



## Tributes to Dame Fiona Caldicott

Presented at the Memorial Service held in  
Somerville College Chapel, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2022



### **Tribute by Lord Patten, Chancellor of the University of Oxford**

It is not false modesty to begin by saying that I am not nearly as well-qualified as others who are present today to speak about Dame Fiona Caldicott's distinction as a scientist and leader of our National Health Service. I can speak with a little more authority about her work as a Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University and as the Head of this College. But in covering these parts of Dame Fiona's life, I want to talk mainly about her character and style of leadership rather than about buildings and benefactions. Others, I am sure, will make good what I fail to speak about myself in those and other categories of achievement.

I became Chancellor - and the Visitor of this College - in 2003, almost exactly halfway through Fiona's term as Principal of Somerville. She was one of the College Heads whom I have known best and admired most during my years as Chancellor. She gave me, and the Vice-Chancellors whom she served, unfailingly good and wise advice at a time when the University was seeking to make its central organisation more efficient without losing the strengths that we associate with diversity and the collegiate system. She was always balanced and reasonable, mercifully free of personal prejudice and any suggestion of the pursuit of self-interest. As you all know, Fiona was elegant, articulate and always

thoroughly good company. I liked and admired her as much as anyone I have got to know at this University over the last almost 20 years.

Dame Fiona's record and reputation as a scholar and public servant reminds me of a point which the British historian Professor Peter Hennessy makes about our political system, a point which alas may — at least for the time being — no longer be true. Hennessy points out that in the absence of a codified constitution our political system and public service culture have depended on our confidence that the 'good chaps' of both sexes will refrain from doing certain things. They will know how they should behave without being given instructions. Moreover, as we observe the smoke and flames rising today from a bonfire of decencies, we know that those who still know how to behave get things done in the way that is most likely to be sustained and successful.

Dame Fiona was a Gold Card member of 'the good guys'. The best known and important contribution that she made as a scientist to making public policy is a good example of this. As Baroness O'Neill has pointed out, her work on the reuse of medical data dealt successfully with a difficult moral dilemma and recurrent problem in medical ethics. She had to find a way of reconciling the demands of individual privacy and medical research that was both coherent and practical. The issue is, of course, one which has become of greater concern to more people as we have found ways of coping with the recent pandemic. It cannot have been easy for Dame Fiona to find a way through these difficulties while chairing, in the first place, a group of 50, all presumably with their own opinions. Her success in finding acceptable solutions is a mark of her leadership ability which has provided us with solutions to a range of difficult dilemmas, solutions that have been adopted not only throughout the Health Service, but in other branches of public life as well. I don't believe that it would ever have been possible to achieve this if Fiona had ever given the impression that she was more interested in personal publicity and headlines than in producing with professional colleagues workable answers to tough problems. Her approach in doing that work was typical of how she saw the responsibilities which she cheerfully took on in the public sphere.

Dame Fiona brought the same selfless rigour and competence to the senior positions she held in the NHS and in professional medical bodies. She showed, when it was still sometimes necessary to do so, that there was no peak in the making of public science policy or in the safeguarding of professional standards which women could not climb. It is not surprising she was always enthusiastic about helping young women and not so young women to follow in her footsteps, for example when she was carrying out her responsibilities as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equal Opportunities and Personnel.

As a College Head, Fiona demonstrated the strengths of the collegiate system, bringing those who study and teach together in their own community that manages to be part of the wider Academy while retaining its own sense of comradeship and its individual institutional personality. As I said earlier, we can sometimes think of success and failure in leaving a College in terms of buildings and benefactions. In these areas, Dame Fiona was extremely successful. Look, for example, at the new buildings on the Observatory Quarter side, whose completion was supported enthusiastically by the wider University. But more important than that was her understanding of the crucial role of the College in providing pastoral care and understanding. As a psychiatrist and psychotherapist who had a

particular interest in young adults it should have been no surprise that she was such a compassionate, kind, thoughtful and of course occasionally feisty leader of a community in the early stages of adapting to the consequences of becoming co-educational. She knew the members of her community. She cared about them, about their welfare and their development academically and as young men and women. She loved them and they loved her and of course they loved her cat Pogo too. Very often, if you want to describe something which is important and a little complicated, you think of someone who exemplifies its best features. So trying to explain the value of the collegiate structure of the University I've always thought that to look at what Fiona did when she was Principal of Somerville is a very good primer for the job at its most demanding and shows what it entails when it is well done.

