



WINCHESTER
COLLEGE

Common Room Farewells
Cloister Time 2020
Paul McMaster (APM)



1990-2020

It is very difficult to find any image in the school archives of APM, Mr (Anew) Paul McMaster. On the one hand it seems improbable, for he first joined Winchester College as a Scholar in 1976. On the other it is not surprising. Agile of brain and nimble of limb, he moves at purposeful speed and rarely stands still, though the predominance of the agile and enthusiastic brain can sometimes render the nimbleness of limb excessive.

McMaster aficionados in the Common Room (and there are many) compete in seeing how far away from his destination you can get Paul to walk whilst he talks earnestly about something mathematical or football based (though some detect that he talks less about Manchester United than he used to). The record is held by a Housemaster who once got APM from Flint Court to Hunter Tent when he was really heading to the adjacent photocopying room. Dr Hodgins has applied for, but not yet been granted, the right of anonymity.

Over 30 years Paul has built up an extraordinary reputation. He dislikes calculators but loves computers. Mr Rowland, a former pupil, recalls a characteristic moment: 'Sir, I heard that the square root of minus to the power of itself is real. Why?' APM: 'That's a terrific question! Well, let's start by remembering that $i = e^{\frac{i\pi}{2}}$. I mean, it's hard to get more basic than that'.

But the basic does not necessarily come easily to APM, whose nimbleness of brain, as above exemplified, often involves him in a second mile. Long ago one Head of Department noted in APM's file 'his capacity to work hard very cheerfully. Exam papers are the McMaster favourite. Dr Ronaldson remarks that when producing his own papers, 'I often think I've been incredibly careful and thorough, only to sit down with APM and realise how much care it was possible to take'.

Paul has many great theories on life, not all of them derived from his enthusiasm for probability and its theoretical application to gambling. Dr Hodgins' favourite is his theory on creators, deflectors and attractors, doubtless conceived somewhere just north of Hunter Tent. 'I won't burden you with what they are creating, deflecting or attracting', Dr Hodgins explains, 'but you don't want to be an attractor'.

But an attractor himself Paul certainly is. Dr Graham remarks that 'Paul is not only one of the best mathematicians one is likely to meet, he is also one of the nicest of men'. 'He is conscientious, kindly and above all patient', another colleague writes, 'kind, generous and deeply concerned about fairness'.

In 1998 APM moved into the Jane Austen House, 8 College Street. He has been a patient tenant, and generous too, allowing in devotees and donating proceeds to charity. Come to think of it, there is a certain kinship between Paul and the much admired novelist: precise, conscientious, with a keen eye for detail, a keen supporter of institutions, conservative by nature but not without an interest in an ordered society and moral reform.

APM was born (or at any rate baptised) Anew. Baptism, the Chaplain confirms, cannot be gone through effectively a second time. No matter. May retirement with Maria in Herefordshire now see Paul born anew, and (Mc)Master of all he surveys: he certainly deserves it.

TRH
3 July 2020