

**Bridging the gap between science and the arts:
Clifford Norton Fellows and Students at Queen's¹**

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In recent decades, The Queen's College, Oxford has hosted a number of researchers working on topics in the History of Science, with the History of Medicine and the History of Mathematics being the two major themes. This association between the College and the History of Science grew, at least in part, from a bequest made to the College in 1964 by an Old Member, the diplomat Sir Clifford Norton (1891–1990), who sought to forge a new link between the sciences and the humanities.

Clifford John Norton was born in Greenwich in 1891.² He studied at Rugby School, before entering Queen's as a Foundation Scholar in 1910. His tutor was the classicist, and future Provost of the College, E. M. Walker; Norton took a First in Classics Moderations in 1912 and then a Third in *literae humaniores* in 1914. He served at Gallipoli and in Palestine with the Suffolk Regiment during the First World War, and eventually entered the Foreign Office in 1921; throughout much of the 1930s, he served as private secretary to the permanent under-secretary Sir Robert Vansittart, before being posted to Warsaw in 1937. After a further foreign posting to Bern, he was appointed British Ambassador to Athens in 1946, a position that he held until his retirement in 1951. Upon returning to the UK, he sought to re-establish his connection with Queen's, and was for a time President of the Queen's (Old Members) Association; in 1963, he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the College.³ Norton died in London in 1990, seven months short of his one-hundredth birthday.

As early as 1952, Norton had written to the Bursar at Queen's to signal his intention of leaving a bequest of £2,000 to the College, and was already wondering whether to earmark it for a specific purpose.⁴ Discussions appear to have taken place between Norton and members of the College, and by 1960 he had accepted the suggestion that his bequest (now having risen to £10,000) be used to fund a 'Clifford Norton Research Fellowship'. By 1964, Norton had decided to turn his proposed bequest into an immediate gift, and was musing on possible subjects for the Fellowship:

"The subject is still vague in my mind. Is there anything that might be a bridge between Science & the Arts?"⁵

Having initially asked for his bequest to be kept confidential, Norton then permitted the following announcement to appear in the *College Record* for 1964:

"Sir Clifford Norton (1910), Honorary Fellow, has endowed a new Junior Research Fellowship, which will be known by his name. This generous gift substantially increases the provision for opportunities of research, the promotion of which has long been a cardinal feature of College policy, and is especially welcome at a time when the need for qualified academic teachers is become increasingly pressing. It is hoped to make the first election to the new Fellowship for October 1965."⁶

A committee was formed within the College to consider appropriate subjects for the new Fellowship, and

1 This is a slightly longer and footnoted version of an article that appeared in *The Queen's College Record* 2020, pp. 105–108. I am grateful to Peter M. Neumann, Harry Wu, Mike Riordan, Richard Parkinson, Viviane Quirke, and Robert Fox for reading an earlier version of this article and for making valuable suggestions.

2 Peter Neville, 'Norton, Sir Clifford John (1891–1990)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65288>, accessed 9 Jan 2020]

3 *The Queen's College Record*, vol. IV, no. 6 (1963), pp. 4–5.

4 The Queen's College Archives, FB 1046 Norton: Norton to the Bursar, 24 May 1952.

5 The Queen's College Archives, FB 1046 Norton: Norton to the Bursar, 9 August 1964. Norton's suggestion may have been motivated by the recently aired views of C. P. Snow, concerning the 'Two Cultures' of the sciences and the humanities: C. P. Snow, *The two cultures and the scientific revolution: the Rede lecture, 1959*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959 (I am grateful to Harry Wu for this suggestion).

6 *The Queen's College Record*, vol. IV, no. 7 (1964), p. 6.

returned the recommendation in January 1965 that it be advertised in the History of Science or Medicine – but that if no suitable candidate were found, it should be re-advertised in Ancient History, Classics, and Modern History.⁷ Although these latter subjects would not have met Norton’s interdisciplinary intentions, they would at least have mirrored his own studies in Oxford and subsequent career. The position was duly advertised,⁸ and a suitable History of Science candidate was found in the form of Robert Fox from Oriel College, a historian of physics who was then completing a DPhil dissertation entitled *The Study of the Thermal Properties of Gases in Relation to Physical Theory from Montgolfier to Regnault*. Fox was elected to the Fellowship in October 1965, and when he left Oxford a year later to take up a lectureship at the University of Lancaster,⁹ the subject of the Fellowship was changed to Linguistics or Psycholinguistics.¹⁰ Over the next thirty years, the post cycled through several subjects, all of which fulfilled Norton’s tentative suggestion of something “that might be a bridge between Science & the Arts”: History of Science, Linguistics, Economics, and Psychology (see Table 1).¹¹ The research topics of Fellows ranged from the social history of twentieth-century British medicine (Bryder) to schema theory (Bowers) and conversation analysis (Geluykens).¹² Amongst the historians of science, History of Medicine was a particularly prominent theme (represented by Lindsay Sharp, Linda Bryder, and Harriet Deacon).

