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Transforming natural resources into fuels » An interview with Christopher Ricks
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Editorial
Welcome to the 2010 issue of Floreat Domus. The magazine is being published slightly earlier this year, partly because the Annual Record comes out in September, and we wanted to distribute the two publications more evenly across the year.

I am grateful to the informal editorial advisory group which has provided advice on the content of this issue. Vice-Master Seamus Perry, postgraduate Jennifer Robinson, undergraduate Tom Rowley, Tutor in Politics Adam Swift, and Senior Tutor Nicola Trott have all been helpful in this regard. If there is any Old Member with a particular interest in publications who is willing to join this group I would be pleased to hear from you. The group does not meet in person; members simply respond to one or two emails a year which ask for specific input or advice.

In this issue, as well as welcoming some new faces we are also celebrating student success in debating, judo, and journalism; we continue to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the admission of women to Balliol with a report on the first of two special women’s lunches; and we also find out what just a handful of the thousands of talented Balliol alumni are doing today in fields as diverse as cake-baking, sustainable energy, novel-writing, and counter-insurgency, to name but a few.

As always, please do not hesitate to write to me with your thoughts and comments on the magazine.

Jacqueline Smith, Editor
New Domestic Bursar

In July 2009, Jo Roadknight took an opportunity ‘too good to miss’ and moved from Hertford College to Balliol as Domestic Bursar, filling the vacancy left by Carl Woodall when he went to work at the House of Lords earlier in the year.

Jo’s first impression of Balliol was that it had an ‘extraordinary family feel’, and that there was a sense of people belonging to the College, from the scouts to the fellowship. In one of her previous roles she managed a group of care homes for the elderly, and she jokes that this experience of ‘looking after the old and slightly mad might stand her in good stead for overseeing the efficient running of an Oxford college! It is clear that she certainly has a well-functioning sense of humour, which is one of the skills she identifies as important for a Domestic Bursar, along with diplomacy, and remembering what it was like to be a student.

It was in the air force that Jo began her career, as an officer, before taking time out to have her three children. She then resumed work, this time for British Airways, where she managed cabin services across fleets including Concorde.

Balliol’s new Domestic Bursar has been charged with cutting costs and increasing revenue in this difficult financial climate, and Jo intends to do this while continuing to improve services for students, Fellows, and visitors to the College, whether they be tourists, parents, or conference guests.

I ask Jo what she likes best about her role here at Balliol, and without hesitation she explains that it is the variety that she enjoys: ‘One minute I could be head to head with the city council, and the next minute I’m taking the maintenance team out for a pint on a Friday’.

New Praefectus

In September 2010 Holywell Manor will be welcoming a new Praefectus. The Praefectus is the Fellow responsible for overseeing the College’s graduate centre based around Holywell Manor and for pastoral care of Balliol’s outstanding community of graduate students.

Professor Tom Melham, the new incumbent, sees his role as being an ’advocate for Balliol’s graduates, in College and the University’, committed to the well-being of the students and the success of the centre. Having been an international graduate student at Cambridge in the 1980s, Tom knows first-hand how a strong college community can provide a ‘delightful and uniquely valuable intellectual and social home’ to graduates. He wants to make sure that Holywell Manor remains the premier collegiate graduate facility in Oxford.

After Cambridge, Tom went to Glasgow University, where he served as Faculty Vice-Dean for Graduates, coming to Balliol as Tutor in Computation in 2002. He is Professor of Computer Science in the University and does research on machine-assisted logical reasoning about computation. Tom has just come to the end of four years as Tutor for Graduate Admissions at Balliol, during which time he oversaw a significant expansion in the College’s graduate numbers and in Balliol’s provision of graduate scholarships. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and supporters, we now offer more graduate scholarship funding than does any other Oxford college.

I asked Tom what aspects of the role he was most looking forward to. He was enthusiastic about working with the individuals who make up the graduate student community at Balliol. ’It really is an extraordinary group of very clever people. It will be exciting to get to know these young scholars and researchers, full of energy and interest, and working across many disciplines.’

‘Tom will also be involved with some of the more practical aspects of life at the Manor. The MCR have already used some of their own budget to clear the old kitchens in the basement to make way for a sound-proof music practice space. Tom is keen to help ensure this proposed development becomes a reality. He is also delighted to be working with the new Domestic Bursar, who has already started making important improvements to facilities and staffing at the Manor’.

Balliol wishes the new Praefectus all the best in his aim to offer our graduate students ‘dedicated graduate facilities and a scholarly community unmatched in Oxford’.
New Fellows

Balliol is pleased to welcome seven new Fellows.

Gretchen Gerzina

Gretchen is a Supernumerary Fellow, George Eastman Visiting Professor (English). She is the Kathie Tapte Vernon Professor in Biography at Dartmouth College. Gretchen has published widely on such diverse topics as Bloomsbury, Frances Hodgson Burnett (author of The Secret Garden), and slavery. Since 1997 Gretchen has hosted the US radio programme ‘The Book Show’.

Joseph Conlon

Joseph joins Balliol as a Junior Research Fellow in the Sciences (Physics). Previously he was at the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Cambridge. He is a particle physicist and specializes in string theory, which postulates that all particles are vibrating strings. His research studies the consequences of the extremely small-scale physics of string theory for the merely very small scales of particle physics. He is particularly interested in supersymmetry and the mass patterns of supersymmetric particles that may be discovered at the Large Hadron Collider.

Toby Ord

Toby returns to Balliol as a Junior Research Fellow in the Humanities (Philosophy), having studied Philosophy here as a graduate. His research interests encompass both theoretical and practical ethics. He will focus on ‘moral uncertainty’: the study of how we are to act when we are uncertain about the relevant moral issues. He is also working on the ethics of global poverty and global catastrophic risk (see page 36).

Nicola Trott

Nicola took up the post of Senior Tutor and Academic Registrar at Balliol in Trinity Term 2007. Previously she was Head of English Literature at the University of Glasgow, where she also undertook research in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature. Before moving to Glasgow in 1995 she had been a Fellow by Special Election at St. Catherine’s College Oxford and a Lecturer both in Oxford and at the University of London.

Laure Zanna

Laure Zanna is the James Martin Junior Research Fellow (Oceanography). She is based in the University’s Departments of Physics and Earth Sciences. Her research focuses on ocean dynamics and climate. She studies physical mechanisms related to large-scale ocean circulation variability.

Marika Youni

Marika (Maria) is a Supernumerary Visiting Fellow and Oliver Smithies Lecturer 2009-2010. She is Associate Professor of Legal History in the Department of Law at Democritus University of Thrace (Greece). Her speciality is ancient Greek law and institutions, Roman law and institutions, and the interaction between Roman and Greek law in the Greek provinces of the Roman Empire. While at Balliol she intends to complete her research on legal inscriptions from Ancient Crete (7th – 4th centuries BC).

András Schiff

Andras Schiff is a Hungarian-born classical pianist. He emigrated from Hungary to Britain in 1970, and is a British citizen. Schiff is one of the most renowned interpreters of Bach, Mozart, Schubert, and Schumann. He is a Special Supernumerary Fellow at Balliol, a post to which he was elected in 2009 for five years.
John Jones’ retirement dinner

Contrary to popular opinion, chemists love nothing better than a good knees-up. Fortunately Saturday 17 October 2009 offered the generations of Balliol chemists a very good party excuse indeed.

The occasion was a celebratory dinner held to mark the 48-year Oxford career of Dr John Jones, the College’s quondam Head of Chemistry, Dean, Vice-Master, Vice-Gerent, and Hero of the JCR, finally becoming an Emeritus Fellow. (We can hardly say it’s a true retirement, since he is remaining as Balliol’s Fellow Archivist, and has taken charge of the project to convert St Andrew’s Church to Balliol’s Historic Collections Centre [see p XX].)

One hundred and thirty people gathered on the night, first overflowing from the Senior Common Room, then in Balliol’s Hall. Former colleagues including Professor David Logan and Professor Malcolm Green were joined by students from nearly every year taught by [HJ], including some who now have chairs of chemistry of their own. The kitchen staff did us proud with a menu including beef Wellington, one of John's favourite dishes, as those who have attended his schools' dinners will know.

What John and his wife Pat did not at first know was that on the way through to the back quad, those attending the dinner had been quietly diverted into the Old Common Room, to add their signatures to a picture which was presented to John during the speeches. The photograph was a stunning 360° panorama of Balliol’s front quad turned into a circular picture, including a view of staircase 2 where John taught chemistry to 41 years’ worth of undergraduates. The image was created by Karl Harrison, the Oxford Chemistry Department’s IT officer.

During the dinner the Master spoke about John’s many contributions to Balliol, not only as a Tutor, but as everything from Dean to Senior Fellow and Vice-Gerent. Then Professor Dermot O’Hare, John’s successor as College Head of Chemistry, sang the guest of honour’s praises at greater length. Dermot spoke of the impact John has had on the international peptide chemistry community, on generations of students, and on the College which has been his focus for nearly half a century. There were reminiscences of studying as an undergraduate chemist, the typically intense Jones tutorials, and side-stepping decanal wrath, then memories of O’Hare’s change from pupil to fellow tutor, and finding in John a supportive and encouraging mentor.

Dermot also explained, for those who might not be aware, how in recent years the Balliol archivist has attracted something of a cult following among students. A Facebook fan-group called 'John Jones is God', started by three former students, now has 262 members. A sample 'fact': 'Fume hoods are not used to protect John Jones from a reaction, they protect the reaction from John Jones...'

The evening was an acclaimed success, with 124 chemists from 41 different Balliol years seizing the opportunity to meet up and grow nostalgic over their shared experiences. Wine flowed, conversation sparkled, and most of us have never seen John himself so close to being speechless, almost overwhelmed by the affection in which so many clearly hold him.

Our thanks to everyone who helped to organize the evening.

Emma Windham, Anne Hammerstein, Amy Mallock (née Rawlings), and Sarah Gowrie (all 2002)

John Jones, Andrea Sella (1986), and Geoffrey Cloke (1971)
Sculpture at the Manor

In 2009 Holywell Manor received two artworks to add to its impressive collection. Raymond Petit (1975) donated a piece of his own work: a sculpture entitled ‘Icarus’. Even as an undergraduate reading PPE, Petit combined his studies with sculpture, staging an exhibition at the Oxford Union Society. He continued with his art alongside his diplomatic career, exhibiting in various countries and achieving international recognition as a sculptor. ‘Icarus’ was unveiled in May by the artist at a drinks reception presided over by the Praefectus Diego Zancani, at which the Master Andrew Graham gave a speech. The guests included current and old members of the College as well as members of the artist’s family and a representative from the Luxembourg embassy in London.

Four months later, in September, a bronze cast of an original piece entitled ‘Molusco’ by Feliciano Béjar arrived at Holywell Manor. This piece was kindly donated by Martin Foley (1951). (See Floreat Domus 2009.)

Balliol is very grateful to Raymond Petit and to Martin Foley for their generous contributions to Holywell Manor’s beautiful grounds.

Rory Stewart to give 2010 Stein Lectures at Balliol

The Leonard Stein Lectureship was established in 2001 in honour of Leonard Jacques Stein (1887–1973) and his son Peter Philip Kitay Stein (1932–1971), who were both members of the College. The Lectureship covers the fields of International Relations, Politics, or Modern History with special reference to the study of these subjects in relation to the modern Middle East. The Lecturer is responsible for giving a small number of lectures open to any member of the University.

Leonard Stein had been associated with the cause of Liberalism in British politics since his student days. He was active in the League of Nations Union, being a member of the Mandates and other committees, and was a founder member of the Council of Christians and Jews. In 1953 he was awarded an OBE for political and public services. Peter Stein was Leonard’s elder son. At Rugby School he was awarded the King’s Gold Medal for History, and at Balliol (he matriculated in 1952) took a First in Modern History. He suffered from ill-health for much of his life, and died, aged only 39, in 1971.

The College is pleased to announce that in 2010 Rory Stewart (1992) will be giving the Leonard Stein lectures. Rory is Ryan Family Professor of the Practice of Human Rights and Director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University. He is the Conservative Party’s Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Penrith and The Border. He is well-known for having walked 6000 miles across Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries in 2000–2002 (see Floreat Domus 2008). In 2006 he founded the Turquoise Mountain Foundation, a charity designed to revive Kabul’s historic commercial centre. See page 20 for more from Rory on the current situation in Afghanistan.

French catering teams visit Balliol

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Before arriving at Balliol the visitors went to see Raymond Blanc’s famous Oxfordshire restaurant, Le Manoir aux Quat’ Saisons. At Balliol they were welcomed with drinks in the Fellows’ Garden, followed by lunch in the OCR. Balliol’s Domestic Bursar Jo Roadknight, Conference and Catering Manager Howard Chirgwin, Head Chef Bertrand Faucheux, and Head Butler Jacqueline Fossey took the visitors on a tour of the the Hall, SCR, and Buttery, where there was a display of some of the College silver.

The Head Butler took them on an impromptu guided tour of the Covered Market (where they enjoyed watching staff decorating cakes in the shop where Balliol’s former Pastry Chef now works).

In December the House of Lords returned the favour. The Balliol staff enjoyed a tour of the buildings and catering outlets, and lunch in one of the formal dining rooms.

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Looking around Balliol Hall in the early afternoon of 21 November 2009, we could hardly believe our eyes. Gone were the rows of suits punctuated with the occasional dress so common at formal College dinners. Instead, the room was filled with women moving between tables to meet with old friends, planning their day in Oxford, or simply going over all that had happened since graduation. It was hard to believe that among this group were the very first women ever admitted into the college, the class of 1979.

This lunch, celebrating thirty years of women being admitted to Balliol, was a chance not only to meet up with old friends or, in our case, to learn about what life was like from previous generations of students. It was also a way to celebrate how the entry of women changed college life and culture forever. Two speeches, by Cressida Dick (1979) and Anna Lewis (2003; currently a postgraduate student at Balliol) made the point well. They reflected on what had changed over the past decades, and what had remained the same. It was obvious that from the very beginning these students, from 1979 onwards, had made an impact, whether in shockingly good rowing, taking on student politics, or achieving academic brilliance.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the day was the opportunity to speak to some of the extraordinary women who comprise Balliol’s alumni. We were privy to two old friends both cringing while remembering their sartorial choices – shaved heads, in hindsight, were not such a good look – and fondly reminiscing about their JCR days of rent strikes, rowing, and lots of laughter.

What was particularly memorable was the continued reiteration of what these women believe is the Balliol ethos: to use one’s skills as well as possible to serve others across the world. For finalists in the haze of fast-approaching exams, this was not only reassuring, but positively encouraging when thinking about what having studied at Balliol might actually be all about.

That these women could communicate the significance of having studied at Balliol so affectionately, and with so many joyful memories, was for us the highlight of the celebration. In years to come, when celebrating forty years of women at Balliol, we can only hope to do the same.

Three of Balliol JCR’s former Women’s Officers record their impressions of the first of two lunches celebrating the women’s admission to Balliol.

Women’s Anniversary Booklet

Many thanks to all the women who have responded to our calls for memories and pictures from their time at Balliol. A booklet to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of women being admitted to Balliol is to be published in May 2010. You will be able to view this as a pdf on the College website (www.balliol.ox.ac.uk), but if you would like to receive a print copy, please contact Janet Hazelton (Development Office, Balliol College, Oxford, OX1 3BJ; tel: + 44 (0)1865 277690; fax: + 44 (0)1865 202472; email: janet.hazelton@balliol.ox.ac.uk)
The 2009 William Westerman Pathfinders

The Pathfinders Programme, inaugurated by benefactor Bill Coolidge in 1955, funds up to eight final-year students to travel to the USA each summer. The successful applicants stay for six to eight weeks, mainly hosted by Balliol Old Members. The purpose is to encourage better understanding between non-US citizens and US citizens, as well as allowing Old Members to keep in touch with Balliol.

Three of the 2009 Pathfinders were entertained overnight by Kitty Lastavica (Bill Coolidge’s niece) and her husband John. A dinner was held at their beach club in Manchester, Massachusetts, and the next morning breakfast was held at their estate. It was a chance for the Pathfinders to find out which belonged formerly to Bill Coolidge. It was taken at their house, located on the estate in the rocky mountain National park, and forest fire and a black bear in Yosemite.

The great American wilderness

Flora Malein has a background in botany, so it is no surprise that for her, ‘one of the greatest lures of the Pathfinders Programme was the opportunity to experience the great American wilderness with my very own eyes.’ She visited Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, the setting of Henry David Thoreau’s classic work Walden; or Life in the Woods (1854). It was Thoreau and philosophers like him who helped to develop an understanding of the importance of conservation in America, and Flora set out to discover whether the culture of conservation is still alive and well, by visiting botanic gardens and parks across the States.

The Pathfinders skilfully combined their research activities with plenty of adventure, as Henry Cullen recounts: ‘this week [a road trip across the south-west] provided some unforgettable moments: the first view of the canyon; cruising down the old Route 66; gazing in awe at the Hoover Dam; seeing not a single soul when looking around us in Death Valley; star-gazing under the dark desert sky in central Nevada; and surviving close encounters with a forest fire and a black bear in Yosemite.’

Roisin Watson enjoyed climbing Mt Evans in the Rocky Mountain National Park, and experiencing Niagara Falls on the Maid of Mist boat. Maya Bahoshy’s various hosts took her to tennis and baseball sporting events as well as to musical concerts and a Labor Day barbecue. Indeed, food featured prominently in most of the Pathfinders’ reports, with fine steakhouses and traditional ice cream parlours getting frequent mentions.

On their return from the USA, the 2009 Pathfinders dined in London with Matthew Westerman (1983), whose generous benefaction currently funds the programme in memory of his father, William Westerman (1947). They were joined by Master Andrew Graham, Dean & Chaplain Douglas Dupree, Development Director Alastair James, and Old Member Jon Moynihan.

Comparing education systems

The Pathfinders each propose a research project that they will work on during their stay. In 2009, two Pathfinders displayed an interest in learning about the American education system. Helen Lochead concluded that ‘the UK higher education system has a lot to learn from America. She visited a liberal arts college and was convinced of the benefit of students not having to specialize too early, concluding that studying a wider variety of subjects for longer makes for more well-rounded individuals. Charlotte Heard investigated attitudes to public and private education, and learnt about different ways of handling admissions to higher education. She says: ‘I really learnt a lot about education during my trip, from educational policy ideas in Washington, to observing lessons in the Bronx!’

Lucy Kellett also found herself exploring American educational institutions. Her project was about feminism on university campuses. She found that she benefited from exposure to American confidence, and is frank about what she personally got out of the experience: As for what this trip taught me about myself: I am much more capable than I thought.’

The 2009 Pathfinders

Flora Malein (2006, Biological Sciences)
Charlotte Heard (2006, Physiological Sciences)
Hannah Kuchler (2006, History)

Maya Bahoshy (2006, Physiological Sciences)
Henry Cullen (2006, Classics)
Lucy Kellett (2006, English)
Helen Lochead (2006, Chemistry)
Roisin Watson (2006, History)
Judo champion

Over the last fifteen years, Rebecca Bayliss (2009) has devoted much of her time to judo. In January, she represented England at the 2010 Commonwealth Judo Championships in Singapore. She won the bronze medal in the senior 63 kgs category. She says: 'If someone had told me six months ago I would have a bronze medal from the Commonwealth Championships I would probably have laughed.'

Rebecca is reading for a DPhil in Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics, and is grateful to the people in her lab who ‘frequently put up with me running out at 6pm sharp to catch a train, and then crawling in aching the following day.’ She is also thankful to her boyfriend who follows her ‘through all the highs and lows, despite the pressures of training and competing for himself’.

Rebecca travelled to Singapore using a grant from Balliol’s Cadle Fund. She says: ‘I am extremely grateful to Don Cadle for his generous endowment and love of Balliol sport, and to the fund’s current managers, for the support I received. I am very proud to have travelled with Balliol College behind me and am delighted to have been able to return with a medal.’ Rebecca aims to represent Great Britain in judo within the next two years.

Balliol scoops Guardian Student Media Awards

Balliol is proud of two current students for their success in the recent Guardian Student Media Awards.

