Durham Castle Society</i>

Society members in attendance (25):

Philip Hopwood (85-88), Rex Andrew (65-68), David Hollington (67-70), James Rowley (94-97), Gary Ingram (86-93), Alistair Gibb (62-66), David Mallett (62-65), Martin Sexton (58-61), David Waters (61-66), Chris Meltuish (69-72), David Young (59-62), Robin Brown (68-71), Henry Brockman (83-86), Chris Wilson (68-71, 74-75), David Mehers (68-72), Ian Watson (67-70), Mike Waters (67-71), Bob Thurlby (67-70), Des McWilliam (68-71), John Waterhouse (67-70), Patrick Hayes (20-23), Roger Lilley (68-71), David Pearson (68-71),

Chris Morrison (68-71), Mark Bulsing
With the following joining virtually (4); Jonathan Pearson, David Goodly, John Chapman, Diana Heß

Others in Attendance:

Ellen Crabtree (Vice-Principal), Shoaib Islam (Senior Student 24/25), Olivia Grace Smith (Social Chair 24/25 & Senior Student Elect 25/26)

Apologies for absence:

Matthew Maneely, Andrew Hemmings, David Edmonson, Nick Mercer, Ed Gunson, Douglas Denham St Pinnock.

The Secretary apologies for any errors or omissions in the above names.

I. Introductions

Kevin Hawes

The Chair introduced himself and welcomed all to the meeting and indeed the weekend as a whole. The Chair welcomed Wendy Powers virtually joining due to injury along with Julia and Ellen and thanked them for their work in preparation for the weekend. He also thanked the College staff for letting us impose ourselves for the weekend and graciously hosting us. KH received reports of the below deaths and the chair expressed his sorrow for the loss and encouraged anyone willing to reach out to Alex Nelson to write an obituary for Castellum.

Reports of Death:

David MacDowall, David Brice (2025), Chris Burdett (January 2025), Stephen Denyer (January 2024), William Forster (2024), Neil Hassall (2024), Richard Pryce (July 2023), Brian Scrivener (September 2024), Norman Thompson (Feb 2024), David Charles Twinn (2021), John Atkin (John the Maid) (February 2025), Edward Thompson, Stanley Morris, Dennis Byatt, Thomas Scott, John Rex, Paul Smyth, Joseph Pyburn, Edensor Jones, Charles Willis, Peter Bladon, David Knowles, Alan Elphick, Martin Foulger, George Anderson,

Michael Young, Robert Shirley, Alan Bainbridge, Derek Holbrook, Richard Wailing, Harold Morley, David Brice, John Whittaker, Rev. John Paul Hoskins, Joe Ashmore, Steve Astin (Eric).

2. Minutes of the previous meeting, published in Issue 75 of Castellum:

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and accepted on a general aye.

3. Principal's Welcome and Report

Due to a recent injury Wendy is housebound to the Master's House. The Society sent their well wishes to her. She remains actively involved and joined the meeting virtually as well as showing a pre-recorded welcome speech before the reunion dinner. Ellen, the Vice-Principal, provided an update from the college on Wendy's behalf.

- The Fellows' Garden project is now underway with an estimated conclusion in October. There will be further details shared about a re-opening event in due course.
- The Norman Chapel has extensive conservation works and now has a set of double doors to help control the climate within the chapel.
- Further work has been completed on the Tunstall chapel to support the falling organ loft which has now been completed.
- Norman Gallery is currently closed due to structural works but this project has been paused due to funding gaps from the University.

Julia introduced herself and provided an update on a wide range of alumni-related issues, including: alumni activities; the new Durham Castle Society website; the introduction of a new range of College merchandise; reviewing how alumni data can be used; and gifts from donors, noting that the number of donors now exceeds one hundred. Julia noted in particular

that there is over £729,000 of pledged donations for the North Terrace Restoration Project and remodelling of the Fellows' Garden into an arts, culture and heritage space.

4. Report of the Alumni and Development Manager

Julia was pleased to report that there were 150 attendees at the reunion weekend across seven decades of Castlemen with the earliest graduating in the 1950s and the most recent just last year.

There is a book of condolences available for those wishing to share memories about John the Maid which will be given to his family along with added into the archives. All emails Julia received regarding this will also be added into the book.

5. Report of University College Durham Trust

Mark Bulsing presented the report from the Trust, having met earlier in the day prior to the AGM. He provided an update of the purpose of the trust; to receive donations and manage this via Rathbones investment and disperse this money appropriately in the interests of the student body.

The Trust is a legal entity set up in 1990, governed by volunteer trustees, some nominated, some de-facto as per committee roles of DCS and some with relevant financial sector experience. This differs from the Durham Castle Society which is less financially focussed and focuses more on events, contacts and connections.

It was reinforced that should members wish to donate and 100% guarantee their funds go towards the college/JCR they should donate to the Trust which carefully maintains and monitors its accounts and releases funds to Castle-specific projects where appropriate. Donations can also be either restricted or unrestricted. It is most beneficial to the Trust if members would like to donate unrestricted funds which the Trust may choose where to spend but with a preference for where the money is to go, for example towards a first year student from the North East who may need additional sports funding. However, if this is legally restricted, the

money may sit for a number of years within the account and not be spent, should there not be any candidates who fit the restriction criteria applying.

It was reminded that another benefit to donating to the Trust over the University is that the entire trustee board are volunteers so your donation goes further rather than towards running a full department. The Trust currently funds the Alumni and Development Manager role as a long term vision of continue to drive donations into the Trust.

There have been recent Trust developments of developing a sustainable cash outflow policy as well as an ethical investments policy.

The trustees voted to renew Julia's contract at Manager level for a further two years to focus on fundraising for the next two year term.

There was a comment from the floor that reminded members that if you are at a point in your life where you are comfortable with money and intend to donate upon your death you may be better donating whilst you are still alive as this will reduce your inheritance tax and also allow you to see the benefit of your donation.

6. Report of University College Durham Trust

Alex Nelson explained his role on CAB which meets once a term consisting of the College Principal with other College officers and representatives from all common rooms. Wendy uses this time to share updates with everyone and it is an open forum for discussion and Alex uses this time to take any concerns of the Society to the College officers and student leaders.

This year there has been a focus on development of better handovers between students officers.

7. Report of the Editor of Castellum

Alex Nelson shared that the society had just published another fantastic bumper edition of Castellum with the help of Oliver Lendrum. KH expressed the Society's thanks to both Alex and Oliver for their work on this year's edition which distributed 1300 copies.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding how the majority of the Society's

funding came from Castellum now that Freshers are not charged membership in their first week. The University is firm this is a model which will continue which is supported by the committee, such that freshers are not billed to be alumni members in their first week. The £10 for Castellum only just covers the cost of printing and posting Castellum let alone any other costs of the Society, which albeit has low operating costs, however this limits any long term ability to donate back to the JCR which will be covered in further detail in the Treasurer's report.

A motion was proposed that Castellum be increased to £20 as anyone who is willing to pay and can afford £10, can likely afford £20 so this should barely affect uptake but significantly help the society. Proposed by David Mallett, Seconded by Rex Andrew, the motion passed by a vote. As such Castellum will be £20 moving forwards, with a small transitional period for current subscribers.

8. Reports of the JCR, MCR and Thorp Society

Shoaib Islam, JCR Senior Student, shared brief updates from the JCR however summarised that full reports could be found in the most recent Castellum. However, the highlights include that the JCR levy has increased for the first time in a number of years, however they have decreased formal costs this year. The University is struggling financially and has brought in further cost cutting methods that are affecting students such as reducing the opening hours of the already busy Bill Bryson Library.

Rooms are now cleaned just once a term however the University 'inspects' liver-in rooms with little warning fortnightly. The President's Committee has pushed back and reduced this to monthly inspections with full notice given to students.

Given the closure of Norman Gallery Shoaib is concerned about the collective memory of students living on NG. If you have any pictures or memories you are willing to share please contact him on castle.seniorstudent@durham.ac.uk

9. Reports of the Treasurer and Presentation

of Society Accounts

Martin Gunson introduced that the accounts had been published in the most recent Castellum and these were approved by the attendees.

The Society is in ok stead but income is slowing down drastically so expenditure shall have to be limited.

Some elements such as the Lowe library fund can be cut back as this budget now comes from other funding streams within the College. The military scholarship has historically had income each year but as this fund hasn't been touched for a few years this will be paused. This year the Castle Society was not able to offer any funding to sports and societies as this is no longer sustainable. However, we did still support a contribution towards Castle Community Action (CCA).

Martin proposed that the £4000 in the budget for the Lowe should be written back into general expenditure, this passed on a general aye. CCA Funding continuing at £1500 per year and the military scholarship input being paused also both passed on a general aye.

MG explained how lifetime membership subscription from freshers was no longer a thing and the Society needed to look at a different time in a student's time at Castle, perhaps during graduation. Wendy explained that during freshers' week students are met with a significant amount of costs including gowns, JCR levy, freshers' week pass to name a few which normally comes to around £300 for an undergrad or £100 for a postgrad so alumni membership was not a reasonable cost to expect a new student to pay.

Between 2000 and 2023 over £200k has been given back to the JCR from the Society for every day expenditure such as sports and societies, CCA etc. This will be drastically limited moving forward unless we evaluate how the Society is funded.

Our current funding model as a society doesn't work and further work will be done by the committee to uncover a new plan. Suggestions would be very welcome for this.

10. Election/Re-Election of DCS Officers

As there were no other nominees the officers and committee members of the DCS remained as stands, passing on a general aye, including those on Teams.

11. Election of Committee Members

There were no new committee member nominations for 25-28 despite Chris Silberberg and Richard Ellery Retiring. Therefore, two roles remain open for next year.

12. Appointment of Nominative Trustees to UCDT

Matt Maneely has been re-elected a trustee to ensure the successful hand-over to Andy Molloy of his role. However, this decision doesn't fall to the DCS but to the Trust itself.

13. AOB

There was a vote on having music in the form of a string quartet during the meal. This was rejected due to concerns about hearing conversation at dinner. A middle ground was reached that music would be appreciated during the entrance to dinner but not during the meal itself.

The next two reunions will be moved to July due to accommodations changes in the Easter holidays meaning there would be no College accommodation during April. The dates will be 17-19th July 2026 and 16-18th July 2027.

14. Date of Next AGM

The date of the next AGM is Saturday 18th July 2026, the time is to be confirmed. There being no further business to be declared, the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Charlie McKeever, Secretary

CASTLE SPORTS AND SOCIETIES

One of the greatest privileges of my role as Union and Societies Officer this year has been seeing first-hand how deeply Castle's clubs and societies. For many current students and alumni, these groups were at the heart of their time at Castle, where friendships were forged and a sense of belonging took shape. This spirit remains alive today more than ever, supported by both student leadership and the continued generosity of our alumni community.

Floreat Castellum

Written by **Amelia McLean-Brown**,
Union and Societies Officer 2025-2026

BADMINTON

Hello, My name is Flynn Kilby, and I am President of Castle Badminton for 2025-26. When I took over the role in 2025, the club was in an unfortunate position; there were only about ten people who regularly came to training, and our teams rarely ever won a match. My goal as president was to foster a more inclusive club and create a society of friends, rather than a group of people who simply played badminton once or twice a week. In this vein, our social secretary, Oreofe Subair, has hosted several wonderful socials, which usually culminate in a headache in the morning. In Michaelmas, we held a team dinner at Alishaan, with twenty people joining us to enjoy a good curry. To ensure we look the



part, our Treasurer, Roni Cakmak, is organising stash and creating a team jersey for us to wear with pride.

Compared to 2023/24, our teams have been much more successful this year. Our women's team, captained by Grace Dymond, remains undefeated, winning the Women's First Division and are being promoted the Women's Premier League. The men's team, captained by Ariz Akmal, have been equally successful and are joint first in the Men's Second Division, having annihilated Hatfield 8-1 back in October. In addition, the Mixed As, captained by Javon Chan and Hitender Bhati, and the Mixed Bs, captained by Jocelyn Wong, have been successful, winning several matches and have both been improving day by day.

After an incident in Michaelmas Term, I decided to create the position of Castle Badminton Welfare Officer, with the first holder being Aruba Salim. She has brought a smile to every training session, waiting to lend an ear to anyone who needs to talk and is always handing out sweets to brighten up everybody's day. Due to the renewed popularity of Castle Badminton this year, I felt that a one-hour training session, once a week, was not enough. Thus, the Executive and I instituted a subsidy system, which pays for a two-hour Freeman's Quay session every Saturday. Around Castle, Saturday has now become known as "Badminton Day" and it forces everyone to bond for four straight hours! Back in Michaelmas, Castle was part of an inter-university tournament, where we were pitted against Loughborough. Though our team were defeated 5-4, our players, George Li, Zhi Wei and Eric Zhang, played superbly and showed great dedication to the club.



Overall, the Club is thriving, and I am immensely proud of what I, the Executive, and our members have created this year. I hope this continues into 2027!

Written by Flynn Kilby, President 2025-2026

BASKETBALL



Strong win for our women's team. 25.1.25

Castle Basketball has had a busy and rewarding year, continuing to train, and face other colleges in league games. With around 25 participating members and a mix of experience levels ranging from novice to Durham University Team, the club has focused on developing individual and team basketball IQ, ability and

chemistry. This year marked some very strong performances against tough teams in the 1st and 2nd leagues, resulting in the women's team winning the League Cup and the award for University College Team of the Year, and the men solidifying the A Team's place amongst the top half of college teams by qualifying for the College Basketball Cup.

Across the year the Castle Basketball men's and women's teams trained weekly, competing in college league games on weekends and hosting socials. Particular highlights include: Movember Charity, Castle Hatfield day, and College Varsity games.



Men's win against Ustinov A, 17.1.26



Castle Basketball Execs collecting the Women's Team of the Year 2025 award

Beyond results, the club continues to be a close-knit community, with regular socials and collaborations with other societies. We're grateful for the support of alumni and former members. Looking ahead to next year, we hope to grow both the women's and men's teams, and we'd love to stay connected with any alumni interested in visiting or supporting the club.

Written by Samuel Brochen, President 2025-2026

CASTLE CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

Castle Choir and Orchestra have enjoyed a vibrant and rewarding academic year so far, continuing to play a central role in Castle's musical and social life. One of the year's highlights was performing at the opening of the new alumni-funded performance space in the Fellows' Garden alongside Castle Chapel Choir, a particularly meaningful occasion that celebrated the lasting impact of alumni support on music at Castle. The ensemble also delivered a sell-out Christmas concert in Castle Great Hall, a much-loved fixture in the termly calendar, as well as performing



Fellows' Garden opening ceremony



Castle Choir and Orchestra Christmas Concert (December 2025)

for the Durham Business Group Christmas Luncheon, strengthening connections beyond the college community.

This Epiphany Term, the society is looking forward to a collaborative concert on 17th of March with Trevelyan College and St John's College, reflecting a growing spirit of musical partnership across the University. With around 70 members (and counting), Castle Choir and Orchestra pride themselves on being inclusive and accessible, welcoming musicians of all backgrounds and experience levels.



