



## **Welcome to the Senior Common Room of St Andrew's College for 2016**

There have been senior academics with rooms in College since the nineteenth century. For 140 years there have been some resident tutors, for over 110 years Vice-Principals and Senior Tutors, and in more recent years a variety of Deans. The first two resident Fellows were appointed just before the Second World War, 77 years ago.

In Principal Kinross's time, in the 1890s, the first University Professor of History lived in College for a few years and the two men used to solve the problems of the world after dinner over tobacco in their rooms. Many other senior members did the same sort of thing. But there was no space dedicated as a Senior Common Room until 1960, when the present elegant room was converted to this purpose.

The Senior Common Room is part of the central wing added in 1892 to the 1870s building by Sir John Sulman. It was originally used as the lecture-room for students in the Theological Hall studying for the Presbyterian ministry. This theological aspect of College life moved across to the Harper Building in the 1920s and in the 1940s the 1892 lecture-room became the College Library, while the fine Old Library of 1876 was used as a Chapel. In 1960, however, the construction of the present Dining Hall allowed the dedication of the present Chapel and the books were returned to the Old Library. Principal Alan Dougan then decreed that the vacant downstairs room, with its exquisite acoustics and handsome Hawkesbury sandstone walls, should become the Senior Common Room, and so it has remained.

The membership of the Senior Common Room has diversified with the admission to the University of an increasing number of postgraduate research students and graduates studying for higher or professional degrees by course-work. So the resident Senior Common Room today consists of a pleasing admixture of College officers, from the Principal down, Senior Area Tutors, the Dean Team, research students, other advanced students, and those in graduate Medicine or other graduate disciplines, along with their partners, where relevant. Non-resident tutors are always welcome visitors, while non-resident Honorary Fellows from a diversity of backgrounds, including all former Councillors, are members along with the Director of Music and the Chaplain.

The term Senior Common Room is Janus-faced. It means both a community of people and the space in which this community meets for drinks before formal dinner and for coffee, port and conversation after dinner, unassisted nowadays by tobacco.

Informal talks by members or visitors on Monday evenings will be a regular feature throughout the two semesters of 2016, interspersed with some chamber music. We have a delicate virginal for the intimacies of the baroque and a Steinway piano for a different repertoire. The instruments are available for all members of the Senior Common Room to play with respect. Kate Lonie is in charge of the programme of talks and music this year. Suggestions for topics or speakers are always welcome.

Occasionally the Senior Common Room is booked for College functions. These will normally be notified in the weekly events email called the Wittins. At all other times, not least after informal dinners, members are encouraged to enjoy the warm ambience of the room to chat, play chess or whatever (within reason).

I extend the warmest welcome for 2016 to new members of the Senior Common Room, to returning members, and to our visitors.

There is a monthly subscription of \$40 for members. The Senior Common Room is financially responsible for a variety of necessary features, such as the wines and soft drinks which are served at formal dinners and some special events, and the newspapers and journals to which it subscribes. Neither bottles nor papers should be removed from the room since they are purchased for the common good.

All members are expected to dress appropriately at formal dinners, with gowns: men normally wear a jacket and tie. Spare gowns hang at the foot of the back stairs for any who need them. Formal dinners are normally held on Mondays and Tuesdays. We meet in the Senior Common Room around 6.15 or 6.30 p.m. and at 6.45 p.m. go up to High Table by the back stairs. The Principal normally presides, in his absence the Vice-Principal or Senior Fellow, and in their absence anyone in attendance. Several Latin graces are customarily used, with an occasional English or Scots alternative. Printed texts are normally available at high table.

While High Table controls the first grace, the Senior Student or other member of the House Committee will indicate to the person presiding when second grace should be said. High Table normally eats with more leisure than the undergraduate body and lingers over dessert after second grace and the mass exodus. Coffee and tea, as well as port, are available downstairs after dinner.

All members of the Senior Common Room are encouraged to bring an occasional friend to dinner or to a Monday event.

In the periods between teaching semesters, when there are no formal dinners, a weekly buffet dinner will be served in the Senior Common Room at 6 p.m. one evening every week to promote continuing collegiality.

Because there are artworks and silver in the room, it is necessary to keep the door locked when no-one is there. It is the responsibility of those who are the last to leave to ensure that the electric heaters which keep the tea and coffee warm are switched off each evening and that both doors are secure.

I hope that you all find the Senior Common Room a congenial place and contribute to its congeniality. It is an egalitarian community of scholars, just as the medieval universities aspired to be. Welcome.

**Ian Jack**  
**Senior Fellow and President of the Senior Common Room.**