The iron law of demography is of course death and our departure — we all share this common destination - to whatever, if anything, happens next. For many religions, there are ways of describing this which bring comfort, but you don't have to have a religion to find solace in ideas which go beyond the utilitarian. I imagine that helps to explain the happy choice of the Ivor Novello lyrics that are being sung during this celebration. The thought of gathering lilacs together again encourages me to mention one metaphor about death and one poem.

A North American Episcopalian missionary bishop, Charles Henry Brent, asked himself the question — what is dying? He imagined that he was standing on the seashore watching a ship with white sails spread sailing on the morning breeze towards the horizon. As the ship becomes a distant speck of white sail just where the sea and sky come together, a friend says to him "There! She's gone!" But gone where? Only gone from my sight, that is all. She is just as big as ever she was. Her diminished size", he goes on, "is this in me and not in her. And just at that moment someone at my side says " there! She's gone!", There are other eyes that are watching for her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout - "there she comes! And that - he concluded - "is dying". And so whether literally or not we will gather lilacs again.

But above all, when I read all the tributes to Dame Fiona I thought of that poem 'Farewell my friends' by the extraordinary Bengali poet, philosopher, artist and spiritual inspiration Rabindranath Tagore. "Farewell, farewell my friends -/I smile and/bid you goodbye./No, shed no tears/I need them not/all I need is your smile. If you feel sad/do think of me/that's what I'll like/when you live in the hearts of those you love remember then/you never die". Dame Fiona Caldicott was a very special and much loved woman. Thanks to her, the world was made a better place for many men and women, young and old. Would that more of us could claim such a legacy.

Lord Patten,  
17<sup>th</sup> September 2022

## **Tribute by Dame Dr June Raine (1971, Physiology), CEO of the MHRA**

The leadership and legacy of Dame Fiona Caldicott in medicine, in education and in patients' safety are without question of immeasurable and lasting value. Fiona's life's work has touched the lives of more people than she would ever have imagined. For Fiona's unique, outstanding contribution to healthcare has benefited each and every one of us. Many more people beyond these shores who will never know her name have reason to be thankful to her.

In medicine, Fiona's distinguished path was not merely a trajectory to the top and to the highest office, leading her chosen specialism during some challenging times as the first woman to become President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. More importantly, Fiona led the way for women in medicine who were attempting to balance career and family. As the first President of a Royal College to have achieved a national role entirely via part-time training and appointments, Fiona broke down one of the most resistant barriers in medicine. In doing so, Fiona opened the door wide for every woman in medicine who does not wish to sacrifice family life in pursuit of career fulfilment.

Fiona's ability to marry her pre-eminent and weighty leadership roles with generous support of those much further down the ladder was what made Fiona so special. In 2010, on Fiona's retirement as college Principal, our Somerville Medics Group was delighted but perhaps not so surprised when Fiona agreed to become our first President. In this role, Fiona was our 'north star', leading us deftly and imperceptibly to take on more stretching objectives.

A new initiative for the alumni to judge presentations of the Final Honours School research projects for their potential to improve patient care not only encouraged students to aim for the highest scientific merit but helped cement the alumni generations in common endeavour. There were debates on the more challenging questions in the National Health Service – including when Fiona brought in her Vice Chair from the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust, the former Director of Sales at Waitrose, who laid out for us in very direct terms exactly what customer care should look like.