Castle Choir and Orchestra Christmas Concert 2025 with Durham Business Group

Written by Martha Noakes, President 2025-2026

CAMPAIGNS



We kicked off this 2025/26 year with six impactful campaign weeks so far, including Housing Matters, SHAG week, Northern Lights, Movember, Think B4 U Drink and Eating Disorders Awareness Week. A standout was the SHAG party, an infamous evening in the Undie celebrating self-expression and sexual health with a themed playlist, drinks and so much more.

Northern Lights week was our most ambitious yet. Having applied for and secured the University's full £600 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) fund, Northern Officer (Rebekah), our Welfare Officer (Jess) and I took over 20 Castle students on a fully-funded coach trip to Beamish Museum. The feedback was incredible. For many, it was a profoundly enriching introduction to northern heritage and a deeper appreciation for the region, an opportunity they might otherwise have never had. We kept the momentum going with a Northern Party in the Undercroft Bar, where a local Hartlepool band gave even the Castle's resident ghosts a proper shake.

The week also featured a powerful imposter syndrome workshop led by Sophie, Vice Principal of Ustinov College. Students discussed safe spaces, resilience and transforming challenges into our own strengths, ultimately owning our place and our voice. (Crucially, asking for forgiveness not permission). We wrapped it all up, as only seemed right, with Greggs pizza.

Campaigns Officer
Evie Soleil

CASTLE THEATRE COMPANY

Castle Theatre Company has had a busy year, with another extremely successful national tour and fantastic performance of Laura Wade's 'The Watsons' at the Sir Thomas Allen Assembly Rooms Theatre, and a side-splitting Comedy Cabaret in Castle's very own Great Hall. At the moment, we are preparing for our next tour, where we will be performing Shakespeare's highly underrated 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' in locations up and down the country.

'The Watsons' was described by Molly Bell as "utterly charming" in Durham Student Theatre's (DST) First Night Review, and was "filled with warmth, hilarity and unexpected tenderness". Castle student Archie Elliot's adaptation of this reimagined classic was truly inspired, making complete use of the comedic aspects of the script, and directing the actors to build hilarious caricatures of common Jane Austen characters. The costume contrasted regency era fashion with an extremely sleek set that made the audience feel as if they were looking in at the action through a window. The addition of a gigantic disco ball for the unexpected dance number was a great touch too!

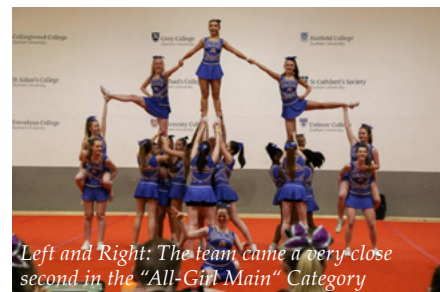
The Comedy Cabaret was a great success, with performances from The Durham Revue, The Stand Society and Shellshock! Improv. Donned in black tie, audience members enjoyed a drinks reception and spent the evening in the Great Hall, watching fantastic comedy. It is an event that is sure to be another great success this year.

Castle Theatre Company toured with 'Twelfth Night' last summer, which was described by Alex Ray in Palatinate Indigo as feeling "like a celebration of the original, not a reworking of it". This quote aptly summarises the company's new approach to theatre, shown through the direction of 'The Watsons' and in our choice of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' for this year's tour. Castle Theatre Company certainly has an extremely exciting year ahead of itself.

Written by Felicity Wood, President 2025-2026

CASTLE X HILD BEDE CHEER (AKA BEARS)

Bears have had an amazing start to the year thanks to some very talented freshers who have joined and committed their all to the team. Our team continues to support other sports at half-time game shows (see Loughborough Varsity photos) and we get really into our



training routine. We would love to do some more cheering for Castle, too! We are now readying up for the intercollegiate competition, which takes place on 21 March. We will be entering a team into every

division (Main, Pom and Stunt) so please do come and support us if you can! Keep up to date on our socials [@hildbedecastlecheer](https://www.instagram.com/hildbedecastlecheer) on Instagram for a peek of what we bring to the table!

Written by Ellie Quinn, Co-President 2025-2026

CRICKET

In the aftermath of a rather disappointing Ashes series, I should hope an account of University College Cricket Club's (UCCC) past year offers some relief. With Epiphany Term's training now underway, it seems appropriate to look back at the successes of the club in the 2025 season.

Unfortunately, the indoor team found little triumph in the winter, but we sought great solace in our two hard-fought victories in the summer, one against St John's and the other the morning following a very merry Leather & Willow social. Despite a questionable batting order, and the fact that only eight dishevelled members could drag themselves to Maiden Castle for the game, a shocked John Snow (I think) failed to defend what ought to have been a perfectly strong score of 135 from their 20 overs. The club's former and current president opened the second innings, with the latter posting 70 (-odd), and carrying the bat to lead the team to a thrilling success. Especial amusement was also found by both teams in one member padding up in his suit, shorts, and loafers from the night before.

As far as socials go, Leather & Willow was certainly the highlight of the club's year. On a sunny Saturday evening in June, a game of pub cricket took four teams to a disappointing chicken shawarma wrap at Lebaneat, and across the Bailey. A number of matches were played in Cuth's garden (although I am not sure anyone knows who won), 24's

wine supply ran dry, and the night turned into a welcome break after a busy exam season.

The coming year promises to bring further excitement. A packed first training session offered a glimpse of the surprising quality and depth of this year's squad, and we should thus hopefully see a shamefully long-awaited victory against our rivals on Castle x Hatfield Day. Finally, the return of the infamous UCCC vs UCRFC cricket match is also to make its return in 2026, a particularly exciting event that two-thirds of the College are yet to enjoy.

Written by Findlay Barrand, President 2025-2026

FEMINIST SOCIETY

Castle's Intersectional Feminist Society is an inclusive and welcoming group dedicated to advancing gender equality. Over the past year, the society hosted a wide range of social, creative and educational events, including paint and sip nights during Arts Week and Castle Hatfield Day, tote bag painting, and movie nights. One such screening of Michelle Obama's 'Becoming' was held in collaboration with Castle's First Generation Society. In addition, Castle Fem Soc has organised bar crawls with the College's Pride Society, an intercollegiate social with university-wide feminist societies last Christmas, and initiatives celebrating women in Castle during International Women's Day. The society has also shared feminist book recommendations to encourage continued learning and reflection beyond events.

More recently, the society has sought to broaden its scope beyond its previous boundaries to adopt a more explicitly political and activist focus. While continuing to provide a safe and supportive space for students to reflect on gender-based issues, Castle Fem Soc has increasingly aimed

to take steps towards advocacy and awareness. In collaboration with the Durham Halo Project, the society hosted a panel discussion at the Students' Union for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, followed by a charity bake sale. Speakers included representatives from the Halo Project, Dr Chloe Romains (Durham University), and Castle's own Ele James, third year student and founder of Warm Hearts. The society's 2025/26 President, Charlotte, also delivered a speech highlighting the collective impact of Durham's feminist societies and emphasising their growing importance in the current social

and political climate. Some of our society members joined Emily, our Vice President, at the WOW North East festival. Ashley James gave a talk, and the students even got the pleasure of meeting her!

**Written by Charlotte Morgan,
President 2025-2026**



THE KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS SOCIETY

The Krishna Consciousness Society (KCSoc) brings the practice of Bhakti Yoga—devotion and selfless service—into student life. Everything we do comes back to connecting with the divine through sound, celebration, and ancient wisdom.

Mantra Meditation sits at the heart of what we do. The Vedas or Eastern Philosophy teach that sacred sound itself carries divine energy, awakening us to our inner beings. When we chant together, the noise of deadlines and daily stress falls away. We also take this practice to Durham City Centre for Harinam—sessions of singing and dancing that tend to spark happiness in countless faces. As no experience is required to play any instrument or chanting, we were hosting instrument practices where Kirtida Devi, the Branch Director at the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) Educational Services, was teaching us how to play the kartals, mridanga and harmonium.

Our Hatha Yoga sessions went beyond physical postures. Through pranayamas and asanas, students learnt how each movement affects both the body and spirit, releasing tension, opening energy channels, and creating inner balance. After each practice, we meditated and chanted together, feeling cleansed and connected. These sessions showed us that yoga prepares the body and mind to receive the divine sound of mantra with greater clarity and peace. We also hold regular talks/Gita Circles, sharing and finding ways to apply timeless Ancient Vedic wisdom to our lives, and meditation workshops where we explain and practise the different stages of meditation to understand why Mantra Meditation is covering other kinds of meditation.

In February, members of KCSoc joined students from other KCSocs across the UK for a weekend retreat at Bhaktivedanta Manor in Watford, a serene ISKCON temple gifted by George Harrison of The Beatles. With travel sponsored by the National KCSoc Network, students gathered for an unforgettable experience of kirtan, cow care, yoga, and games, all



nourished by delicious prasadam served three times a day. The retreat offered a rare chance to step away from university life, deepen our practice, and connect with a wider community of students who share the same journey of devotion and self-discovery. It was a beautiful reminder that KCSoc isn't just a Durham society; it's part of something much bigger.

In March, The Philosophy Society invited us to participate in the Charity Event "The Philosophies of Poetry", where we shared a poem about the blessings of God and how the association with KCSoc is a manifestation of those blessings.

KCSoc was also invited to participate at the Castle Culture formal, where we shared what the Vaishnava culture is about and read five verses from the Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam (in both Sanskrit and English), exploring how selfless service brings real peace.

In June, we held Durham city's first Ratha Yatra. This is known as the Festival of Chariots, held across all the major cities around the world, which winds through Durham's streets, starting and ending at the Castle Courtyard. It's a procession rooted in tradition from Jagannath Puri, India, celebrating how the Lord steps out from His temple to share mercy and joy with everyone. Students, staff members, local people, and members of the Newcastle ISKCON Temple gathered with us, creating a community connection. We are very grateful to Indira & Ramarao and Sarvottam & Shymala for sponsoring this event.

In October, we celebrated Diwali at the Oriental Museum, which marks light defeating darkness. We celebrate knowing that simple things – reflection, singing, being together – can genuinely brighten our inner

world and bring harmony.

During the terms, we hosted various social activities, including walking in the botanic gardens, watching the film "Hare Krishna! The Mantra, the Movement and the Swami Who Started It All" in the cinema room at New Kepier Court, and cooking sweets to share with students and staff at Castle.

Whether you're curious about meditation, looking for community or simply wanting to try something new, there's a place for you here!

-Krishna, Shatakshi & Sharad

Written by Edwin Herrera Chacon

MEN'S FOOTBALL

After an eventful end to the academic year in 2025, with a lovely sojourn in Lisbon and the departure of some big players (Schuller, Dinan, Wills... oh wait, he's coming back), Castle AFC returned in October with a fresh, optimistic mindset. Fionn kicked off AFC's social calendar with a welcoming introduction for the new freshers, followed up by a vintage Bucky social. Over the course of Michaelmas, great results for all teams were flooding in — or maybe trickling is more accurate — and NKD Bird was looking busier than ever.

However, despite the throng of Castlemen and women who rocked up to Track Pitch in support, Castle were knocked out of floodlit in the first round, to Ustinov no less. The only solace to be taken from this, as Nissim keeps reminding people, is that Collingwood 'barely' beat them 1-0. Nevertheless, since then, with something to prove, Castle have enjoyed a great run of form. The As have been unbeaten for ten weeks (including holidays), with Seb Jones almost entirely responsible for Nissim's deliverance from a double relegation, and Merriden's Bs currently sit at the top of the table. The Cs are looking seriously competitive, with

Crees scouting out some dangerous talent throughout the year, and the Ds have been consistently fielding full teams in recent weeks, with captain Ball still out (thankfully) due to injury. There is a lot still to look forward to this Epiphany as well – the arrival of our new Kappa kit, and a pub crawl social.

As we look forward to the Easter Term, and the completion of another year in Castle, it makes me think back on all that has been achieved, reminiscing on the good and the bad over the last year — the Santo Antonio Festival was incredible, Rutter and Hermann's fights weren't intelligible, and the Battenbergs were inedible. Ultimately, this year has shown me once again that Castle AFC truly is the best club, and it has been an absolute pleasure to be part of such a great group of lads.

C-A-S-T-L-E, Castle is the team for me.

Written by Jack Nation, President 2025-2026



MIXED LACROSSE

It's been a year of extremes for Castle Mixed Lacrosse. From forgetting we had matches to finally, finally, winning one. Last year we arguably made a name for ourselves for losing every match, but this academic year has seen a resurgence of University College Mixed Lacrosse Club (UCMLC) with worryingly dedicated freshers and even more passionate returners. Losing is in the past.

The season's emotional turning point came when we did the unthinkable and beat JoBo (Josephine Butler College). Our first win in too long, and you could tell. I think JoBo were confused as to why we were so overjoyed, but they couldn't possibly understand. We turned up with



numbers and just enough coordination to pull off a win. The match was sealed by a JoBo own goal in what can only be described as divine intervention. History was made.

Off the back of our brief flirtation with success, the rest of the term happened. Results were mixed and attention started to shift away from solely what was happening or not happening on the pitch. The main development was the ordering of the UCMLC Canterbury trackies which, when they arrive, will hopefully at least make us look put together.

Off the pitch, socials did the heavy lifting. Our traditional 'LaCross Dressing' social saw an alarming turnout with over 50 freshers, a Bailey

bar crawl, and an altercation in Klute (I can only imagine someone mentioned our losing streak). 'Lacrossmas' was significantly more wholesome. We dined on questionable Lebaneat catering and were entertained by Maja being forced to sing the full '12 Days of Christmas', or more like the restaurant being forced to listen to Maja sing.

All in all, this year has given us a win, a little more hope, and a surprising number of people begging to be chosen for exec roles next year. UCMLC is back and better than ever.

Written by Daisy Mansell, President 2025-2026

MIXED NETBALL

Despite the season only getting underway late last Michaelmas, University College Mixed Netball Club (UCMNC) have emerged entirely unscathed. Points-wise, at least. Hangover-induced injuries are another matter.



We've built a strong, genuinely dedicated team, many of whom I personally drag out of bed most weekends to make fixtures happen. Nevertheless, the ever-increasing amount of money I spend on Ubers has paid off, with consistently strong performances against tough opposition and a comfortable position near the top of the league leaderboard.

The return of ex-President Roddie has only added to the momentum, playing so well that opposing teams have suggested we must have "found him on the street", an accusation we neither confirm nor deny.

With plenty of games still to come, Benedict and I are very excited for the rest of the season! If you're looking for something competitive, welcoming, and quintessentially Castle (boozy), UCMNC is very much worth a try.

Written by Poppy Tristram, President 2025-2026

ROWING

UCBC has had an extraordinary year, continuing to cement its position as Castle's largest and most successful club, both on the water and, perhaps more notably, off it.

In March, UCBC once again returned to the Tideway for the Women's and Men's Head of the River Races. It was amazing to see the women's squad make their triumphant return to WEHARR for the first time in five years, and they are looking forward to returning soon. The Men's 1st VIII secured an impressive 2nd place in the Small Academic Pennant at HARR, our best result in recent memory and a testament to the quality of training and commitment shown by the squad. As one of the few colleges to field a second VIII, the depth and quality of our squad was clear for all to see. Looking forward to this year, I am excited to welcome many of you to our annual HARR dinner and subsequent social on 28

March, so look out on Facebook for more details.

