

Dear Alumnus/Alumna,

As you may know, we are currently writing a new History of the College which will be published in December 2023, in time for the celebration of our 400th anniversary in 2024.

Although we have a wealth of material in the College archive, much of the information we already hold on the student experience of life at Pembroke has come from alumni recollections which we previously gathered from those who matriculated before 1960. It is now time to record the memories of those who were in College from 1960 onwards. This type of information is not captured elsewhere in our more formal records and alumni are, therefore, a vital resource to enable us to continue to build a more comprehensive history of Pembroke, both now and in the future.

To this end, we would like to ask you to send us your reminiscences of your time here. We have previously undertaken this type of exercise in the form of a questionnaire but we find that this can be a little prescriptive and so, this time, we have just provided a short guide which we hope will help you write as full an account as possible of your time at Pembroke. We have suggested some general themes, sometimes including some specific aspects in which we are particularly interested, but please do not feel constrained – if you think of something which we have not mentioned then please do include it. There is no word limit for this exercise! We are looking, not only for general impressions but also for specific stories with as many details as possible, especially dates.

If you have any questions, or if you have any memorabilia that you would like to donate to the archive, then please do get in touch with Amanda at memories@pmb.ox.ac.uk.

Please note that, as well as possible inclusion in the History, all responses will be deposited in the College archive and made available to internal and external researchers in the future. Please let us know if you would like to have your response anonymised.

Pembroke College 400th Anniversary Reminiscences

The Basics:

Your full name when at Pembroke:

Your year of matriculation:

Undergraduate/Graduate/Visiting and subject(s):

How many years were you at College?

Life before Pembroke and admission:

Please let us know something about your family background and school, how you came to arrive at Pembroke and what you remember of the admissions process, including your interview and any exams you sat. We would also like to know about your first impressions of the College and how you settled in. If you came to Pembroke as a graduate or visiting student and/or from another country, how did the experience compare to any other institution and/or country where you had studied

Domestic:

We are interested in all aspects of your experience of domestic life in College, including what your room was like, rules and regulations (including gate hours) and college catering (meals, pantry and bar). With regards to food, we would like to know about any special dinner experiences and dining traditions, including sconcing, and we would also like to hear about any experiences of student welfare and pastoral services including whether the Chapel played an important part in your time here. We are also very interested in the experiences of students who lived out and what impact this had on your relationship with the College.

People:

We would like to hear about your interactions with staff – not only the Master and Fellows of your day but also other staff in academic, administrative and support roles, such as scouts and porters. We would also like to know how you found sharing College life with your fellow students. Perhaps there is someone who made a lasting impact on you?

Academic:

As the main reason for being at Pembroke, can you tell us how you found the Oxford academic experience? This might include whether the tutorial system worked for you, how you found the workload and how you coped, what it was like studying outside college (i.e. lectures, labs, libraries etc.) and whether or not your course was all you hoped it would be?

Social:

This has always been another vitally important aspect of the University experience which might include your involvement with sports, music, drama and/or social clubs or societies at both College and University, as well as any external engagements, such as political activities. Do you remember details of specific events, perhaps with students who would go on to fame and fortune? Also, what do you remember of social events like the May Ball, Eights week, gatherings in the Master's lodgings, Christmas festivities etc.?

JCR, MCR, College Clubs and Societies:

There is less information in the archive than we would like for the JCR, MCR and College Clubs and Societies. If you were involved in any of these, any records and/or your recollections would be very helpful.

Memorable Events:

Although day to day life at Pembroke is the core of this exercise, perhaps there are particularly memorable events that you would also like to share – these could be within College, in Oxford or in the wider world.

The 1980s and 1990s

Women students were admitted in 1979 – did it take College long to adjust and, if you were one of the first women students, how was your experience?

Did the 'Thatcher era' affect you as a student?

Do you recollect the period of College rent rises and what was the impact of these?

The use of technology developed rapidly in these decades – how did that manifest itself?

Did you live in the new Sir Geoffrey Arthur building, opened in 1990?

And finally...

Rounding off this exercise, we would like to hear a little bit about your post-Pembroke career and what your experience of coming to Pembroke has meant to you going forwards.

Would you be happy to be contacted for more information or a follow up interview? Yes/No