Thomas Phipps (2007), a third-year English student, edits the humourous magazine Oxymoron, which won the Guardian Student Media Award for Magazine of the Year. At the awards ceremony Tom and the other Oxymoron editors informed everyone around them that there was no way their magazine was going to win: ‘we said the whole concept of victory for the Oxymoron was ridiculous, we were talentless hacks, etc. Then a video clip was shown of all of the editors of the Guardian, Grazia, and others reading the magazine and laughing, which was awesome. The result was announced and we went up and got the award. We were all glowing for days afterwards.’

Tom Rowley (2008), a second-year History & Politics student, was runner-up for Student Journalist of the Year. Tom lost no time in becoming involved in student journalism when he arrived at Balliol, starting work as a reporter on The Oxford Student in Hilary term of his first year. Then he progressed to news editor, and eventually to overall editor in Michaelmas 2009, which must make him one of the youngest ever editors of the paper. He is part of the editorial advisory group for Floreat Domus, and he is the author of an article on Balliol and the European Union in this issue (page 32).

Tom says: ‘Naturally, I was honoured to be named runner-up. I’m hoping to go into journalism or marketing in the future. I’ve reached the end of my term editing the student paper, so although I will continue contributing articles, I should have a bit more time for academic work, which my tutors should be pleased about!’

More Balliol debating success


This year, another Balliol man was ranked top debater at the 2010 Championships, beating 700 others during the event at Koç University in Turkey. Balliol’s Shengwu Li (2006) spoke for the motion “The media should show the horrors of war”. The pressure at such tournaments is not insignificant; debaters are informed of the motion only fifteen minutes before they have to speak. Shengwu says: ‘There are few debates that three years of reading PPE do not equip you to argue… It felt great to be ranked the top speaker, but debating is a team sport, and my individual ranking owes a lot to my partner (Jonathan Leader Maynard of University College).’

Shengwu has previous successes under his belt: in the summer of 2009 he took part in the European Universities Debating Competition in Newcastle, and his team, Oxford A, won the competition. He was also voted the second best speaker of the tournament. His performance there allowed Oxford to retain that particular trophy for the second year in succession.

So what is the quality that enables Balliol students to stand out from the crowd in debating circles? According to Shengwu, it is ‘imagination, which, as Einstein said, is more important than knowledge.’

Shengwu Li
'If you like free food, you’ll love this!' I have spent my last three terms at Balliol happily disseminating slogans such as this (with the help of Catherine Willbery, Secretary to the Dean and Chaplain), in order to encourage people to come to the weekly Doug’s Lunch. In case you’re not familiar with this most nutritious of Balliol institutions, Doug’s Lunch is a meeting open to all members of College, in which we listen to an invited speaker talk on a topic, and then engage in discussion together, while enjoying the free sandwiches, coffee, and biscuits Doug provides every Thursday.

We students spend much of our time at Oxford focusing on the subject of our study, alongside colleagues in our particular fields. This is why those who come to Doug’s Lunches find it so refreshing to listen to a variety of speakers, who all assume that their audience has no previous knowledge of their subject. Our audience is diverse and fluctuating — around ten to thirty undergraduates and graduates, and sometimes a few members of staff. No matter the make-up of the audience for a particular talk, the discussion that follows is consistently imaginative and thought-provoking. Because the meeting is open to all, and informally cozy in the recognisably Dupree way, there is easy conversation between graduates and undergraduates, and students who otherwise would not meet one another. This is a weekly commitment you don’t have to commit to — although many feel compelled to do so!

In the last year as Doug’s Lunch convenor I’ve had great fun introducing a wide range of speakers and ideas to this community within College. Many speakers have been visiting professors at Balliol, or long-established Fellows: we have heard David Wallace on parallel universes, and Lynn Margulis on the evolution of sex; Stephen Tapscott has recited translations of Neruda’s love poetry; and Daniel Burns showed photos of the children in Helmand, Afghanistan, where he was stationed. We have made many speculations about the future, aided by the Institute of Ageing and by the Oxford Internet Institute next door to Balliol.

Doug’s Lunches have also provided a valuable platform for gathering the awareness of students on issues we can change. Felicity Cooke (head of the University’s Equality & Diversity Unit) talked to us on the hidden gender prejudices that lead to discreet discrimination; Toby Ord explained the ethical foundations of his thriving charity, Giving What We Can; and dialogue between Balliol students and Rose Hill Primary School was recently set up as the result of a Doug’s Lunch.

Most of all, I have made friends with a wonderful range of graduates and undergraduates whom I would never otherwise come across in our busy and divergent daily schedules. Many others have done so as well. If you can — you should definitely come!

Doug’s Lunches are from 1–2pm in room 8, staircase 21, every Thursday during term-time. The termcard is published online and through the JCR, MCR, and staff mailing lists. If you would like to suggest a speaker for Trinity Term or later, please email yuan.yang@balliol.ox.ac.uk

Felicity Cooke, head of the University’s Equality & Diversity Unit

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions relating to the website, please contact: webmaster@balliol.ox.ac.uk

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By Yuan Yang (2008)
Professor and Priest

Balliol Fellow Judith Brown describes her faith as being ‘at her core’ and asserts that it has to be ‘all or nothing’. Perhaps it is this sense of conviction and determination that has led her along the obstacle-filled but ultimately rewarding path to ordination.

Judith first knew she wanted to become a Priest in the early 1970s when she was teaching at Manchester University. She talked it over with the University Chaplain, who advised her, given the Church of England’s policy on the ordination of women, to ‘put the idea on the shelf and hope it goes away’. Twenty years later, in 1992, the Church decided to allow women to become ordained. Judith was by this time two years into a new post at Oxford, and deeply involved in the academic life of the University as well as bringing up a young family. She simply couldn’t see how she could also fit in training for the ministry.

It was in the summer of 2007, when Judith attended a friend’s ordination at Winchester Cathedral, that she realised that she should actively pursue the idea of training to become a Priest. She was accepted at Ripon College Cuddesdon, just outside Oxford. People entering the ministry later in life are able to follow tailor-made courses, which take into account the knowledge, training and experience they already have. So Judith was able to take a course during two terms of sabbatical leave due to her. She says: ‘it was a remarkable experience going back to being a student, attending lectures, writing essays and having tutorials’.

Judith was ordained as a Deacon at Christ Church Cathedral on 4 October 2009. She will be ordained as a Priest in June 2010. In the interim she is ‘apprenticed’ to a Priest in a large benefice between Oxford railway station and the ringroad. She is of course also involved with the Balliol Chapel community, working with Chaplain Douglas Dupree. Among other things, she has instituted, with fellow Pastoral Associate Alex Popescu, a Tuesday evening service, which alternates between Choral Evensong and a quiet meditative service.

Judith’s new life combining her dual roles of Professor and Priest is one that requires careful organization. The two roles are not without overlap. Academics’ work involves pastoral care, which is also central to the ordained ministry. Moreover, she has found that her academic training as a historian migrates easily to another discipline: for example it means that she finds it natural approaching the Bible as a historical text, or, as a historian of Asian history and culture, studying rites such as marriages and funerals in a historical framework across different religious traditions.

In fact many of Judith’s students are from Muslim and Hindu traditions, and she recounts how she discussed her ordination with them: ‘I thought it was important to reassure them that my relationship with them wasn’t about to change – I wasn’t going to try and convert them!’ It is telling that some of the most enthusiastic supporters of Judith’s becoming a Priest have in fact been from faith traditions other than Christianity. Her understanding of other cultures and religious traditions means that she can observe and value ‘how different people see reality and pursue the good and the true’ – an insight that will surely come in useful as she embarks upon this new stage of her life.
Balliol Fellow David Vines is a Professor of Economics. He is interested in macroeconomic theory and policy. His research is gathered around three main strands: fiscal and monetary policy within the European Monetary Union and its implications for the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact in Europe; international financial crises, and the implication of these crises for reform of the crisis-management process at the International Monetary Fund; and the implications of the fall of the dollar, and of Chinese exchange-rate policy, for the reform of the international monetary system.

Professor Vines took sabbatical leave in Michalemas Term 2009, and here Floreat Domus publishes an extract from his report:

‘This has been a rewarding term. I spent it at the Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis, in the Research School of Economics at the Australian National University, where I have an Adjunct Professorship. I have been working on the macroeconomics of the global financial crisis. I am editing a double-issue of the Oxford Review of Economic Policy on the crisis with Christopher Adam, of the Department for International Development and St Cross College. I spent much of my sabbatical leave discussing the issue’s papers with their authors as they, Chris, and I all gradually put together an understanding of how to think about the crisis. Chris and I are writing a long introductory essay for the issue.

I have also been working with a graduate student on a formal, analytical piece about the financial crisis, tentatively called ‘On getting Finance properly into Macroeconomics’. This has involved technical analysis of how a financial sector of the economy, in which there are highly-leveraged firms (such as Goldman Sachs and the late Lehman Bros), can cause there to be wild oscillations in asset prices. Many macro-economists are at present at work on aspects of this question, one component of which concerns how a small shock (trouble in the sub-prime mortgage market in the US) can cause a large outcome (the near collapse of the entire global financial system and a global recession). Interestingly one non-economist has entered the fray in a revealing way. Bob May, a biologist, and former President of the Royal Society, has introduced economists to models taken from epidemiology, and his ideas have been taken up in a big way by Andy Haldane, the leader of the Financial Stability Section at the Bank of England. My own paper with graduate student Paul Luk provides one answer to this ‘small shock/big outcome’ question. In doing this it uses insights from the ‘financial accelerator’ literature, something which was originally started by Ben Bernanke, now Governor of the US Federal Reserve System.

In November I gave a paper called ‘Thinking about Globalisation in the Very Long Run’, in which I argued that Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and Maynard Keynes all understood that globalisation of the economy leads to changes in the international distribution of political power. Keynes, in particular, understood that after bearing the burdens of two world wars, the UK would no longer remain the global hegemon. He saw that a genuinely new system of global governance was necessary – a multilateral system – at least in part to protect the UK from the depredations of the new hegemon, the US. It is becoming clear that the US will not remain in the global hegemon for much longer, and that a new sort of multilateral system is necessary – at least in part to protect the rest of us from a struggle for global supremacy between the US and China. My paper on this topic will become a chapter in a Festschrift for Ross Garnaut, a prominent policy economist in Australia.’
New Year Honours

Five Balliol alumni have received Honours in the British and Australian Honours Lists for 2010.

James Fairfax (1952, and Honorary Fellow) has been elevated from AO (Officer of the Order of Australia) to AC (Companion of the Order of Australia) in the 2010 Australia Day Honours List. He received his original honour in the Queen’s Birthday Honours in 1993, for his service to the arts and to the community. This second honour recognizes his continued service to the community through support for the visual arts, conservation organizations, and building programmes for medical research and educational facilities. His interest in medical research, particularly pediatrics, stems from the fact that he was diagnosed with a very serious life-threatening condition called pyloric stenosis when he was three months old. He survived and went on to combine his illustrious media career with the philanthropy for which he has now been twice honoured.

Edward Mortimer (1962, and Honorary Fellow) has been awarded the CMG (Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George) for services to international communications and journalism. He is Senior Vice-President and Chief Program Officer of the Salzburg Global Seminar, Austria. This institution is a non-profit organization that holds seminars on economics, politics, and other issues for future political, economic, and business leaders from around the world. Its mission is ‘to challenge present and future leaders to solve issues of global concern.’ Previously Edward Mortimer worked in communications roles in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Lieutenant General Simon Mayall (1975) has been appointed CB (Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath). He has served in the army for over thirty years, in Germany, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Oman, Belgium, and Afghanistan.

Cressida Dick (1979), Assistant commissioner in the Metropolitan Police Force, has been awarded the Queen’s Medal for Distinguished Service.

Hugh Powell (1985), lately UK Senior representative in Helmand, Afghanistan, has been awarded the CMG.

Jane Stapleton

Balliol Emeritus Fellow Professor Jane Stapleton (1981) has been elected Honorary Bencher of Gray’s Inn. Jane Stapleton is Ernest E. Smith Professor of Law at the University of Texas School of Law, a Professor at the Australian National University College of Law, and a Statutory Visiting Professor and member of the Law Faculty at Oxford University. She received a Doctorate of Civil Law from Oxford in May 2009.

Singaporean Policeman’s success

Peter Joo Hee Ng (1985) took over as the Commissioner of Police in Singapore on 1 February 2010. Forty-three year-old Peter Joo Hee read Engineering and Economics at Balliol. He has worked with the Singapore police force for 24 years. He helped set up and lead the police’s elite Special Tactics and Rescue (Star) unit, which specialises in hostage rescue, and was the former Central Police Division commander. His most recent role in Singapore was as Director of Prisons.

Kim Beazley appointed Australia’s US Ambassador

In September 2009 the Australian Government announced that Kim Beazley (1973), a former Australian Defence Minister, and more recently Chancellor of the Australian National University, would be the new Ambassador in Washington. Speaking on Australian radio, Professor Beazley said: ‘This is just about the toughest ambassadorial job that we have… I look forward to it.’
Beth Shapiro’s (1999) career proves that life as a bioinformatician requires equal parts lab work, globetrotting, survival instincts, brains, and sangfroid. She has trekked through the Yukon Territory, Alaska, and Siberia’s Taimyr Peninsula to hunt for the remains of extinct animals. A 2008 woolly mammoth expedition brought her face-to-face with curious, shotgun-toting Dolgans, a local nomadic people of Siberia. As a Balliol graduate student, Beth managed to convince Oxford’s Museum of Natural History to let her take a drill to rare, irreplaceable dodo bones. Her willingness to go to such great lengths in the name of science has made her a leading scholar in the field of evolutionary biology. Her efforts have earned substantial praise. In September 2009, she received the highly coveted MacArthur Fellowship. Commonly referred to as the ‘Genius Grant’, the five-year, $500,000 award encourages recipients to pursue their own creative, intellectual, and professional inclinations. This immense honour comes early in Beth’s career. While she has published more than forty scientific papers, undertaken numerous fellowships, and acted as director of Oxford’s Ancient Biomolecules Centre, she has held her current post as an Assistant Professor of Biology at Pennsylvania State University only since 2007. ‘It’s a wonderful feeling to know that my colleagues think sufficiently highly of my work to have made this possible,’ she says of the fellowship. ‘At the same time it is a little bit intimidating. I hope I can live up to the expectations of the award.’ The fellowship will fund Beth’s wide-ranging research in evolution, genetics, and bioinformatics. Her work involves isolating genetic data from a variety of sources through time – RNA viruses, polar bears, and extinct dodos, mammoths, and rhinos – and using computational analysis to test specific hypotheses about evolution and biodiversity. Focusing on gene sequences with long, traceable histories can help scientists identify trends in the present day. Studying the genetics of fast-evolving RNA viruses enhances our knowledge of existing human pathogens, such as AIDS, and lends insight into the development of emerging threats. Ancient DNA can explain why an external stimulus – like the last ice age or global warming – can elicit drastically different responses across species. Examining these phenomena will help us understand ‘how habitat changes imposed by our own species will influence biodiversity,’ Beth explains, ‘and hopefully help us make more informed decisions about our future.’

Beth’s time at Balliol was inspirational. ‘It’s time at Balliol was inspirational’ , she says. ‘The experience helped me to open my eyes to new ideas, and to become more comfortable taking risks. Balliol has been crucial in my successes so far, and will continue to shape my career and my life.’

As Beth begins her MacArthur Fellowship, new innovations are changing the landscape of genetic research. Ongoing development of high-throughput, inexpensive DNA sequencing platforms is producing enormous amounts of genetic data that bioinformaticians specialists are incorporating into their studies of genomes and population genetics. ‘I think we’re on the verge of some major new insights,’ she comments, ‘and I hope that I can get in on the game.’ Given her impressive record so far, Beth will undoubtedly emerge from the impending bioinformatics revolution as one of its foremost luminaries.

By Peiling Li (2006, History)
Balliol’s sixth Reith Lecturer

Is it acceptable to put a monetary value on life? If you could select your unborn child’s sex, eye colour, or even IQ or sexual orientation, would you do so? Michael Sandel (1975), the Anne T and Robert M Bass Professor of Government at Harvard University, has posed these questions to more than 15,000 students as part of his course, ‘Justice: A Journey in Moral Reasoning’. The class is Harvard’s most popular and stands as a testament to Michael’s appeal within and beyond the academy. It has spawned a book, Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?, a twelve-part television series, and a website (www.justiceharvard.org).

Michael Sandel’s reputation for making philosophical arguments accessible by drawing on concrete examples and contemporary political controversies attracted the attention of the BBC, who named him the sixty-first annual Reith Lecturer. The Reith Lectures are renowned for connecting the world of ideas with the larger public, and Michael delivered his in May and June 2009 in London, Oxford, Newcastle, and Washington, D.C.

Michael, who is the sixth person with a Balliol connection to receive this honour, spoke on the theme of ‘A New Citizenship’.

His lectures drew together several themes: the moral limits of markets, the role of morality in politics, and the ethical implications of genetics and biotechnology. He argues that our reliance on markets as a way of life – which prompts us to act primarily as consumers – has created an atmosphere conspicuously devoid of engagement with the moral and spiritual questions that underpin our value system and our definition of the good life. According to Michael, the absence of moral argument in public life is highly corrosive to the democratic project.

In politics, he believes that ignoring or superficially discussing moral and religious beliefs leads to the suppression of moral disagreement. Simmering beneath the surface, this provokes backlash and resentment, hindering the creation of a just society. In genetics, re-engineering ourselves to perfection undermines civic life.

Michael suggests that salvation lies in replacing market-driven politics with a new politics for the common good. Acting principally as citizens, we can rejuvenate our civic infrastructure by re-incorporating moral and even spiritual questions into our public discourse and by imposing moral limits on markets.

Michael’s tenure as a Rhodes Scholar at Balliol heavily influenced his lectures. ‘It’s fair to say my Reith Lectures are an elaboration of the themes that preoccupied me during my time at Balliol, he remarks. He switched from PPE to political philosophy after reading treatises by Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and Hannah Arendt. Studying under Charles Taylor, Alan Montefiore, and Ronald Dworkin, Michael investigated the connection between economics, political philosophy, and ethics. ‘I wanted to see whether considerations of equality and justice could be included within economic analysis,’ he says. ‘Balliol was the perfect place to wrestle with these questions.’

After giving his second Reith Lecture at Rhodes House, he experienced what he described as a ‘nostalgic return’ to Balliol. He dined with Master Andrew Graham, who was a young economist at Balliol when Michael was a student. While their conversation remains between friends, one must wonder whether Michael asked the Master the question he has posed to so many before: ‘What is the right thing to do?’

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Other Balliol Reith Lecturers

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1952</td>
<td>Arnold J. Toynbee (1907)</td>
<td>'The World and the West'</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Alastair Francis Buchan (Fellow 1973)</td>
<td>'Change Without War'</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>Daniel J. Boorstin (1934)</td>
<td>'America and the World Experience'</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>John Keegan (1953)</td>
<td>'War in Our World'</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Chris Patten (1962)</td>
<td>'Respect for the Earth'</td>
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Curious and compassionate

BY JACQUELINE SMITH

Balliol has produced a great many novelists, of all genres, and so writing an article about them was always going to be an exercise in unfair selection. A quick trawl revealed the astonishing fact, for example, that thirty published crime writers have either been educated or have taught at Balliol, of whom more in a subsequent edition of Floreat Domus. For now, two contemporary novelists stand out: Harriet Goodwin (1988) and Chris Cleave (1991). This article tracks these two novelists’ paths to publication and asks what, from their Balliol days, has been useful to them in their writing.

‘I had a dream,’ said professional mezzo-soprano Harriet Goodwin in answer to my first question ‘What made you turn to writing?’. And she wasn’t referring grandly to some long-cherished ambition. One summer night in 2005, two and a half weeks after the birth of her fourth child, she went to sleep and dreamt about a boy falling through the surface of the earth, down a tunnel ringed with golden ladders and speckled with green algae. Fortunately for her publisher (Stripes Publishing) and for Borders (where her book, at the time of writing, is book of the month), for the thousands of 8–12-year-olds who will probably read the book, and not least for Harriet herself, the first thing she did in the morning was take a few minutes to jot down the details. And it didn’t stop there. For the next nine months (a gestation period with which she was by now very familiar) she wrote (in longhand) for ten to fifteen minutes every day, in secret. Neither her husband nor her children had any idea what she was up to.