Moving into the regatta season, both squads demonstrated exceptional form, reaching finals at both Hexham and Durham regattas. However, it was certainly the women's squad who finished the academic year on a high, with the 1st VIII's victory at Durham Regatta. The win was duly celebrated at our summer BBQ, where the crew arrived triumphantly with their silverware in hand before ceremonially dunking their cox, Amelie, in the Wear. She seemed even more enthusiastic than her crew mates. After being subsequently fished out and hosed down, the celebrations continued well into the evening.

The year finished with our annual end of year dinner. In typical UCBC fashion, after several wines, and more than enough Shoey's, we made our way to 24s for our drinks reception and extra port which they bought in specially. UCBC had a phenomenal time and would absolutely love to go to back to 24s.

The new academic year has seen a very welcome and significant investment in our fleet from the JCR, with the purchase of two new pairs (one new Falcon 2x/-, and a second-hand Eton 2-). When racking my brain on what to name these boats, I initially considered following in my predecessors' footsteps and naming one "Mack" (see Castellum Issue 11, 1958). However, with the self-confidence that being a Castleman provides, I had a rather more ambitious idea.

I sent a letter to the Maison du Grand-Duc, inviting Castleman and newly crowned Grand Duke (in order of importance), HRH Guillaume V of Luxembourg, to name one of our boats. To my surprise, I received a reply, not from the Grand Duke himself, but from Luxembourg's Embassy in London, fully supporting the idea. Thus, UCBC welcomed His Excellency Ambassador Georges Friden and Claudine Friden to the riverbank, making the well worth trade of a UCBC tie for several bottles of Luxembourg Crémant (which were very swiftly sampled), where we held a naming ceremony for our new pair 'The Grand Duke of Luxembourg'.





The second pair was named 'Cardinal Sin', as we retired its predecessor after several years of gathering dust. Castle's Chaplain, Rev Dr Sam Hole, very kindly offered to bless both boats. With UCBC needing all the support we can get, this led to the unfortunate consequence of the Chaplain blessing 'Sin', I imagine a first for all involved.

To inaugurate the start of the academic year we held our annual Bailey Boat Race, continuing the tradition of a high turnout and rousing success.

UCBC made ourselves well known with over 100 people in attendance and several banners trophied from other colleges. The social calendar throughout the year has been as certainly packed as ever, a testament to the hard work of our social secretaries, Henry and Leia. In Epiphany Term, we introduced a Noah's Ark themed social, in which freshers walked two by two into the night. Whilst certainly biblically inspired, sadly no one managed to walk on the Wear.

The senior squads have gone from strength to strength under the brilliant leadership of our captains, Broghan, Ed and Jude. The women's squad have quickly formed a close-knit group, with regular socials complementing a rigorous training plan. This has proved effective, with the Women's IV posting its fastest time on the Wear in many years at Durham Small Boats Head (SBH), speaking to the squad's dedication. The women now have ambitious goals as we look ahead to the remainder of the season.

The men's squad have had their most successful Michaelmas in recent history, with the 1st IV boasting wins at Durham and York SBH, bringing a welcomed reinstatement of our bragging rights on the Bailey. While there has taken significant encouragement for the Men to get back on the ergs, the squad is now focused on building on this success and to even more wins on the Wear, the Tyne, and beyond.

This year's novice programme has been exceptionally successful, with huge credit going to our novice captains, Thomas, Tilda, Henry and Ilaira, for their dedication and leadership. Starting with over 100 enthusiastic freshers at the beginning of Michaelmas, the captains have done an outstanding job introducing newcomers to the sport. The hard work paid off at Novice Cup, where the Women's 1st IV secured a strong placing against fierce competition from across the university. The men's squad also put in commendable performances, with crews demonstrating the depth of talent within the programme. With Novice Head approaching, the squads are training hard and looking to build on these early successes.

What has been particularly encouraging is that several novices have already begun integrating into the senior squads, making valuable contributions to training sessions and demonstrating the seamless progression that has become a hallmark of UCBC. This bodes extremely well for the future of the club, ensuring we maintain our position as Castle's strongest sporting society for years to come.

As we move forward, I have every confidence that UCBC will continue to thrive both on and off the water. It is the history and tradition of the club that continues to inspire each new generation of rowers. Alumni remain at the heart of UCBC, and I'd be delighted to hear from any former members, whether you're passing through Durham or simply want to reminisce about your time on the Wear. Feel free to reach out at mack-jenkins@outlook.com, or better yet, join us at one of our Floreat Castellum Boat Club (FCBC) events throughout the year.

I must finish by extending my eternal gratitude to this year's executive committee, who have worked tirelessly both on and off the water. From

supporting diplomatic engagements, to navigating the aftermath of our more spirited social events, they've handled everything with good humour and dedication. Looking at the talent and enthusiasm within our current squads, I'm excited to see what the future holds for UCBC.

Written by Mackenzie (Mack) Jenkins, President 2025-2026

RUGBY

University College RFC (UCRFC) returned to the field in Michaelmas playing some of the best rugby the club has seen in years. A round-robin tournament at the start of the year saw two big victories for the club: a return to the Premiership, and more importantly, a win over Hatfield. We were gifted with a great fresher cohort of players, and Joe James.



Led by Finn "Polar Bear" Mclean, the boys felt confident leading up to floodlit that we could do a number on Collingwood. Everything was going perfect, before Collingwood got scared and sabotaged our team lineup on the day. A close game saw Collingwood just edge the win, but the sorrows were short lived as UCRFC launched a relentless Plate campaign. Our win over Collingwood B was so devastating that I was awarded "Castleman of the Week" without even being present at the game. The victory has seen us through to the semis where we fully expect to desolate John Snow and sail our way to a Plate win.

Tour this year will see us jetting off to the paradise that is Krakow, it's

just a shame that Lello has to come with us. He has personally asked me to remind everyone reading this article that he is related to Tom Lello, although if you've ever spoken to Fin he will have already told you that. Overall, the club is stronger than ever this year, and Castle Rugby is back to winning ways. Keep an eye out for a Plate win coming our way, and as ever, Castle boys are happy.

Written by Jack Jordan, President 2025-2026

RUNNING

The past year has seen the continued growth of Castle's welcoming running community, University College Running Society (UCRS), which we are all proud to be a part of. We have continued the tradition of three to four weekly runs, exploring Durham and making many new friends on the way.

In 2025, Easter Term saw many of our members take on the challenge of the Gateshead Half Marathon and 10k race, fundraising for the charity Olivia Inspires. We enjoyed a carb-loading dinner together the night before, cheering our friends on at the finish line, and of course a celebration afterwards. We look forward to hopefully taking even more UCRS members to the race in 2026.

Michaelmas 2025 took our membership to an all-time high, and it has been great to see such enthusiastic uptake amongst this year's freshers. To continue encouraging this participation and honour the friendly ethos of the society, we have started incorporating even more social activities, often ending runs with a trip to Chapter's Tea Rooms or The Swan. Some Michaelmas highlights included our Movember run, in which we created moustache-shaped Strava art, and a festive run in the final week of term, which took us up Observatory Hill decked in tinsel



and reindeer antlers.

Finally, in Epiphany 2026 we have set our sights on climbing up the college sports leaderboard by participating in intercollege relays and Parkruns, and are excitedly awaiting our first stash drop for some time under new stash captain Rhys. We cannot wait for members to enjoy proudly wearing their UCRS fleeces around Durham!

Written by Amy Bunce, President 2024-2026

SQUASH

The Squash Club hit the ground running this year, with record turnout from the very start of the season. A great mix of new players and familiar faces quickly settled in, creating a lively and competitive atmosphere at the Racecourse. Sessions twice a week have been busy and well attended, with players pushing each other on court and helping to build a strong sense of community within the club.

Both the women's and men's teams have put in some excellent performances across their respective leagues. The season has seen everything from tight, nail-biting matches that came down to the final points, to absolute takedowns where the teams really showed their quality. Results like these reflect the depth across the squads and the effort everyone has put in throughout the year.



With the season now heading into its final weeks, there's plenty to look forward to. The women's team will also be travelling to York for varsity in the coming weeks, which is always a highlight of the calendar. With good momentum and a strong team spirit behind them, the club is well placed to finish the season on a high.

Written by Josh Hales, President 2025-2026

TENNIS

University College Lawn Tennis Club (UCLTC) is about to begin the 2026 season competing once again in the Premiership league, where expectations are high. While the league campaign is yet to begin, the end of last season provided some notable highlights, showing our club's strengths. These include our varsity selection against York, a strong run within the festival of sports, continued success in the highest division, and noticeable increased participation from Castle students.

This season has started under some difficult circumstances, with poor weather preventing many training sessions within the Epiphany Term. Despite this, the team has shown resilience, maintained strong attendance and built a solid competitive foundation. The addition of talented freshers and players returning from a year out has significantly improved our squad, and thus our hope in winning some silverware. With this momentum building, I am confident that UCLTC will have an amazing season.

Written by Arthur Merriden, President 2025-2026

YOGA AND PILATES

I'm Amy, President of Castle Yoga for the past two years. Yoga has been a big part of my life, and also a big part of my university experience. I want to encourage as many people as possible to reap the same benefits that I have, physical and emotional.

As a society, we offer free and inclusive weekly yoga classes which are held in the Bishop's Dining Room (BDR). The classes provide a space where Castle students can come and relax at the end of a busy day as a break in the chaotic uni routine. This year, Castle Yoga has grown massively. Where previously it was only me teaching, we now have three new Castle students who run classes. This means we can provide more sessions for more to enjoy. The girls who are now on the team are so lovely and professional, and it's great to hear the positive feedback about all of their classes.

Whilst the BDR is a beautiful space to practice in, it is fairly small. Come summer, we look forward to making full use of the renovated Fellows' Garden and holding some outdoor sessions. It will be great for more people to be able to attend, especially during exam season where some relaxation will be much needed!

Written by Amy Bunce, President 2024-2026

CONSENT AT CASTLE

At University College, fostering a strong and thoughtful culture of consent is central to its commitment to a safe, respectful, and inclusive community. As Consent Interns, my wonderful co-intern Jess Dowse and I had the honour and the challenge of helping to embed these values within a new cohort of students joining our College this year! Our main role was to develop a welcoming and opening environment in which new students were able to understand what our expectations were as a College towards Consent culture. We also aimed to break down social barriers and the taboo around this topic. As we took on the task of creating our Consent Workshops for our freshers, it was not long before we realised we had a huge challenge ahead of us.

To begin with, this year we were able to expand the diverse community within College by having a much larger number of students joining us – over 400 to give you some perspective! This meant that our usual format of small groups of five students per volunteer would not be sufficient. In fact, during our execution we had one of our very passionate and diligent volunteers per ten to sixteen students and at one point one of our team members even had over twenty students to look after! The other biggest challenge we had to overcome was having the right team to support us interns who were leading the workshops. We couldn't have dreamed of a more passionate, kind and patient team of volunteers, each selfless members of University College, giving every thought and effort to improving our community here at Castle. So, with our super team in place and our huge task at hand, Jess and I had to put our minds together to see how we would manage having over 100 students in the Great Hall for each of our three consecutive workshops.

Throughout the process, we were most fortunate to have the support and guidance of our wonderful Vice-Principal Ellen Crabtree and Assistant Principal Natalie Craig, lighting our way to our ultimately successful and smooth-running workshops. The constant encouragement and support we

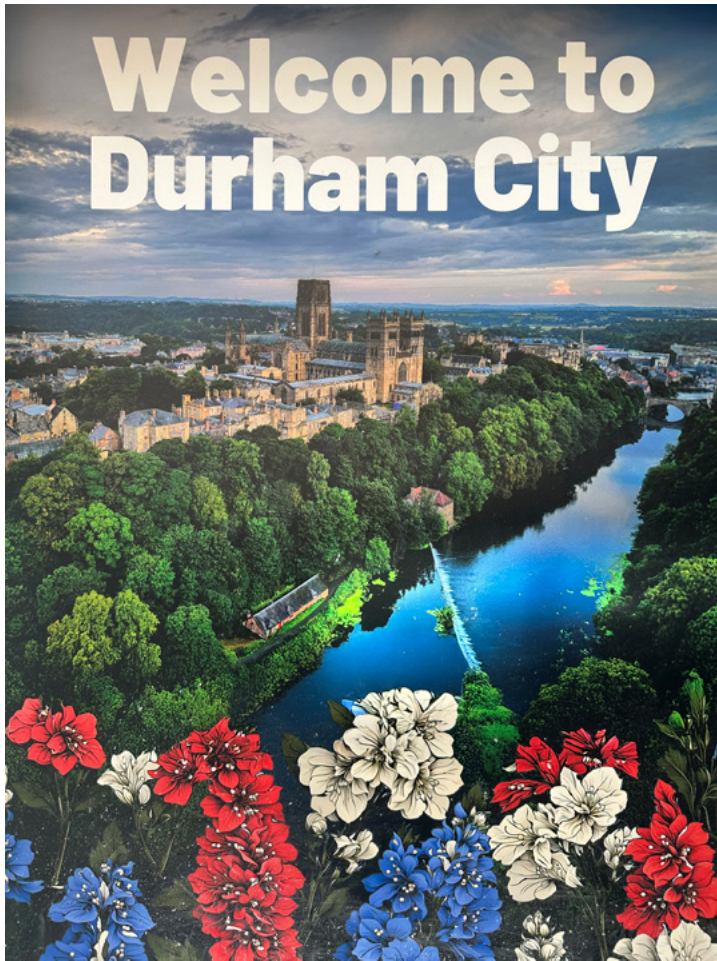
got from them made those daunting challenges turn into hurdles that we felt we could jump over. We remodelled our workshops to cater for our freshers, allowing them to interact with their neighbours to deepen and develop consent myths and whilst Jess and I took care of signposting and key information.

Our volunteer team were brilliant at representing the culture we have here at University College, naturally taking different approaches to leading their teams in group work and bringing in their own perspectives to making the workshops more effective and relatable for the new students. We completed the workshops feeling extremely proud of how much effort went into the rewarding outcome of successfully getting the message of how integral consent, and having a consent culture, is in our community. We were all definitely stretched to overcome the challenges we faced, but these instilled resilience and fostered growth in each of our own experiences. We



came away from our efforts not only rewarded by our contribution to our community but also the personal growth in our skillsets we achieved. As a whole, for me the entire experience summarised the nurturing environment we have at Castle where efforts to support others are always married to receiving that support back.

