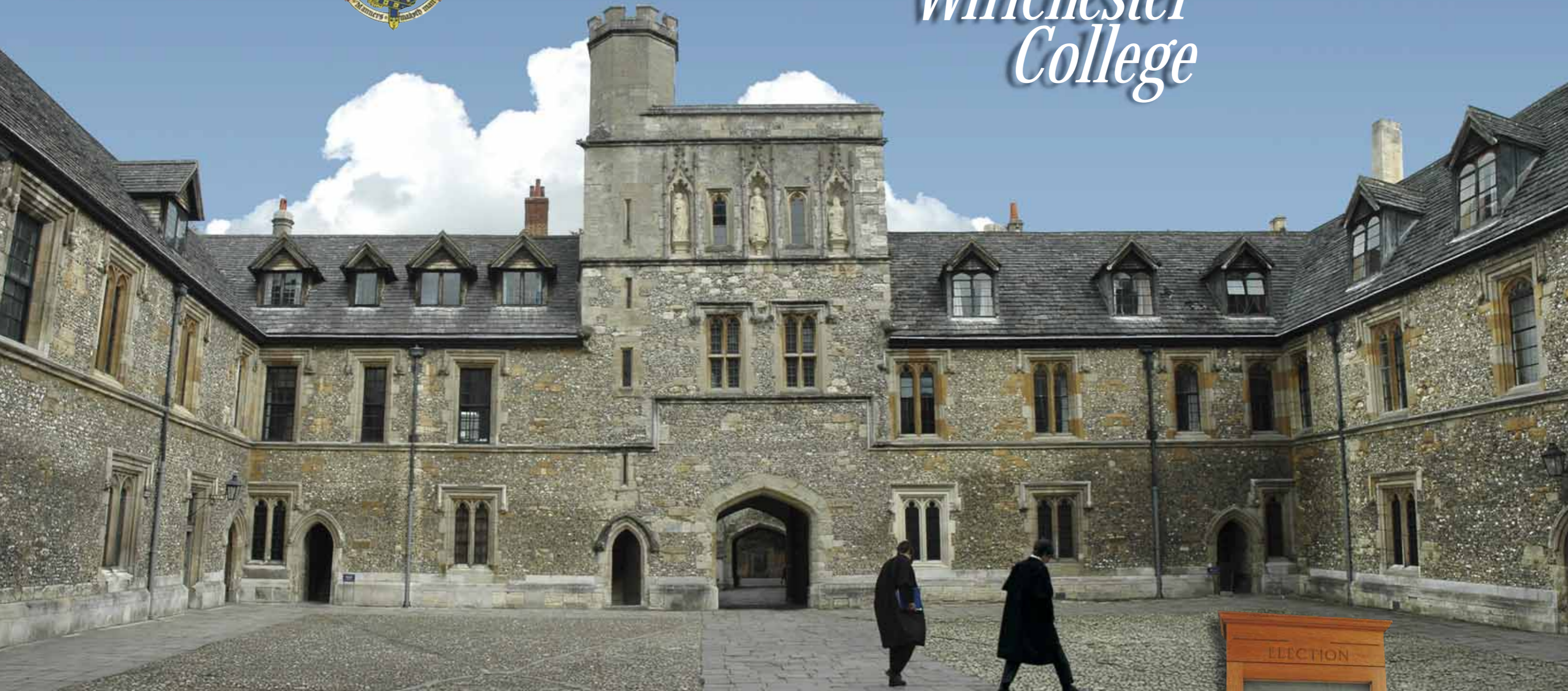




# THE *Friends of Winchester College*



*Martin Scott, Second Master 1962-1979*

## Contact details

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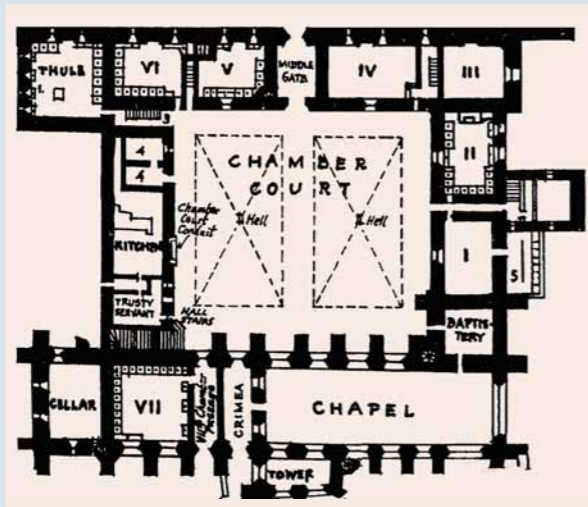
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**Spring 2006**

# College & Chamber Court

Chamber Court was the heart of the mediaeval school, and it is where the whole community ate, slept, worked and worshipped as ordained by the Founder, William of Wykeham. It is not large, being a square with sides of one hundred and fifteen feet with paving round the edges and down the centre. In between the paved areas are two cobbled rectangles with narrow sets of stones leading to a drain in each. The stones are known as 'good intentions' and the drains 'hell' as the path to hell is, as we know, paved with good intentions.