Seven A4 notebooks later, and she had a novel. She sent it to literary consultancy Cornerstones and paid for a first report. By summer 2007 she had written a second draft, and was all set to send it off for further comment. Then, just before the family summer holiday, an email popped into Harriet’s inbox advertising an anthology competition run by the Society for Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators. She hastily sent off the required first 4000 words of her novel and set off on holiday without a further thought. Not only did she become one of the winners of that competition; she also caught the attention of one of the women on the panel, who is now her literary agent, and who got her a two-book publishing deal.

With such success under her belt, what are Harriet’s tips for aspiring novelists? Aside from reading things other people write (her favourite novelist is E.M. Forster), Harriet’s top tip is to keep a diary. She kept one every day during her first two terms at Balliol, and although she assures me that none of it merits reprinting here, it contains some of her predominant memories of the College: helping with the event celebrating ten years of women at Balliol (which included a disco in the JCR); singing Good King Wenceslas one Christmas-time with Jasper Griffin and Baruch Blumberg; and enjoying the welcoming community of the Chapel choir.

Perhaps reading English at Balliol was what really sowed the seed in Harriet’s mind that she could be a writer? In fact she got rather frustrated by what she described as the ‘factory style’ of teaching; focusing on Browning for only a week, followed hot on the heels by Tennyson the next. So she switched from straight English to Medieval English, reasoning that she personally would find the concentration on one period of time more satisfying. Under tutor Lynda Mugglestone (Pembroke; Harriet had to be taught outside Balliol for some of her papers), Harriet studied Sutton Hoo, which has since formed the inspiration for the second novel in her two-book deal, thereby quelling a lurking fear that she might have to rely on the unpredictability of vivid dreams.

Like Harriet, Chris switched courses while at Balliol, but his was a more dramatic step – from Chemistry to Psychology. He cites John Jones’ recommendation to read Primo Levi as a deciding factor in his change of direction. In his Psychology tutorials with the late Mike Woodin (‘one of the greatest human beings I ever met’), Chris found himself being allowed to write his essays in song form and perform them to guitar accompaniment. When I asked him whether reading Psychology at Oxford was of any help to him as a novelist, he said only in that it brought him to realize ‘that the human mind is still mysterious, and that little is known about it. The human mind is still the Wild West for novelists.’

Anyone who has read The Other Hand? may beg to differ. This unsentimental and surprising story of an encounter between a young female Nigerian asylum seeker stranded in London and the British editor of a women’s magazine, two figures whose lives have collided once before, is a compelling and sensitive study in
human compassion and empathy, exploring motivation, desire, and survival.

And yet the book manages to be so much more than a thrilling page-turner (although it certainly is that). It gives an insight into the harsh reality for those seeking asylum in the UK today, and provokes the reader into imagining the contrast between this and the protected lives of more privileged sectors of London society. So does Chris set out to raise awareness about social issues with his novels? His answer is a resounding yes: ‘I think that’s a novelist’s job. I am convinced that the contemporary culture is becoming increasingly narcissistic and self-referential, whereas novels can dig down through our mores to deliver an experience that is rooted in the underlying reality: namely, that the untamed human heart is adrift in a perilous and unequal world where a billion people every night go to bed hungry.’

His first novel *Incendiary* (made into a film starring Ewan McGregor in 2008) certainly played its part in digging down to the underlying perilous reality. It is an epistolary novel written to omega in London by a woman whose child dies in a bomb attack in London. The strange circumstances of its publication in 2005 send a shiver down one’s spine: on the morning after its launch party, London awoke to the 7th July terrorist bombings that killed fifty people.

Chris makes no claims that his novels will single-handedly alter the course of history and prevent bad things from happening. Instead, he says: ‘I believe that the good-humoured and effortful struggle to understand one another’s lives is at worst a good way to pass long journeys, and at best an antidote to violence.’

Chris is currently writing a novel about women in sport and a non-fiction book about his own decision, at the age of 36, to get a year younger; he also writes a weekly column about his family for the *Guardian*. At the time of writing, he is looking forward to when filming starts on *The Other Hand*: ‘When they filmed my first novel, *Incendiary*, they had to pull me off the set with pliers. ’ But he claims it is not really the glory that motivates him. These days he measures success in terms of emails from readers who explain why his work is important to them. And perhaps it was the people he encountered at Balliol who first enabled and inspired him to write hard-hitting novels with an explicit social agenda: ‘My abiding memory of Balliol is of curious and compassionate people who inclined not to let rules or conventions get in the way of doing something that was worthwhile or interesting.’
Transforming natural resources into fuels

Dr Andrew Ashley is currently leading the pack in pursuit of transforming natural resources into fuels, via a man-made carbon cycle. As one of Balliol’s Junior Research Fellows in the Sciences, he has successfully discovered an environmentally friendly method for converting carbon dioxide (CO2) and hydrogen (H2) into methanol, a liquid fuel.

His recent publication ‘Non-Metal-Mediated Homogeneous Hydrogenation of CO2 to CH3OH’ with Balliol’s Professor Dermot O’Hare, has attracted so much interest that it has been highlighted in Nature Chemistry and deemed a ‘Hot Paper’ in Angewandte Chemie. This highly respected journal reserves this accolade for rapidly evolving fields of high current interest.

Andrew Ashley clearly has instinctive foresight as to the direction in which current research is heading, highlighting this area as one to watch at the beginning of his Junior Research Fellowship. He says: ‘the realisation of the main contributors to global warming. There’s massive room for future development’.

The reverse of combustion
The beauty of what Ashley is developing is that it tackles more than one of today’s global problems. Current concerns regarding climate change are largely due to the growing atmospheric quantities of the greenhouse gas, CO2. Ashley’s approach will utilise the abundance of CO2 as a starting material for the production of methanol. A process that could be considered as ‘the reverse of combustion’, it may provide a source of man-made fuel while consuming one of the main contributors to global warming.

In addition, these hydrocarbons are also needed as feedstock chemicals, the basic resource from which synthetic molecules are made. Ashley explains: ‘When all the oil runs out what are you going to do, say, for the pharmaceutical industry? Using one source like CO2 kills two birds with one stone’.

The inherent difficulty with the reaction of CO2 with hydrogen is that CO2 is so thermodynamically and kinetically stable. This hydrogenation process effectively uses CO2 as a hydrogen store, but until now this seemingly simple process has proved to be very difficult to execute. One of the main problems is that methanol is not the most likely product from the starting materials, and often a mixture is obtained. Many approaches have been explored (both homogeneous and heterogeneous), including using solid state systems to bind CO2 and reduce it to carbon monoxide (CO) and formic acid (HCO2H).

Incorporating strategies that had been used with hydrogen before, Ashley’s idea was to develop further the concept of frustrated Lewis Pairs (FLPs). These systems consist of a pair of molecules which are prevented from bonding strongly to each other due to their sheer size. However, the small nature of hydrogen allows it to react with the FLPs, the crucial and ingenious step that enables the reaction to take place. When asked how the idea of FLPs arose, he said: ‘You had to activate hydrogen in order for it to react with CO2, and a lot of biochemists work on proton/electron coupled transfer. I thought that if I could cleave hydrogen to hydride, which had already been documented for FLPs, that would be the starting point. It was literally the first reaction I did in the lab at the start of my JRF’.

The Eureka moment
Largely gone are the days, especially in an experimental science, when breakthrough discoveries happen during a ‘Eureka!’ moment. It is normally over months of carefully monitored experiments that the ‘answers’ slowly emerge. Ashley’s discovery certainly was an exception to the rule: ‘Commonly people don’t tend to heat sealed glass tubes to 160˚C when they contain solvent that boils at 110˚C, which is what I did!’ This unconventional practice, coupled with the fact that he subsequently isotopically labelled the CO2, led to the breakthrough. On examination of the NMR spectrum, used to discern an atom’s local environment, he saw that the CO2 had reacted to form a precursor to methanol. Ashley has now developed the first example of a selective production of methanol using homogeneous, low pressure conditions. Currently the process is metal-free and utilises boron, a non-metal, as the reactive part of the molecule. The benefits are obvious: ‘No toxicity or disposal concerns, and they’re cheap’.

Ashley aspires to improve this novel process: ‘It’s not catalytic but the key is if we know the step that’s killing it – in this case it turned out to be water – then there’s massive room for future development. We are working now at making more water tolerant systems.’ Even with a patent and a groundbreaking paper, there is still further scope for this project: ‘The current process can only give methanol, but as soon as I get funding, I hope to use transition metals in tandem with this system. We simultaneously activate hydrogen and carbon dioxide and then use metals to get long chain hydrocarbons selectively. That’s the end goal and even if you have to use mercury, it doesn’t matter as long as it works!’

See www.newscientist.com/article/dn18387-co2-in-the-air-could-be-green-fuel-feedstock.html for an article in the New Scientist featuring Dermot O’Hare and Andrew Ashley and their work in this area.
Innovating medical education

BY ELIZABETH MUMFORD (2008, MEDICAL SCIENCES)

While numerous features of an Oxford education may have changed since many readers of Floreat Domus graduated, I’m sure that one aspect has not: the late-night cramming of information before exams, only for it to be forgotten a few weeks later. Or, as the Americans would say, ‘binge and purge’ learning. However, this culture might be set to change thanks to the efforts of Dr B Price Kerfoot (1989, Human Sciences): according to the CEO of the company he set up, ‘Dr Kerfoot’s work will fundamentally change the way the world learns’.

Kerfoot’s early interest in education was stimulated by his experiences with the tutorial system at Oxford, and later developed when he took part in Harvard Medical School’s New Pathway curriculum (problem-based learning). In his fourth year of surgical training, rather than perform basic science research he decided to pursue formal training in education (‘definitely a strange research topic for a surgeon’).

Web-based learning

Intrigued by the ‘unproven frontier’ of educational research which the internet provided, after finishing his residency Kerfoot chose to investigate online learning. He admits it has been a tough slog … since educational research does not get much respect, let alone funding.

In his initial trials of web-based teaching modules at four medical schools he found that although ‘they were effective at increasing knowledge … retention from this learning was poor’.

Using two principles which he picked up from psychological literature on learning and memory, Kerfoot went about designing an entirely new method of delivering the necessary factual information to medical students. The spacing effect shows that ‘when you present and repeat information over intervals of time, you can increase the uptake of knowledge’, while the testing effect shows that ‘when you present information in a “test” format, rather than just reading it, long-term retention is dramatically improved’.

Spaced education

Spaced education presents the material to be learned entirely in a test-question format: upon submitting their answer the students receive immediate feedback on their performance. New information is introduced when the correct answer is achieved in order to elaborate on important points. A key feature of the technique is a proprietary algorithm which then adapts the content and spacing of future questions to the individual’s response. For example, an incorrectly answered question might repeat after a week whereas correct responses will elicit the repeat of that question after several weeks. Each module typically contains 20 to 40 questions, and runs over one to two months. The questions are delivered by email in a multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank or multiple-correct-answer format.

Kerfoot’s developments have been backed up by more than ten randomized controlled trials over the last three years, the largest of which involved 1470 physicians in 63 countries. At its best, spaced education can increase knowledge by 50 per cent and strengthen retention for up to two years. Importantly – and unlike many ‘traditional’ e-learning modules – it is also ‘extremely well accepted by students and physicians’.

Kerfoot himself admits that ‘in medical education, improving clinicians’ practice patterns and ultimately patients’ health outcomes is much more important than just generating learning’. Spaced education has been shown to be successful in this regard. For example, inappropriate cancer screenings decreased by 26 per cent in 95 primary care providers where clinicians had participated in a spaced education course. Not only does this save money, it also significantly reduces patient anxiety.

A social learning community

Given that the spaced education methodology is content-neutral, it has an enormous potential to be applied across a huge range of subjects. SpacedEd launched a public website in May 2009 (www.spaceded.com) with the tagline ‘addictive learning that sticks’. Here it is possible not only for individuals to enrol on courses, but also for them to deliver their own course in a subject of their choice. ‘Tutors’ are able to charge their ‘students’ to participate, but many choose to post their course for free. There are already dozens of courses ranging from bartending to music theory to trigonometry. The aim of the site? To create a ‘social learning community’ where learners and course authors can interact and engage in discussion on current issues.

Kerfoot’s personal research is now returning to the medical field to focus on how online spaced education can best be applied to improve the health outcomes of patients, which he views as ‘a critical downstream outcome-measure’.

He cites as the keys to his success ‘persistent hard work, fantastic mentorship, great support from Harvard Medical School and the Veterans Affairs Boston healthcare system, and a willingness to “jump off the cliff” into a research area which is not typically valued within the surgical community’. 

Dr B Price Kerfoot
In the summer of 1994 one week changed 20-year-old Ben Rowland’s life. An undergraduate at Balliol reading Classics, he was seeking ‘something macho’ to do in the long vacation. He decided to volunteer at a summer camp in Kent for damaged and often violent children, run by London-based organization Toynbee Hall.

He is carrying on a long Balliol association with the organization. It was in 1884 that Samuel and Henrietta Barnett first opened the doors of Toynbee Hall, so named after their friend Arnold Toynbee, a political economist who studied and taught at Balliol before his early death in 1883. The Barnetts’ vision for social reform, inspired by Toynbee, was to bring upper- and middle-class students to live and work together with people in deprived neighbourhoods. In this way the future elite would be exposed to the reality of poor living conditions and class divisions in British society. This pioneering work in the borough known today as Tower Hamlets gave rise to a worldwide movement of such ‘university settlements’.

In the footsteps of Clement Attlee

One of the original rooms at Toynbee Hall (which still occupies the same site between Liverpool Street and Brick Lane as it did 125 years ago) contains an impressive array of Oxfbridge college arms above the picture rail, representing all the colleges which have sent students to volunteer there. Although the summer camps no longer run, there are many projects in which volunteers can become involved; in fact, according to Chief

The ensuing week of intense 18–20 hour days, where the ratio of adults to children had to be one to one, certainly met his criteria. In fact he was so transformed by the experience that he persuaded fellow-students to join him, and in 1996 there were 15 Balliol volunteers. Ben himself continued to volunteer every summer for seven years, and today, at the age of 35, he is Chair of the Trustees of Toynbee Hall, which he describes as ‘a humbling, daunting and incredibly exciting honour and challenge’.  

Currently there are sixteen residential volunteers staying for one or two years, usually combining their work with further study. Their contribution not only distinguishes them from the herd of graduates applying for jobs, but also gives them a unique understanding of the issues that need to be addressed. They are in good company: British Prime Minister Clement Attlee spent two years as Warden of Toynbee Hall in the 1920s, and it has been argued that his experience there contributed to the development of the National Health Service and the modern welfare state.

Financial inclusion, legal advice, and aspirations

So what does Toynbee Hall actually do today, and why is Ben still so passionate about its work? Tower Hamlets continues to be one of the most deprived areas in the country, and a key issue is ‘financial inclusion’. Many people in the area do not have bank accounts or access to credit. Ben explains that one of Toynbee Hall’s strengths is getting down to what the issues really are. Why do some people ‘choose’ not to have a bank account? Perhaps they have had a bad experience with bank staff, or they are not confident about filling in the application form because English is not their first language.

Once the real reasons are unearthed, obstacles can be tackled and poverty addressed. One residential volunteer is looking at ‘financial inclusion indicators’. He is mapping ATMs in the borough which charge a fee to take money out; it is thought that there are over 200. This makes little sense in one of the poorest areas of London.

Another part of Toynbee Hall’s work is the free legal advice centre, where qualified and trainee lawyers volunteer throughout the week. It is the oldest such centre in the country, having been open since 1898. This continuity is one of the most impressive things about Toynbee Hall. And yet other areas of its work are completely new, responding to the changing needs in society. For example, ‘Dignify’ is a pilot project looking at how to tackle the phenomenon of elder abuse, which can range from basic neglect to emotional blackmail relating to finances.
Relief funds the project, which raises awareness of the issue, and organizes support and advocacy. And then there are new responses to old problems: based next to the street where Jack the Ripper’s first victim was killed, the Safe Exit project has brought police, courts, and social services together to help on-street sex workers break the cycle of ‘need to work – get fined – need to work.’

The children’s camps that Ben was involved in have evolved into something called ‘Aspire’, a programme run in partnership with local schools, which helps 120 young people every year. The young people in question have been described as those ‘excluded’ in school, the ‘invisible’ low achievers suffering from low self-esteem and limited aspirations. Twenty mentors work with them on citizenship, the arts, and physical activity. The focus is on achievement, recognition, and reward. Two residential volunteers are looking at how progression can be measured: how can you tell whether aspiration and confidence have increased? One indicator of success is that some of the users of this programme have themselves gone on to become mentors.

Looking forward
So what is the outlook for the local community which has benefitted from Toynbee Hall for 125 years? In 1884, most of the poor people in the area were Jewish. Then came the Irish. And then after the Second World War the Bangladeshis. The problem is that people tend to move out of this area when they become more financially solvent; as Ben explains, the ‘trick’ to regeneration is to fix the problems of the people and of the place at the same time.

Chief Executive Graham Fisher believes that women are the key to a better future for Tower Hamlets. If women were given the opportunity to be educated, then households would be more likely to have dual incomes. Toynbee Hall is engaged in some informal adult literacy work, mostly with women who are parents of children at the local school. One incredibly significant but hard-to-fund part of this work is the Signature project, an eight-week course in which Bangladeshi and Somali women learn to sign their own name.

Local to national
So Toynbee Hall is busy filling the gaps in services for the people in this community who would otherwise slip through the net, and it helps 6000 people every year. But one of the things that seems really to motivate Ben is that Toynbee Hall has an increasingly important role in helping to transform its local programmes into national solutions.

Not only does it make sure that local elderly people get a hot meal and assistance coping with dementia; it also helps the government to work out what kind of programmes need to be delivered nationally. Toynbee Hall is not only out on the streets counting the number of fee-paying ATMs in the area; it is also an adviser to the government about its financial inclusion policy and part of a task force working with the banking industry to develop a code of practice on financial inclusion.

Starting with the end
As well as being Chair of the Trustees of this remarkable organization, Ben has a day job working for Tribal Group, a public services consultancy company. He works primarily with local authorities to cut costs, which he achieves largely by making sure that those in charge always start with a real understanding of the the needs of the end user, rather than the idea that they should be ‘seen to be doing something’ about a particular issue.

This practical but passionate focus on what people really need perhaps derives from something that Ben learnt while volunteering at the children’s camps: ‘I realised how similar we all are, really, and how easy it is to misinterpret the products of chance and accident as something deeper.’ It is clear that what makes him tick is a belief that we all have potential given the right opportunities, which exist only if people get the services they need. If proof were needed, when Ben arrived at the Treasury recently for a meeting, he was greeted by a familiar-looking receptionist. The young man turned out to be one of the children who had attended a camp that Ben led fifteen years ago.
Can we succeed in Afghanistan?

In September 2009, Michael Webb travelled to Pakistan, where he spent time in Peshawar and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and Afghanistan, where he spent time in Kabul, Bamiyan, and Mazari Sharif. Drawing on his experiences, as well as interviews with Balliol fellows and alumni, he asks: ‘can we succeed in Afghanistan?’

Azam Khan, a local politician in Peshawar, has agreed to take me to visit the Taliban. ‘I take many journalists around Peshawar, he says. ‘But never to the Taliban. You are the first.’ A friend of his drives us to the outskirts of the city, and we hail a donkey taxi to take us the final mile. The walls of the madrassa are whitewashed, and I feel the force of the midday sun as we stand in the courtyard. About forty young Taliban, fifteen to thirty years old, quickly gather around us. They have been expecting us, they say. Azam introduces me to the imam, a cold man in his late forties who, like those of his students who are old enough, sports an impressive beard. He leads us to an underground classroom where we sit cross-legged in the gloom. A man more senior than the imam has been waiting for us. In contrast to the sea of white prayer caps, this man wears a black turban: someone tells me he has recently returned from Kandahar, the province next to Helmand in southern Afghanistan. Nobody elaborates. We sit and talk.

