

Mr Chancellor,

If life is a series of accidents, then a happy accident brought our Honorary Graduand this evening, Colin FitzPatrick, to Newcastle University, an association which has continued for over 40 years. For it was Clearing that brought Colin, a native of Staffordshire, to Newcastle as an undergraduate in 1973. He had planned to go to the LSE to study Economic History, but ended up here studying Economics and Accountancy: their loss, our gain. He recalls his time at Newcastle with fondness, having survived an accommodation crisis in Freshers' week and, later in his career, tackling the then-Trotskyite contingent who were trying to take over the Union by standing successfully as an Independent candidate. His career as the Deputy President of the Union Society was, he says, good preparation for his future career. He met a Senior Partner of Price Waterhouse while he was Deputy President and subsequently applied for just one job – which he got – as a trainee accountant with PW Newcastle, conducting audit and investigations work, where he remained until 1987. In that year, he moved to Grant Thornton, Newcastle, where he quickly became a Partner, with responsibility for the Tax & Personal Financial Planning services. Clients included those in construction, manufacturing, retail and service sectors, and firms of solicitors, providing consultancy on (among other things) mergers, improving profitability, partnership structure, profit sharing and premises appraisal.

Now, Mr Chancellor, if I say that we have in our presence a Forensic Accountant, you may well speculate that Colin has a secret, parallel career in medicine. Not a bit of it. Our Honorary Graduand provides expert advice to

## **JOHN COLIN FITZPATRICK**

the courts in cases such as personal injury, medical negligence, fraud, theft, financial deception and investment fraud, partnership disputes, fiscal and non-fiscal share valuations; shareholder disputes; loss of profits claims; breach of contract and breach of warranties claims; directors disqualification cases; pension losses and tax disputes. He has provided evidence in over 600 civil and criminal cases over more than 20 years, in an extremely varied caseload. One example was the case brought by an independent coal company arguing that British Coal had been de-nationalised at an under-valued price. Another case involved a manufacturer of pickled onion jar lids: unfortunately, the lids rusted when they came into contact with vinegar, resulting in the loss of 1,400 tons of pickled onions. The eye-watering fate of the onions may be imagined, but, for the reckoning of compensation, it was estimated that it would take two years for one person just to unscrew the jars. Colin is also the Founder member and Treasurer of Northern Disputes Resolution, a grouping formed in Newcastle to promote commercial mediation, whose services, by the sound of his caseload history, are sorely needed.

In 1998, Colin established his own business with Jon Royle, a Grant Thornton colleague, as General Practitioners and Specialist Forensic Accountants to provide Tax, Accounting and Business Advisory services. I understand from Mr. Royle that in the early days of their collaboration they were hoping to spend the day together at a cricket match, but since Colin is so very dedicated to long hours at work, his business partner is still waiting.

Colin FitzPatrick is a highly qualified Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and Associate of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, with many other professional accreditations to his name, and has

## JOHN COLIN FITZPATRICK

given lectures for the English and Scottish Law Societies and to the English Society's Management Advisory Section, as well as contributing three chapters to the Law Management Section's Mergers Toolkit published in late 2007, and contained in the recently published *From Recession to Upturn: Financial and Management Strategy for Law Firms*. We are all looking forward to the 'Upturn' bit. As one of his most interesting and challenging appointments, from July 2007 to September 2008, Colin undertook an overseas project which culminated in his appointment as Finance Director and Chief Financial Officer of a manufacturing and construction company based in the Middle East. This floated on the Stock Exchange in London on 30 March 2008, at a market capitalisation of £237 million. In addition to his ongoing work through FitzPatrickRoyle Ltd., he acts as a non-Executive Director of a number of businesses. In 2008, he was appointed the independent Audit Committee Member for the Port of Tyne, and in 2011 he was appointed a non-Executive Director of Techflow Flexibles Limited and of Techflow Marine Limited, companies operating in supplying the Oil and Gas Industry that are based in the North East. His Directorship of Techflow Flexibles Yantai Limited, a Chinese company, takes him on frequent trips to the Far East, and he continues to notch up many more frequent flier miles from Malaysia to Mexico in his highly successful consultancy work.

Colin has been married for thirty years to Bernie, whom we are delighted to see here this evening, and who I am told is also a very adventurous person, having spent time in her 'LBM' – Life Before Marriage – on a scientific trip to Indonesia, followed by independent travel in that country. Their daughter Anna has inherited her parents' love of travel, and now lives and works in Dubai.

## **JOHN COLIN FITZPATRICK**

We are honouring Colin FitzPatrick today for his dedication to Newcastle University and long years of voluntary service. He has some claim to being the longest serving member of Council, having attended his first Council meeting in 1975 as Deputy President of the Union Society. He noted upon his return as an elected member in 2003 that the room in which Council met remained unchanged – although since then Council has met in five different University rooms which says something about the pace of change in higher education. He is also Honorary Treasurer of the Newcastle University Development Trust and Chair of the Investment sub-committee, responsible for the management of over £50 million of investments for the benefit of the University. He was Chair of the Audit Committee from 2005 to 2013, and, we are pleased to say, is still a serving Member of the University Court.

Mr Chancellor, for his time and expertise in dedicated service, and as a loyal and long-standing friend of Newcastle University, I present to you for an Honorary Fellowship, Mr John Colin FitzPatrick.

*Citation by Professor Helen Berry, 13 October 2014*