The Warden, ten Fellows (priests to officiate at the daily round of masses and liturgy), two Masters and three Chaplains, in addition to the seventy scholars, lived in the rooms overlooking Chamber Court. The Quiristers, sixteen of them, were pushed somewhat out of the way in what is now Thule. The floors were of chalk, impacted on a bed of flints and remained so until 1540. The Warden's lodgings were two rooms within the Middle Gate



This 'Quadrangle Court', as it was known in the mid-nineteenth century, is dominated by the buildings on the south side, which are of dressed stone, unlike the flint facings on the other three sides. In the southwest corner

are steps leading up to Hall, which is aligned with the Chapel. To the right of these steps, adjoining the kitchen, is a passage formerly known as the Buttery, which houses the famous picture of the Trusty Servant, still dressed in the Windsor uniform which he assumed in honour of a visit from George III. Following along the west side one comes to a long recess containing a tap and a heavy silver cup on a chain. Originally this *Aquæductus* had a pent-house over it with the Founder's arms on the pediment, but this was destroyed in 1837. The cup is inscribed with the words *pote, repone* which make little sense. Drink and replace would be *pota, repone!* Until running water was installed in 1837 and a wash-room (*Moab*) provided, the conduit was the scholars' only washing place.



tower whilst the Headmaster, Second Master and junior Fellow had to share one room. When the Fellows and even the Master began to 'pernoctate' outside College in defiance of the Rubrics, discipline suffered and, as a result in 1631, the Fellows were ordered not to sleep abroad. There were originally six chambers until 1701 when the old School, minus what is now a passage, became Seventh Chamber.

Old School was the one and only school room for the three centuries before its conversion to Seventh Chamber in 1701. This was as the Founder had intended as he ordained that 'schools for scholars be held in perpetuity in the great house below the hall'. He went on to say that in Hall there should be no dancing or singing, no spilling of beers, for such practices might annoy the scholars in 'grammatical schools' below. By 1683 it was considered too small as the scholars had been joined by a number of *fili nobilium* and the boys moved into the new School in 1687. The original School had three double windows, all facing south, so that in the winter its occupants gained the full benefit of 'the rays of Phoebus' which supplied the only warmth, as there was no fire.

In 1866, the old college buildings were still much as they had been in mediaeval times. Scholars and Fellows (a few at any rate) occupied their respective chambers



The scholars slept in the ground-floor chambers, many of them on the wooden bedsteads which had been installed in 1540. The lavatories were earth-closets without doors.

A few years later an upstairs room, on the eastern side of Chamber Court, was converted into Eighth Chamber to accommodate an increase in the number of scholars. This was abandoned a couple of years later, but the idea of extra space was appealing. The upstairs accommodation was allotted by the Statutes to Wykeham's resident Fellows, but as

their functions dwindled, their visits became rare. As a result, their rooms became the scholars' dormitories, and since 1903 all the scholars have slept upstairs.

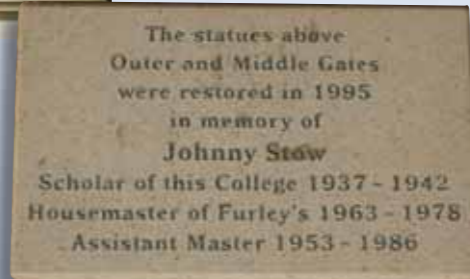
Not a great deal happened during the 20th Century other than the occasional rearrangement, refurbishment, and full electrification in 1934. The principal source of heating continued to be open fires. By the 1950s fires in the upstairs chambers were only lit on special occasions like the annual Notions Exam, and on cold nights the only warm place was in the washing rooms with their hot pipes; that

was where late night work was done. Central heating was not extended to the upstairs chambers until a particularly chilly start to the spring term in 1987 made the authorities relent. When parents returned and found that their children were sleeping in sub-zero temperatures, they queued up to complain to the Second Master. Then it snowed. Collegemen, with a characteristic sense of humour,

with the rest of the main court taken up with the kitchen, Hall and Chapel.

collected enough snow to make a snowman in the middle of the floor and there it remained, without melting, for three days and nights.

The 21st Century is starting on a much more positive note. An appeal has been launched to raise around £1.5 million. Life in College has for six centuries revolved round the chambers containing about a dozen boys of different ages. They have a familial structure which is intimate, and yet also contributes in a significant way to the scholars' education and provides a focus for a variety of activities, both sporting and social. The Appeal of 1973 resulted in a set of Chambers whose new oak fittings combined comfort with dignity in a manner that won commendation from the Worshipful Company of Carpenters for its 'design, choice of timber, manufacture, installation finish and behaviour'. They will remain as they are, but there will be more quiet rooms provided for reading and times of reflection.



It is upstairs where things will be really happening this time. Apart from central heating, the

scholars still sleep in dormitories that accommodate 6 to 10 boys, and the relatively Spartan arrangements have discouraged many potential applicants.

The proposal is to provide the boys with smaller, more homely bedrooms, with no more than 7 boys to a room for their first three years, no more than 6 for their fourth, and no more than 2 for their last year. It is proposed that two floors are constructed on top of the existing lavatory block in a contemporary manner to provide 4 of the smaller bedrooms. This extension will allow a significant upgrade of the washrooms.

It may have taken a little time to reach an accommodation level that is recognisable for the 21st Century, but it's a long way from chalk floors, straw mattresses and the *Aquæductus*. William of Wykeham would still recognize the exterior facing Chamber Court, but the interior would be a very different matter!

