

Ann Taylor came to St Edmund Hall in 1979 when, having declined a comparable appointment at Cambridge, she returned to Oxford to take up the position of University Lecturer in the Laboratory of Physiology.

Ann had obtained a First class degree in Physiology and Biochemistry at Oxford and then undertook medical training at the Radcliffe Infirmary. She embarked on a research career after completing her house officer year and began teaching at St Anne's College in 1957, becoming a Fellow there in 1959. She left Oxford for a research position in Stanford in 1963 and moved in the mid-1970's to Cornell, where she was appointed to a tenured Faculty position. Her status and international reputation was reflected in the superb references for her Oxford position from leading figures in her field.

Professor Erich Windhager (her Head of Department in Cornell) wrote:

“Dr Taylor is a highly respected senior member of the staff of our department whose departure will be a severe loss to Cornell. It is almost certain that she will be promoted to the position of Full Professor within the next few years”.

When Ann returned to Oxford she had established a flourishing research career. Ann studied the involvement of calcium and cytoskeletal proteins in the regulation of movement of salt and water across the cells of epithelial tissues such as the kidney and bladder. At Cornell, she had worked alongside Erich Windhager, who in turn had worked with Hans Ussing, one of the founding fathers of epithelial physiology and her heritage in this regard was very apparent with the important advances that her thoughtful papers described.

From my personal knowledge of a good number of women scientists at this time I suspect that Ann Taylor was very much better than many of the men that surrounded her. She was typical of women who had to achieve more highly at many stages of their careers in order to gain the same recognition as less talented men.

There is much evidence of her support for women in the Hall and she pioneered their recognition. One Fellow who knew her said: “She had a very impressive presence & spoke with authority. And it was only years later that she revealed that she had initially felt isolated & hurt by a degree of misogyny from some older Fellows”. Whether thinking or unthinking in origin this misogyny no doubt existed; In looking at her file I noted that the first lines of Ann's appointment contract reads: “The Fellow will be expected to give instruction to junior members of the College reading Physiological Sciences (Medicine) and related joint schools. HE will also be expected to ...”

While Ann was very much a research scientist, she was also a hugely gifted and influential teacher. Robert Wilkins, our present Senior Tutor who holds Ann's position now, was given lectures from Ann in his first year in Oxford. He commented: “While the science has moved on, those first year lectures from thirty years ago are hard to improve”. Ann Taylor influenced many lives, and she will long be remembered as an inspirational tutor – more of that later from one of her tutees.

She also became influential in the life of the Hall. Ann was instrumental in ensuring that the college had its first Tutor for Women, a post which was very necessary at a time when the vast majority of women students had only male tutors. She was our first (and best) Tutor for Women, performing all the duties of this office with great skill, and often far beyond the call of duty.

Ann was a stalwart supporter of women in college in general but her support of the Women's Boat Club exemplified this. Her support ranged from faithfully going down to watch Torpids and Eights races whenever she could (all crews, not just the women!) as well as wider political support within the college for boat club activities. Jenny Taylor (now a Professor in Oxford and a Fellow by Special Election at the Hall) was Women's Captain in 1987/88 and she comments:

“Ann provided much support and encouragement to me in that role. In 1985/6 a lengthy debate took place about whether the women would be allowed to use the carbon-fibre boat. The women had always been

relegated to wooden boats, the men's crews were using the new carbon-fibre boat, but I think the women were viewed as having the best chances of success and so the Women's Captain at the time Liz Hollingworth campaigned for this, and finally we were permitted to use this boat and indeed won blades in 1986".

Liz Hollingworth – now a senior judge in Australia and an Honorary Fellow of the Hall recounted to me that: "We won our blades in summer eights in 1986, when I was the "Ladies' Captain". I think it may have been the first year that Teddy Hall women did that. I have a vivid memory of our cuppers supper, attended by the crew and Ann. It was a warm and heartfelt occasion, in which each of the members of the crew stood up and spoke spontaneously about what it had meant to them to row in that boat. I remember how happy Ann was, and how generously she also spoke that evening".

I suspect Ann would be very quietly satisfied that last year more women than men got Blues in the Hall and the Women's Firsts won Blades in Summer Eights.

Ann provided great support also for the men in the Boat Club. It flourished under her guidance and patronage. In relation to changing men's attitudes in the Hall, Ann's role in the boat club was again important.

Another Fellow remembers "initial frictions existed between her and traditionalist Fellows who deplored the admission of women. By her persistence, well-deployed charm and by her success in forming women's crews, which seemed suddenly, far superior to the men's, Ann won them round, to the benefit of the boat club and the College in general".

Ann's interests in people also had other influences. She was a central and key figure in developing the student welfare service in Oxford again more of that later from Dr Gordon Gancz.

Ann also had an anarchic, or at least a contrarian streak, and thought nothing of leaving her car parked in Queen's Lane in defiance of any regulations in force.

Ann was a remarkable woman and was rightly featured in our 3000 Women Exhibition last year. The photograph on the cover of today's order of service is the one from that exhibition and it hangs in our Dining Hall. Ann was the first and only female Tutorial Fellow when she started. She championed minorities, argued for fairness and openness, gave support to many and provided an inspirational example as the very best of an Oxford research scientist and tutor.

We have set ourselves the goal of embedding Ann's memory and influence in the Hall in perpetuity by raising a £50,000 endowment for a student bursary in her name.

How to succinctly capture Ann's profile for all the diversity of family, friends and colleagues in this Memorial Service? I can do no better than return to the final sentences of Professor ISIDORE EDELMAN (a famous Professor of Biochemistry at Columbia University) who finished a glowing reference for Ann's application to Oxford in Aug 1979 with:

"Dr Taylor also has a broad and intelligent grasp of membrane transport and renal and electrolyte physiology in general. She is a very effective teacher and is scholarly and energetic. On the personal side she is honorable, cooperative and conscientious – a thoroughly admirable colleague and friend".

It was a privilege to know Ann Taylor.

Keith Gull, Principal, St Edmund Hall, October 2017