Counterinsurgency is a difficult business. ‘If you wanted to do a pie chart of what really matters,’ explains Hugh Powell (1985), UK Senior Representative in Helmand 2008–9; ‘it’s security plus governance/informal justice – everything else is icing.’ The problem is that creating security in a country with a determined insurgency spread among a population of 30 million people requires an enormous number of troops, for which there is little public support. Hence Barack Obama’s announcement in December of a ‘surge’ that will ‘allow us to accelerate handing over responsibility to Afghan forces, and allow us to begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011’.

These words caused some confusion, says Patrick Hennessey (2004), author and former captain in the Grenadier Guards: ‘he was trying to indicate to the Americans, “don’t worry we won’t be there too long,” and to the Taliban, “we’re coming,” and he ended up telling the Americans “we’re coming” and telling the Taliban “don’t worry we won’t be there too long”?’ It is this tension, between the need to create a perception of durability that will encourage the Afghan people to support the government, and the need for a credible commitment to leave that will force them to take responsibility for the fight, that animates much of the current debate. With its focus on transitioning to the Afghans, Obama’s ‘surge’ strategy attempts to manage the contradiction: ‘We need them to know that we will not leave them in the lurch,’ says Colonel Richard Iron, who is visiting Balliol to write about his experiences directing a counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq, ‘but they do need to step up to the plate.’ Indeed, ‘what both sides are really fighting for is to convince the Afghan people to come off the fence on their side,’ says Chris Dell (1978), formerly Deputy US Ambassador to Afghanistan.
In theory this should not be too difficult. 'By all objective standards, we still have the overwhelming support of the Afghan people,' says Hennessey. 'Unlike Iraq, where Joe Average in Basra or Baghdad didn’t want you there and didn’t really mind that much if you got blown up, Joe Average in Kabul and Kandahar and Herat doesn’t want the Taliban. They are a minority fringe element trying to impose something on an unwilling and unreceptive people.' Yet, as Gerard Russell (1991), a Fellow at Harvard’s Carr Center for Human Rights, points out, the Taliban ‘offer quick justice, and we don’t, and it’s seen as being uncorrupt – generally fairly brutal, but at least it’s a resolution. And that’s what the Afghan people want.’

Enabling the Afghan government to provide such justice has therefore been a key priority: Powell spent his time in Helmand ‘creating and rolling out community councils, or district shuras, and using those district shuras to re-establish a system of traditional justice.’

For some, though, this is not enough. ‘It’s a fantasy to believe you can base counterinsurgency around the Afghan state when it doesn’t exist,’ says Adam Roberts, an Emeritus Fellow of Balliol and expert on counterinsurgency. Rory Stewart (1992), whose Turquoise Mountain Foundation kindly hosted me in Kabul, agrees, arguing that an effective Afghan government ‘shows little sign of emerging.’ But Chris Alexander (1989), a former Canadian Ambassador to Afghanistan and former deputy head of the UN mission there, rejects such assertions: ‘The Afghan government remains weak and in some cases corrupt, but it is an order of magnitude stronger than it was in 2001.’

Much hinges on Hamid Karzai, the country’s president for the next five years, whom Dell knew well: ‘He would probably make a great king – sitting around with the bearded ones, schmoozing, drinking tea, reaching consensus on issues. But he just isn’t very good at actually running the government: making decisions and seeing them implemented and enforced.’

Some do have these qualities: Hugh Powell describes Gulam Mangal, Governor of Helmand, as one of ‘a large number of genuine patriots’ with ‘genuine administrative ability’ and ‘core political skills’. This makes Lt Gen Simon Mayall (1975), Deputy Chief of the General Staff, cautiously optimistic: ‘I don’t think it is a given that between top-down pressure from ourselves and bottom-up pressure from the Afghan people, we can’t get the government into the right place.’

Corresponding differences of opinion colour arguments about the Afghan National Army (ANA). Nobody disputes that Afghans make tough warriors: ‘there’s no respect for anything other than being right at the point of a bayonet,’ says Hennessey, who mentored ANA troops on his tour in 2007. This is consistent with my own experience: an ex-Mujahideen general called
The Taliban, I learn, study the Holy Koran here at this madrassa for eight years: some already have the 6,666 verses completely memorized. They support the jihadis who mount suicide attacks against coalition forces; indeed, some had friends who ended their lives this way. They tell me the Koran orders them to avenge the invasion of Muslim soil by infidels. They say they will be successful. In fact, 9/11 was a conspiracy by the Americans, was it not, an excuse to invade Afghanistan? No, I cannot persuade them otherwise: have I not seen the documentaries, read the pamphlets? I have been indoctrinated by my own government. Now I am here, I will understand the truth.

Stewart believes he has a better solution: reduce our own military presence to a size that is sustainable in the long term, and use this lighter force to assist with development operations in the north and centre, undertake counterterrorist operations, mainly with special forces, and facilitate a political settlement, largely by ‘ensuring the Taliban don’t retake Kabul’. This would leave large swathes of territory in the south and east of the country ‘outside our control’. But he believes that the reduced cost of such an operation would be more proportionate to our ‘limited strategic interests’ in Afghanistan, and, more importantly, that the surge risks intensifying direct, overwhelming security threat, ‘Switzerland’ (Iron’s utopia of choice). ‘I think the Taliban will cease to be a direct, overwhelming security threat’, continues Mayall. ‘There will be some parts of the country where the writ of the government is pretty light, but we will have Kabul, Mazari Sharif, Herat, Kandahar, and the Helmand Valley, and this will give people the chance to contrast life in our areas with that in Taliban-controlled areas. It will show the local population, who will only be to endure. Alexander does not buy this, calling it ‘one of the most dishonourable courses of action I have ever heard from serious people.’ The military concurs: ‘a light footprint would give us a drip feed of casualty figures and would be much more likely to lose us public support,’ says Mayall. ‘The Afghans aren’t stupid, they can read between the lines and they’re not going to rally in support of the Afghan national government or the ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] effort if they think it’s half hearted,’ says Hennessey; ‘the ANA would splinter along ethnic lines and you would see a civil war,’ says Daniel Marston (1998), a counterinsurgency expert and advisor to the British and American militaries. On Stewart’s proposals for counterterrorist operations, Powell is blunt: ‘Nobody seriously believes that special forces can do that. You need to be pretty close to the ground to have any effect at all; the effect of strikes is very limited; and just to get the intelligence you rely on the local population, who will only be prepared to feed you information if they believe that the Afghan government will endure. Frankly, most practitioners on the ground consider the light footprint approach a bit of a fantasy.’ But Stewart stands firm: if the surge is able to defeat the Taliban and create stability, he promises me, ‘I would eat my hat.’

One thing on which everybody agrees is that ‘success’, if it is ever achieved, will not be pretty. ‘We’re not going to end up with Afghanistan as a Garden of Eden,’ warns Mayall – nor ‘Switzerland’ (Dell) – nor, indeed, ‘Basingstoke’ (Iron’s utopia of choice). ‘I think the Taliban will cease to be a direct, overwhelming security threat’, continues Mayall. ‘There will be some parts of the country where the writ of the government is pretty light, but we will have Kabul, Mazari Sharif, Herat, Kandahar, and the Helmand Valley, and this will give people the chance to contrast life in our areas with that in Taliban-controlled areas. It will show people that if you are secured by ISAF
and the ANA, wow doesn't life get better.' Hennessey gives an example: 'You have the Taliban paying $10 a day and then you have a vibrant marketplace in a town that hasn't had one for the last ten years because of the security threat. Most men are going to say, 'I'll stick with the market stall, thanks, rather than get killed in six months fighting for the Taliban with my one rusty AK-47.' All this is part of a wider battle, notes Mayall: 'We've allowed the extremists to seize the strategic narrative, to make it one of an attack on Islam rather than an attempt to give the Afghans a better life within their own culture.' A successful strategy, he believes, must win this battle of ideas.

Success will also require a managed withdrawal after the surge: Marston believes that 'in some areas the Afghans can take over in the next five to six years'; Mayall talks of a 'three-to five-year military plan, plus a couple of decades of international tender loving care'; Dell suggests 'we will probably have a significant presence in Afghanistan for a generation.' Iron explains what happens in the meantime: 'Each brings to the fight what they do best. What we do best is intelligence, special forces, fire power, air power, logistics. What they do best is boots on the ground: they can generate far more people than we can and they are more acceptable as the face of the government. We must fight this together.'

The question remains whether the public will continue to support that fight. Mayall, who 'owns a lot of this problem,' believes they will: 'We now have a well thought through, comprehensive approach. American casualties in Iraq continued to rise in 2007, but American political support for Iraq rose because they could see there was a plan and they could see progress being made against the plan.' The same now applies in Afghanistan, he says. 'The public will understand because they will be able to link sacrifice back to purpose.' This is a big ask. If voters do demand a withdrawal, says Russell, 'it would send the very dangerous signal that the West can be defeated through force.' That's a lot to put at stake.

It is Ramadan, and the Taliban invite Azam and me back to the madrassa that evening for iftar, the breaking of the daily fast. Azam is reluctant to return, but I want to find out more about these people: many are teenagers, like me, and despite our obvious differences I feel a connection with them, if only because of our shared youth. A boy no older than twelve leads us up some stairs to the roof of the main structure and motions us to sit down on some large mats. Many more boy servants bustle about, preparing the feast to come. Their prayers offered, twenty Taliban come up and join us on the floor. As always the fast is broken with dates, following the example of the Prophet Mohammad, and water. After everyone has taken their fill, the circle falls silent. Someone I don't recognize from the morning leans forward: 'Why are your countrymen slaying our Muslim brothers? Why do they trespass on Muslim soil?' Suddenly, and with perfect timing, a cloud covers the moon; a faint glow. He smiles at me encouragingly and signals to me to answer. He smiles back, nervously. He looks away. 'Well, I say at last, acutely conscious of the twenty Taliban who surround me, hanging on my every word. 'That sounds to me very right, and honourable, and just.' At this, they smile. The imam holds up his hands and begins to speak. 'He is praying for you,' says Azam. 'He is praying that you will go back to your homeland and tell your countrymen this: that his people are right, and honourable, and just.'

The Taliban I met in that madrassa were Islamic extremists, but they were not committed insurgents. Yet, when those young men finish their studies, there will be no jobs waiting for them. One in three are orphans. It is possible that the boy who told me his Muslim brothers would be victorious over the infidels will soon himself be strapping explosives to his chest. Yes, poverty and a lack of alternatives will have played a part. But ultimately it is Taliban ideology that motivates such fighters. What happens in Afghanistan will either give hope to men like him and those who radicalize them the world over, evidence that the West can be defeated and Islamic extremism can triumph; or it will temper those illusions and show them an alternative that they might be persuaded to accept as right, and honourable, and just. If the battle on the plains of Helmand and in the streets of Kabul is a battle for the minds of the Afghan people, so too is the battle for the minds of the Afghan people a battle for the minds of the whole world. Can we succeed in Afghanistan? We have to.
An interview with Christopher Ricks

BY JACQUELINE SMITH

It is with considerable excitement that I approach my interview with Sir Christopher Ricks (Balliol 1953 and Honorary Fellow), the most recent Professor of Poetry at Oxford. His works of literary criticism featured on my reading list as an undergraduate, and I am curious to know what the man himself is like.

He accosts me gently in the foyer of the London Library where we have arranged to meet. Due to ongoing renovations we are led by a very circuitous route around the block to the office of the Librarian, who has kindly loaned us her room. After a false start in which I confess to ‘loving’ Virginia Woolf (which elicits a pitying grimace), I manage to redeem myself by avowing ‘love’ for Eliot in equal measure, which restores broad smiles all round. And then we are off. Despite the hiatus caused by a badly timed fire alarm, we talk non-stop firstly in this curiously dark and modern office and subsequently in the Costa Coffee bar of the local Waterstone’s, where Christopher solicitously enquires whether I will let him buy me a cup of tea.

I ask him to tell me something about his memories of being an undergraduate at Balliol. He explains that he was already twenty years old when he came up, having been Howards). I think in this case he got it wrong. ‘Allotments’. After that he got the post of Professor of Poetry at Oxford (2004 –2009). He says he was most pleased with his inaugural lecture at which he deplored the denigration of prose: ‘It's like saying there is rhythm in dancing but none in walking.’ Another of his responsibilities was to help judge the Newdigate Prize for Poetry. The poems are of course submitted under pseudonyms, and it is a nice coincidence that the competition was won this year by Balliol’s Arabella Currie for her poem ‘Allotments’.

Critical edition of Eliot’s poems

Christopher may have achieved many distinctions in his career, but he is not taking time out at the age of 76 to rest on his laurels. He is still very much involved with teaching and graduate supervisions at Boston University and is also working on a new full critical edition of Eliot’s poems.

He talks animatedly about a discovery made by his co-editor, Jim McCue. It concerns a poem called ‘The Cultivation of Christmas Trees’, written in 1954, twenty years after all the others. Christopher bought a copy of it while he was an undergraduate at Balliol, and read it with disappointment. But Jim has discovered an earlier draft, which Christopher has found he ‘likes much better for its curious long-windedness. It’s like a studio out-take being better than the final broadcast. Usually Eliot had an inerrancy of judgement when making revisions, but I think in this case he got it wrong.’ This earlier draft is touching because within the poem Eliot explains that he was asked to write it by his publishers, and at the end he asks whether the poem is really the kind of thing you would like to send or receive, at Christmas. Christopher will be busy with the Eliot edition over the next few years.

Favourite poems

So far we have skated through some highlights of Christopher’s academic career. But I’m interested too in more banal questions and, with the caveat that he might find these a bit facile, I ask him what was the first poem that he remembers enjoying, and does he have a favourite poem?

My questions naturally prompt Christopher to reminisce about his school days at King Alfred’s School, Wantage. One of his teachers, Mr Swann, had been a pupil of F. R. Leavis, and he introduced the boys to Lawrence, Eliot, and Joyce. The other English teacher, Mr Harrison, was more old fashioned, and preferred Tennison. Perhaps this early exposure to differing but well-reasoned opinion is what instilled in Christopher his keen appetite for criticism. But the first poem he really remembers enjoying is Paradise Lost: ‘I bought my own copy while I was at school – an H.C. Beeching Oxford Edition which cost half a crown. It was packed like a Bible’. Christopher read it with and for pleasure. He also read C.S. Lewis’s preface to the poem, and thought his approbation right, but his reasoning wrong. It is surely no coincidence that Christopher’s first book was about Milton.
Mrs Moran found traces of rose petal on her nail scissors and a guilty look in her husband’s eye when she asked him for the truth. In fact she already knew that at night he left her bed for his allotment and trimmed his petals and sprayed the leaves with her scent, snatched from her drawer when he thought she wasn’t looking.

She did not know that Mr Moran polished his tomatoes and kept his shed as a sort of boudoir for his tools. Velvet pillows, incense, bead curtains at the door. Or that every Sunday, Mr Moran put on hobnail boots and trampled the flower beds of other men.

Until one Sunday he stopped.

He dug up his tomatoes and steadily, one by one, he ate them.

Now Mr Moran lies flat in his allotment bound by roses breathing damp air. As the sun moves he moves and bangs his head on dragon fruit, fat with the seeds that swell them. He tastes the resist and boil of earth beneath his shoulders and the tickle of the Venus fly traps beside his earlobes.

The others, with their cricked necks, avert their eyes as they pass Mr Moran’s allotment. They whisper that Mr Moran’s wife has left him to his green pleasures but he has not noticed.

As for a favourite poem, as predicted, Christopher is not keen on the terms of the question: ‘I don’t like the notion of “favourite” because it miniaturizes things and is somehow diminutive – it’s not a question about what I think is the best poem, but the one that most clicks with me.’ Having defined the question to his satisfaction, he plumps for Tennyson’s poem to his friend Edward FitzGerald, which is a 56-line single sentence by way of a birthday greeting. Fitz never received it because he died in the month of its writing. ‘It’s a lovable poem,’ says Christopher simply.

And then it is all over, as Christopher needs to keep an appointment with Jim McCue. He brings him back for tea about ten minutes later, and spots me lingering with a book. ‘What are you reading?’ he asks, and I shamefacedly display the cover of a small (and therefore, in my defence, eminently portable) paperback by Doris Lessing about her cats. I swear I hear a playful ‘miaow’ as the two men turn to join the queue.
Although Balliol is known primarily for leadership in politics and academia, business leadership has also been a part of the College’s history from its very foundation.

Dervorguilla, wife of John de Balliol, was a shrewd investor, wise manager, and generous philanthropist who established a permanent endowment for Balliol College after her husband’s death. As the first of Oxford’s colleges, Balliol was essentially a new enterprise; today, her investment has grown into a storied institution which has produced world-shaping graduates for nearly 750 years.

The business world has changed quite a bit over the centuries: back then, starting a business meant joining a guild, globalization meant hopping on a camel and travelling the Silk Road, and raising start-up capital generally involved waiting around for a wealthy relative to catch the plague. Today’s business world is fast-paced, rife with risk, and highly complex; however, that hasn’t stopped a number of intrepid recent Balliol graduates from following in Dervorguilla’s footsteps and thriving in the world of business.

The variety of the businesses featured in this article reflects the diversity of Balliol graduates today: Awfully Nice Cupcakes, co-founded by Holly Johnson (2003); Explosive Science, established by Paddy Cullen (2005) and Nick Zani (2005); Oxford Student Consultancy, set up by Joerg Metzner (2005) and Michael Strahman (2005); and Zoombu, co-founded by Rachel Armitage (2000) are all successful ventures in their own right, and have followed different paths to get to where they are today. However, all share some things in common, such as the motivation to address some sort of need.

Addressing a need

In the case of Zoombu, Rachel Armitage identified a problem that many of us share: ‘Sorting out travel in Europe can be very frustrating; nothing seems to work together, and we thought we could come up with a better way.’ Rachel, along with fellow Oxonian Alistair Hann, came up with Zoombu, an innovative website that aggregates combinations of travel components on land, sea, and air, and allows the user to choose between the cheapest, fastest, or most carbon friendly routes. Rachel’s better way to travel has caught the eye of investors and travellers alike, winning awards from Oxford Entrepreneurs, the Eye for Travel Summit, and the Said Business School Venture Fund.

For others, the need was more personal; when asked why he chose to start Explosive Science, Nick Zani replied, ‘the job market was pretty terrible, and [Paddy and I] decided we’d like to work for ourselves instead of working for free for someone for six months trying to get a job.’ He added, ‘We’ve been to a few primary schools that don’t have science teachers; children don’t see science until secondary school. We just did a few simple experiments for the kids and they all agreed upon what we knew already – science is wicked!’

For their part, Joerg Metzner and Michael Strahman hoped to effect change in the community while helping students by starting Oxford Student Consultancy. Michael recalls, ‘Joerg once mentioned a system in some European countries whereby students would take time off from school to do paid but cheap consultancy stints. Based on that idea, we came up with the idea of leveraging the minds of Oxford students to provide a high quality, pro bono consultancy service focusing on organizations that can’t afford the high rates of more traditional consultancies. We took the idea to Jonathan Black and Jennie Courtney in the careers office and pitched it as a way to help the community while providing experience and skills to students. Between the four of us we put together a scheme and now it’s going extremely well, serving clients in Oxford and the greater London area.’