And at a purely pragmatic level it was our President who took rapid and decisive action when the blizzard of 2018 blew in across the country the day before our annual meeting, promptly cancelling it and ensuring that no-one would be risking life and limb to get to College through the freezing snow. A small decision, but once again displaying Fiona's natural care for people.

As we celebrate Dame Fiona's life and work today, it is fitting to finish with a focus on arguably Fiona's greatest achievement, transforming information governance in healthcare. The three Caldicott Reports, the first 25 years ago, have surely been Fiona's greatest gift of all. The Government's Chief Medical Officer had spotted Fiona's own personal gifts and asked her to chair a committee looking at patient identifiable data, which at that time was moving around healthcare without patients' knowledge. This was a remarkably prescient decision – it is hard to imagine anyone other than Fiona delivering the transformative recommendations she did, recommendations which have reverberated round the world.

In 2013 Fiona's second report 'Information: To share or not to share,' set out arguably the most important of the eight principles: the duty to share information can be as important as the duty to protect patient confidentiality.

It was Fiona who recognised that data about people's experiences of health and social care has huge potential for improving services and discovering more effective treatments and ways to provide care. She knew that those benefits will not be realised without public trust. In 2018 Fiona became the first National Data Guardian, a position embodied in statute.

The embodiment of the responsibility for wise decisions about the use of patient data in the form of 'Caldicott Guardians' was a ground-breaking decision, for it recognised such individuals would be a powerful force for good by making sure that organisations behave in a way that is trustworthy. In Fiona's modest words, "I really had no idea it would have the effect it has had. We were rather ahead of our time."

Today there are many thousands of Caldicott Guardians across the UK – in NHS hospitals and GP practices; in hospices, clinics, care homes and prisons; in pharmacies and charities and organisations like my own which hold large quantities of patient data. Their work, at the interface of the law, ethics and patient care, is challenging. But it could not be more important.

As captured last year in the landmark Goldacre report on using health data for research, seven decades of complete NHS patient records contain all the noise from millions of lifetimes. "Perfect, subtle signals can be coaxed from this data, and those signals go far beyond mere academic curiosity. They represent deeply buried treasure that can help prevent suffering and death around the planet on a biblical scale. It is our collective duty to make this work". In other words, data saves lives. It seems beautifully apposite that this celebration of Dame Fiona's precious legacy is World Patient Safety Day.

In this historic hall, in the College which bears the name of another pioneering woman who helped challenge and change perceptions, in this setting which is Dame Fiona's spiritual home, we all have memories which will stay in our hearts and minds forever. I have a personal recollection of Fiona quietly sitting down beside an NHS Director after what seemed an interminable government meeting, helping to find a way forward in the fast-moving world of digital data analysis.

There's another contrasting vision of Fiona in this hall, costumed as former Principal Dame Emily Penrose, strikingly beautiful in a vast Edwardian hat in a moving and amusing enactment commemorating Somerville's contribution in the First World War, when college was temporarily housed in Oriel College.

We all wear a number of 'hats' in our lives. Of my 'hats', the one I am proudest to wear is when I say today, 'I am a Caldicott Guardian'. Thanks to Fiona, personal health data are safe and secure and will always be used for the wider benefit and public good. People can be confident of this and have utmost trust, and trust is surely the bedrock of good clinical practice and healthcare.

This is Fiona's lasting legacy. We can take enormous pride and draw huge comfort today from the knowledge that it is a living legacy, a legacy embodied in thousands of Guardians, and a legacy that will benefit patients here and round the world in perpetuity. Thank you, Fiona, for what you have done, for us all.

June M Raine  
17 September 2022



**Tribute by Professor Matthew Wood, Professorial Fellow, Professor of Neuroscience and Associate Head of the Medical Sciences Division**

It is rare in the world of medicine, or any walk of public life for that matter, to come upon such a dedicated leader, who inspired such confidence and loyalty, who gave so much and changed the course of so many peoples' lives – but such was Dame Fiona.

