

Margaret Ward-Martin (1981-1984)

I got off the coach in Durham one day in October, 1981. A student from Trevelyan met me at the station and carried my suitcase. It turned out she was President of the JCR. That was my first lesson – there were no airs and graces – no hierarchy – just a shared humanity at Trevelyan. There were many such lessons. I had waved my parents and brother off at the bus station in Manchester a few hours earlier and arrived in this Brave New World feeling scared and inadequate. The air was fresh and smelled of autumn. At the time, Trevs was all female and, coming from a convent school, that suited me. My first concern when I arrived was that I would make a fool of myself by failing to get to grips with the hexagonal building. I was not confident at all. About anything. It turned out everyone else felt the same. Another lesson learned.

I remember formal dinners with fondness and met my best friend, Fiona, when we were on duty together. We remain close to this day. A third lesson for me - that friendship is organic and that I needed to work through my prejudices and assumptions. I needed to understand that we were all there on merit, regardless of economic, physical, psychological and emotional challenges. We were all there at that time because we had earned a place. Fiona and I studied, partied, laughed, cried, graduated and subsequently planned our weddings and healed from our divorces, together.

This time 40 years ago I was waiting for my A Level results. I had no idea what the future held. I encourage any of you reading this to enjoy what Trevelyan has to offer. The women I met modelled tolerance and compassion; they found the courage to change and to speak their truth. The lesson I took away from Trevelyan was to continue to learn. Every situation, especially the tough ones, teach us something about ourselves. Sometimes these events may change our character but they always reveal our character.

I was scared and homesick when I arrived at Trevelyan. I left feeling worthy and equipped for the challenges ahead. That confidence has remained to this day and I wish you all, nothing less.