Simone Sharma, Consent Intern 2025/26

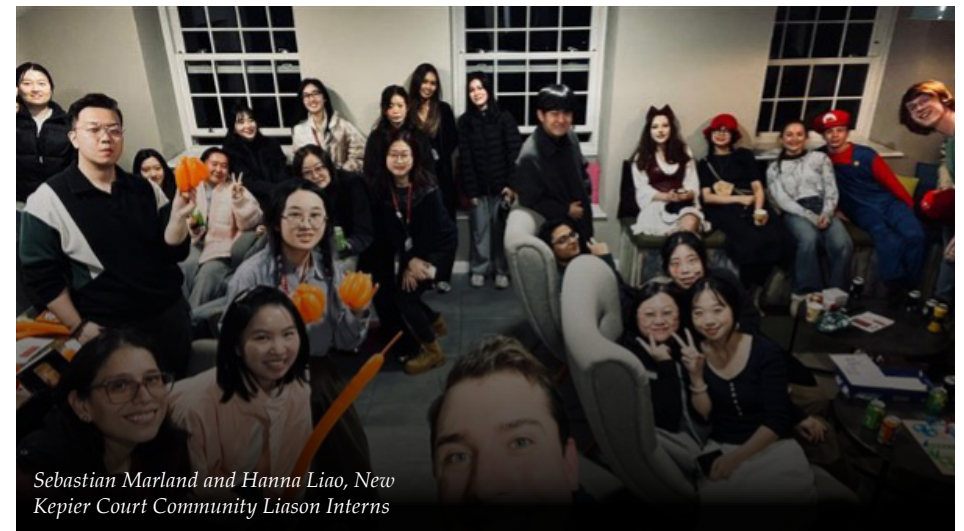


Another transposed picture of Durham City which definitely looks wrong.

COMMUNITY LIAISON (NEW KEPIER COURT)

College life also extends to New Kepier Court, where we have the perfect collection of both undergraduates and postgraduates. Our goal as Community Liaisons has been to foster a fun, multicultural and inclusive environment filled with social gatherings, such as our Halloween arts and crafts evening where we learned how to make pumpkins balloons, shared snacks and watched a scary movie. Since the beginning of Michaelmas Term, we have welcomed students from all over the world with the help of the fantastic team at New Kepier Court, who are one of the major pillars of our community. We also organise informal get-togethers where we share a warm cup of tea to talk about academia and life - this is a wonderful way to not only create a stronger-knit community but also foster a sense a belonging.

**Sebastian Marland and Hannah Liao,
New Kepier Court Community Liaison Interns.**



*Sebastian Marland and Hanna Liao, New
Kepier Court Community Liason Interns*

BELONGING AT CASTLE: RESEARCH, COMMUNITY, AND A LIVING HISTORY

I recently completed a visiting fellowship at the Institute of Advanced Study (IAS) in Durham for the Michaelmas Term. Led by Professor Catherine Montgomery, I worked on a collaborative project studying patterns of doctoral education and knowledge production, and my hosting college was Castle, which quickly became central to my academic stay in Durham. While the IAS provided an institutional and intellectual home for the project, Castle offered me a space for reflection, conversation, and a sense of belonging. At Castle, I was able to test my ideas and refine them through everyday exchanges, whether over dinner, lunch or in the shared office I occupied with other IAS Fellows. Living and working within a historic castle seemed to give my time in Durham a unique texture and depth. The daily routines created a rhythm in which conversations could unfold and ideas could mature.

I had the privilege of accessing parts of the Castle that are not usually open to the public. Walking through these spaces, I was struck by the visible marks of time on the walls and the layers of history embedded in the building itself. I couldn't help but imagine the many lives that had passed through those rooms and chapels, and the moments of work, debate, service, shared daily life, and even intrigues that had taken place there. My colleagues and I would joke about hearing ghosts — a light-hearted way of acknowledging the Castle's strong historical presence. One of the things that impressed me most was the sense of the Castle as a living place, inhabited daily by students and scholars who respect and care for its history and legacy.

What I valued most about Castle was its strong sense of community and care. Its vibrant cultural life, comprising carol services, choirs, teas, formals and informal gatherings, provided opportunities to forge connections across

disciplines, roles and career stages. This fostered a culture of generosity, attentive listening and open exchange. I would also like to acknowledge Team Castle, and in particular the many women whose hard work helps to make Castle an inclusive and welcoming place. The College's commitment to diversity, care and belonging is evident in the Team's daily practices, which often go unnoticed yet profoundly shape life at Castle.

Even in the short time of my fellowship, and reflecting on my time there, I realise that Castle has profoundly shaped my understanding of academic life itself. Research does not only unfold in offices or libraries, but also through conversation, shared routines, and moments of collective reflection. Living and working at Castle made this especially tangible and distinctive.

Since returning home, Castle has remained very much in my thoughts. I am deeply grateful for the warmth, generosity and openness that I experienced there, and for the privilege of having been part of such a remarkable place, albeit briefly. It is a place to which I would gladly return.

Carolina Guzmán Valenzuela,
27 January 2026



DUNKLEY CURATORIAL INTERNSHIP

During my first term as the Dunkley Curatorial Intern at Durham Castle, I have gained valuable experience in the day-to-day running of a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is simultaneously home of our College. This is somewhat of a unique situation when considering heritage and museum sites, and I have found it fascinating to learn about the processes of balancing the two. Working with the Castle curator, Gillian, during my first term meant that I could learn the ropes, with opportunities to join her in meetings and discussions, which gave me a good understanding of projects within the Castle. Likewise, all other Castle staff have been extremely welcoming and made my first term enjoyable and engaging.

I have had the opportunity and responsibility to focus on collections documentation within the Castle. This at times has been difficult, trying to memorise several rooms and the names of them, but it has been useful in helping me develop an understanding of these rooms and the collections within them. Documentation is crucial in a place like Castle, with furniture often being moved for events, meetings, or storage. Keeping up-to-date records of movement allows us to track the history of the collections, while also ensuring their safety. Another task I am responsible for is pest monitoring, from which I have learnt a significant amount. This involves checking traps throughout the Castle to analyse any changing patterns in the rooms, which can inform us of potential issues such as damp or infestations. This regular maintenance prevents these issues from developing and is one of the most important aspects of protecting the collections in the Castle. While much of the first term was about finding my feet and ensuring I understand the dynamics of the Castle, I have also learnt and contributed to the curatorial decision-making, which is a priceless experience when first entering the world of heritage and museums. The first

term provided a strong foundation, which I now look forward to further developing real-world experience and skills.

Liam Norman, Dunkley Curatorial Intern

Thanks to the generous support of Castle alumnus Paul Dunkley, this paid, part-time role lets students work alongside the Castle Curator while studying for their MA in Museum and Artefact Studies



LOWE LIBRARY

Hello!

The Lowe Library Team has an extremely strong team this year, starting with the hiring three assistant librarians in Michaelmas, with three continuing from last year. As a group we have run successful initiatives such as poetry competitions, online campaigns and are in the process of organising talks with notable individuals and visiting fellows. We collaborate with the JCR and MCR by opening up the library as a calm space during events and promoting their events and initiatives both inside the library and on our social media.

Recently we have increased our accessibility resources in the library through the addition of coloured reading screens and lenses. As a team, much time is spent cataloguing donations from alumni, which we happily accept, so if you have any books which you think would benefit the Lowe please reach out.



Sincerely,
Morgan Watkins
Lowe Librarian
2025-26

Alumni interested in donating books should get in touch with the library team: lowe.library@durham.ac.uk

FELLOWS' GARDEN OPENING: CONNECTING GENERATIONS AT CASTLE

After an energetic first month of welcome activities designed to transition new students into Castle life, the opening of the redeveloped Fellows' Garden marked a moment where that initial excitement settled into something deeper. While the welcome programme introduced me to Castle's people, rhythms, and activities, this event revealed the wider and longer-term community that surrounds the College.

As a new international MBA student, I attended the opening both as a student and in my professional capacity, having supported the event through my work as an Alumni Relations Intern with Julia Bonner, Alumni Relations & Development Manager.

More than 100 guests attended the occasion, including alumni who helped make the redevelopment possible by collectively raising £800,000 to restore the Fellows' Garden. Many had contributed years earlier, motivated by a desire to preserve a space that had been meaningful during their own time at Castle.

Seeing alumni return to experience the completed garden brought a strong sense of continuity to the afternoon. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was led by Professor Wendy Powers, Principal of University College, alongside alumni James and Vanessa Riley and Olivia Grace Smith, Senior Woman. This was followed by speeches, including an address by Professor Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor of Durham University, which recognised the role of alumni generosity in enhancing the student experience and sustaining Castle's shared spaces for future generations.

Beyond the formalities, the garden's transformation was striking. Open, light-filled, and thoughtfully designed, the redeveloped space offers greater accessibility and more room for student-led activities, informal gatherings, and creative use. The addition of a lift from the Castle's barbican

provides the first fully accessible outdoor space in Durham Castle, while purpose-built facilities now enable outdoor performances and community events. It feels firmly part of everyday Castle life – a space shaped by past generations, ready to be used by the present one, and preserved for those who will follow.

A highlight of the afternoon was the premiere of *Begin Again*, a musical piece, written by students Shambhavi Sharma and Chris Massa, and performed by the Castle Chapel Choir and Castle Orchestra. The performance brought the garden to life, reflecting Castle’s strong tradition of arts and music while inaugurating a space designed to host many such moments in the years ahead.

As the event drew to a close, informal conversations with alumni offered insights into what Castle had meant to them and how that connection had endured over time. In that moment, the opening revealed Castle not just as a student community, but as a close-knit, generational one I was becoming part of. I am already spending time in the Fellows’ Garden and look forward to returning to it throughout the year, particularly as it comes into full bloom.

Drishya Menon, Alumni Relations Intern



FELLOWS' GARDEN FILM INTERNSHIP



Professor Wendy Powers, Vanessa Riley, James Riley, Professor Karen O'Brien (Vice-Chancellor) at the opening of Fellows' Garden. Courtesy of Shoiab Islam.

Before it became a site of plans, permissions, and construction fencing, Fellows' Garden was a space for community. Tucked behind the walls of Durham Castle, it was a space that felt almost borrowed rather than owned: somewhere for pauses between lectures, performances that appeared and disappeared, and conversations that stayed longer than intended. For generations of students, staff, and alumni at University College, the Fellows' Garden carries a personal history that resists easy documentation.

Over the past year I've been working on the documentary *Fellows' Portrait: A Space of Change, a Place for Performance*, which follows the reimagining of this much appreciated space. I put myself forward for the project hoping to expand my videography portfolio, but quickly realised

it was also an opportunity to document a moment of collective transition.

Through filming and interviews, I spoke with architects, festival directors, and members of the Castle community, each offering their own perspective on what Fellows' Garden has meant and what it might become. One particularly meaningful moment was connecting with a Castle alumnus now working in the film industry, whose experience encouraged me to view the project not only personally, but as a professional contribution to the College's evolving creative and historical legacy. From a technical standpoint, this was the most ambitious project I had undertaken, invoking extensive footage and bringing together multiple perspectives into a single narrative. Yet despite its scale, the project remained deeply personal. As a student who spent time in Fellows' Garden during my first year, I found myself filming not just a space under construction, but the emotional weight of its transformation.

As the documentary prepares to be shared more widely, my hope is that it resonates with those who remember the garden as it was, while also inviting others to imagine what it can become. And if the process has taught me anything practical, it's this: always check your microphones are on.

Kris Holmes

In recent years, thanks to generous alumni funding, we have been able to recruit a small number of student interns to help us support the student community and mark important occasions, such as the opening of the Fellows' Garden. Kris' film follows different individuals involved in bringing the garden to life and will be released later in the spring.

REFLECTIONS FROM COLLEGIATE WAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

What is the Collegiate Way? It was fascinating to be a part of this collegiate and collegial international conference hosted by Durham in December 2025, marking 10 years since the network was first founded by Durham. The conference provided delegates with a valuable opportunity to reflect on the impact that collegiate systems – across their many global adaptations – have on our institutions, staff, students, and alumni.

The discussions were particularly timely given the challenging financial position currently facing the UK higher education sector, alongside ongoing questions about the cost and sustainability of managing collegiate institutions. The conference offered an excellent platform to share best practice and explore how colleges can continue to support students effectively, especially through multi-faceted student support initiatives, opportunities to grow and develop and foster a strong sense of belonging.

Some of the broader topics we took away from the conference:

- The importance of smaller-scale communities to build connection, learn from members (students and staff), support participation, enable and lead change in short timeframes.
- The power of living learning communities rooted in place: learning and education takes place informally and in structured settings, as well as through social and cultural environments.
- Colleges as places of formation, where in this age of AI, automation and political division, we can connect and be human.

A number of presentations also highlighted the importance of our global alumni community, whose members act as ambassadors for our colleges, support student learning opportunities through volunteering and philanthropy, and help foster and strengthen a sense of belonging rooted in shared history and experience.

As colleges, we remain committed to helping students reach their full potential by encouraging them to step outside their comfort zones and engage in new opportunities within a supportive and caring environment. The team-building, communication, and leadership skills students develop through involvement in sports, societies, internships, and executive roles play a significant role in preparing them for life beyond their studies.

So many of the themes we discussed at the conference echo what we so often hear from Castle alumni about the friendships, support and sense of belonging that shaped their time here, reinforcing the lasting value of the collegiate experience.

Dr Ellen Crabtree, Dr Natalie Craig & Julia Bonner



University College staff and students with our conference delegates from Macau and Dartmouth Universities

REVITALISING THE CASTLE MENTORING PROGRAMME



Following feedback from mentors and students, we have revitalised our mentoring programme for 2025–26. This year sees the introduction of two distinct streams: Connect, which has a careers and industry focus, and Thrive, designed to help students settle into life in Durham. The refreshed look of the programme, including a new logo created by current student and JCR Campaigns Officer Evie Miller-Soleil, reflects this renewed energy and direction.

er-Soleil, reflects this renewed energy and direction.

We launched the programme in early Michaelmas Term with an event aimed at building connections across the College community. More than 150 students have now opted in, supported by 35 mentors from our SCR. Most recently, we hosted our mentor networking evening, where mentors came together to share best practice and explore approaches to common challenges. The evening rounded off with a lively pub quiz in the Undie, where the mentor team Les Quizérables claimed a very well-earned victory.

We are hugely grateful for everything our mentors bring to the programme. Their time, kindness and enthusiasm make a real difference to the students they support.

If you live within travelling distance to Durham and would like to be involved in future years please contact us via univcoll.office@durham.ac.uk.

Dr Natalie Craig and Dr Ellen Crabtree

At our mentoring launch in October 2025



Evie, our finalist undergraduate who designed the new logo for the Mentoring programme



CHAPEL CHOIR

The recording of Castle’s latest CD, ‘Messages’, recorded with Convivium Records, took place in April 2025. The album, which will be released on 10th April 2026, was an enormous, yet rewarding and vital project for the Chapel Choir. The CD was recorded in memory of the late David Knowles, an alumnus of the Chapel Choir and the College, who worked as a journalist with the Telegraph. He was particularly renowned for his work as a host of the Telegraph podcast ‘Ukraine: The Latest’, which has now become one of the world’s most-listened to news podcasts.

‘Messages’ will be the first CD released by Castle Chapel Choir in eight years, with its predecessor ‘Christus Vincit’ being released in 2018. A monumental collection of Anglican choral music, the album is a collection of predominantly previously unrecorded works, two of the composers being alumni of University College, Sir Edward Bairstow and Francis Jackson, alongside the famed Henry Purcell and renowned woman composer, Amy Beach. It was recorded over the course of three days in the deconsecrated seminary, Ushaw College, and was a demanding but gratifying process that drew the choir together.