With Awfully Nice Cupcakes, Holly Johnson wanted to change the community more than just a community; she hoped to change society for the better, one cupcake at a time. ‘Co-founder Jennifer Dawson and I love holding vintage tea parties and want to bring people back to a bygone era through our cupcakes,’ she said. To that end, Awfully Nice’s cupcake collections are branded with retro names like ‘Rizzo’ and ‘Dorothy’, and the founders prefer to deliver their wares to customers personally – another nod to a simpler time before mail order and megastores. More recently, Holly and Jennifer have begun to offer fully customized vintage tea parties in a box, delivering not only cupcakes, sandwiches, and other treats but also sets of vintage dishes and cutlery, tablecloths, cupcake stands, and everything else needed to help their customers experience the 1940s through food.
Team effort
Merely coming up with a solution to a problem, however, does not a successful enterprise make. Execution can make or break a new business, and successful execution almost always requires a team effort. It is no coincidence that all four of the businesses profiled in this article were founded by partnerships; all of our founders attribute a great deal of their success to the quality of their co-founders and other team members.

In Zoombu’s case, each partner brought specific vital skills to the table. Rachel notes, ‘Alistair is the techy one [Hann holds multiple advanced degrees in engineering and met Rachel while both were pursuing engineering degrees at Oxford and then Princeton] and I have experience in business as a consultant and working in venture capital.’ At Zoombu, Alistair heads up the technical team while Rachel is in charge of developing the business. This partnership has been extremely fruitful, as Zoombu has managed to develop not only a unique and powerful search engine but also vital partnerships with transportation providers and experienced businesspeople who serve as the company’s advisory board.

Seeking advice from experienced mentors has also paid off for Explosive Science. Nick states, ‘We got in touch with an accountant who’s been really helpful to us and put us in touch with useful contacts.’ Paddy adds, ‘He’s started up loads of companies before and has given us really sound advice about technical things like the VAT and how to set up our accounts.’ Thanks in part to this advice, the business is off to an explosive start; the pair have already presented to over 200 students, and have received rave reviews from teachers and students alike. Indeed, all of the founders agree that selecting the right partners, from co-founders through to every employee and adviser, is vital to the success of any start-up business and should be a focus of every aspiring entrepreneur.

The future’s bright
As for the future, things look bright for all four ventures. Now part of Oxford University’s Careers Service, Oxford Student Consultancy has helped numerous organizations and had its first set of student graduates in December 2009; students interested in volunteering, or organizations interested in the group’s services, are encouraged to visit the website for more details (www.careers.ox.ac.uk).

Between its delicious cupcakes and innovative vintage tea parties, Awfully Nice is not only serving up delicious treats for its customers but also making steady progress toward its goal of bringing us a little taste of yesteryear with every bite; those interested in acquiring some tasty treats will only be further tempted by the sumptuous pictures on the company’s website (www.awfullynice.co.uk).

Explosive Science has grown to serve not only primary students but also secondary schools, working in many GCSE topics to show how science learned in the classroom might be applied in real life, often with very exciting results. More information about the company, the science, and the founders is available on their website (http://explosivescience.com).

Zoombu is growing at breakneck pace, and the organization is looking not only for partners and customers but also for new employees. Rachel hopes that the site will move from its current limited demo phase into full deployment very soon, and individuals interested in using the service or joining the team can find more information on the Zoombu website (www.zoombu.co.uk).

The world of business has changed a lot since 1263, but it seems that one thing has remained constant; Balliol graduates still have the capability, the passion, and the talent to make waves and to change the world, one volunteer, chemical reaction, cupcake, or travel plan at a time.

Stop Press: Plink Art
Balliol’s Mark Cummins (2001) is the latest entrepreneur to dazzle the world of business with a technological innovation that has won a top Google prize. Mark and fellow DPhil student James Philbin (New College) have set up a company called Plink Search and developed a visual search engine called Plink Art. This software enables you to take a photograph of a picture in an art gallery on your mobile phone, and then automatically find the Wikipedia article relating to the picture.

Art galleries are showing interest in the product, which is powered by cloud-based computer vision technology developed by Mark and James as a result of research undertaken with Professor Andrew Zisserman and Dr Paul Newman (Balliol 1991) at the Department of Engineering Science.

Mark said: ‘We know we’ve got some pretty unique technology, but winning the Google competition will give us the funding and the exposure to really make a go of it. We’re excited that people will finally get a chance to play with our image recognition system. We’ve got years of PhD research in it, and it’s genuinely amazing technology, so it’s great to see it reaching real users’.
Weaning Britain off fossil fuels

By Doireann Lalor (2006, Modern Languages)

When Alan Heeks was at Balliol in the late 1960s there was an ‘exciting blend of swinging sixties socialism’, but, he says, this contained ‘pretty well zero environmental consciousness’. By the time Adam Bruce was a Balliol student in the late 1980s, the JCR was making some effort to recycle, but environmental issues were at the bottom of most peoples’ agendas. Both Alan and Adam are now working, in radically different ways, to bring about a low-carbon future for Britain.

I ask each of them for their visions of Britain’s energy future. Adam Bruce (1986) replies that ‘our dependence on hydrocarbons has led us to make a series of pacts with the Devil, and that we must now move to a low-carbon economy, increase our energy security, and decrease our reliance on fossil fuels. He sees us ‘moving, inexorably, to an electric society’, with transport, heat, and lighting becoming increasingly powered by electricity. By 2050, he predicts, over 50 per cent of the European Union’s electricity will be generated from renewables. As chairman of the British Wind Energy Association and head of sustainability at Scottish & Southern Energy, Adam is working to make this vision a reality.

Alan Heeks (1966) foresees that by 2050 the rising cost and unsteady supply of fossil fuels will have forced us to reduce our consumption dramatically. For Alan, techno-fixes are not the solution, and no amount of scientific progress will allow us to carry on living as we do now. He favours a different strategy, which he dubs ‘collaborate, simplify, and localize’. In this scenario, we would make major cuts in domestic energy use by sharing resources and co-operating with neighbours (producing food locally through community market gardens and vegetable box schemes, car pooling and ride sharing). We would create local, community-based means of energy production. Alan’s present reality matches his vision of the future. He has set up and lives in a cohousing project – The Threshold Centre in Dorset – which operates precisely along these lines. And Alan has proved that this scenario can deliver the goods: his community has one of the lowest projected ecological footprints in the UK.

A market solution?

So do these two men believe that a market-based solution could bring about the low-carbon future that they both envisage? Neither feels that a purely market-based solution is the answer. For Adam, the market ‘has a significant role to play’, in that we are reliant on the market to deliver the investment needed to build low-carbon infrastructure. But he asserts that this will not happen ‘without the appropriate long-term policy signals from government’. He underlines the need for the government to ‘get back into the power market and construct a new policy framework’ to decarbonize the power sector, while praising the creation of the Department for Energy and Climate Change last year as ‘a step in the right direction’.

Alan is much more reluctant to advocate any reliance on market forces. For him, ‘the social and environmental implications of a purely market-based solution to energy shortages are too gruesome to imagine’. He pictures
whole nations being priced out of the energy market, and in the UK he anticipates ‘extreme social unrest arising if fossil fuel is only affordable by the elite.’ Alan suggests alternative models to a market solution (‘Contraction and Convergence’, and Paul Hawken’s ‘The Ecology of Commerce’), but he insists that these will not come about without government intervention. We will need the government to regulate, he says, so that we can ‘move from a free market in which environmental damage is largely free of cost, to a system which taxes resource depletion and carbon emissions, rather than profits and labour.’

So both Adam and Alan, in spite of the fact that they are approaching the energy crisis from very different angles, are calling for large-scale government intervention. But what about the individual? Do we all have a role to play in weaning Britain off fossil fuels? Yes we do, they say. Adam Bruce feels that ‘individual action can be hugely powerful’ and that ‘people are encouraged to act through seeing others take action.’ The first step that an individual can take, he says, is to reduce their own energy consumption. But he stresses that ‘this is not to advocate a hearty cold-showers-and-consumption’ but he stresses that ‘this is action’.

The MCR vegetable patch, with, from left to right, Charnie Lawery, Maxie Kaufmann, Doreen Lular, Emily McLaughlin, Ed Latter, and Mike Urban

Alan Heeks

Read English at Balliol (1966)
Harvard MBA
Co-founded the FTSE 100 building materials group Caradon plc (1985)
Worked in marketing in Proctor and Gamble, for BP and GlaxoSmithKline, and for smaller ethical businesses
Published the book The Natural Advantage in the UK (2000) and the US (2001)
Created The Magdalen Project (organic farm and educational charity)
Co-founded the Threshold Centre (cohousing project in Dorset, 2004)
Manages Hazel Hill Wood (woodland nature reserve and retreat centre)

Change it’. He stresses that guilt or doomsday preaching are not good motivating forces for change. Rather, he believes that humans are encouraged to act when they are presented with positive, sociable examples of living with low resource use. He seeks to achieve this with the three models of sustainable living that he has founded: an organic farm (The Magdalen Project), a conservation woodland, and a cohousing community.

Civil disobedience

Eminent climate experts and spokespeople, such as Al Gore and George Monbiot, have been calling for people to take to the streets and demand that politicians deliver the energy and climate future that we need, citing acts of mass civil disobedience by the likes of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and the Suffragettes which have brought about fundamental paradigm shifts throughout history. I ask Adam and Alan for their views on the role that civil disobedience has to play in carving out the roadmap to Britain’s low-carbon future. They both support it.

Alan defines ‘peaceful mass public engagement’ as ‘crucial in pushing the politicians to act.’ Adam believes that the argument is no longer about ‘Why’ but is now about ‘How’ and ‘How quickly.’ ‘If we are to generate 50 per cent of Europe’s electricity from wind energy by 2050,’ he says, ‘we require massive investment in new kit, including large-scale interconnection across the North Sea. Offshore wind will be the UK’s North Sea Oil of the twenty-first century.’ To ensure that this happens, ‘by all means bang the drum to keep politicians on their toes,’ he says, but also needed are ‘hundreds of Balliol graduates over the coming decades’ to come and actually ‘help build the future.’

Finally, I ask them both if they would encourage current Balliol students to consider following career paths in sustainable development. In particular, I am interested in the fact that neither of them was trained in environmental science. Has this been a hindrance? Adam declares: ‘I am, and always will be, a Balliol historian’. He still finds comfort in his History textbooks – Gibbon and Braudel – which taught him that ‘mankind has a habit of doing the right thing over the long term.’ He concludes that ‘whatever happens, it is clear that there will be a lot of work to be done in transforming the way we power our lives, and there will always be space for Balliol students in that.’

Alan explains that his ‘apparently irrelevant’ English degree has in no way been a hindrance to working in the sustainability sector, which he describes as ‘interesting, satisfying, and of huge public benefit’. He states: ‘while environmental studies might be helpful for some of this, subjects like PPE or psychology could be more relevant’. This is because as we come to understand more clearly that climate change is not only an environmental problem, but one that is saturated in political, economic, and human rights conundrums, there will be increasing need for engagement from people with a myriad of different academic backgrounds. Indeed, Alan urges us to look beyond our academic training as we prepare ourselves for the radical changes that society will undergo in order to cope with the climate and energy crises. Alan advises: ‘Whatever subject people study, I’d urge them to combine this with some hands-on, front-line experience, in vacations or gap years, of organic agriculture, green building, permaculture or intermediate technologies. Educating the heart and soul, and the ability to imagine a good future, are even more crucial than training one’s mind to fulfill the vision.’

So the lesson from these two alumni is that not only will we need scores of engineers and physicists to build our low-carbon future, but we will also need Balliol brains and brawn of all kinds in order to re-imagine and reconstruct our society in a way that allows us to live within the resources of this one planet.
Balliol alumni Sasha Abramsky (1990) and Raj Patel (1992) have both recently brought out books about the politics of food, though from differing perspectives and homing in on separate, but related, issues. The politics of food is not an obviously pressing concern to affluent Western society. But the investigations of Abramsky and Patel bring it closer to home.
Sasha Abramsky and Raj Patel both received BAs in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics in the early 1990s. Raj then went to SSE and Cornell University, and worked with the United Nations, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. As well as writing, he is now a policy analyst at the Institute for Food and Development Policy/Food First. Sasha followed his PPE degree with some time at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and has lived in America ever since. Alongside writing, he is also a teacher on the UC Davis writing programme and a fellow at the New York City-based Demos think-tank.

Uncovering hidden scandals

As their book titles suggest, both Sasha and Raj seek to uncover something that is ‘hidden’ from our view. In the case of Sasha’s study of America, the ‘hidden scandal’ is the ‘grinding permanence’ of the need to evade hunger that plagues low-income families. Raj’s ‘hidden battle’ concerns the global food system and the devastating effects of multinational agribusinesses on third-world producers. He argues that instead of dominating the producers, these corporations manipulate how we, the consumers, think about and eat food.

While both studies are predominantly negative critiques of contemporary food politics, they both provide positive plans of action. Sasha represents all the struggling Americans he interviews on his travels when he makes hopeful recommendations to the Obama administration. Raj’s proposals hit at both the macro and the micro level. He highlights the many movements across the world that are campaigning for the changes that must take place nationally and internationally, and shows that there are things that we, as individuals, can do to help fix the broken food system.

Where will the next meal come from?

Sasha combines his interviewees’ narratives with his own personal low-income food experiments. This allows him to gain an insight into the reality for so many millions of Americans. In an interview, he explained to me that these experiments were a necessary exercise in empathy, which enabled him to break down the stereotypes that people have about those who struggle to make ends meet. Many in America, a first-world country, still cannot believe that daily hunger is a reality for millions and that obesity is caused by the desperate consumption of cheap unhealthy food, rather than gluttonous waste. The period of hunger in America is a psychological one, namely a constant anxiety about where the next meal will come from.

Sasha uses personal experience and the stories of the people he meets to inform his political analysis. The effect of federal cuts in financial and food aid, and an unfair calculation of the poverty level, mean that many deserving citizens have missed out on much-needed Medicaid, food aid, and an unfair calculation of the low-income food experiments. Sasha highlights the many movements across the world that are campaigning for the changes that must take place nationally and internationally, and shows that there are things that we, as individuals, can do to help fix the broken food system.

The alibi of ‘consumer freedom’

Raj’s book takes the reader through the entire global food system, starting from the pressures felt by farmers and finishing on the supermarket aisles where our tastes as consumers are sculpted. There are chapters on the importance of inter-governmental trade treaties, the history of the post-war food system, and an explanation as to why agribusiness corporations are the only agents to gain from today’s food system.

Most farmers suffer from a complete dependence on their low-priced produce and are incapable of moving out of the market they find themselves in. The price of commodities, such as corn, is so low that it is not enough to support the families living on this food. The system is failing them, and the problem is getting worse as the global economy continues to struggle. The result is a world where many people go hungry, while others are forced to buy unhealthy and expensive food at the expense of their health.

The solution lies in changing the system, not in allowing agribusiness corporations to continue their practices. Raj believes that we must resist the urge to be satisfied with the status quo and must resist the urge to be satisfied with the status quo. Instead, we must demand change and insist on a fairer and more just system. Raj believes that we must resist the urge to be satisfied with the status quo and must resist the urge to be satisfied with the status quo. Instead, we must demand change and insist on a fairer and more just system.

Combating the system

What can be done about the injustice and increasingly critical environmental degradation of the current food system? Raj’s guiding theme is that there is hope to be found in the opposition and protest movements of those people who have suffered. As individuals, we must ‘transform our tastes’ away from the processed junk we are hard-wired to enjoy. We must start to grow and eat locally and seasonally, as well as give our support for local produce, which helps cut transport costs.

Raj also believes that we must resist the urge to be satisfied with the organic and fair trade revolutions that the corporations have co-opted into the food system. He is critical of an over-appreciation of fair trade because it only marginally increases the price offered to the farmer. The price is far too low to support poor communities tied to a mono-crop market. What is needed, he says, is a radical recognition of the demands and rights of what he terms the ‘Global South’ – impoverished regions across the world. This can be brought about by greater development assistance and investment, the introduction of the living wage, and the cancellation of third-world debt.

Alongside these suggestions is another radical move, this time against the big corporations. Raj believes that monopolies across the world must be aggressively policed, and environmental restrictions must ensure big food corporations act to create a more sustainable food system. Processed food should be taxed to take into account the harm it causes both people and the planet.

Although these proposals may sound utopian, Raj is encouraged by the many movements across the world that are leading the way in educating and organising opposition to the injustice of the food system. Indeed, when asked about his views on Raj’s book, Sasha said that, despite disagreements on several points, he accepted Raj’s core argument that combating the world’s food system must be a ‘ground-up process’. Sasha, while hopeful of Obama, doesn’t think that the President, with his connections to big agribusiness, will be introducing a revolutionary progressive agricultural policy any time soon.

These two books complement each other. Sasha provides insightful journalistic reportage combined with first-hand experiments in low-income food experiments. He then uses this to talk national politics and to urge people to recognize the hidden scandal of American hunger. Raj’s study of the international politics of food covers the entire system, from soybeans to supermarkets. It is a far-reaching and rigorous deconstruction of the system, revealing its deficiencies and injustices and advancing a multi-level strategy for repair. Both books are vital to learning about current ambitious Balliol student with, as Naomi Klein would say, a ‘hunger for justice’.
Architects of the European Union

By Tom Rowley (2008, History & Politics)

In the nineteenth century, Balliol sent out young men to far-flung outposts of the British Empire. From Canada to Cairo and Bermuda to Burma, Balliol’s graduates took their places amid the administrative powerhouses of the world’s biggest empire.

It was, though, another Balliol alumnus, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (1912), who foresaw the ‘winds of change’ that signalled the demise of Britain’s imperial ambitions. It is not coincidental that Macmillan also filed Britain’s first (unnecessary) application to join the then fledgling European Community in 1961.

Given that Balliol never was one of Oxford’s more regressive institutions, it is perhaps unsurprising that many Balliol alumni followed in Macmillan’s footsteps, believing that Britain’s future lay not in empire-building but closer relations with its European neighbours. Indeed, it was Macmillan’s successor—two, former Balliol FFest Edward Heath (1935), who finally negotiated Britain’s entry to the European Community in 1973.

Richard Hay himself remembers the ‘pioneering spirit’ that was at the heart of the European project in those early days. ‘It was a group of people committed to building a European community – not necessarily a political structure of federalism, just getting on with what can sensibly be done together,’ he recalls.

He remembers the difficulty of communicating in the first few years: ‘Part of the deal politically between Edward Heath and the French was that British officials would cope in French. My French was extremely ropey but we learnt to cope...We sort of had to find the map references where two statements crossed and say things one way and then another.’

Michael Emerson (1959) completed the triumvirate of former Balliol members in Brussels, arriving at the Commission from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1973. Michael was later to join the Cabinet of Balliol alumnus Roy Jenkins (1938), alongside Graham Avery, where he helped formulate Jenkins’s policy on economic and monetary union, the precursor to the Euro.

Of the difference between Soames and Jenkins, Graham notes: ‘Soames was not an intellectual – he prided himself on being the only Commissioner without a university degree. Roy was the complete opposite – he was a very cerebral politician, and had extraordinary perspicacity – he could see further into the future than the others.’

Since then, several other Balliol students have gone on to be at the forefront of the development of the organization. One was Julian Priestley (1969), Secretary General of the European Parliament (see Floreat Domus 2007). Another was Graham Avery (1961), who played a key role in the recent accession of a further twelve countries to what is now called the European Union.

The pioneering spirit of the early years

Graham recalls the ‘extraordinarily interesting’ early years of Britain’s involvement with the Community. ‘The British political class was trying to come to terms with the EU – I’m not sure it has yet succeeded! But those of us who went to Brussels realized that the European adventure was profoundly important for the future of British foreign policy,’ he says.

In 1973, having worked for the Ministry of Agriculture since graduating, Graham was invited by Christopher Soames to join his first Cabinet – the personal staff of a European commissioner – as its agricultural adviser.

It was during this initial foray to Brussels that Graham met Richard Hay (1960), another Balliol alumnus, whom Soames had recruited to his Cabinet straight from the Treasury. Graham recalls Richard’s ‘meteoric career’ in Europe, where he became Director-General for Personnel before leaving Brussels in 1992 to be ordained.

A 1975 press conference given by Christopher Tugendhat (second from right), with Richard Hay next to him (second from left)

Graham Avery
Roy Jenkins, President of the European Commission from 1977 to 1981, succeeded Macmillan as Chancellor of Oxford University in 1987, and was succeeded in 2003 by Chris Patten (1962), yet another Balliol alumnus to have proved influential in Brussels.