Years	Name	Subject
1965-1966	Robert Fox	History of Science
1966-1969	Philip Twitchell Smith	Psycholinguistics
1969-1972	Geoffrey Richard Sampson	Linguistics
1972-1975	Lindsay Gerard Sharp	History of Science
1975-1981	Vacant	
1981-1983	Stephen Noel Broadberry	Economics
1983-1984	Vacant	
1984-1988	Linda Bryder	History of Science
1987-1988	John Maxwell Bowers	Psychology
1988-1989	Vacant	
1989-1992	Ronald Geluykens	Linguistics
1992-1993	Vacant	
1993-1997	Harriet Jane Deacon	History of Science

Table 1: Clifford Norton Junior Research Fellows¹³

The finances underpinning the Fellowship, however, were never entirely robust. From the start, it had been acknowledged that it might be necessary for the College to supplement the salary of the Clifford Norton Fellow in order to bring it to a level appropriate for a Junior Research Fellowship.¹⁴ Indeed, financial considerations seem to have been behind at least some of the gaps in Table 1: the Fellowship was funded by the income from a ‘Clifford Norton Trust’, established on the basis of Norton’s original bequest, but in 1975–1981, for example, the income simply wasn’t sufficient. In 1983, the then-Provost, Lord Blake, wrote

7 The Queen’s College Archives, FB 1046 Norton: Report of the Committee on the Clifford Norton bequest, 13 January 1965.

8 *Oxford University Gazette*, vol. XCV, no. 3223, 28 January 1965, p. 507.

9 Fox subsequently returned to Oxford in 1988 as Professor of the History of Science, and Fellow of Linacre College.

10 The Queen’s College Archives, FB 1046 Norton: Report of the Committee on the Clifford Norton Junior Research Fellowship, 1 April 1966.

11 Demography was suggested as a further possible subject for the Fellowship when it became vacant in 1969, but no appointment was ever made in that area (The Queen’s College Archives, FB 1046 Norton: Report of Committee on Clifford Norton Junior Research Fellowship, 8 November 1968).

12 *The Queen’s College Record*, vol. VI, no. 1 (1985), p. 5; vol. VI, no. 3 (1987), p. 2; vol. VI, no. 5 (1989), p. 3.

13 The information given in Table 1 does not in all cases tally with that recorded in the *College Record* or the *University Calendar*, which contain some inaccuracies; these have been resolved by reference to Governing Body minutes in the College Archives.

14 The Queen’s College Archives, Governing Body Minute Book 14.2.1962–21.12.1965, p. 207 (5 December 1964).

to Norton, seeking permission (which was duly granted) to use the capital from the Trust as well as the income to provide for future Fellowships.¹⁵ It was intended gradually to run the fund down, though on at least one occasion money from an outside source was used to subsidise the Fellowship: during her final year at Queen's, the bulk of Linda Bryder's salary was supplied by a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship.¹⁶

By the mid-1990s, however, the money had run particularly low, and it was decided to demote the Clifford Norton Fellowship to a Studentship (i.e., a junior research post ranked below a Junior Research Fellowship), and to make it a non-stipendiary position.¹⁷ Hereafter, the post was to be intended for, but not restricted to, postgraduate students completing their DPhils. At the same time, the post was fixed permanently to the History of Science, and ceased to cycle through different disciplines. But even within this narrower focus, the incumbents of the Studentship (see Table 2) still covered a broad range of topics. The History of Medicine remained a prominent theme: for example, the first Clifford Norton Student, Viviane Quirke, used the post to complete a DPhil dissertation (under the supervision of the first Clifford Norton Fellow, Robert Fox) entitled *Experiments in Collaboration: The Changing Relationship between Scientists and Pharmaceutical Companies in Britain and France, 1935–1965*.¹⁸ Two of the subsequent Students (namely, Catherine Kelly and Harry Wu) also worked in the History of Medicine. But the History of Mathematics has also featured – in the work of the present author, but most notably following the appointment of Jackie Stedall (1950–2014), a specialist in early modern English mathematics, as Clifford Norton Student in 2000; Stedall subsequently became a Junior Research Fellow, and then a Senior Research Fellow of the College.¹⁹

Years	Name
1997-2000	Viviane Quirke
2000-2003	Jacqueline Anne Stedall
2003-2005	Alexander John Marr
2005-2008	Catherine Jane Kelly
2008-2011	Harry Yi-Jui Wu
2011-2013	Christopher David Hollings

Table 2: Clifford Norton Students in the History of Science

Sadly, the current financial situation does not allow for a Clifford Norton Student, but when the present author returned to Queen's in 2015 to take up a Senior Research Fellowship, the Governing Body chose to name this the 'Clifford Norton Senior Research Fellowship' – so, although the College no longer has a junior research post in the History of Science, a visible link to Sir Clifford Norton's original bequest remains.

15 The Queen's College Archives, Governing Body Minute Book 31.10.1983–29.5.1986, p. 38 (18 January 1984).

16 The Queen's College Archives, Governing Body Minute Book 21.6.1986–8.2.1989, p. 121 (3 August 1987).

17 The Queen's College Archives, Governing Body Minute Book 8.2.1995–13.1.1998, p. 200 (7 December 1996).

18 Quirke also wrote for the *College Record* on the work of the Nobel-Prize-winning former Provost, Lord Florey: Viviane M. Quirke, 'Howard Walter Florey (1898–1968)', *The Queen's College Record*, vol. VII, no. 4 (1998), pp. 15–23. We note that Florey was Provost of Queen's at the time of Norton's bequest in 1964.

19 Peter M. Neumann, 'Jacqueline Anne Stedall', *The Queen's College Record*, vol. IX, no. 1 (2015), pp. 81–83.