The choir pre-empted the release of the CD with a launch concert at St Bartholomew-the-Great, London, where David Knowles had sung as a member of the choir. The event was a profoundly moving commemoration of David that was very well-attended by alumni, students, family, and friends, and a touching testimony to the hard work of the choir, especially the work of the Director of Music, Barney Howard, and previous Choir Manager, Kathrynne Ryan, who both poured their hearts and souls into making the project happen. We look forward to celebrating its official release, which will come with many festivities, both personal and within the College.

The latter part of the year saw the choir’s annual summer tour to Scandinavia, namely Stockholm, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark, with a day trip to Lund to break up the journey between the two. It was an intense but

The choir rehearsing prior to the CD recording in the Tunstall Chapel



exhilarating week, with a series of concerts and services being performed almost every day in a series of distinguished venues. A particular highlight was our concert in The Church of Our Saviour, Copenhagen, famous for its prominent ninety-metre spire and spiral staircase surrounding it, as well as its fantastic elephant-supported organ, much to the enjoyment of our senior organ scholar. Our program was made up of a series of monumental works by established English choral composers, including Stanford's 'For Lo, I Raise up', Howells's 'Te Deum' from his Collegium Regale service, and Elgar's 'The Spirit of the Lord', allowing the choir to showcase the hard work done throughout the academic year (even though singing works such as these for five days straight did prove quite tiring!). Overall, it was a joyously musical week full of sunshine, friendship, and, much to our dismay, very overpriced pints...

This monumental year for Castle meant that we were desperate to keep the momentum going as we were handed the baton of Manager and Assistant

Manager. Freshers' Week was jam-packed from the get-go, and with half the choir having graduated at the end of the previous year, what was to be an almost entirely new choir had to be put together. With almost seven applicants per place, the decisions that had to be made were very difficult, and many pub meetings rife with notes on napkins and emergency pints having to be pencilled in to aid our decision making.

Once the choir had been assembled, our overwhelming schedule in Michaelmas left no time to acclimatise. The day after our first rehearsal, we had a filming crew recording us in the Tunstall Chapel for a Japanese TV program on UNESCO World Heritage Sites - Castle's international television debut! The weekend of the second week of term, the choir made their way down to York for a full Sunday of services at York Minster. The following week we were singing at the unveiling of the newly-renovated Fellows' Garden alongside the Castle Orchestra, which also happened to be the world debut of Chris Massa's 'Begin Again', a piece composed specially for the event. To say we hit the ground running is an understatement, but the series of back-to-back events the choir was performing at caused the new generation of singers to grow close immediately, a definite silver lining to the chaos that came with the lost sleep and energy drinks quaffed in an attempt to get through the consecutive commitments.

Alas, the madness did not stop there; before we had time to stop and catch our breaths, Christmas festivities fell upon us as we were propelled towards Advent. Our regularly scheduled Advent carol services were paired nicely with opportunities to connect further with the College through events such as 'Beer and Carols' in the Undercroft Bar, an excuse for the choir to do even more of its favourite activity, drinking beer (and also singing). This event also raised money for the MCR's chosen charity of the year: the Durham Wildlife Trust.

In the slightly more distant future, there are even more exciting plans for Castle. In Epiphany Term we look forward to another series of fantastic opportunities - a particularly exciting example being an event new to the Chapel Choir this year: an evening of solo recitals performed by each of the



The choir in the York Minster, after a busy day singing Choral Matins, Eucharist, and Evensong

scholars, held in the Bishop's Dining Room. This will be an opportunity for the chapel community to get to know the choir on a more personal level, and to enjoy the talents of each individual member. As ever, we remain in search of opportunities for the Chapel Choir to integrate further into the local community; we continue to uphold the long-standing tradition of our annual performance at the Durham Freemasons' Lodge, an event to mark the strong relationship between the College and the Freemasons; and in March we will be singing at HMP Durham.

In July, the choir will be going on its usual summer tour, this year to Eastern Europe, commencing in Krakow, Poland. Despite being a slightly unorthodox (pun intended) location, it will be wonderful for the choir to perform in more unique and adverse venues, whilst also experiencing cultures that many members of the choir would not have the opportunity to experience otherwise. It is also an excuse for the style of music the choir usually sings to stray further from Anglican and closer to Orthodox, a direction our basses will most certainly revel in.

The choir returns to London for its annual London Residency in August, with services at St George's, Windsor, Westminster Abbey, and St Paul's

Cathedral on the 16th, 17th, and 18th of August respectively. The bond between Castle and these monumental venues continues to grow stronger, and we are ever-grateful to have the opportunity to return year after year. Of course, we are always overjoyed to welcome back alumni of the College and the choir to return to partake in services with the choir again, and we look forward to seeing as many members of the College community there as possible.

**Sofia Lang, Choir Manager
and Edie Tunnicliffe, Assistant Manager**



HIDDEN HISTORIES OF DURHAM CASTLE

In 1986 Durham Castle and Cathedral were inscribed onto the UNESCO World Heritage Register. This year, 2026, accordingly marks a significant milestone as we celebrate 40 years since the inscription. As a college community this occasion hopefully invites the opportunity for reflection on what this honour means. In being inscribed on the World Heritage Register the site has been considered, by definition, to be 'of outstanding value to humanity'. Whilst many of us are lucky to call this place home, the Castle is a site of national and international significance, and it can be easy during our busy college lives to overlook the fact that we are surrounded by some of the most precious works of architectural and sculptural design, stretching back 950 years.

This is precisely what we hoped to bring to the fore in our specialist Hidden History Tours which we delivered across the course of this year, encouraging people to see their Castle home in a new light. These tours were developed and led by Castle PhD researcher Lottie Thompson and IMEMS Fellow Eric Cambridge. These tours focused on the most internationally significant features of the Castle – the eleventh and twelfth century Norman-style Romanesque architecture of the Castle, such as our Norman Chapel (c.1080) and Bishop Hugh of Le Puiset's Norman Arch (with the occasional foray into the thirteenth and fourteenth century phases under Bishops Hatfield and Fox).



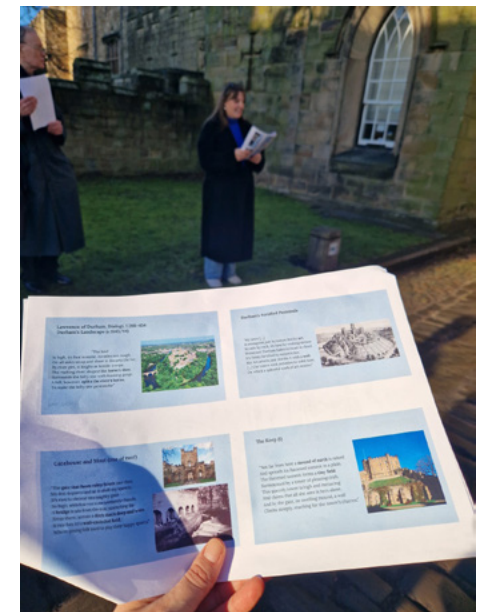
These specialistic tours invited members of our university community to begin by reading the poetry of Lawrence of Durham (d. 1154). Lawrence – the focus of Lottie's research – was a Benedictine monk who lived in Durham Castle in the second quarter of the twelfth century and who writes about his life on the peninsula. One of his poems, the *Dialogi*, contains one of the most significant early descriptions of the Castle, detailing how the site would have looked around the years 1143–44. Using Lawrence's writing as our springboard, Eric shared his expert knowledge of the architectural history of the site, exploring what Lawrence may have been describing over 800 years ago, charting and celebrating that which still survives today, and explaining the subsequent developments under successive bishops. These groups received a privileged access into parts of the Castle not ordinarily on public tours, including visits to the Norman Gallery, the kitchens, the SCR – and, importantly, the SCR toilet! If you ever have the chance, do look up and admire the remarkable decorated Norman arches above your head.



Across the course of the year, it was a pleasure to welcome groups from the JCR, MCR, and SCR to take part in these specialist behind-the-scenes tours. We also welcomed members from outside of our college community from the Medieval and Early Modern Students Association (MEMSA). It was a particular pleasure to deliver a series of tours over the course of the Alumni Weekend in April, where we were able to meet so many Castlemen and to give them a new perspective on the place they called home. At the same time, we learnt a great deal too – like all the best education, the tours were genuinely a two-way learning experience!

The international significance of these Norman-style Romanesque features will continue to be all the more important in immediate years. In 2027 we will celebrate the European Year of the Normans, marking 1000 years since William the Conqueror was born. At a national level these celebrations will kick off this Autumn in the British Museum where the Bayeux Tapestry will be on display, having left France for the first time in many centuries. We look forward to finding opportunities to celebrate our own significant place in the cultural legacy of the Normans within our college community.

Lottie Thompson



DURHAM CASTLE AND CATHEDRAL UNESCO MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-35



unesco

World Heritage site

Many thanks to Alex Nelson for inviting me to say a bit about the co-creation of the new management plan for Durham Castle and Cathedral UNESCO World Heritage Site 2025-2035.

I should perhaps start by introducing the World Heritage Site and my role. The United

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) was founded in London in 1945 after World War II with the aim of fostering peace through mutual understanding. You will find the fascinating history on the website of the UK Commission for UNESCO (<https://unesco.org.uk/about/history>) with a quotation from then Prime Minister Clement Attlee that is as relevant today as it was then:

“Today, the peoples of the world are ‘islands shouting at each other over seas of misunderstanding’. They do not understand each other’s history, each other’s ways of living, each other’s way of thinking. The better they understand each other, the more they will realise how much they have in common and why and how they differ, and the less prone they will be to take up arms against each other. ‘Know thyself’, said the old proverb. ‘Know your neighbour’, we say today. And the whole world is our neighbour”

Clement Attlee, Conference for the Establishment of UNESCO, November 1945.

UNESCO established the Convention for the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972 and the UK ratified it in 1984. Durham (the Castle and Cathedral) was in the first batch of UK sites, along with Stonehenge, to be inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986 (see

image), the same year that I came to Durham as an undergraduate to read Archaeology.

I remember the World Heritage Site monument being erected on Palace Green in 1987. It has recently been revealed (see image) following completion of conservation works on the buildings on Palace Green.

2026 therefore marks our 40th anniversary as a World Heritage Site. I like to joke that it has taken me some 40 years to get from one side of Palace Green to the other. I did leave Durham but have been drawn back over the years into various roles and have been the manager for the World Heritage Site Partnership since 2003. My job is to bring interested parties and stakeholders together to preserve the site for posterity.

The World Heritage Site Partnership brings together the principal land-owners and stakeholders and is co-funded by Durham County Council, Durham Cathedral, Durham University and St. John’s College. It is not a separate legal entity. The basis of the Partnership is consensus. It relies upon the convening authority that UNESCO status brings.

All World Heritage Sites must have a management plan which sets out how the ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ of the site will be protected. The 2025-2035 Plan is the third since inscription. It sets out our collective vision and objectives and new projects. The Plan has developed in dialogue with our many communities of place, interest, practice, learning and worship, from a Prospectus published in 2024 outlining our core themes to Conserve, Share and **Regenerate** and values of being people-centred, collaborative and research-led.

The Draft Plan was published online in 2025 and a public consultation was hosted on DCC’s Let’s Talk Citizen Engagement Platform. People were invited to comment specifically on the Local Values, the Vision and Objectives and Action Plan for the next period. The consultation period ended on 4 December. Both the 2024 Prospectus and 2025 Draft Plan can be accessed through the “related links” here: <https://www.durhamworld-heritagesite.com/about>.

Detailed written responses were received from the City of Durham

Parish Council (representing 11,000 households), Durham Cathedral Friends (3000 members), Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation (740 pupils), St Margaret's Allotment and St Margaret's Churchyard (174 members), Durham Green Corridor Project Team, Visit County Durham, UMi, Durham Pointers, Observatory Hill Research Group, together with members of City of Durham Trust. Some 86 people completed the online survey. Minuted online and face-to-face meetings reached a further 50 people at the Town Hall (12), online (7), Durham Youth Council (7), face to face with Durham Visual Support Group (20) and online with Durham Disability Forum (5). An Equality Impact Assessment was also completed.

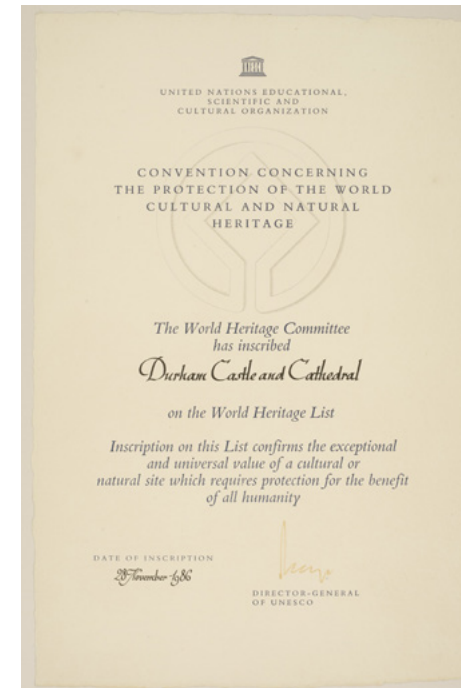
Local people's priorities that emerged from the survey replies centre on accessibility, inclusivity and green space. People want more and better access. They want to be more involved. Most people enjoy the site from the outside – 4 million visitors per year. 400,000 come inside the Cathedral. 40,000 inside the Castle. In terms of local values many people expressed a sense of pride in the place – but not necessarily a sense of belonging. Most residents in County Durham have never been inside the Castle. For the majority of people, the World Heritage Site is merely a backdrop to daily life. They enjoy the riverbanks and want to see investment to improve the outdoor experience.

This work has already started, and University College is at the forefront with the recent improvements to the Fellows' Garden. Durham Fringe Festival for one is thrilled to have access to the space. The Cathedral plans to open the Deanery Garden for visitors and improve the arrival for visitors approaching via Prebends Bridge and the last remaining gateway in the historic castle walls at Watergate. Durham Wildlife Trust has completed a survey of riverbanks users to inform the management plan. Some lost views of the World Heritage Site (from the railway station and A1M approach) have been improved and a detailed study of the setting of the World Heritage Site is informing new advice for developers. The idea is not to prevent future development but to ensure that it is sensitively done and that the special sense of place is preserved. Alongside this work, our colleagues at

Durham County Council have been preparing a new Conservation Area Management Plan which outlines and characterises seven conservation areas within the city and identifies potential development sites, again with the idea of supporting sensitive future development.

Conservation work, of course, is ongoing. That job will never end but the great opportunity over the next 10 years is to share the site both locally and globally as a resource for lifelong learning. To that end the exciting news in December that Durham has been accepted into UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities (<https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/learning-cities/durham>) opens new opportunities for partnership working with cities and peoples across the world.

Anne Bowman Allen
Senior Manager, Durham Castle and
Cathedral World Heritage Site



REFLECTIONS ON BEING PART OF THE JAPANESE DOCUMENTARY AT CASTLE

During Michaelmas Term 2025, we had the opportunity to show a Japanese film crew around our College and the city as part of a Japanese documentary series on World Heritage Sites. As part of the University marketing team and as Castlemen, we were invited to take part in filming, and it was a genuinely unique experience.