Chris Patten was European Commissioner for External Relations during Romano Prodi’s administration from 2000 to 2004. By this time, Graham had been appointed Director-General for External Affairs, and worked under Chris. Graham emphasizes Chris Patten’s ‘very important contribution to the development of EU foreign policy’.

Growth and change
Graham was one of the architects of the enlargement of the EU to bring in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – ‘Europe’s reunification’, as he calls it. As well as growing in size, the community has also changed in other ways since those first pioneers were dispatched in 1973. Graham led much of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy that has taken place over the decades:

‘The concept of the Common Agricultural Policy when I came to Brussels was support of farm prices. Now the accent is more on the environment as one of the main reasons for public funds being involved in agriculture. One of the things I’m most proud of having done was to write the EU’s first ‘Green Paper’, in which the Commission said that environment and agriculture should work together,’ he reflects.

Richard Hay witnessed the beginning of the process of digitization. ‘Another revolution was the information revolution,’ he recalls. ‘I remember Soames had a great struggle over the purchase of one computer for the Commission...Within ten years, we had many PCs in every department. It had a great effect on every dimension of the organization.’

However, Richard thinks, for all this change, the fundamental ethos of the institution remains the same: ‘What didn’t change was the pioneering spirit and a considerable informality about structures and relationships. What matters is who you know – a lot is based on personal contacts, which cut across formal hierarchies. It can make it difficult unless you’re a bit of a jungle fighter.’

Asked how much he felt Balliol had informed his subsequent career, Richard replied: ‘It was a great time of broadening horizons and meeting people and learning about arguing and presentation. He also notes that it was a time of ‘making bricks without necessarily a great deal of straw’, an experience that today’s tutors would obviously not recognize.

The EU today
Graham, meanwhile, is convinced that Brussels still offers a plethora of interesting careers for today’s Balliol men and women. ‘If I were your age, I would be very interested to go into a career in foreign affairs,’ he says. ‘I would try to spend some time working for the UK and some time working for Europe. I would hope to join the new European diplomatic service which is being set up under the Lisbon treaty.’

He reflects on the future of the EU: ‘It’s often been said that the initial mission of the European Community was to stop wars between European states. But young people don’t consider that’s a particularly sexy mission for today, because it has succeeded so well. It is inconceivable now that members of the EU would take up arms against each other. What the EU needs to do in the twenty-first century is to be outward-looking, to project the values and interests of its citizens worldwide.’

Whether the current generation of Balliol students will follow Graham’s suggestion remains to be seen. What is abundantly clear is that, were they to do so, they would be following in the footsteps of a long and very distinguished line of Old Members who have played an important role in translating a pan-European organization from an ambitious pipe dream to a very present reality, spanning twenty-seven nations and representing Europe’s interests on a highly diverse range of policy. It is an impact of which Balliol should be justifiably proud.
The case for an Australian bill of rights

BY JENNIFER ROBINSON (2006)

Jennifer Robinson makes the case for an Australian bill of rights, drawing on the work of Balliol alumni and scholars and on her own work with Geoffrey Robertson QC on his latest book, Statute of Liberty: How to Give Australians Back Their Rights (Random House, 2009).

It is a lamentable fact that Australia is out of step with the rest of the legal world in safeguarding fundamental human rights. Unlike the UK, the US, Canada, South Africa, India, and New Zealand, Australia does not yet have a national bill of rights. Many are working hard to change this state of affairs. Recent cases demonstrate severe deficiencies in human rights protection in Australia which, considered in light of the experience of the Human Rights Act in the UK, illustrates that this is a debate of great practical significance for all Australians.

The history of the struggle for human rights in Australia

Those drafting the Australian Constitution borrowed heavily from the US Constitution save for three aspects: the Federal Commonwealth was established under the Crown, the Executive would sit in Parliament, and there would be no bill of rights. A bill of rights was rejected out of fear that a due process clause would undermine the discriminatory provisions of the law at the time, including laws which disadvantaged indigenous Australians and migrant Chinese. Since Federation, successive attempts to create a bill of rights – whether constitutional or statutory – have failed.

But the concept of human rights is not foreign to Australia. In 1787 Captain Arthur Phillip enacted the ’First Law’ for the penal colony that became Australia, which asserted ’there will be no slavery’. This was many years before Wilberforce abolished the slave trade in Britain. The emancipists fought hard to ensure trial by jury and the right to vote: Australia pioneered the secret ballot and universal voting rights, and was among the first nations to give women the vote (indigenous Australians would have to wait until 1967).

On the international level, Eleanor Roosevelt recognized that Australia contributed more than any nation to the development of the principles enshrined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Australian delegation brokered the agreement and ensured the inclusion of the rights to health, welfare, and education. Australia pushed for the creation of an international court to enforce the UDHR on the grounds that a mere declaration of principles would not offer assurance against the revival of oppression.

Ironically, Australia has taken no ‘national’ measures to secure the effective recognition of these rights under Australian law. Fifty years after the establishment of the UDHR, Australia is one of the very few Western countries without a national bill of rights.

Renewed vision for Australia

Saying ’sorry’ to the stolen generations of indigenous Australians in 2008 signalled the beginning of renewed civic engagement with creating a better future for all Australians. Also in 2008, the new Rudd government held the 20/20 ’Ideas’ Summit, at which a thousand articulate Australians came down in favour of a republic, a treaty of reconciliation with indigenous Australians, and a charter of rights – three ’ideas’ that are only new in so far as they can be related to each other as essential conditions for the final emergence of an Australian identity.

In his recent book, UN judge and Australian human rights barrister, Geoffrey Robertson QC, argues that a bill of rights will both improve Australia’s human rights record and represent a statement of Australian values borne out of Australian history that we should preserve and carry into the future. He argues that Australians have ’lodged in [their] consciousness, various beliefs about “the Australian way” to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness…that have not been synthesised or coherently articulated as a set of moral or legal values’.

Tim Soutphommasane (2004) agrees, but asserts that any bill of rights must be part and parcel of the creation of a republic. In his recent book, Reclaiming Patriotism: Nation-Building for Australian Progressives (Cambridge University Press, 2009), Tim argues that ’the establishment of the republic is an opportunity to put in place new symbols and institutions of citizenship’ and that this should include a clear statement of rights and responsibilities.

According to Tim, a bill of rights will ’promote a more active and virtuous citizenship’ and one that represents a more inclusive and multicultural notion of Australian identity.

If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it

Despite renewed enthusiasm for civic regeneration, the idea of a bill of rights remains extraordinarily controversial. Vocal opponents argue that Australia has an excellent human rights record and that Australians’ rights are sufficiently protected by our Westminster-style democracy and the common law. Not only is this claim Panglossian, but it ignores the experience in the birthplace of our legal and political systems, where the Human Rights Act has exposed numerous gaps in UK common law, especially for disadvantaged groups and minorities.

There are cases in Australia where courts have in fact found no
constitutional or legislative provision that allows them to prevent or put a stop to human rights abuse. These include the indefinite (and inhuman) detention of asylum seekers in AL-Kateb v Godwin (2004) 219 CLR 562, and laws allowing the forcible removal of indigenous children from their families in Kruger v Commonwealth of Australia (1997) 190 CLR 1. David Hicks, an Australian held for many years in Guantanamo Bay, found no recourse in the Australian courts to force or even pressure Australia to bring him home, such that he felt impelled to turn to the UK, applying for British citizenship in the hope that the British government might ask for his release as it had for others such as Binyam Mohamed.

After the 20/20 Summit, the Attorney-General created the Australian Human Rights Consultative Committee to conduct a nationwide consultation to examine protection and promotion of human rights and responsibilities in Australia. Aruna Sathanapally (2006) coordinated a group of ten postgraduate lawyers who presented a briefing to this Committee on the UK’s Human Rights Act and the lessons it provides for Australia. The Committee adopted several of the briefing’s suggestions in its recommendations to the Australian government. The consultative process was assisted by Lord Bingham (1954 and Visitor) who spent time in Australia speaking to judges and senior politicians about the UK experience. No-one could be more qualified to have done so, as Lord Bingham led the British judiciary through the process of grafting the principles of the Human Rights Act onto UK common law. In his recent book, The Rule of Law (Allen Lane, 2010), just as in his judicial decisions under the Human Rights Act striking down or curtailing the most abrasive government anti-terrorism powers, Bingham illustrates his scrupulous respect for the limits of judicial function while vindicating human rights against the excesses of government action. The Committee’s simple finding is that Australia’s wealthy and allegedly egalitarian society disrespects and discriminates against many classes of its citizens, from indigenous Australians who live in conditions of third world disadvantage, to the mentally disabled and the large numbers of Australian workers who no longer have sufficient trade union protection. In short, the system is broke and it needs fixing.

Looking to the future

While the Australian debate languishes a decade behind on the question of whether or not to adopt a bill of rights, in the UK debate forges ahead to consider the protection of a greater range of rights. Balliol Fellow Jeff King has been working to foster this debate. In June 2009, he and Professor Sandy Fredman hosted a workshop attended by academics, students, and NGO representatives on the subject of ‘A UK Bill of Social Rights?’ The workshop was convened to discuss the report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights on a Bill of Rights for the UK (10 August 2008), which recommended the introduction of constitutional social rights in the UK. The workshop has developed into a more formal group of interested parties seeking further public engagement on the protection of social rights in the UK.

Concerning an Australian bill of rights the question is not a matter of if, but when. Whatever its final form, it must include rights that reflect the iconic moments in our history: the low points which we want to protect against and say ‘never again’, such as the systematic discrimination against indigenous Australians and the massacre of workers at Eureka Stockade; and the high points that represent moments of moral vision such as Phillip’s first law against slavery. Like the UK’s Human Rights Act, an Australian bill of rights will improve human rights protection, but should also provide a statement that Australian children can recite with pride, and give them an understanding of the unique history that has influenced the Australian definition of a free society. The Australian bill of rights must recognize the struggles and triumphs of the past and welcome and rejoice in our multicultural present and future.
Toby Ord and the science of morals

BY GWAIN WILLIAMS (2006, POLITICS)

Toby Ord is unusual: a philosopher whose work has had a direct practical impact on the way he lives his own life. As his philosophical work led him to consider the potential good consequences that would flow from a radical increase in charitable giving, Toby found he could no longer continue as before. He has now pledged to donate a significant proportion of his income to charity, and leads a campaign – Giving What We Can – encouraging others to do the same.

Given the way in which his own philosophical investigations are directly linked to one of the world’s most urgent moral problems, I am keen to know whether Toby finds it strange that most mainstream academic moral philosophy fails to engage with the urgent concerns of poverty, domination, exploitation, and oppression. He admits that ‘there is a disconnect’, and suggests that one explanation is that the problem of poverty is morally too obvious, meaning that it gets overlooked by philosophers, with some dangerous consequences. ‘What mainstream moral philosophers usually like to talk about gets used as a proxy for what we think is important. But actually, it’s more correlated to what we think is difficult.’

Having studied philosophy at Balliol as a graduate, Toby is now back at College as a Junior Research Fellow, aided by a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship. His undergraduate background, though, also takes in Mathematics and Computer Science – a fact that one suspects might in some way motivate his desire to bring quantitative calculation and precision to bear on moral philosophy, which is a theme that is evident in much of his work. ‘In terms of ethical theories, my view is that we should hold ourselves to the type of standards that theoretical physicists hold themselves to: if something looks ad-hoc or non-fundamental, then we should be suspicious of it.’

As a consequentialist, Toby is happy to claim that morality is a quantitative and technical issue. I ask Toby what he believes the prospects are for moral philosophy to become more scientific, and whether we can hope to reduce to empirical disagreements what currently seem to be conflicts of ethical values. Echoing the words of his mentor and fellow moral philosopher Derek Parfit (Balliol 1961), Toby is hopeful that progress in this direction is possible: ‘ultimately I’m very optimistic, but not on a short timescale.’

Toby’s approach to moral philosophy is strikingly explicit and clear, and he is unashamedly enthusiastic about the prospect of rationalizing our moral thought. Though a significant part of his project is to show that, properly understood, consequentialism is not as counter-intuitive as is often supposed, his remains a very special and distinctive way of looking at human life and the problems of morality. Perhaps the issue for the rest of us is not so much whether we agree with Toby’s answers, but whether we can accept his way of looking at the questions.

See www.givingwhatwecan.org/ to find out more about Toby Ord’s campaign.
Bookshelf

As well as the two novels featured on pages 14-15, the following titles by Balliol alumni hit the headlines in 2009/10.

The Checklist Manifesto

Atul Gawande takes us from Austria, where an emergency checklist saved a drowning victim who had spent half an hour underwater, to Michigan, where a cleanliness checklist in intensive care units virtually eliminated a type of deadly hospital infection. He explains how checklists work to prompt striking and immediate improvements. And he follows the checklist revolution into fields well beyond medicine, from disaster response to investment banking, skyscraper construction, and businesses of all kinds.

‘With this book, Gawande inspires all of us, doctor or not, to be better’
The New York Times

A Gift to My Children
Jim Rogers (1964, PPE) (Random House, 2009)

Jim Rogers is a world traveller and legendary investor who made his fortune before he was forty. Now the bestselling author shares a heartfelt, indispensable guide for his daughters (and all young investors) to find success and happiness. He offers advice with candour and confidence, but this time he adds paternal compassion, protectiveness, and love.

‘a gentle piece, on how to learn from triumphs and mistakes in order to achieve a prosperous, well-lived life’
thisismoney.co.uk

The Junior Officers’ Reading Club: Killing Time and Fighting Wars
Patrick Hennessey (2000, English) (Allen Lane, 2009)

This is the story of how one of Britain’s soldiers was made, through the testosterone-heavy breeding ground of Sandhurst, into the war-pockmarked, gritty Balkans, out into the nightmare of Iraq and Afghanistan’s Helmand Province. It describes not only the frenetic violence of a soldier’s life, but the periods of stifling and (sometimes) comic boredom, living inside an Army caught between a world that needs it and a society that no longer understands it.

‘Soldiers who can write are as rare as writers who can strip down a machine gun in 40 seconds, but Patrick Hennessey is one of the few...a powerful, compelling and unapologetic memoir of a young soldier’s life’
The Sunday Times

Inside Obama’s Brain
Sasha Abramsky (1990, PPE) (Penguin, 2009)

Inside Obama’s Brain isn’t a biography; rather, it’s a psychological profile, perfect for anyone who hopes to model his astonishing success or simply to understand him better.

‘An award-winning journalist Sasha Abramsky interviewed close to 100 of Obama’s current and former friends, colleagues, classmates, teachers, staff, mentors, editors, and even his next-door neighbours. These people each know pieces of Obama’s life and career, which the author blends into a uniquely detailed analysis.

‘Breezy engaging book’
Publisher’s Weekly

The Magnificent Mrs Tennant: The Adventurous Life of Gertrude Tennant, Victorian Grande Dame
David Waller (1981, PPE) (Yale University Press, 2009)

The salon established by Gertrude Tennant (1819–1918) attracted legions of celebrities, among them William Gladstone, Joseph Chamberlain, Oscar Wilde, Mark Twain, Thomas Huxley, John Everett Millais, Henry James, and Robert Browning. David Waller’s book recovers Gertrude’s lost life, drawing on a treasure trove of recently discovered family papers.

‘elegantly recreates a seething, death-haunted century’
Independent

Solo
Rana Dasgupta (1990, Modern Languages) (Fourth Estate, 2009)

This novel recounts the life and daydreams of a recluse one-hundred-year-old man from Bulgaria. Ulrich embarks on an epic armchair journey through a century of violent politics, forbidden music, lost love and failed chemistry, finding his way eventually to an astonishing epiphany of tenderness and enlightenment. Solo is a book about lost roots, broken traditions, and wasted ambitions — and the depths of lyricism by which human beings overcome those failures.

‘Solo is mannered in its strangeness, but utterly unforgettable in its humanity’
The Guardian

Charles Dickens
Michael Slater (1957, English) (Yale University Press, 2009)

Charles Dickens is remembered as one of the finest novelists in history. In this richly illustrated work, Michael Slater presents each of Dickens’s novels in the detailed and illuminating context of his personal and professional life. He highlights Dickens’s boundless energy, his passion for order and fascination with disorder, his organisational genius, his deep concern for the poor, his love of fairy tales, and his hatred of tyranny.

‘shares a wealth of new material…and, gosh, does he know his stuff.

This is a hugely impressive biography’
The Bookseller

If you would like your book to be featured on the Floreat Domus Bookshelf, please send details to the Editor, Jacqueline Smith (contact details on inside front cover)
Towards Balliol’s 750th anniversary

As readers of Floreat Domus will know, the College will be celebrating the 750th anniversary of its foundation in 2013. There will be a series of events to mark the occasion, and we are planning the programme now. To help strengthen Balliol’s financial position for the future, the College is presently engaged in an ambitious campaign to raise over £30 million (and to double the number of people giving to Balliol) by 2013. Our campaign runs in parallel with the University of Oxford’s campaign, ‘Oxford Thinking’, and all donations given to Balliol during this period are included in the sums raised towards the University’s overall target.

Since August last year, when the last edition of Floreat Domus was published, Balliol has received over £3.5 million more in gifts and pledges. This has taken us to the figure of £17.5 million towards our target. Given the difficulties of the present financial and economic climate, this is a significant achievement, and we have been extremely heartened by the response of Old Members and other friends of the College around the world.

A primary goal of the campaign is to increase considerably Balliol’s endowment for Fellowships (including Junior Research Fellowships), scholarships, and for our general educational activities. Our present endowment stands at just over £60 million, and it currently contributes about one-third of Balliol’s total income. This is significantly less – in terms of endowment per student – than the College’s other academic competitors in Oxford, such as Merton, Magdalen, and St John’s, and we are determined to increase it in the years ahead.

Another goal of the campaign is to secure funds for some of the College’s major building projects, including the Historic Collections Centre at St Cross Church (see page 40), some additions to Jowett Walk for student accommodation, and a new building planned for the Garden Quad providing much-needed space for lectures, receptions, musical performances, seminars, and tutorials.

Of the £17.5 million raised in gifts and pledges so far (since 2006/07 inclusive), £2.8 million has been given by hundreds of donors worldwide to the Annual Fund, and the report on the page alongside provides further information about how these gifts are helping students at the College today. Donations to the Annual Fund are the primary way in which alumni, in particular, are contributing to Balliol, but, in the coming years, we will be asking everyone also to consider making a gift to the College’s endowment.

We are very grateful indeed to the Old Members who serve on our numerous fundraising committees, and who are helping us greatly at this time. Our Campaign Board in the UK is co-chaired by Nicola Horlick (1979) and John Colenutt (1981), and our North American Campaign Board is chaired by Ben Heineman (1965) with Donald Gogel (1971) as Vice-chair. Their help, advice, and support continue to be invaluable in enabling the College to achieve its campaign goals.

The importance of the campaign

ANDREW GRAHAM, MASTER OF BALLYOLL

‘Balliol is a remarkable place. It is recognized by many, including those outside the College, as the foremost college in the University. What gave it this reputation? Three factors predominate: its intellectual power, its internationalism, and the extraordinary impact of Balliol people on the world at large.

Is the reputation still justified today? Absolutely, Balliol continues to attract exceptional students and academics from all over the world, acting as the springboard to even greater achievement. Balliol alumni, right now, hold the very top positions in countries across the world in politics, the law, academia, international relations, business, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, public administration, literature, religion, scientific and medical research, the media, and the arts.

And it is worth remembering that the pool of Balliol people is minuscule in comparison with the potential number of individuals trying to reach the top. The student body in Balliol is a mere 700 or so, when there are, for example, nearly 20,000 students in Oxford, around 2 million in the UK, and over 14 million in the US.

Even more impressive is that these results are achieved on a budget per student that is well below that of the other most famous Oxford colleges, St John’s, Christ Church, Queen’s, Magdalen, Merton, and Jesus all have at least twice as much endowment per student as Balliol; and Oxford, as a whole, has an endowment that is less than half of that of the elite universities of the US.

