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## MY TIMES AT CAMBRIDGE

Hugh Macrae Richmond

Recently I noticed happily that two issues of the News of Members section of the *Emmanuel College Journal* began with gracious notices of my publication *Shakespeare's Tragedies Reviewed* and of my award for distinctive achievement as Emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley. Such recognition was the less surprising in that, after twenty-eight years of retirement, most of my comparable colleagues are dead: I was born in Burton-upon-Trent in 1932 and my first session at Emma was 1951-54.

However, an earlier date relating to my career at Emma occurred around 1,000 "C[hristian] Era" when a Mercian warlord Called Wulfric endowed a Benedict abbey at Burton, perhaps to expiate his leading Anglo-Saxon forces in the destruction of Danish warriors as, at the nearby centre of the Danelaw at Repton, recent excavations have uncovered the graves of mass executions of Scandinavians. Like many minor European cities Burton has a long and complex history, standing close to the centre of England, near Stratford-upon-Avon, at the highest navigable point of the River Trent for Danish longships, a strategic locale mentioned by Shakespeare's Hotspur.

The monastery was substantial: when I was a student at the University of Florence, I found in the map-room of the Palazzo Vecchio that the door of the cabinet for England had an icon listing some of the land's major centers: York, London, Canterbury, and Burton-upon-Trent. Of course a school was attached to the abbey as early records show. Though it was well endowed it was in decline, so that around 1520 Abbot Beyne felt that the abbey was doomed by the Reformation but that something might survive, if he endowed a grammar school. It was successful, for almost half a millenium until the Shirley Williams/Margaret Thatcher

destruction of the grammar school culture that sent students like me to universities including Cambridge.

When I was awarded an open scholarship to Emmanuel I was required to improve my Latin and complete my two years of national service. After vicissitudes that saw me ominously reassigned (from the Welch Brigade to the Education Corps, to the Seventeenth -Twenty-First Cavalry, to the Royal Artillery, and finally to the Air Force), I found stability as an anti-aircraft intelligence officer linked to the fighter-wing, and based in a country house a stone's throw from Beverley Minster, where I fared remarkably well. It involved massive computers but little action, probably because there was no threatening enemy activity except in the yearly training exercise. This unfortunately fell on the first week of opening term at Cambridge. but I felt obliged to defer my arrival at Emmanuel until this was completed. As the sole such volunteer among several college freshman involved I was promoted to full-lieutenant and remained in the reserve through-out my Cambridge career, though it ruined my freshman year as I arrived long after all the introductions, received the last horrid lodgings available, and was assigned to a tutor, who was a religious fanatic specializing in Plato's *Gorgias*, which I found unintelligible. The college's master despised the Humanities, favoring Engineering and left-wing History, leaving supervising English in the hands of a brilliant specialist in modern literature so diffident that his stammer prevented completion of most sentences. I also persisted in playing collegiate rugby which even then was semiprofessional, and in the college third team managed to break my collar-bone. As a result of all these problems I did very badly in the preliminary exam ending my first year and was warned my scholarship was in danger.

I needed to plan my remaining two years at Emma, devoted to the two major exams of the English Tripos. Under the influence of

wide-ranging if controversial literary historians such as E. M. W. Tillyard, I decided to focus on the Renaissance and Reformation with emphasis on the manageable scale of drama and the lyric rather than bulky novel texts like *Clariissa* and *Middlemarch*, and by substituting performance rather than sport, aided by my role as Brutus in a public production and access to definitive stagings by celebrities like Olivier and Gielgud for the paper on "Tragedy." The special topic of "Milton" matched the puritan culture of Emma and the accidental fact that my room in North Court overlooked Christ's College where Milton spent his undergraduate years. This also matched well with the exam devoted to "the English Moralists." For the lyric element in the exam on "Close Reading" I was helped by courses with F. R. Leavis.

But my key initiative lay in the choice of advanced studies in two foreign cultures. At BGS our dynamic French teacher arranged an exchange of pupils with Arras as early as 1946, which I missed because of an attack of rheumatic fever. However at the last minute the Arras director of education decided to participate himself and I was the only available candidate. Fortunately his family was based in Rouen, and his move to Normandy and later to Paris provided more attractive environments than the Pas de Calais. The relationship proved mutually rewarding and life-long, ensuring my mastery of French culture. The second language field was less obvious as my Latin was limited and I decided Italian was equally relevant for my Renaissance interests, and this proved invaluable, as I found a powerful resource in the University of Florence, that provided a cultural enrichment which transformed my capacities.