It is said that “life is the sum of your choices”. Ostensibly Somerville chose Fiona as its Principal, but in truth it was the reverse. Having not been offered a place at Somerville to read medicine as an undergraduate, she could have chosen not to throw her hat in the ring. You might say that she had unfinished business...

For a young, new medical tutor at Somerville in the mid 1990s, the election of Fiona as Principal was a remarkable opportunity. I wrote to Fiona immediately after her election – ‘What could we do for medicine at Somerville?’ I asked. Her response was instant, warm, encouraging and wise.

Our very first conversation lasted several hours. Of course we talked about Somerville and a vision for medicine. But we also talked about South Africa, where I had done my medical training, the history of that troubled country, medical training under Apartheid, her own deeply insightful experiences of medicine in South Africa, and the personal tragedy of her son's death in that country.

She inspired immediate confidence, with clarity of mind, deep seriousness and strong commitment. Through example she always inspired the highest professional standards, and always demanded the highest possible aspirations for our students.

Somerville had an abundance of brilliant undergraduate medics at that time. What we needed was a leader in clinical medicine to enable the full span from preclinical to clinical medicine. Almost immediately an opportunity arose. The May Readership in Medicine which had been at New College, was converted to a new May Professorship. New College assumed they would retain it but hadn't counted on Fiona, who went in to bat for Somerville. She also came up against a young Professor by the name of John Bell. Fiona prevailed. The new May professorship came to Somerville and with it the brilliant Professor Raj Thakker. We were now complete.

Fiona's influence grew rapidly within Oxford Medicine. She was passionate about education and training. She became a champion for expanding the number of medical students and in particular for a new Graduate Entry Medical course – which would be a unique opportunity to bring in a more mature and much more diverse group of medical students. Somerville led the charge. With this expansion and these new students, Somerville secured a second Medical Tutor and achieved critical mass across the breadth of medicine.

When Fiona first arrived I asked if she would help to interview medical students, never expecting a busy Principal to have the time to do this. Astonishingly she accepted, and interviewed undergraduate, graduate entry and clinical medical students every single year of her Principalship. She was totally committed. We often joked that no college, perhaps no institution, could match the heavyweight undergraduate interview pair of Professor Thakker, Fellow of the Royal Society and May Professor of Medicine, and Dame Fiona, Principal of Somerville and past President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Doubtless they were an intimidating pair for 17 year old prospective medical students, but Fiona was brilliant at putting candidates at their ease and getting the best out of them. Her deep insights were invaluable and Somerville continued to attract the very best from increasingly diverse backgrounds.

Fiona was totally committed to the students (and not just the medical students). She was deeply concerned for their academic progress, but also their welfare, and in particular their mental health – an important legacy for Somerville and for Oxford. We established a student medical society (named for her predecessor Dame Janet Vaughan). Fiona attended virtually every meeting, attended virtually every visiting talk, and almost every dinner – especially the celebratory ones. She was totally inspirational.

Medicine at Somerville always remained very close to Fiona's heart. She continued to take enormous pride in the achievements of everyone – Fellows, Tutors but particularly the students whose progress and careers she followed closely. Without Fiona, there would be no medicine at Somerville as it is today; she put Somerville medicine well and truly on the map.

Fiona rapidly expanded her leadership roles to many other domains within the University and the wider world of Oxford Medicine.

An especially important role that she took on was as Chair of the Oxford Radcliffe NHS hospital trust. She led the Trust for a decade and guided it through a period of great change. The Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre initially joined forces, together becoming the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in 2015. This provided the crucial foundation for much closer integration and working between the University and the Hospital, which, as we witnessed so vitally during the pandemic, has underpinned Oxford's extraordinary success over the last decade as *the* leading global academic clinical medical centre.