Today, Balliol continues to excel and to do so extraordinarily economically. To maintain this excellence, especially in the face of reductions in funding from Government, it needs, above all else, to have a higher level of endowment. With this endowment, Balliol will continue:

• to provide the best undergraduate education in the world.
• to generate the most exciting environment for graduate work and for research.
• to foster people who have the capacity to be movers and shakers across the globe.

One of the key goals of the College’s present campaign is to build up Balliol’s endowment for the years ahead, while also funding more immediate projects including those that benefit: current students (through the Annual Fund); the wider community of scholars (through the Historic Collections Centre, for example); and our current junior members, Fellows, and alumni (through the proposed Garden Quad Building, for instance).

Balliol’s very special contribution to education is that it encourages some of the most talented people in the world to develop two important characteristics: they think for themselves, but they do not just think of themselves. To be brilliant and iconoclastic is exceptional; to combine brilliance with integrity and with generosity of spirit is a truly rare achievement, and this is Balliol’s unique gift to the world.’
The Annual Fund – a record year

In 2009, Balliol’s Annual Fund broke all previous records – over £600,000 was received in cash gifts – thanks to the continuing generosity of Old Members and other supporters. The total given to the Annual Fund since its inception, in 1999, has now exceeded £5 million, and over 36 per cent of Balliol’s Old Members have contributed to it so far.

Given Balliol’s limited endowment, money given to the Annual Fund, which is used for immediate expenditure, is particularly important. For example, to have generated £600,000 in income would have required the College to have had the equivalent of £15 million extra in its endowment funds (based on drawing 4 per cent per annum in income).

This unprecedented level of support has allowed us to continue to fund a number of areas of College life which directly benefit current undergraduates and graduates, and it has had a real impact on many aspects of our activities.

For example, last year, Balliol was able to award more scholarships and bursaries than ever before, ensuring that we continue to attract and retain the most promising young men and women. Not all of the money given out last year for this purpose (around £750,000) came from the Annual Fund, of course: the College has, over the centuries, received benefactions in support of students in financial need, and we have also had several gifts over the last decade, in particular, to fund graduate scholarships.

The Annual Fund also enables Balliol to provide additional tutorial support, especially in subjects where there are gaps in supply or where there is a particular demand for more teaching. In fact, the College spent almost £280,000 last year on providing this additional tutorial support, using not only Annual Fund donations but also other resources.

Furthermore, refurbishment work on rooms and staircases throughout the College continues – with the redecoration of Staircase II and the installation of shower cubicles in twenty student rooms last summer, for example – and our IT facilities have seen significant improvement as well. In addition, we were able to contribute over £100,000 to the JCR, MCR, and College societies last year.

Gaudy Campaigns

Balliol’s Gaudy Campaigns play an important role in the success of the Annual Fund by encouraging Old Members to make a special contribution in their Gaudy year, and the 2009 campaigns were no exception.

The 1965–1967 Gaudy Campaign in the spring, chaired by Gordon Johns (1966), set a Balliol record for the highest percentage of donors from those approached personally by the Gaudy Committee – 56 per cent – and the Gaudy years contributed over £160,000 to the campaign. The 1978–1980 Gaudy Campaign in the summer, co-chaired by former JCR President Catherine Roe (1980) and Ian Harnett (1979), raised over £200,000 in gifts and pledges – a huge achievement in this difficult economic climate.

We are extremely grateful to the Gaudy Committees for the time and effort they have devoted to the College.

There are two Gaudy Campaigns in 2010, one for the 1988–1990 years in the spring, chaired by David Lewis (1989), and another for the 1994–1996 years in the summer, which will be chaired by Caleb Wright (1995). Talking about his involvement in this year’s campaign, David Lewis says: ‘Balliol gave me a unique opportunity to meet extraordinary people – people from a multitude of backgrounds and with a boundless energy and enthusiasm for life – people who are now doing amazing things and who will remain my lifelong friends. I am pleased to be giving something back to College by helping with this campaign, and enabling future generations of students to enjoy the same kind of opportunities that I had at Balliol.’

‘It has been a great privilege to help with the Annual Fund campaign in our Gaudy year. Balliol has made such a big impact in my life and career. College fostered the interest in economics that became the basis of my professional life. It is also impossible to underestimate the impact of meeting my wife at College, as well as the lifelong friendships that we have made. Getting back in touch with friends through the 1978–1980 Gaudy Campaign was great fun and everyone was very generous in return. Being able to help the current generation of students through the Annual Fund campaign was just one small way of saying “Thank You” to all the people connected with Balliol who have helped shape my life.’

Ian Harnett (1979)

‘Being part of the Gaudy Committee and talking to contemporaries was a lot of fun. Whether I knew them well or not at all, I never had a short conversation! Everyone just wanted to talk about Balliol. People have happy memories of their time at College but over the years they have also developed a much deeper understanding of how Balliol – its standards, values, and aspirations – has helped shape their futures. They appreciate that influence in their lives, and I am glad that the Annual Fund exists, with our help, to make sure that the current generation of students has it too.’

Catherine Roe (1980)

1988–1990 Gaudy Committee

Chairman
David Lewis (1989)

Members
Nick Delfas (1990)
Adam Joy (1988)
Clare Lewis (1989)
Barry MacEvoy (1990)
Anne Mackenzie (1990)
Shukri Souri (1988)
Jackie Surtani (1988)
Historic Collections Centre at St Cross Church

Balliol’s rich and diverse holdings of medieval manuscripts, early and rare printed books, archives, and modern literary and political papers are one step closer to having a new home. Work on converting the beautiful St Cross Church (next to Holywell Manor), one of the oldest buildings in Oxford, into a Historic Collections Centre, designed by architect Robert Montgomery, began in earnest on 4 January this year.

Everything was halted by snow three days later, but the Centre is on course for completion and availability in early 2011 as planned, after which we will begin moving our collections into the Church. Contractor Felham Construction Ltd has recently undertaken projects for Wadham, St Johns, and Exeter Colleges very successfully. Our aim is for the Centre to be open for use well ahead of Balliol’s 750th anniversary in 2013.

Here, in controlled state-of-the-art conditions, we will make accessible to scholars from around the world our outstanding collections—collections that have been acquired by gift, or in the case of our archives, through administrative process, over centuries. Our plan is to conserve the building, its memorials and glass; to install glass-fronted bookcases in the Nave; to have environmentally controlled self-contained storage units clad in oak panelling in the north and south aisles and former organ chamber; and to provide a working space for readers (and an exhibition area) in the Nave.

Concern about the integrity of the eighteenth-century intramural burial vaults, which have precarious roofing, has led to a slight redesign of the flooring to minimize the risk of collapse. The College is working with Oxford Archaeology on this aspect of the project.

All the stained glass windows are to be removed by Chapel Studios for cleaning and repair. They will be returned and installed with protection (which they lack at present) at the end of the project. The wall memorials are being cleaned by Nimbus Conservation, who recently completed similar work to an exquisitely pleasing standard in Exeter College Chapel.

Generous benefactors

The College has so far secured just over £2.1 million in gifts and pledges towards the projected target of £3.3 million for the project, including the very generous pledge of £1 million from the Shirley Foundation. Other generous donors include Jon Moynihan (1967), Neil Record (1972) and Julie Record, David Kogan (1976), Nicola Horlick (1979), Mark Storey (1981), Martin Foley (1951), Jonathan Lowe (1978), Ian Harnett (1979) and Sara Harnett (1980), Charles Thacker (1964), Sir Launcelot Henderson (1970), Sir Henry Brooke (1957), and many others too numerous to name here.

The College is actively seeking the remaining funds to complete the works as part of our plans to celebrate 750 years since Balliol’s foundation in 1263. We are very grateful for all gifts to this important project.

Balliol anniversary book

Balliol is heading towards an important anniversary in 2013, when the College will have been in continuous existence on its current site for 750 years, longer than any other college in Oxford can claim.

Balliol is planning many events to mark this extraordinary milestone, of which you will hear more in due course. One exciting project that is under way is the publication of a special book about Balliol. This richly illustrated portrait of Balliol, linking today’s developments with its remarkable history, will be published in December 2012.

Old Members will be offered the chance to subscribe in advance of publication, at a discounted price. More details of this offer and information about the progress of the book will be published in forthcoming editions of the Annual Record and Floreat Domus as well as on the College website.

More details can be found on the website at https://archives.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Archives/stcross01.asp.
Should the state be secular? On 19 February 2010, around seventy people including current members of Balliol, Old Members, and guests, spanning close to thirty different matriculation years, and having travelled from all over Europe, gathered to discuss this question at the Master’s Seminar in Berlin. Making this possible was Sir Michael Arthur (1969), British Ambassador to Germany, who generously hosted the Seminar at the British Ambassador’s Residence. Sir Michael was joined by fellow diplomat, His Excellency Philip McDonagh (1970), the current Irish Ambassador to Moscow, who hosted the Seminar the last time it was in Europe – in Rome, in May 2006, when he was Ambassador to the Holy See.

As Chair, the Master introduced proceedings with a special message from Richard von Weizäcker (1936), President of Germany between 1984–1994, whom he had visited that morning. The message stressed the continuing and necessarily unique relevance of the seminar’s topic today, as well as von Weizäcker’s interest in any ideas and conclusions generated.

The Master then yielded the floor to two specialists to introduce the topic: Leslie Green, Fellow of Balliol and Professor of the Philosophy of Law at Oxford, and Professor Rajeel Bhargava (1975), Senior Fellow and Director of the Centre for Developing Studies in Delhi.

Working from the assumption that states value toleration, Green began by separating the concepts of toleration and secularism according to the extent to which they valued inclusion, before addressing familiar fears about secularism: that it constitutes ‘atheism in drag’, is ‘non-neutral’, and encroaches upon ‘token religiosity’.

Responding to the apparent consensus on the merits and manageability of secularism, Bhargava touted the ends for which states need it – principally for the reduction and elimination of institutionalised inter- and intra-religious domination – before questioning the extent to which declared secular states are really secular, offering stark and provocative practical examples from secular and non-secular European states.

Europe, like certain other parts of the world, Bhargava argued, had a problem: despite increased demand for migrants, institutional arrangements had failed to come to terms with a multiplicity of faiths. More was required, then, to further secularize the state.

Following a brief plenary discussion, we broke for an hour into four groups, chaired respectively by Peggotty Graham, Denise Réauine (1980), Professor of Law at the University of Toronto, Sir Michael, and Balliol Professorial Fellow Nick Trefethen, before reporting back to the plenary for further debate. Specific topics surveyed included the subsidization of religious schools, the presence of established state religions, legislation on religious matters, and recognition of religious groups. Issues attracting special attention concerned the extent to which secular values truly exist, whether debates as to common values can take place in a non-secular space, the limits and consequences of token religiosity, and the proper adjudicative and fact-finding bodies to deal with laws and other rules having religious effects.

The sessions were enormously productive, with discussion continuing well into the night over drinks and a delicious dinner at the Residence. In a timely coincidence, the following weekend political theorist Tim Soutphommasane (2004), writing almost 20,000km away in his weekly column in The Australian, considered ‘That grey area between church and state’. Echoing the sentiments of the Master’s Seminar, he noted that politicians should exercise great care in drawing on their religious traditions in public life, concluding: ‘Such is the burden of pluralism. Where politicians are not judicious, they risk undermining the legitimacy of public institutions and the spirit of toleration.’

Seven current students accompanied the College delegation to Berlin, including Christina Schoenbach (2006), Maike Kaufman, Philipp Mertsch, and Andrew Whitby (2007), and Mike Webb and Edward Grefenstette (2008). We benefited greatly from the local knowledge of Maike and Philipp in exploring the sights, sounds, and tastes of the city, spending most of Thursday evening in what used to be East Berlin before visiting the Brandenburg Gate and Holocaust Memorial on Friday. We are especially grateful to Sir Michael for providing a tour of the British Embassy. Barely a decade old, the building was designed by Michael Wilford and is located only steps from where the Wall fell just over two decades ago.
Benefactors to Balliol

The College gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the contributors listed here to Balliol's campaign for its 750th anniversary, whose gifts were received between 28 February 2009 and 1 March 2010. We have respected the wishes of those who have asked for their gifts to remain anonymous, and we thank them too for their support. We apologize for any omissions.

Annual Fund


1965
Richard Ashton
Gay Aston
Professor Roger Cashmore
David Fox
John Green
Roy Hay
Tim Hunt
Nicholas Hope
Paul Joachim
Geoff King
Michael Levine
Gordon Littlewood
Stephen McCarthy
Ian Merling-Blake
Hubert Murray
Emeritus Professor
Paul Crittenden
Alexander Pruda
Malcolm Naylor
Professor Stephen
Oppenheimer
Michael Orr
Richard Raeburn
Saleh Tarin

1966
James Atkinson
Professor Charles
Baden-Fuller
James Bayliss
Stephen Bergman
David Bostock
Charles Brooke
Christopher Currie
Aidan Foster-Carter
Jonathan Green
Captain Bill Griffin
Richard Heller
Professor Jose Hierro
Simon Humphries
Professor Kenneth
Dougley
Stephen Lewis
Eero Kaprio
Philip Kendall
Ronald Knox
Julian Schiff
Peter Scott
Nicholas Shirlington
Jonathan Sunshine
The Reverend Canon
Barry Thompson
Professor Bernard
Wasserstein

1967
Ted Atlett
Paul Brown
David Gowan
Christopher Grayson
David Hooper
Brendan Horton
Ian Ibbotson
Professor Paul
Jankowski
Jon Moynihan
Charles Rickett
Anthony Sheppard
Eddie Teo
John Walters
Frank Waterland
Charles White
Sir Alan Wilkie

1968
Christopher Allen
Robin Ashton
Andrew Buxton
Nicholas Burnett
Professor Terrell
Carver
Michael Crane
Chris Dunabin
Edward Edie
Miles Emley
Professor James
Fawcett
David Garside
Professor David
Gowland
Professor Peter
Hayes
Alan Hopkinson
Peter Hutchinson
Philip Kay
David Keane
Mark Lowe
Alan MacDermot
Aldo Maria Mazio
Professor John
Ramsey
David Sheraton
The Hon Richard
Stearns
Nicola Te
Professor Nigel
Thomas

1969
Tom Brown
Professor John
Cooper
John Deshurtz
Michael Donithorn
Derrick Eden
Paul Evans
Michael Freeman
Ian Gass
Peter Gavan
Sir John Holmes
Kevin Honour
Charles Jones
His Honour Judge
Peter Jones
Andy Lane
Charles Lane
Philip Lemanski
Will Miles
Professor Peter
Skegg
Michael Stewart

1970
Hew Balfour
Professor Russell
Davies
Stephen Dobson
Peter Grebenik
Eric Hanson
Professor Craig Joyce
David Jones
Edward Jones
Julian Lewis
John Lund
Richard Saller
Professor Stephen
Smith
Martin Taylor
David Vernon-Jones
Paul Vinta
Mark Whallock
Blandell

1971
Andrew Chadburn
Jonathan Cox
Andrew Craig
Andrew Foster
Professor Peter
Gilbert
Robin Illingworth
Professor Alexander
Leaf
Oliver Moore
Professor Philip Nord
The Hon Timothy
Palmer
Robert Pear

1972
The Hon Kurt
Schmolke
John Scott

1973
Andrew Burnham
Leo Cahalan
Nicholas Demery
Professor Chris
Hendrickson
Lawrence Hutter
Michael Macgregor
Tim Middleton
Hakeem Belo-Osagie
Neil Stuart
Peter Sowden
Garth Symonds
The Revd Nigel Warner
Laurence Weeks
Neil Williamson
James Yorke
Douglas Young

1974
Thomas Barron
Michael Betterton
Miles Burgess
Justin D owley

1975
Charles Alexander
Professor Ronald
Reiner
Tim Boardman
Paul Edwards
Alan Gordon
Roger Gray
Stuart Jameson
Simon McGuire
Stephan Moss
David Norman
Julian Powe
John Raffe
Anthony Teasdale
Christopher Turner
Carson Wen

History Fellowships Campaign

1931
Peter Calvocoressi

1935
The Revd George
Hood

1936
Sir Charles Gordon

1941
HUGH MYERS

1943
John Taylor

1944
James Ellery

1952
Hue Roe

1956
The Hon David Bruce

1958
John Cottrell

1962
Euan Sutherland

1963
John Nicoll

1964
Colonel Michael
Craster

1966
Richard Allan

1967
Julian Le Fans

1968
Chris Dunabin

1970
Hew Balfour

1971
Professor Peter Gilbert

1973
Ian Bell

1974
Darien Bernstein

1975
Edward Fillos

1978
Richard Fisher

1982
Simon Green

1988
Kit Bingham

1989
Justin Scott

1990
Craig Fraser

1998
Paul Darban

Anonymous
Supporters
3 Anonymous
Supporters

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## Historic Collections Centre

