

William Conrad Costin (1893-1970)

President of St John's College, Oxford

W C Costin was a fine man of a particular English type. At School, of which he became Captain, he had a distinguished academic and athletic career (Victor Ludorum in his final year). He became a captain in the Royal Gloucestershire

Regiment in World War One and won the Military Cross. In World War Two he was seconded to the Ministry of Supply in a vital position organising communications with North America; but his life's work lay in academic achievement.

At St John's College, Oxford he gained a First Class History degree and was successively Exhibitioner, Fellow, Senior Proctor and ultimately, in 1957, a loved and respected President, in the footsteps of William Laud OR (Archbishop of Canterbury and another great President of St John's) whose remains are interred in the Chapel of the College. It was Costin who gave the commemorative lecture on the tercentenary of the execution of Laud in the Tower of London.

Costin's writings reflected his particular interest in China. He served on many University bodies devoting, in particular, much time to the wellbeing of the Bodleian Library. (The longest serving Bodleian Librarian, Bulkeley Bandinel OR, like William Laud, has long been commemorated by a plaque at School.)

Costin was a freemason and a one-time Grand Deacon of England. For many years he was a member of the Southern Appellate Tribunal for Conscientious Objectors, a suitable platform for his humanitarian qualities and warm heart, ever determined on fair treatment for all, in whatever sphere he engaged.

He remained loyal to the School and Town, served on the Reading Education Committee for more than 30 years, was a Reading School Governor and became President of the OR Club.