We started the day by meeting the team outside the Gatehouse, where Jiro and the crew set up their camera equipment. They briefed us on the plan for the day and what they needed from us and asked us to think of our favourite location in Durham for some filming later on.

First on the agenda was a room tour. They wanted to capture what it is like living in the dorms of Durham Castle. Luckily, Elle lives in the Keep, with a spectacular view of both the Courtyard and the Cathedral. The hardest part, though, was the stairs. The crew were amazed by just how many there were and had to take a break before we continued filming.

It was a relaxed day overall, with plenty of time to pause and reset between takes. The team would send us away for periods so they could film B-roll footage of the Castle. They even filmed one of our formal dinners, from Minstrels' Gallery, as well as some shots that showed the less glamorous side of a catered meal.



After scenes on the Black Stairs, in the Great Hall, and on the Tunstall Gallery, we headed to our chosen favourite spot in Durham: Observatory Hill. Getting there was an effort, as we needed to find somewhere suitable to park and then safely assemble and carry all the gear. Once we reached it, the crew filmed us walking up to the viewpoint before interviewing us for the final segment of the programme.

Jiro asked some genuinely thought-provoking questions about our time at Durham so far. As we both enter our final year, it felt bittersweet to reflect on how quickly our time here has passed, and how close it is to ending.

We explained that the best part of Durham has been the people we have met and the experiences we have been part of, especially the college system and the sense of community it creates. It is something we will both miss.

That led naturally into the final question: why we chose Observatory Hill. We shared that we have a lot of memories there, most notably after June Ball 2025. When the night finally ended, the survivors made their way to the top of the hill (pictured) and watched the sunrise over the Cathedral and Castle, in tattered dresses and drink-covered suits, taking in the last moments of the academic year and reflecting on everything we

had experienced so far. We were slightly delirious, but extremely grateful.

Filming for the documentary was a brilliant experience, and it was fascinating to watch back, even with our voices dubbed over. Unfortunately, due to copyright, the footage cannot be shared, but we have attached some photos that capture what the day was like.

Shoaib Islam and Ellena Saini



40 Years of Women at Castle



It's time to come home!



*Save The Date
for the
Reunion Weekend!
16 - 18 July 2027*

HELP US WRITE HISTORY!

Send your memories, stories or photos from when Women arrived in Castle for next year's Castellum issue!
Email at castle.alumni@durham.ac.uk

JOHN ATKIN

16 November 1943 – 26 February 2025

Address for the funeral of John David Atkin by Fr David Sudron

I've been dreading this. Mostly because it is the ritual expression of a truth that I would rather not acknowledge: that this world no longer holds one of my most remarkable friends in the flesh. But also because he left me with a task whose difficulty I didn't fully realise when he asked me to do it: how do you pay tribute to a huge character without turning him into a caricature?

It went something like this. The 'phone rang one evening not so long ago.

"Hello, darlin', it's only me."

"Oh, hello, hinny. Are you all right?"

"Uh-huh. I've been to see Michael Hampel about me funeral. And I've telt 'im I want you to do me eulogy thing. Is thar' all right?"

"Er... I suppose so. But I sort of wish you hadn't told me."

"Why's that, like?"

"'Cause the small number of people who've asked me to do their funerals have died not very long after they've asked me..."

"Oh, <expletives deleted>! Well that's me finished then!"

Experience tells me that it's never possible for a funeral tribute to be what everyone wants it to be. And all the more so when someone is literally and figuratively so much larger than life as him. So I'm going to do the best I can in the few minutes I have. And if you know him as well as I assume most of you here this morning do, you can imagine for yourselves the short shrift you would get if you were able to tell him that you thought he hadn't chosen the right man for the job!

John David was the youngest child of Mary Alice and Jim Atkin. He was preceded by Patricia, who died in infancy, Margery, Phyllis, Eileen, Jim and Bill — a remarkable brood for a mother with a weak heart who

was told she would probably not have any more children after her first. He was brought up surrounded by love in Kimblesworth colliery, on the city's northern outskirts, in a household that was well managed to high standards on its modest means. He was supposed to be christened David John, but Jim gave the names the wrong way round. Mary was having none of it, and for the first fifteen years of his life David was all anyone ever called him. He was a delicate but sparkly boy. Mary was always worrying about his health, convinced that he wouldn't live long. And yet he would be witnessed turning cartwheels on his way to and from school (cue mother deploying plenty of soap to scrub his blackened hands clean), or joining in with the acrobatics of his sisters, or displaying his aptitude for tap dancing. I do wonder how much of Mary's anxiety was exacerbated by Patricia's untimely demise and her own health; because her own death also turned out to be untimely, when David was just 13 — and it hit him extremely hard. Nevertheless, solid foundations had been laid for a family life that, in whatever way it changed, would remain vital to him throughout his life.

In 1959, at 15 years of age, David found himself in the employ of University College, Durham, where he would not only spend the whole of his working life, but become a renowned part of its life. And not as David, but John, for the simple reason that there was already a David among the staff, and using his other name was an easy way to minimise mix-ups. It wouldn't take long before his character began to stand out: one need only look at the tributes that are being paid to him, and see how far back the dates go of when those paying the tributes were students or staff or dons. He cared passionately about the life of the college and its people as a distinct community within the greater whole of the university. And it was a close-knit community in those days, with a long-serving body of staff who changed little as students came and went.

Front of house is no doubt how most of us remember him most clearly. Whether ruling the Servery in his mesh trilby and press-studded overall, or presiding over the Formal serving of dinner in a black jacket and red waistcoat, carrying five plates at a time, his presence was unmistakable,

even when he wasn't saying anything. And not only because of the heady cloud of Aramis. But of course it was very rare that he wasn't saying anything, and most of what he was saying was hilarious. I'm just glad that the college is compiling some sort of anecdotage, because however outrageous I am happy to be, there is some degree to which I am prepared to spare the blushes of the Cathedral Church of Durham.

His job as Steward also had an important behind-the-scenes component. In the days when Congregations for the conferring of degrees were held in the Castle, John was entrusted with looking after the Chancellor in the Bishop's Suite. When Durham broke with precedent and appointed the exquisite Dame Margot Fonteyn to the rôle, it was John who helped her into and, more importantly, out of the gold-trimmed trappings of office that the delicate frame of a prima ballerina found physically burdensome. And I also imagine that he was a great tonic for her in the intervals between the rather stiff and repetitive ceremonies.

In some ways he was the single most important custodian of Castle's collective memory over fifty years. His ability to remember the names and faces and antics of students and staff past was astonishing. He was thrilled when they returned over the years, and loved to find out where life had taken them. And his devotion was reciprocated. The college was the instigator in his being made MBE, "for services to higher education". In addition, his portrait, depicted on the front of the service booklet, was commissioned to hang in the Great Hall: he is the only member of the domestic staff to have been honoured in this way. And it tickled this devoted royalist no end that he was being painted not long after the artist had painted Charles, Prince of Wales.

I hope that all this isn't sounding like I'm falling into the common postmortem trope of "he never had a bad word to say about anybody...": because he was forthright in expressing his reactions to people, for good and ill. But the good far outweighed the ill. And even when his tongue might deliver a damning verdict, more often than not there was a glimmer of a deeper compassion in his eyes. I can't help but think of my own first encounter with him. It was by the bench outside the entrance to the

Servery, and a sharp voice issued from a bustling presence behind me: "Get out my bloody way, you!" Not quite the first thing you'd expect to hear from someone who would become one of the best friends of your Durham days.

And he was a quite wonderful friend to have, as I was blessed to find out. During my student years I would trundle down to No. 2 Elvet Crescent every Monday night for a coffee and a chinwag. As I try to think back I can't really remember what we spent all those hours talking about. College life, naturally; the goings on at the back door of the police station that he closely observed from his kitchen window, of course. But for all he might have appeared to be an inveterate gossip, it disguised a quite remarkable degree of discretion: a quite brilliant way of putting people off the scent, really. Similarly, although he might often have seemed to be as hard as nails, beneath the shell there was a gentle, insightful and vulnerable soul: Andrew Ratcliffe captured it perfectly in his portrait if you look carefully at his eyes.

He was also a spontaneously and unstintingly generous man. On holiday with Eileen, he might suddenly buy half a dozen scarves. If she asked, "What do you want all them for?!" he'd simply reply, "Well, I'll give them to the girls at work!" He wasn't only generous with his money: he was generous with his time and his energy, too. His work in college was physically demanding at times, and he was quite something to behold when he hit his stride, shuttling back and forth between the kitchen and high table. He was also generous with his heart with those who loved him best. I'm afraid I'm going to single one of them out: his niece who he always lovingly called "Little" Eileen. Eileen, he simply adored you, and I can't think of a more appropriate way for him to have set out from this world than with just you by his side.

Which brings me, finally, to why we are gathered in this church today and not any other. You would be forgiven for thinking that the cathedral church is the only suitable one for the exequies of so august a personage. But his legendary status has nothing to do with it. Nor, really, has the fact that latterly he served this place as a bedesman. We are here for the best

of reasons: this was simply his usual place of worship. Every Sunday morning he would be here for the 8 o'clock, perched in the Probationers' stalls on the north side of the Quire. Until he retired, he would trundle straight out after receiving the the Sacrament, ready to begin another working day, fortified by the rites of Holy Church.

His faith was perhaps the least ostentatious thing about him: a quiet trust undergirding everything else, first fostered by the late Fr Peter Hiscock, the Chaplain of Castle in the 1980s. Peter was a priest whose integrity made a deep impression on John, and he saw him guided safely into the fold of the Church. And so it has been that, for the second half of his life, week in, week out, John has united himself with the crucified and risen Christ. Today, we mark that union's final consummation, and we pray that as he now shares in Christ's death, so he will also share in the glory of his resurrection: John David Atkin, Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire and sinner of Christ's own redeeming, may flights of angels speed you to your rest.



The passing of “John the Maid”

Recollections from Jonathan Pearson (Castle 1987-91)

I am sure your mailbag will be bursting with an outpouring of affection for John Atkin since Castlemen and Castlewomen learned of his recent sad passing. Anticipating this response, I have been asking myself why there should be more such reaction to John's death than for say the passing of a College Master or Professor, and asking what made him so treasured amongst College members since the 1950s.

John certainly held a very special place in the hearts of our family. I first met John as a Castle undergraduate in October 1987. This was the seismic year that Castle went mixed, and he was immediately adored by all the young Castlewomen, who found his humorous, non-threatening demeanour a very welcome break from what could otherwise be a very a masculine environment. He was in his prime then, aged 43.

I am sure he had regular time off, but to my mind he seemed omnipresent in the 1980s: dishing out toast with his (ungloved) immaculately manicured and bejewelled hands; serving up food thrice daily (“slops with a smile” I once overheard); orchestrating his ‘harem’ of catering staff. However, more often than not, he seemed just to be loitering in the Great Hall by the door to the servery, nonchalantly leaning his back to the wall, doing not very much at all! There was undoubtedly a safeguarding element in his keeping a paternal eye on proceedings, and he undoubtedly very much enjoyed the banter with ‘bright young things’, but I suspect most of all he was happy just seeing the world go by in a safe place that he loved.

The 2003 portrait by Andrew Ratcliffe now hanging in the Great Hall captures so brilliantly the essence of John the man, and John the Maid! It is modestly sized, as John knew his appropriate place in College; it is perfectly positioned; it shows off all the trademark physical attributes: his big tummy, his gold jewellery, his smart attire and his slightly haughty look. It is a brilliant legacy to the man and Master Maurice Tucker deserves huge thanks for commissioning this gesture of appreciation

from the College. I am sure John knew he was called "John the Maid", for all the above reasons, but it was never, ever expressed with any malice, but always with respect to him as a great servant of the College.

I was lucky enough when I left Castle that my then girlfriend Joanne Pearson (née Cobham -Castle 1990-94), still had two years in College remaining. Weekends during our long courtship switched between Castle and Norwich. Knowing full well I was an interloper, John was always very hospitable, letting me into meals, formals etc with a knowing wink. He accompanied my visits with characteristic banter such as: "Oh no, not you again!", "Can't keep away, then?" or "Sit yourself down then, you bugger", and supported our burgeoning relationship brilliantly.

Therefore, it only seemed natural to us both that we should invite him to our wedding in the Tunstall Chapel and Senate Suite (now the SCR). We were very short on space, as the ceremony was already attended by ten Durham graduates, so John graciously declined, but insisted on acting as Master of Ceremonies for the day, which he did with great aplomb.

Of course, by the 1980s John had already become a legend for many generations of Castlemen since 1958. Amongst those early students was my own father Neville Pearson (Castle 1959-62). Father often commented on how tricky those early years could have been for him, with John being younger than many students, having effeminate mannerisms in very much an all-male college and with many undergrads just back from raucous, rough-and-ready national service. Those were far from enlightened times. He bore early years with fortitude and good humour, and quickly became liked by all. My father and his contemporaries only had the highest of respect for John. Meeting him in the Great Hall for tea on the first day of the legendary spring reunions in the 70s and 80s was always a genuine highlight.

Whilst a student, it was my mother, Alison Pearson (née Jones – Aidan's 1959-62) who had a potentially dangerous encounter with John. As father's girlfriend, the two of them hatched a scheme to dress her in male attire and to sneak her into the Great Hall as the first female undergrad ever to have attended a Castle formal dinner hitherto. Not

known for their daring, this was a brave move for one of the 'Aidan's Maidens'. Discovery would have brought heavy censure, even being sent down. John spotted my mother early on and facial expressions told her she had been rumbled. However, John knew where his loyalties lay and kept quiet, much to the relief of my parents.

A final coda to the family saga was the last time I met John in person in Durham in July 2021. We were moving my son, James Pearson (Castle 2020-24), out of Bailey Court at the end of his first year and were by the post box on Palace Green, when John walked by. He was instantly recognisable and he was delighted to meet Joanne and myself again and our three children. He remembered James coming to reunions in the early 2000s as a babe-in-arms and thrilled that he was carrying on the Pearson tradition in Castle as an undergrad.

Since learning of his passing, I have been giving thought to what it was precisely that endeared him to generation after generation of Castle students. It is not as though he did anything unduly special in his everyday job in Castle. We never heard him address Great Hall as a student and I never recall even seeing him beyond the confines of the Buttery, the Black Stairs and the Great Hall. Our conversations were never long, nor especially deep and meaningful.

However, it was clear from the first day I met him that John had an enormous presence in Castle, both physically and in the psyche of the students, and they loved him. He was omnipresent at mealtimes three times a day all year round and could be relied upon still to be in these familiar haunts years after leaving this place. He had a prodigious memory for names, faces, stories and people. I never heard him say a cross or churlish word, but was kindness personified. We all remember his wicked sense of humour and he undoubtedly loved the banter – "What's wrong with you then? Man problems?", he said to a glum looking rugby forward in 1988! He was just a lovely man.