Unfortunately my stuttering supervisor unexpectedly fled the college leaving me with no advisor in my last year, but the college recalled its distinguished medievalist, H. S. Bennett, who proved wonderfully sympathetic, and also secured me the advice of his wife Joan Bennett, a distinguished 17th century scholar They

proved good friends, leading to my First Class in the Second Part of the Tripos., A point about the importance of college staff: after my first the head porter, Mr. Freestone, congratulated me and my group of friends in Modern Languages who also got firsts, saying he knew we would all do well: "I used to notice after dinners the four of you were the last to leave, you were so deep in discussions, and the staff wanted to clear you all out, but I stopped them because I knew how much your talk mattered."

The First opened the option of a research degree However, the Senior Tutor told me they had no experience with firsts in English, but the interview was characteristically interrupted by the Master who intervened, telling me I should simply get out and find some secondary school. However, Mr. Bennett was more sympathetic and helped decide my future. Instead of taking a teaching credential at Oxford he secured my admission to a B. Lit. research program at Wadham College, and when I arrived there after a year as an Assistant d'anglais at the Lycée du Parc at Lyon, the Warden, Sir Maurice Bowra suggested that if I stayed for two years I might easily acquire a D. Phil. which proved the case and led to my professorship at the English Department at the University of California at Berkeley. There my experience with performance led to an award from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a hundred thousand dollars to make three television documentaries, on Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. We completed the Shakespeare one in London in 1986, and decided to base the Milton one on Emmanuel, not only because of the college's Puritan context but because my wife had worked with the Master who by then then was a distinguished Chaucerian, Derek Brewer, He volunteered a recorded interview - which led to *A Prologue to Chaucer* proving the most successful of the three. Overall sales amounted to 10,000 items, with a quarter of a million dollars in royalties. Emmanuel also provided the locale for our

creation of the documentary *Milton by Himself*. So that stay at Emmanuel proved enormously rewarding.

All of these activities require funding over many decades by grants, awards, fellowships, royalties and sales of our various projects amount to over a million dollars, permitting activities such as our web-site at *Shakespeare's Staging* which has received fifteen million page visits. Initially funding for my Emmanuel degree came from the college scholarship and state reinforcement, but that did not cover the cost of living which was paid by my father, who followed my grandfather's World War I army service, In World War II that earned them both Mentions in Dispatches. Moreover because my father volunteered when far overage, his employer the Westminster Bank graciously continued his bank pay --added to his modest army salary which he generously dedicated to my education, running out only at the last moment for the charge of typing my D.Phil. thesis at Wadham College, which Bowra miraculously covered by locating a Goldsmith's Company fund for needy Derbyshire students. At present after twenty-eight years of retired activity I have just received a ten-thousand dollar award to upgrade the Shakespeare site and a Milton one.

Furthermore, over this career I have been treated so generously by the University of California that reaching our ages of ninety it seemed time for us to reciprocate, and my wife and I have been setting up such modest analogues as we can manage to my Goldsmith's Company grant, particularly for stressed Humanities graduate students. We have managed this at our various colleges: Wadham, Berkeley, St. Hugh's, and of course Emmanuel. Our latest visit to Emma was to finalize the grant with Sarah Bendall, who has cleverly matched funds to double its value to produce the following outcome:

" Hugh and Velma Richmond have endowed a bursary in memory of Professor Derek Brewer to assist students of the MPhil. in

English Studies who elect to specialise in Medieval Literature. Eligible candidates must have applied for admission to Emmanuel College as an M.Phil. student, or must transfer to Emmanuel College in order to receive the award. They must have received an offer of admission for the MPhil. in English Studies and in addition, have outlined a dissertation topic in the period 1066-1550 in their "research Proposal." When taking up their offer, candidates would be expected to take the Medieval "Textual and related Studies D? course, and one "Specialist B' seminar related to medieval literature. The honorary is of L9,000, awarded to a home student for the academic year 2022-23."

This offer reflects the positive final outcome of all our visits to Emmanuel, which have proved to be a key to my whole career down to the present.