1951  
Martin Foley  
1953  
Professor Sir Christopher Richards  
1961  
Sir Alan Beth MP  
Professor Gregory Brandt  
Lord Selkirk of Douglas  
Andrew Hallan  
Harry Lessie  
Richard Morris  
Doug Rosenthal  
Robert Webb  
1962  
John Cookson  
Alan Scott  
Chris Jelley  
John Lloyd  
Eamon McKeeown  
Anthony Metcalfe  
Peter Miller  
Derek Minor  
1964  
Howard Shaw  
Charles Thacker  
1965  
Paul Joachim  
1966  
Simon Humphries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1976 | Peter Andrews  
Andrew Franklin  
Richard Hocking  
Isadore Jermon  
Dimitri Kullmann  
Guy Leech  
James Ogilvie  
Alan Robinson  
Professor Tom Schwartz  
Stephen Shuttleworth  
Bill Tonks  
Hunt Williams  
Talbot Ypsma |
| 1977 | Chris Start  
Philip Baker  
James Barker  
Jonathan Bayliss  
David Carter  
David Christie  
John Dunleavy  
Neil Forsyth  
Richard Gillis  
Jeremy Mayhew  
Ian Pearson  
Professor Philip Scoocroft  
John Einters  
Michael Wainwright  
Richard Walker |
| 1978 | Carter Brandon  
Marty Burn  
Andrew Curry  
Tom David  
Tom Elliot  
Peter Fink  
Walter Greenblatt  
Kenneth Greig  
Harry Hamley  
Phil Hare  
Charles Hindson  
Richard Hooker  
Jonathan Lowe  
Arjuna Mahendran  
Nicholas Prettejohn  
Lord Reid  
Tom Reid  
Alastair Stanack  
Peter Wetherall  
Christopher  
Whitehouse  
Michael Wilcockson |
| 1979 | Simon Auerbach  
The Revd Professor  
Michael Banner  
Bob Batchelor  
Robin Baynham  
Elena Ceva-Valla  
Robin Cohen  
Rebecca Colenutt  
Louise Collins  
Catharine Driver  
Andrew Evans  
Warwick Fairfax  
Bennett Freeman  
Tawfick Ghandour  
Nigel Hall  
Jenn Hills  
Nicola Horlick  
Helen Lawrence  
Jost Leschauer  
Professor Philip Maini  
Beit Muddford  
Elizabeth Nisbet  
Hilali Noooreen  
Mark Robinson  
Paul Shuttleworth  
Professor Martin Zirnbaum |
| 1980 | Alison Berlins  
Andrew Boucher  
Raji Davenport  
Christopher Gallop  
Sara Harrett  
Matthew Hamlyn  
Mark Hudson  
Felicity Hunt  
Darja Jefferys  
Frank Kennedy  
Philip Kolvin  
Jonathan Macdonald  
Stephen Malher  
Paul Mason  
Andrew Morgan  
Catherine Roe  
Michael Rossington  
Adam Shuttleworth  
Professor Duncan Tate  
Peter Telford  
Andrew Weir |
| 1981 | Richard Barnett  
Professor Arthur Burns  
John Colenhut  
Carlos Tello Diaz  
Professor Daniel Esty  
David Foster  
Wayne Henderson  
Matthew Lynn  
Glenn Moramarco  
Jonathan Ostry  
Christian Roby  
Gordon Willoughby |
| 1982 | Richard Blackford  
Jeremy Cohn  
Susan Cookey  
Piers Daubeny  
Robert Fraser  
Lawrence Gray  
Claire Gruziel  
Charles Hayes  
Rupert Holder  
Andrew Marshall  
Nick Moukas  
Claire Moraity  
Sean Murphy  
Michelle Cale  
Alasdair Cross  
Adam Dutheie  
Ian Fox  
Alastair Wilkins  
John Fleming  
David France  
Tamara Isacs  
Professor David Shaw  
Giles Singler  
Professor Michele Garnard  
Carl Garland  
Giles Howson  
Gregory Jones  
Julian Knowles  
Bill Lipscomb  
Arthur Moore  
Mitchell Moss  
Vicki Reeve  
Stuart Reynolds  
Anwar Saidat  
Chris Tomlinson  
Paul Williams  
Camilla Bingham  
Jason Cale  
Leonard Cohen  
David Howie  
Jane MacKay  
Russ Mrurhead  
James Rattue  
Sarah Seed  
Shuki Souri  
Ralph Walmsey  
Julian Wesseley  
Adrian Bradley  
Fiona Bolton  
Adrian Lewis  
Claire Lewis  
David Lewis  
Jane- Frances Kelly  
Rory Pope  
Justin Scott  
Barry MacEvoy  
Marc Read  
Paul West  
Peter Symons  
Axl Baecumler  
Tina Bennett  
Jeremy Breaks  
Mojo Billington  
Adam Constable  
Alexander Cooper  
Iain Corby  
Mark Falcon  
Christian Gant  
Eleanor Gordon  
Emma Hardy  
Tina Hene  
Harry Morris  
John Masters  
Adam Zoia  
Rashid Zuberi  
Benjamin Dalby  
Dan Leedham-Green  
Pei Ji Lung  
Christian Mehnert  
Tonia Novitz  
Alfred Oetker  
Oliver Pooley  
Jonathan Savidge  
Barnaby Maundner  
Taylor Paola Tinti  
Simon Woods  
Mandy Bazile  
Michael Dal Bello  
Alasdair Harlam  
Helen Hayes  
John Sargent  
Philippa Southern  
Alison Spencer  
Stephenie Victoria Whiford  
James Windle  
Neil Kennedy  
Josh Harlan  
Ali Husain  
Andrew Woodhouse  
Becky Ashton  
Richard Ashton  
Barbara Jeffery  
Carol McQueen  
Richard Sanderson  
Alan Thein  
Ben Lynch  
Charles Goldsmith  
Eleanor Greenwood  
Andrew Chrisomalisi  
Simon Clarke  
Geoff Gowling  
Rose Grimond  
Kirtie Kappo  
Sarah Johnson  
Jade Newburn  
The Hon Robin Walker  
Michael Birshar  
Richard Collins  
Paul Durban  
Benjamin Harding  
Piers Horne  
Tomila Lankina  
Emma Lindsay  
Sarah Longair  
Luke Shepherd  
Peter Torette  
Timothy Williams  
Christian Barby  
Laura Birch  
Andrew Cohen  
Michael Hawkins  
Vicky Jones  
Joh Martens  
Edward Swann  
Emma Whale  
Paul Williams  
Philip Bundy  
Gillian Dow  
Simon Glasscock  
Kristin Javaras  
Vincenzo Rampulla  
Peter Cl flash  
William Mulholland  
Amy Sewell  
Alexa Shipman  
Jason Vickers-Smith
Calendar of events to July 2011

17 April 2010
Balliol North American Dinner, University Club, New York (part of the University’s Biennial North American Reunion)

15 May 2010
Thirty Years of Women at Balliol Lunch (for matriculation years 1994-2009)

10 June 2010
Seminars at Dundas Castle, Edinburgh

26 June 2010
Summer Gaudy (1994-1996 matriculation years)

3 July 2010
Balliol Family Day
24-26 September 2010 ‘Meeting Minds – Shared Treasures’ Oxford Alumni Weekend (dinner at Balliol on 25 September)

2-3 October 2010
Balliol Society Weekend (invitation enclosed with Floreat Domus. The 2003 matriculation year is invited as College guests)

18 November 2010
Usborne Dinner, London

12 March 2011
Greville Smith Society Lunch

19 March 2011
Spring Gaudy (for the 1991-1993 matriculation years)

Date to be confirmed
Master’s Lunch

4 June 2011
Parents’ Lunch

2 July 2011
Summer Gaudy (for the 1997-1999 matriculation years)
Buried treasure

BY JACQUELINE SMITH

What do the Ashmolean Bestiary, Shakespeare’s first folio, the map that the king and queen of Spain may have consulted while deciding whether or not to send Columbus to discover the new world, and the Gutenberg Bible have in common? They are all treasures held in the Bodleian Library. While studying for her MSc in Economics for Development, Gillian Einhorn (2007) developed an intense desire to see these unique Oxford treasures. Happily, she encountered Sarah Thomas, Bodley’s first female international Librarian, at one of Doug’s lunches (see page 8). Gillian persuaded Sarah (a Balliol Professorial Fellow) to set up a ‘treasure tour’ for fifteen Balliol graduate students.

It was on this tour that Gillian learned about the wealth of archive material that is donated to the Bodleian every year, much of which remains unclassified due to lack of financial and human resources. This state of affairs prompted Gillian to put her thinking cap on. An inspired idea came to her very quickly: why not start a scholarship? The group of students who had gone on the first treasure tour were all very interested in the Bodleian’s holdings and qualified to help with the massive archiving work required. What better way to foster the relationship between Balliol and Bodley, to ensure students still got to see the fascinating material, and to help the library out, than to raise money to fund a work placement for a Balliol student within the Bodleian?

Gillian wasted no time in taking her idea to the Senior Tutor, Nicola Trott, who responded positively and presented it to the Academic Committee where it was approved. The terms were thrashed out between Balliol and Chris Fletcher, the Bodleian’s Head of Western Manuscripts, before the final seal of approval was granted by College Meeting. Sarah Thomas very generously gave a personal donation to the fund, which was started with money from Balliol (in turn matched by the Bodleian), and supplemented by Gillian herself. The first Balliol-Bodley scholar, Christine Madsen (2007), was in place by Hilary Term 2009.

Gillian is now working back home in South Africa with Dalberg Global Development Advisors, a company that provides consulting services in global health, agriculture, access to finance, economic development, and the environment. She is helping with the implementation of a market access strategy for the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Plan – the first Africa-owned, continent-wide agriculture development initiative of its kind. She says: ‘the work is challenging because it addresses longstanding African development issues, but the opportunity to engage with senior policy officials and travel across the continent is inspiring.’

So what did Gillian gain from her year at Balliol that made her so committed to ensuring a positive experience for future students? ‘Balliol provided me with a home away from home. I learned to row (slowly), punt (misguidedly), and play croquet (badly). I really enjoyed the warm welcome from the graduate community, the excellent food, and the diverse topics up for discussion at Doug’s lunch. It is clear that she developed a firm affection for the place and it is to her credit that she had the drive and enthusiasm to set up such an innovative scholarship that benefits not only Balliol students but also the Bodleian Library, and the relationship between these two illustrious institutions at opposite ends of Broad Street.

The first Balliol-Bodley Scholar
Who is Christine Madsen, the first Balliol-Bodley scholar, and what has her experience of the scholarship been? She is currently reading for a DPhil in Information Communication and the Social Sciences. She explains: ‘I’ve been a librarian for twelve years and I’m working at the Oxford Internet Institute on the future of libraries. I took part in Gill Einhorn’s treasure tour and I’m interested in the connection between the Bodleian and Balliol.’

Christine wasn’t sure she’d quite fit the bill for the scholarship, which was set up primarily to process an unprocessed collection of archive material at the Bodleian. She is mainly interested in the digitization of cultural materials, and her thesis is about the impact of digitization on scholarship and humanities.

She presents her case in a nutshell: ‘Libraries used to be scholar-centred and are now information-centred, and they need to be moving back to be scholar-centred and working out what users really want, as well as promoting what they do. There is lots of digitization of cultural materials going on in the Tibetan and Himalayan region, for example, preserving the culture of a diaspora (of interest to anthropologists and philologists), and dovetailing with other global initiatives – but a lot of it doesn’t seem to be happening in libraries. Such projects are independent, small, precarious, and largely unsustainable, they need to migrate to a library institution for survival.’
Fortunately for the Bodleian, Christine decided to apply for the scholarship anyway, submitting her CV and a statement about why her skills might be appropriate. The selection committee (Balliol’s Librarian Penny Bulloch, Vice-Master Seamus Perry, Senior Tutor Nicola Trott, as well as Bodleian staff Chris Fletcher and Mike Webb) immediately saw how her experience of the digitization programme at Harvard, for example, put her in a good position to assess the impact of some of the Bodleian’s digital resources; resources that had been in place for some time without having had a significant review. Two projects were set up forthwith: ‘Improving the Findability and Usability of the Online Catalogues of Western Manuscripts’ and ‘Impact Analysis of the “Early Manuscripts at Oxford” website’.

So what did Christine actually end up doing? ‘I worked for about ten hours a week for twelve weeks. I used a model developed from some work I did at the Oxford Internet Institute on a JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) project. This project involved developing a toolkit for assessing the impact of the digitization projects that JISC had been funding.’

The ‘Early Manuscripts at Oxford’ website is about ten years old, and run by Michael Popham. Christine’s investigation, using her impact assessment model, showed that the site was really well used, especially in terms of the number of times other websites linked to it. For the Online Catalogues’ project Christine talked to users and looked at how easy it was for different people to find what they wanted. She recommended ‘bread-crumbs’ (a trail showing where you are in the hierarchy), as well as RSS feeds or emails to alert people to new developments. Christine says that the scholarship had a positive impact on her research as it enabled her to step outside the direct cases in her thesis, and look at the same issues from a different perspective. Her detailed and prioritized recommendations to the Bodleian, in terms of what could be done to improve usability of the two resources, are, according to Sarah Thomas: ‘valuable for us and useful for her own development in digital libraries’.

After her DPhil, which she plans to complete in June 2010, Christine would like to teach at library school but also knows it’s important to stay involved and ‘hands-on’ in the library world. She set up a consultancy company last year which is designed to help libraries report back to their funding bodies and to users on how grant money is being spent.

The 2010 Balliol-Bodleian scholar is Carly Watson (2009). Carly is doing a Masters in English. For the Bodleian she will be conducting research into manuscript poetry in the Harcourt collection. The Harcourt papers are currently being catalogued, and comprise eighteenth- to nineteenth-century correspondence and papers of the Harcourts of Nuneham Courtenay in Oxfordshire, relating to politics, science, the royal court, and the development of Nuneham. Among the papers are several volumes of mainly eighteenth-century poems. Further research is needed to see whether it is possible to identify the hand and the author.

Possible archive collections waiting to be identified, listed, sorted, and boxed in the future include the papers of Sir Edward William Spencer Ford, Officer in Guards during the Second World War and Assistant Private Secretary both to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II, and a large collection of archives of interconnected electrical companies including Marconi’s Wireless Telegraph Company and the General Electric Company. It is hoped that many more graduate students will feel inspired to promote the Bodleian’s treasures and to consider whether they can offer their expertise through the mechanism of the Balliol-Bodleian Scholarship.

Gill Einhorn

Tunnel underneath the Bodleian Library
The establishment of the Arthur and Miriam Levitan Fund

Balliol College is very grateful to Professor Steven Levitan, Visiting Fellow in Engineering Science and Oliver Smithies Lecturer in 2007–2008, for deciding to support the College generously with an initial gift to establish an endowment fund, named in honour of his parents. The income from the fund is currently being used to provide a scholarship for an undergraduate studying Science, Mathematics, Engineering or Philosophy.

Professor Levitan’s father, Arthur, never got a chance to finish college. After one year of part-time study in New York City, he left to join the US Army and was stationed in England during the Second World War. Here he served as an aircraft mechanic, and fell in love with the British countryside and the British people. One of his favorite authors was D.H. Lawrence. He also enjoyed visiting Oxford and punting on the rivers. After the war, he returned home, married Miriam, joined the family business, and started his own family. During retirement, he and his wife spent a year touring Great Britain. Arthur’s son Steven Levitan is John A. Jurenko Professor of Computer Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh. His research is in the fields of integrated circuit (chip) design and parallel computer architecture. In the winter of 2000–2001 Professor Levitan visited Britain and Oxford many times while his wife, Professor Anna Balazs, was a Visiting Fellow at Corpus Christi. During this time he followed in his father’s footsteps and fell in love with the country. Six years later he was enjoying what he describes as the ‘magical experience’ of being a Visiting Fellow at Balliol. He spent his days working in College, and often had lunch and dinner at Balliol too, which allowed him to meet many of the Fellows, Junior Research Fellows, students, and staff. ‘Not only was I invited into the academic fellowship of the College, I was also welcomed into the community of College life,’ he says.

Professor Levitan and his wife chose to endow a scholarship fund at Balliol, in memory of Steven’s father and mother, in order to make the Balliol experience available to more students. He sums up what he believes the merits of that experience to be: ‘The pursuit of excellence is a cultural phenomenon. I saw at Balliol how everyone, from the Master to the Fellows to the Tutors, promoted excellence in scholarship, athletics, and intellectual endeavours both inside and outside the classroom.’

In 2009, Balliol awarded the first Arthur and Miriam Levitan Scholarship to Jekaterina Ivanova, who is studying Engineering, Economics and Management. The second-year Estonian student gained a Distinction in Prelims and was ranked 29th out of 163 in the University.

Jekaterina lived and studied in Estonia until she was 17. She travelled widely with her parents during these years, which gave her the idea of taking her A-levels in a different country. She chose Thailand, where she studied at Regent School Bangkok, one of the few international schools offering scholarships.

Jekaterina then opted to continue her studies at the University of Oxford because it offered the course in Engineering, Economics, and Management. She says: ‘I believe that management skills and a knowledge of economics are essential for any engineer. Balliol is one of the best colleges in both Engineering Science and Economics and Management.’ It was not just the academic record that attracted her, however. She says that another reason for choosing Balliol was that it ‘looked like the most informal college in Oxford. Things like gowns and formal halls at other colleges seemed odd and scary.’ She is very happy to have received the scholarship, and grateful to her Tutors for selecting her. Her ambition is to become a civil engineer.

At present, the endowment money is being used to recognize and reward an existing Balliol student’s academic achievement and to encourage progress. In the future, as the fund grows, it is hoped that the Arthur and Miriam Levitan Scholarships could help to attract very good undergraduate applicants who might otherwise not be able to afford to come to Balliol.
Generous support for prizes at Balliol

The College is delighted to announce that three new sets of prizes for academic achievement have recently been established by Old Members and other donors.

Such prizes help to recognize and reward students’ progress in their subject, and also stimulate them to continue to do well in their studies. They are part of a long tradition at Balliol, and other Oxford colleges, in making awards to the most outstanding scholars. The prizes can also provide much-needed financial help to students in purchasing books and supporting their research projects.

Leonie Foong

Leonie Foong (1995) is generously funding two annual prizes for undergraduates studying Engineering, Economics & Management (EEM), to be awarded to the best-performing students in Prelims and Finals each year. The criteria for the prize can be extended to those studying Science, or other scientific fields, if necessary. Leonie read EEM at Balliol, and now works for Lone Pine Capital in Hong Kong.

Commenting about the prizes she has established at Balliol, Leonie says: ‘Balliol is where I have some of my fondest memories and made some of my best friends...I found the place intellectually challenging and stimulating, and subsequently developed the most during my years at Balliol. None of that would have been possible without the great tutorials and support that I received from my Balliol tutors and college mates.’

‘Balliol attracts many of the brightest and most self-motivated students. Having benefited from an excellent education and a fantastic student life at College, I hope that Balliol can continue to offer a world-class education and excellent resources to generations of future students. Hopefully, my little contribution can serve as additional motivation to Balliolites to strive for academic results beyond their imagination.’

James Sherwin-Smith and Theodoros Kyriacou

James Sherwin-Smith (2000) and Theo Kyriacou (2000) are generously funding an annual prize in Economics and Management, to be awarded to a student achieving the best combined marks in his/her Economics and Management papers in Part 1 Finals of EEM (or, if there is no suitably qualified candidate, to an undergraduate reading the joint schools of Economics & Management who achieves the best performance in Prelims).

James and Theo both read EEM at the same time at Balliol. James is currently a management consultant at Oliver Wyman, and Theo works as a hedge fund manager at Paulson Europe LLP.

They comment about the prize they have created at Balliol as follows: ‘We are delighted to be able to support Balliol Economics and Management students with this prize. We found the addition of ‘E&M’ to our Engineering degrees a challenging but invaluable learning experience that has proven to be a differentiating factor during our nascent careers. At the end of the third year, EEM students go straight from Part 1 Finals into a six-month work placement, and then back to College for Part 2. We hope this prize will help students as they make this transition, and further promote this niche joint schools degree at Balliol.’

Margaret Dubner

Two years ago, Margaret Dubner generously established annual prizes for undergraduates reading PPE and Classics, and, this year, has added a further two annual prizes for undergraduates and graduates in History and Clinical Medicine. She has made these gifts in honour of her late husband, Samuel Dubner (1936), who passed away in November 2007.

Samuel Dubner came to Balliol from Manchester Grammar School just before the outbreak of World War II. Here he read Mods in Literae Humaniores before completing a PPE degree. He then went on to work for the Foreign Office Research Department (until 1942) and the Central Statistical Office, War Cabinet Office (until 1945). After the war he joined the Ministry of Education for two years and then worked at the National Coal Board until 1977. He and Margaret married in 1979, and they had one child, Jonathan.

Margaret Dubner says: ‘My son Jonathan and I are very pleased to be able to support these prizes at Balliol. Samuel greatly enjoyed his time at the College, and it always had a special place in his heart. Although he did not pursue an academic career, he had a deep love of learning throughout his life. I feel sure that he would have been delighted by the establishment of these prizes, which we hope will recognize, celebrate, and reward outstanding academic achievement by students at Balliol, and encourage them to continue to do well in their studies.’

The importance of prizes

Commenting on these prizes, the Senior Tutor, Nicola Trott, says: ‘Prizes for student performance are a highly direct and visible way of supporting Balliol, and we are very grateful to these donors for their generosity. We advertise many of our awards on the College’s website, either to our current members, or on the Admissions pages in order to help attract strong applications in the subject.

‘The most typical prize is an undergraduate Scholarship – and all students who gain a Distinction or 1st in their First Public Examinations gain an award – but there are many points in a student’s career, and many forms of performance, for which awards can be made by Balliol. For example, the majority of undergraduates now pursue “projects” of one kind or another, often involving some kind of travel, and imaginative gifts to support these activities as well are always very welcome. Such gifts are also of great benefit to graduate students, who frequently need to travel to pursue their research.’
Would you like to make a lasting contribution to Balliol’s future?

A bequest can help the College and its students in many enduring ways

Gifts by Will can help to endow Fellowships, establish scholarships, support the Library, create buildings, and fund our flourishing clubs, societies and sports teams.

Since its foundation, bequests to Balliol have helped to shape the College and support its teaching and research, and these legacies enable each generation to ensure that those who follow them can enjoy everything that Balliol has to offer.

Over 200 Old Members and friends of the College, aged between 28 and 98, have already chosen to leave a legacy to Balliol in their Will. As a way of thanking them during their lifetimes, the College has created the Greville Smith Society, named in honour of one of our most generous legators, Harold Greville Smith, who read Chemistry at Balliol in the 1920s.

Members of the Society meet each year for a lunch at Balliol. These gatherings are always convivial occasions, and the members and their guests have got to know each other well. As we approach our 750th anniversary, in 2013, we encourage all our Old Members and other friends of the College to consider making a bequest to Balliol. We hope that you will be willing to join them.

Legacies are a marvellous way to support Balliol’s general educational activities, and we are extremely grateful to receive these gifts.

To request a copy of our information pack about legacies, and to find out how your bequest can help the College, please contact:

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Telephone: +44 (0)1865 277704
Email: laura.bianco@balliol.ox.ac.uk