In any conversation with John, he readily expressed pride about his role in Castle, and he was deeply cognisant of the massive part he had played in college life for so long. Never was this pride more apparent

than in receipt of his MBE in 2002. At one reunion I asked John to sign our copy of Richard Brickstock's excellent book: *Durham Castle: Fortress, Palace, College*. He turned his back as he scribbled something in it and handed it back to me. The inside leaf was blank, and I queried this. "Check page 114", he chuckled. And there was his signature under the image of his official portrait on that page: 'John Atkin M.B.E 'is written. "I could not resist adding my full title!", he quipped.

He epitomised the spirit of Castle, serving the College with admirable loyalty and dedication for half a century. He was the embodiment of that intimate, family feel to college life, which sadly cannot be sustained in the same way in these days of enormous college numbers. If great Masters like Len Slater, Ted Salthouse and Maurice Tucker inspired lifelong respect for Castle as an institution, it was John who inspired the life-long love for Castle. John's personality combined with so many years of loyal service, made him the stuff of legends.

He was one of a kind, and, in a today's monochrome world, he added much needed, larger than life bling and pizzazz. I feel sure John's name will be toasted in Castle and at reunions for many a year. For now, we must come to terms with his passing: a great loss to his family, to my Durham family, to generations of alumni and to the institution of University College, Durham itself. From the rafters of the Great Hall we know his spirit will continue to survey college life and student chatter, and his legacy will live long in the memory of grateful Castlemen and Castlewomen worldwide.

John Atkin Tributes

I arrived at Castle on 24th September 1973 and went to Bailey Court where I settled in. Offering a coffee to my neighbour Dave, who I assumed was also a postgrad student, I introduced myself. Dave called me "Frenchie". At supper that evening in the Servedy, as a small band of postgrads met, John walked in and straight away enquired "Who is Frenchie?". Whoops, I thought, wondering what I had done wrong, but nervously I raised a hand. It transpired my neighbour in Bailey Court was Dave Watson, Catering Manager, and not a mature student! He had been pleased with my hospitable gesture. From that day forward John looked after me. When yoghurt was on the menu as a dessert, John first, followed by the Serving Ladies for years after, always brought the tray to me so I could make first choice of the various flavours - being a fussy yoghurt eater!

Years later I was still Frenchie to John and Dave whenever we met up at Castle.

Dr Alan French (1973 – 1977)

I have many memories of John, but I particularly remember a day when I had a migraine headache, probably around exams times. It was late and so I sought out John who led me downstairs under the kitchen where he had a flat. I'm not sure how few were the people who ever saw this place. It was a treasure trove, full of eclectic items including, if my memory serves me right, a large bird cage with either a parrot or multiple birds. John gave me paracetamol I think which helped the migraine and sent me back to bed.

Many years later I stayed in the Castle for a night to allow me to attend the Great North Run. We had breakfast in the Great Hall and

John deliberately stood next to his own picture hanging in the Hall until I had acknowledged it was of him.

Rodger King (1977 – 1980; 1980 – 1983)

He was an iconic fixture back in my day. A man we all admired.

When I visited Castle again many years later, I walked into the empty Hall where John was organising something. He strode down the Hall towards me and, after a brief pause, exclaimed in his inimitable way 'Well I never, Jon Griffin!' (the name by which I was then known). Another brief pause and he rattled off a list of many of my Castle friends. It was genuinely humbling. I had had a career which took me to different parts of the world but here was a man who, with no particular reason, could still recognise and name me and others. In this sense, he was the living embodiment of the Castle tradition.

Jonathan Griffin (1969 – 1972)

I have a very clear memory of the first time John appeared in Hall at dinner time. He walked behind Eddie Clarney, who was possibly the 'Head Gyp', though there was another chap who served in Hall, as well as several maids. John would have been no more than seventeen and his 'sudden' appearance caused some surprise. I imagine it was quite an ordeal for him.

Like so many other Castle people I was always amazed, on later visits - mainly for reunions over many years - by John's colossal memory

for people, names and faces. One felt one was back in the Castle one remembered when he greeted you and you him. He was part of the place. An amazing record of service and dedication. Unlikely to be matched.

John McCormick (1958 – 1961)

My friend and I, both from Castle, had a double wedding with our fiancées from St Aidan's College in the Tunstall Chapel, three days after graduating in 1972. John was in charge of the catering staff.

The florist had forgotten to send the decoration for the top of the two wedding cakes. John saw this, ran into the Castle garden and returned with two large, deep pink Trumpet flowers, one of which he placed on each cake. Thus, he saved the day!

Ray Tarleton (1969-73)

I first met John Atkin in late 1973, and we quickly became friends. Over the years, on my many visits to Durham, I always made a point of catching up with him and latterly would see him in the Cathedral when he was on duty there. Other special memories are of sitting with him when he attended the Durham Castle Society reunion dinners in recent years.

As with so many people, I will also greatly miss him, such a wonderful, kind and friendly gentleman.

Martin Gunson (1973-74 and 2007-16)

John was quite the legend. An ever-cheerful character, he peppered my one year at Castle with a sweet spice. I always felt the love behind his fierce cheek, and knew if ever I needed his help, he'd show up full force and be there for me. I returned to Durham last Spring, for the first time in 30 years and tried to get in touch with him. I even found a woman at the Cathedral who gave me his mobile number, but said he'd been having kidney troubles and hadn't been in to help lately. I called and sent a text message but got no reply. I assumed he was feeling poorly. Though I didn't get to see him again, I had wanted to thank him for making such a difference for me, and the many other international students as we found our place in a new and foreign environment. We shared so many jokes and laughs that year, that when I think of John, I smile immediately. He knew how to serve and how to live in a way that spread joy and brightened up a room, one even bigger than the Great Hall in which we usually saw him. Rest in peace, John. Your spirit will live on joyfully in all of our happy memories.

Kathleen Koch (1990 – 1991)

John will be missed. The Castle, and its students, were more than a job to him. It was his life. John had a unique talent of making each of us believe we were specially remembered, or specially treated. Every one of us. When, after a gap of a couple of years, I returned for a reunion and asked (after John had retired) "How's John?", everybody knew! Which says it all. John would have liked that.

I had a long chat with him in the Great Hall at one reunion about his portrait. I asked him if he liked it. He said "Yes, very much". Then added, with a glint, "But it's smaller than the others". On another Reunion occasion, after I must've done the porters a favour, John was in the Lodge, and I said "John, does that mean I get a double helping?". He said (to

much laughter from the porters) "You can have a double helping from me, anytime, Barney".

John had a remarkable talent for combining genuine friendship with everybody, and authority. John would help (and did) but had an air of authority.

John Barnett (1962 – 1965)

My memory of John is very positive because he was always so welcoming to all the new students and had a great sense of fun. He could very quickly see family resemblances and from time to time picked out people in line for the Servedy and say when their father was at the College in the past as a student. John of course was quite outrageous at that time with his jewellery and camp mannerisms, and we loved him for that. I remember a copy of the satirical 'Carsole' printed Castle magazine (probably unofficial) with headline "John the Maid slams Gorbachev's latest reform package" showing that he was highly respected. He was embraced by all for his great love of the college people and the character that he brought to the College. Of course, sadly, we don't live forever and may he rest in peace.

Gary Ingram (1986 – 1989; 1989 – 1993)

I've often thought of him since leaving and was pleased to see him a few years ago in the Cathedral when he was working. John was always a huge character, but his pastoral care made him stand out. I struggled to fit into college life and found my feet working on Security and we

always had some banter as he was on his way home on an evening. After completing my degree, I did a postgraduate and moved to Ustinov, but I secured a job as a waiter in the Hall. John was hugely funny and supportive as I worked on a variety of functions over the year and managed to get behind the scenes access into the working of the Castle.

He was ahead of his time and loved to recall the times he met Queen Elizabeth II, and seeing him get his MBE and his portrait completed were fitting of the man.

David Swainston (2001-05)

On a personal note, John was at the heart of University College. His love and affection for the Castle, the College and us as students shone through. He could be cheeky and blunt at times, but always remembered everyone's names, and welcomed us on any return visit to Durham.

There were times he could exasperate the Catering Manager, because he always knew best, but his heart was in the right place and the College was diminished by his departure. He deserves to go down as one of Durham's great characters, and we will look on his portrait in the Great Hall and remember him fondly.

Kevin Hawes (1977-80)

As a 19-year-old kid from the US, my expectation of British people was formed by BBC programming, with a heavy emphasis on Poirot and Jeeves and Wooster. When I got to Castle, I was met not with Mayfair and RP, but with Owengate and Geordie. Being that far out of my depth, I was

in dire need of connections. Happily, John was there. He welcomed me as he welcomed so many, and while he no doubt spotted my confusion and wariness at his immediate geniality, his warmth was undimmed. For me, the best example of his warmth was how John renamed me. My given name is Theodore, and I go by Ted. In John's unsolicited opinion, the choice of "Ted" was a grave error. "Theo" is right there; why not use it? Better still, why not add some panache by dropping the 'h'? Every morning, when I needed to feel as though I belonged, I could count on John spotting me in the line and calling out, "Hello, Teo!". In spite of myself, John always made me smile.

Ted Temple (Institute of European Studies 1995)

Lots of memories of John, but the most emotive was during the meal of a Ladies Night ball when I was crying after an argument with someone, and went to 'hide' in the serving area. John came and sat beside me and told me that I was great, or something to that effect, and that the guy wasn't worth all this fuss. He was a wonderful comforting companion while I sorted myself out. He cared about us, and showed his care very often through banter, but was gentle and deeply kind when I needed him. A wonderful human being.

Joanna Seth-Smith (2001-04)

When I was in Castle, John was already 'part of the furniture'. I remember as a young 18-year-old being slightly intimidated by him given his 'larger than life' personality, but that soon dissipated as I got to know

him over the years. Myself and a small group of friends were always 'first in line' for our meals and as a consequence we got to know him really well. What struck me was his genuine interest in each of us, his knowledge of what we were doing and his genuine pride in the job he did and the role he fulfilled. He didn't realise it, but he taught us all a lot in the way he genuinely cared about people, and I've taken that into how I treat people even now. What always amazed me was that even when we came back five or ten years later that he still remembered us! He will be sadly missed but absolutely never forgotten.

Paul Dickinson (1991 – 1994)

I grew up in Belfast during the bitter years of the Troubles. I had always found religion and identity very fraught. In Durham, I found a much more relaxed approach which I welcome, attending the College Chapel, some Catholic masses and occasional Quaker meetings. One Sunday lunchtime, I joined the lunch queue with various people coming from different places of worship. John commented, "We're all going to the one place. We're just taking different buses".

I have never forgotten that or John's smile as he said it, and it remains central to my understanding of ecumenism and tolerance – one of the most important pronouncements I have ever had.

Sheena Wilkinson (1987 – 1993)

I was saddened to learn of John's passing. I have very fond memories of knowing John during my time at Castle. If I recall correctly, John's full

name was John David Atkin or John D Atkin as abbreviated. When I was at Castle, I registered to have my vote in Durham and on the day, I think, of a local election I went along and exercised my vote. At dinner that evening I was accosted by John who accused me, with a smile, of stealing his vote! His voter's name was registered as John D Atkin (middle name not specified) and so was mine. I think that the council decided there could only be one John D Atkin at Castle and therefore only registered one. I got to the poll first before John!

John was a great asset to Castle, and I had not realised that he had remained there so long.

John Duncan Atkin (1970 – 1973)

John was such a special part of life at Castle and remembered names years after you left. He was a wonderful mixture of no-nonsense Durham and a heart of gold. And like the coal hewn from beneath Durham, brought warmth to those around him. For JCR officers he made sure the fridge on the Norman Gallery was well stocked for those of us who had to come up early – delivered with a twinkle in his eye and a colourful turn of phrase!

Probably most memorable was the occasion in formal dinner (every night in those days when every meal was served to Gentlemen of Castle and impressed guests) when some visiting rugby player ill-advisably chose to take the mickey out of him. John swept back to the Servery in high dudgeon and reappeared with a jug full of brown soup (always of unknown origin) and promptly poured it over the offending bigot's head to the tumultuous applause and cheering of everyone, High Table included, such that the oaf was jeered out of the Hall to a hail of bread rolls. John gave his typical sideways look and was cheered back to the Kitchen.

John may have been seen as a little odd to many in those far off unenlightened days, but he was our John and God help anyone who offended him. I am sure he now serves a Higher Table, and he will continue to bring a smile to all those who know and loved him.

God bless and rest in peace, John, faithful servant.

Michael Osbaldeston (1971 – 1974)

I met him on my first evening in the queue for dinner. I did not quite know what to make of this strange man with gold rings and bangles on one hand and silver on the other. But that twinkle in his eye, his mischievous wit, his sparkle and his quite stern control of events in and around the dining hall were utterly special. He did not stand for fools, and took unkindly anyone who tried to cheek him, or give grief to others. He was an immensely kind man. I got to know him quite well in my three years as I was very involved in the social life of the College. I liked him tremendously. The years intervened, and my father (the late) Canon David Couling, became the Honorary Chaplain to the Cathedral Community. John was by then retired and a Cathedral Steward. I was quite surprised - and should not have been - when he instantly recognised me the first time that we met in the Cathedral. Nothing had changed - just a little more weight, and age - but still the same cheek, wit and twinkle in the eye. John was unique and special. And rare.

There are few now who would dedicate their life to one place. And his was a long life in that place from the age of sixteen. I cherish my memories of this man.

May he rest in peace.

Stephen Couling (1979-82)

As a Castle student I won't forget his sense of humour, personal connection and kindness. On the latter, I returned to Durham to do a recruitment evening for the company I was working for, a year after graduating. I'd booked a room at Castle and had arranged to meet friends in the Great Hall for dinner before the event. Unfortunately, I was caught in traffic on the A1 around Wetherby, arriving a full three hours late, tired, frustrated and hungry. With my friends already at the event, I ran into John, who welcomed me back, ushered me into the Hall, said he'd held back a meal for me and insisted I ate something before doing anything else! He was brilliant, changed my mood immediately and reminded me what I loved about the Castle community, always with John at its heart.

May he rest in peace.

Ross Hair (1985 – 1988)

I was deeply saddened to discover the news of John's death. To me John 'was' Castle, an institution, and every bit the proud custodian of its students and staff. He was an iconic figure, known fondly to us all as 'John the Maid'. I remember his kindness to me as a hungry undergraduate, often he could be relied upon for an extra leg of chicken from the Served. Formals were always immaculately organised and tightly run affairs, and his expert stewardship will have been sadly missed since his retirement I am quite sure. His knowledge of the history of Castle itself was second to none. But it was for his warmth, friendliness and service with a smile that I will most fondly remember him. He knew the names, faces and dietary proclivities of everyone who had the privilege of passing through into the Great Hall. Of course, he didn't need to but that was John. A life of dignity and service personified which we should

celebrate. Just as Paddington thanked our late Queen, I only hope there is a similarly fitting tribute to thank 'the Maid' for he richly deserves it.

Jeremy Locke (1991 – 1994)

In memory of a man who was totally committed to his calling to serve with tenacity, humour and humility. As a first lady back in 1987 you extended such a gracious, supportive and respectful welcome to us; there will never be another John, and Durham Castle and the world will be poorer for this!

Rest in peace John and may you rise in glory.