One of Fiona's very strongest supporters during this time was the very same John Bell, who at this point was now Regius Professor of Medicine. He recalls Fiona's extraordinary period of leadership and transformation of the Hospital Trust. "She had to maintain control of a fairly unruly Board (including me) at NHS Trust Board meetings, which, believe it or not, were open to the public – including the press! This was probably her most challenging job ever, but she did it with brilliance and great finesse!"

When Dame Fiona retired from the Oxford University Hospitals Trust in 2019 she had worked in and helped to lead the NHS for more than half its existence. She praised all the staff 'for striving to achieve compassionate excellence'.

Those words 'compassionate excellence' encapsulated Fiona. She aspired to compassionate excellence in all that she did, and much of what she did and achieved during the course of her life and career enabled others at Somerville, in Oxford and in the world of medicine more broadly to aspire to this very same ideal in their professional lives - to the betterment of the NHS and ultimately for the greater benefit of patients.

Professor Matthew Wood  
17 September 2022

### **Tribute by Mrs Helen Morton, Treasurer of Somerville College 2000 - 2012**

Dame Fiona Caldicott studied medicine and physiology at St Hilda's College, having been interviewed by Somerville but not offered a place! She worked in general practice and chose to specialise in psychiatry because it enabled her to combine her parenting responsibilities with part-time work as a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist in Coventry and Birmingham. She became the first woman president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists from 1993 to 1996 and chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges from 1995 to 1996. Through these roles, she came to the attention of the Chief Medical Officer for England and Wales who appointed her to chair a committee on how patient information was protected which led to the establishment of the Caldicott Principles for sharing personal confidential data. Dr June Raine will be telling you more about this aspect of Fiona's legacy shortly.



When Fiona was appointed Principal in 1996, Somerville held a very different place in the university to the one it holds now. The college had only recently begun to admit men in 1994, after long and bitter debate, and was still adjusting to the changes. The transformation to the modern, professional and forward-looking institution it is today is very much the product of her leadership and determination during her years as Principal. She brought a fresh approach and managed change with finesse and discretion, while always maintaining high standards and remaining calm and poised. She built an excellent relationship with alumni and established a professional fundraising team which has helped to support the college in many ways ever since. She used her charm and influence to bring new life to Guest Nights, Dinners and Lectures and to attract some very interesting and influential guests and speakers.

She worked closely with many key members of the university, and developed an excellent working relationship with the Vice Chancellors, in particular, Sir John Hood, and, in my view, this was largely responsible for Somerville being offered the opportunity to develop the two new Somerville buildings on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ). Of course, the fact that the back of the Somerville buildings along the ROQ boundary were mostly rather ugly and that something therefore needed to be built on the boundary to improve the view from the ROQ side probably also played a part in the decision! A building project much closer to home was her initiative to have a large conservatory added to Radcliffe House, the Principal's lodgings, which provided her and subsequent Principals with a very useful dining and entertainment space.

Of course, she was not only the Principal of Somerville, but also held several other roles – she was the Pro Vice-Chancellor Personnel and Equal Opportunities for the University from 2001 to 2010 and a member of Council. She was a Non-Executive Director and, from 2009 to 2019, was Chair of what is now the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Her leadership and her strengthening of the relationships between the Trust and the University enabled the Trust to achieve NHS Foundation status. She calmly and effectively steered the Trust through some difficult times while improving its clinical performance and always celebrating the dedication and excellence of all the staff and partners. She was appointed National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care in 2015 and held many other trustee and board member roles in public bodies.

I met her in July 2000 when I was interviewed to become Treasurer of the college. I was attracted to Somerville in part because I knew of and admired her achievements through my previous role in Trinity Hospice. We worked very closely together for 10 years and developed not only a very good working relationship but also a very good friendship which continued until her death. I learnt so much from her inspiring example and always came away from meetings with her feeling encouraged, energised and ready to tackle the next challenge. We had a shared love of crime and detective novels and often recommended new books to each other, especially by women writers. And one of the highlights of her retirement was of course her appearance in the winning St Hilda's alumni team in the 2016 Christmas University Challenge with the team being chaired by the crime writer, Val McDermid, who is fortunately a very accomplished quizzier!

