

File 20090529.1917: What I learnt from Andy Cooper's *viva* today:

- I shook Andy's hand and congratulated him. He was pleased to see the three of us there for him, I think.
- At Oxford, vivas are private. Only the two examiners (one internal, one external) and the candidate are allowed in, plus possibly the candidate's supervisor.
- Graduation places are booked a year in advance, and it's only by chance that Andy was able to get one that soon.
- Possibly, plan on booking a graduation place as early as the beginning of 2010 for Spring 2011. Otherwise, if your viva is in January 2011, you might not be able to graduate until early 2012.
- Andy said his external examiner was very tough on him. He was picked to be a 'nice guy'. But the external examiner sees his job as to be extremely tough (the quality control aspect). They kept Andy in there for two and a half hours and started off by saying, 'in this section you said  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ . That's all wrong. Why?'
- Andy looked very happy and relieved. I've heard of DPhil students graduating, but never seen it happen. John Lyle and Shamal and I bought Andy drinks in the Royal Oak.
- I explained how US PhD programmes are different: start at age 22, seven years instead of three; equals as weed-out; getting assigned a thesis topic by your advisor; full funding for seven years so people just drift along.
- DPhil programme requirements have changed; first just after Andy started, then again just after John and I started; new requirement for (and total lack of relevance of) the four required MSc courses that the handbook says you must take; apparently Prof. Kwiatkowska as the new DGS is absolutely requiring them now, whereas before (in Andy's day) it was almost a nonexistent requirement, and when John and I started, it was supposedly required but customarily ignored by supervisors and assessors.
- We discussed Prof Kwitakowska's requirement (as the new DGS) for 3–5 published papers by Confirmation of Status. John and Andy both reiterated how much they liked my writing style (informal, 'more like a book' they said) of the original transfer report and hoped I would continue to write in that style in future.

## References