Amanda Lees (née Leslie) (1987 – 1990)

Wonderfully irreverent. A proud and great Castleman.

Anonymous

John was about the same age as the class of 1962, but he was a warm and reassuring – even avuncular – presence as we found our way in a strange and wonderful new world. And he always remembered our names – as we did his! And we will always treasure his memory as the true spirit of Castle.

David, Katherine, and Anna Mallett (1962-1965, 1991-1994, 1992-1995)

PAUL DUNKLEY

Freshmen at Durham who had done National Service prior to their degree course were often said to be apparent by virtue of maturity and independence. This was true of Paul even to the extent that on arrival at Castle he discarded the offer of reading history and shopped around for a course that he felt was 'on the side of life'. Quite how he persuaded the Professor of Philosophy to set him a paper whereby he could display his potential as a philosophy student I never discovered, but happen it certainly did. Hence, the times when I was regaled with such matters as the essential tableness of tables (Plato, I think), the discomfort caused by Bishop Berkeley's theory of reality and the inescapable importance of supermen (Nietzsche?). Paul was never too narrowly bookish, though. He was more than a competent jazz pianist, and literature that enlisted his sympathies he knew in depth, D.H. Lawrence and Hemingway especially, both of whose thinking and literary presence were resonant in his day-to-day scheme of apperception.

Style also mattered to him. It was not surprising that the great Nel Tarleton was one of his boxer heroes. Naturally so, since, like so many Castlemen, sport was an essential part of Paul's life. During his National Service he had boxed for his regiment, and he was an accomplished hockey half back, dogged, very fit, shrewd in positional play, a clean hitter of the ball and creative in distribution. His palatinate for hockey was richly deserved, as was his inclusion in the Durham County side for which he played with such distinction that it was not unlikely that he would be picked for England. Hockey at Castle, though, was regarded as rather 'low tech'. Rowing commanded a good deal of money and was said to be favoured by the academic staff, and so Paul did not miss his chance when at a Junior Common Room meeting he capped lengthy talk of high matters on the Weir by referring to UCBC as 'the Boating Club', a sally that was greeted with a roar of laughter.

Such raillery made him very good company. How well his challenging contributions were received at Van Mildert Club dinners, occasions always to be prized for the good fellowship, humour, gossip and conversational interest mutually generated by dons and students alike. Here was style in plenty, especially with 1920s Dow port and Napoleonic brandy for additional warmth. I can picture Paul at the end of a meal. The ritual of cutting cigars is taking place. Professor Abbott tells him never to adulterate a Cuban cigar by lighting it with a petrol lighter. Paul smiles, enjoying the fastidiousness deployed.

Twenty years on from that occasion my wife arrived home from her work at Wakefield District College and said, "A friend of yours has parked his motorbike in my office. He said I wouldn't mind". Only Paul Dunkley could come up with that one of course.

David Day

News of the Dunkley Curatorial Internship can be found on page 82

JOHN PAUL HOSKINS

1974–2025

It is with great sadness we report the death of John Paul Hoskins in April 2025. John Paul – known to most as JP – attended Castle 1992–1996 to read for a BA and then MA in Politics; he was deeply involved in college life as Organ Scholar and Chapel Clerk. He was also a gifted tenor and served as Lay Clerk (professional member of the Cathedral choir) at Durham Cathedral throughout his time in the city. His faith and music were central to JP's life, and after graduating from Durham he went on to train for the priesthood at Westcott House in Cambridge and was ordained in 2007. At the time of his sudden death he was serving as Precentor at Worcester Cathedral, with particular responsibility for the Cathedral's music and liturgy (<https://www.worcestercathedral.org.uk/media/kgpbmm1g/sunday-news-2025-april-6.pdf>).

John Paul was endlessly thoughtful, kind and honourable – which makes him sound terribly serious and staid, and perhaps that was sometimes people's initial impression. However those of us who had the privilege to get to know him well discovered the twinkle of fun beneath the surface – as evidenced, for example, by his penchant for organising choir outings based upon the close availability of venues for a decent pint. There were also human limits to his Christian charity – and a distinctive wit – such as when his patience with a particularly scrappy choir rehearsal wore thin and he exasperatedly described the experience of conducting us as "like taking a jellyfish for a walk on an elastic lead".

After graduating John Paul (like the co-authors) stayed on in Durham for a time and the three of us became close neighbours in Framwellgate Moor. We teased JP relentlessly about the monkey puzzle tree in his front garden that he hated but was too soft-hearted to cut down because it was the previous owners' pride and joy, and spent many hours searching for his supposedly housebound cats when they decided to climb out of the window and go exploring (needless to say they made their own way

home without our assistance).

During this time he met Liz and they married in Durham Cathedral, with John Paul – of course – assembling a scratch choir from college and cathedral friends to sing an anthem he had composed for his wife. JP and Liz went on to adopt Suzanna (Suzie) who is now 12 years old – Liz and Suzie survive him.

The world is a poorer place without John Paul, but our lives were greatly enriched by his friendship. He will be much missed and fondly remembered.

Beverley Robson-Jones and Clare Saunders



DR JOHN EDWARD LLOYD

10th January 1940 – 26th November 2025

Castle 1958–1964

John was born in Darlington and attended Darlington Grammar School spending his teenage years immersed in all things scientific. Building his own television and radios, teaching himself locksmith skills, then graduating to car maintenance and clock and watch mending. These were skills that he maintained and was fascinated by his whole life. He also played piano and flute in the school orchestra and was choirboy at a local Church.

John won an open scholarship to University College to study Chemistry. He spent his first year living at Lumley Castle and then the next two years living in Bailey House. Apparently, this was preferable to being in the Castle as it was easier to sneak back in if there was a late night return - we gather that this involved the use of a coal chute! By then John was courting his future wife Julia, an assistant at the Darlington Public Library. She also recalls the mysterious appearance of a female half mannequin torso (christened Clementine!) in John's room that took up residence there for the remainder of his time living in Durham! During this time, John and Julie rode a Vespa scooter. Julie still has hazy recollection of John driving her back from Durham on said Vespa, she having had a drink or two and the lads having physically tied her to John with his mac belt! In 1962 John and Julie were married. By then John had gained his BSc was continuing his studies for a PhD. He was supervised by Ken Wade and they remained in touch until Ken's death in 2014.

In September 1964 after graduating, John and Julie set off on a great adventure – so unusual for the time that it featured in The Northern Echo! John taking a post doc placement at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. Sailing on the SS United States from Southampton, John still recalled the amazing New York skyline as they sailed in at

sunrise. A year in Cleveland followed – ups and downs as the only communication with home was by letter. A highlight was an amazing road trip with fellow chemist Mike Sammes and his fiancé Angela, 8500 miles in about three weeks, travelling across the whole of the continent to California and back! Again, John made some great friends and stayed in regular touch with Professor Malcolm Kenney from Case, who died in 2022 at the age of 94.

Returning to England in 1965, John started work as a research chemist at ICI, where he continued to work for the next 30 years, moving from a research role into effectively a chemical engineering role and was Plant Manager of Paraxylene V at Wilton for many years.

In 1977 a chance conversation changed John's life. Attending a Darlington Operatic Society show he met old pals. They encouraged him to audition as the society was always short of men! The rest as they say is history – his debut was in "The Student Prince" and he finally retired from performing in 2012 when he "went down with the ship" in Titanic. He appeared in more than 60 shows and was a long-standing committee member, ticket secretary and Chairman several times. John was still helping on front of house in 2024 despite his illness. As Julie always said, she knew there was a show on as John's pillow had more mascara on it than her own!

John's even temperament made him an ideal committee man. He was chairman of Darlington Parents Association (challenging 1970s school zoning), PTAs and Chairman of the Governors at a local comprehensive school. John and Julie had one daughter, Virginia (Ginny) and John was delighted when Ginny followed in his footsteps reading Chemistry at St John's College, Oxford, and studying for her Part II with Professor Malcolm Green.

Throughout his life John loved taking things apart, fixing them, and generally getting up to DIY mischief – plumbing being a particular favourite. All the family knew the classic 'John Lloydism' when faced with a torrent of water from a plumbing job – "Oh it's only a drop!".

John had successfully recovered from throat cancer in 2001, but sadly it returned in 2024 and the last two years were very difficult for him. As a great talker and socializer, (he absolutely loved the Durham reunions) the loss of his voice through having a laryngectomy was frustrating, although he communicated very well with an electrolarynx device. Steeling himself, he endured six rounds of palliative chemotherapy in 2025 but despite battling hard and continuing to care for Julie right until the end of September the cancer eventually became too overwhelming. He received gentle and sympathetic care in a local care home and died there at the end of November.

The family have received so many kind messages. John's character shines through in their words: Courage, determination, integrity, kind, fun to be around. The Operatic Society asked to do a live performance at his funeral which truly made it into a celebration of his life. They also nicknamed him "the village elder" – reflecting a man who was respected, wise, calm and a true gentleman. I am proud to say he was my Dad.

Ginny McCloy



DURHAM CASTLE SOCIETY ACCOUNTS

DURHAM CASTLE SOCIETY

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

31ST.JULY, 2025

	31.07.2025	31.07.2024
INCOME		
Subscriptions – Current Year	12,266.72	13,785.72
Donation	-	180.00
Interest Received	302.43	353.73
	-----	-----
	12,569.15	14,319.45
EXPENDITURE		
Castellum	6,954.00	7,375.00
Postage & Distribution	1,637.67	4,281.60
Society Website	638.40	638.40
Reunion Expenses	737.20	522.00
Miscellaneous	214.99	214.99
	-----	-----
	10,182.26	13,031.99
	-----	-----
	2,386.89	1,287.46
JCR First Generation Society		
JCR Frisbee	-	300.00
JCR Rugby FC	-	100.00
JCR Castle Choir and Orchestra	-	200.00
JCR Netball Club	-	200.00
JCR Badminton	-	100.00
JCR Mixed Lacrosse	-	100.00
JCR UC Boat Club	-	250.00
JCR Castle Running Society	-	50.00
JCR Castle Toastie Bar Committee	-	100.00
JCR Castle x Bede Cheerleading Club	-	200.00
JCR Women's Football	-	200.00
JCR Football	-	100.00
JCR Castle Feminist Society	-	200.00
	-----	-----
	-	2,200.00
	-----	-----
	2,386.89	(912.54)
Community Action Fund		
Alumni Events Fund	1,500.00	500.00
Military Scholarship Fund	-	1,000.00
	-----	-----
	1,500.00	3,000.00
	-----	-----
Surplus / (Deficit) for the Year	£ 886.89	£ (3,912.54)

DURHAM CASTLE SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET

31ST.JULY, 2025

	31.07.2025	31.07.2024
CURRENT ASSETS		
Business Base Rate Tracker A/c	21,281.20	20,978.77
Business Community Account	9,256.62	9,807.16
	-----	-----
	30,537.82	30,785.93
	-----	-----
	30,537.82	30,785.93
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Subscriptions in Advance	2,350.00	4,985.00
	-----	-----
	2,350.00	4,985.00
	-----	-----
	£ 28,187.82	£ 25,800.93
	=====	=====
Represented By:-		
ACCUMULATED FUND		
Opening Balance	1,300.93	5,213.47
Transfer	4,000.00	-
Surplus / (Deficit) for the Year	886.89	(3,912.54)
	-----	-----
	6,187.82	1,300.93
COMMUNITY ACTION FUND		
Opening Balance	3,000.00	1,500.00
Transfer	1,500.00	1,500.00
Expenditure	(-)	(-)
	-----	-----
	4,500.00	3,000.00
LOWE LIBRARY FUND		
Opening Balance	4,000.00	4,000.00
Transfer	(4,000.00)	(-)
Expenditure	(-)	(-)
	-----	-----
	(-)	4,000.00
EVA SCHUMACHER-REID HARDSHIP FUND		
Opening Balance	1,500.00	2,500.00
Expenditure	(-)	(1,000.00)
	-----	-----
	1,500.00	1,500.00
ALUMNI EVENTS FUND		
Opening Balance	4,000.00	3,500.00
Transfer	(-)	500.00
	-----	-----
	4,000.00	4,000.00
MILITARY SCHOLARSHIP FUND		
Opening Balance	12,000.00	11,000.00
Transfer	(-)	1,000.00
	-----	-----
	12,000.00	12,000.00
	-----	-----
	£ 28,187.82	£ 25,800.93
	=====	=====

Martin E. Gunson, PgDip (Dunelm), BFP, FCA, FRSA, FISM, FCMI, FFA, FIPA, FFTA, FLAB
Honorary Treasurer

22nd August, 2025

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DURHAM TRUST ACCOUNTS

The University College Durham Trust's accounts are submitted to, and then published by, the Charity Commission on an annual basis. The Trust is registered with the Charity Commission – registration number 1151821. All information published by the Charity Commission about the Trust, including its accounts, can be found by searching for the “University College Durham Trust” on the Commission’s online register of charities: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/>

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DEGREE RESULTS 2024

Study Programme Level	Qualification Award	2024–25
Undergraduate	First	102
	2:1	173
	2:2	36
	Third	0
	Ordinary	*
	Certificate of Higher Education	*
	Diploma of Higher Education	*
	Other	0
	Pass	0
	No Award	*
Postgraduate Taught	Distinction	61
	Merit	188
	Pass	51
	No Award	*
Postgraduate Research	Pass	29
	No Award	*
Total		672

*Numbers in these fields were too low to report on and were thus removed in order not to reveal the identity of individuals

WHO'S WHO AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

PROFESSOR WENDY POWERS,
PRINCIPAL & ASSOCIATE
PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR

DAN HALL,
HEAD CHEF

DR ELLEN CRABTREE,
VICE-PRINCIPAL

DAVID MYERS,
ASSISTANT STUDENT SUPPORT OFFICER

DR NATALIE CRAIG,
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

NICOLA DIXON,
COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION CO-ORDINATOR

JULIA BONNER,
ALUMNI & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

NICOLA COULT,
STUDENT SUPPORT ADMINISTRATOR

REV'D DR SAM HOLE,
CHAPLAIN AND SOLWAY FELLOW

JANET KELLY,
RECEPTIONIST

GILLIAN RENNIE,
CURATOR (CASTLE & COLLEGES)

RAFFAELLA ALIPRANDI,
VISITOR SERVICES CO-ORDINATOR

JOANNE MOORHOUSE,
COLLEGE OPERATIONS MANAGER

SUSAN NOBLE,
COLLEGE ASSISTANT FINANCE MANAGER

DAN THOMPSON,
COLLEGE OPERATIONS TEAM LEADER

ELAINE BEDFORD,
COLLEGE FINANCE ASSISTANT

JAMIE SHORT,
FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE MANAGER

Durham Castle Society Reunions

Friday 17th to Sunday 19th July 2026

Friday 16th to Sunday 18th July 2027

Contributions to Castellum on any subject of interest to Castlemen are very welcome at any time. These are best sent by electronic mail to alexnelson@dunelm.org.uk

Please quote **CASTELLUM** in the subject line

Contributions for Castellum 79 please by January 31st, 2027

We have a fantastic team of housekeepers, porters and catering staff who do a brilliant job to support the college community and smooth running of University College.



durham.ac.uk

castlealumni.ac.uk