What made Fiona so special? I think there were a number of different reasons - she was an enormously influential and compelling role model. She was intelligent and

knowledgeable, a quick reader and had a very retentive memory enabling her to absorb large volumes of information and retrieve it very effectively – an essential skill given the number of meetings she chaired or attended! She had a very good memory for the names and faces of people, even those she only met briefly, again very helpful when getting to know almost 200 new students every year.

She was wise and found the right balance between passion, emotion and evidence which enabled her to cut through the inessentials to the real issues. She would consider difficult situations and judge when to make decisions or to intervene, when to carry on the discussion and when to take issues away in order to do more work and come back at a later stage. Her dry sense of humour, charm and surprising wit helped her to deal with whatever situations she encountered, however complex, and she was never to be underestimated. She always took the time to express her thanks and demonstrate her gratitude for a job well done or a kindness shown.

She listened well and was always there to discuss challenges and problems and to offer sage and compassionate advice in the full confidence that anything you discussed with her would not be used against you and would not be passed on to anybody else inappropriately. She was therefore an amazing confidant and support in difficult situations for me and many other colleagues. Her serious approach and elegant appearance could make her seem formidable on the surface, but I and many others experienced her warmth, kindness, integrity and compassion. She introduced an 'open door' policy and was always approachable. She cared for the students and they knew that they could count on her for support, advice and very practical help when needed, whether personal or professional. She delighted in their success and was very pleased to join 'Dame Fi's Barmy Army' of supporters on the touchline, cheering on the college's first women's soccer team.

The students admired, respected and were proud of her, particularly due to the special effort she made to get to know all of them personally through one-to-one meetings. Some of my staff felt she could see straight through them because of being a psychiatrist. Certainly her professional experience of having specialised in adolescent psychiatry was very helpful on the fortunately somewhat rare occasions when she was having to deal with a particularly difficult student situation.

On a perhaps more frivolous note, Fiona always looked elegant, had a great sense of fashion and colour and a penchant for wearing suits in bright colours, especially purple and of course red, Somerville's colours being red and black, and a fantastic selection of scarves which brightened up any outfit. She even wore items of 'Somerville' jewellery on special occasions, one of which was the Ruskin Brooch. The story goes that Ruskin had given the college some uncut sapphires and that at a later date one of the Principals had decided to get them polished and set into a brooch, which apparently reduced the value but had the benefit of making it possible for the sapphires to be worn. There were always fresh flowers in her office, which was one of the pleasures for me of going to see her, together with the familiar smell of her perfume. And I suspect that she may be the only Head of House who has ever had an article written in a Sunday colour supplement about her make-up routine.

There was a running joke among the students that she and her beloved college cat, Pogo, were in fact the same entity, but this actually reflected the huge amount of affection the student body had for their Principal. Certainly, no cat ever got more attention and fuss than Pogo! Pogo, who came from a litter of the cat of the Principal of St Hilda's, was an ever-present, if not always well behaved, part of college life and it seems only fitting that he should be included in the striking portrait of Fiona that now hangs here in the dining hall. My first encounter with Pogo was on my very first day at Somerville when he strolled into my office, jumped onto the desk and sat there for about 30 minutes washing himself until he must have decided that I passed inspection and he wandered off again! I am pleased to say that Pogo continued to enjoy life in his retirement with Fiona and her husband, Robert, in Warwick until his death on 26 June this year aged almost 24, having had a very long and happy life!

Fiona was a very special woman and a very good friend to me – wise, kind, warm, supportive, interested and encouraging. I miss her very much as, I am sure, does everyone who is here today.

Mrs Helen Morton  
17 September 2022

