Special Feature: More than money
Three Balliol Old Members talk about aid work

People-powered politics

Master on the move
Editorial

My name is Sophie Petrou and I’m the new editor of Floreat Domus. I joined the staff at Balliol in September 2010 as Publications and Web Officer. Prior to this I worked in a variety of publishing roles including writing and editing graduate careers magazines; designing and editing marketing magazines and journals; writing web content and editing interactive DVDs for the DB; I’m very happy to be working at beautiful Balliol – I hope to refresh and update the publications where I can but also to continue to deliver the best and most interesting news from the College and its Members.

I am grateful to staff and Fellows (Dr Nicola Trott in particular) for alerting me to news and potential stories for this edition and to the Old Members who have contributed pieces. It was also great to discover talented and reliable students who were keen to write articles and to find that the pieces submitted were lively and, without exception, well written.

As a departure from the norm, owing to the fact that it’s our current Master’s last year, the first two pages have been handed over to him. Then, as usual, there is a wealth of impressive achievements, exciting projects and interesting developments at Balliol for you to read about in this issue. Articles include a follow-up to the thirtieth anniversary of women at Balliol (page 6); an interview with Hugo Dixon (1984), former editor of the Financial Times and founder of Breakingviews (page 18); and a four-page special feature by three Old Members in the field of aid work (page 20).

Floreat Domus (just like the College’s Annual Record) relies on news from both current and Old Members, so please do send me anything you feel would be of interest or make a good article: I would love to hear from you. Please also send me your thoughts about the magazine – topics discussed or those you would like to see in future issues. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Sophie Petrou, Editor
From the Master

By Andrew Graham

Sadly for me, this is the last Floreat issue of my Mastership. I will write more in the Annual Record. For now, what I want to say first and foremost is how greatly I have enjoyed being Master. Often demanding, occasionally stressful, but frequently enormous fun: above all, it has always, always, been stimulating and interesting. Indeed, one of the greatest pleasures for me and for Peggotty has been getting to know so many of you so much better, and, as described in 'Master on the move' (page 34), we have been spending much of this term doing precisely this.

No doubt you will be expecting me to say something about tuition fees and I do so below. However, what is most on my mind is how much our communication with you has changed and, very probably, will go on changing, and some of the implications of this for Balliol.

The College and its Alumni

When, in 1997/98, I first became responsible for Balliol, email traffic was still in its infancy. Podcasts, blogs and tweets were not even words, social networks had nothing to do with technology, and no College business was ever conducted electronically. Today we have email newsletters, webcasts, and our own online alumni social network (see page 38), not to mention the constant refreshing of the website. Furthermore, Balliol has been well to the fore in many of these newer communication changes.

The Oxford Internet Institute (the first multi-disciplinary research institute in the world looking at the social implications of the internet) largely came into being through my efforts and those of the then President of the MCR. Voices from Oxford, an organisation that specialises in high-quality webcasts from Oxford University, is a Balliol creation – from which I now do my termly webcast of Balliol news; PlinkArt (a mobile phone application for identifying paintings) is the first ever UK company to be purchased by Google. It was set up by two Oxford graduate students, one of whom was from … yes, you’ve guessed it … Balliol.

There is plenty to come. Soon an iPad (or its successor), providing access to all the books and libraries in the world, will sell for less than a single good quality hardback (with some pretty drastic and, for many, unwelcome effects on bookshops). These ‘tablets’ are already video recorders and real-time data manipulators, while also being the devices on which to consume or to produce films, lectures, webcasts and books and then multicast to all-and-sundry or selectively. No one knows exactly where this will take us, but I can see at least one direction, already manifest, that I believe is likely to continue.

The new communication is cheap, easy, reaches anyone anywhere, decentralised and hugely difficult to control. These factors make all organisations far more permeable. The impact of WikiLeaks on the formerly secret world of diplomacy is the most dramatic current example. Being inevitable does not, of course, make it desirable. At minimum, even the supposedly inevitable change can be slowed down (or speeded up). Decisions remain to be taken. Given this, what do we think about permeability?

In the case of Balliol, at least, I am sure we should warmly welcome it. The evidence is that, as institutions become more permeable and so more open to scrutiny, those that perform best will be those where the external face and the internal discussion hold together. Two recent books, How by Dow Seidman and High Performance with High Integrity by Ben Heineman (both are Balliol alumni) describe precisely this point. Most of the time, Balliol’s internal processes and workings are consistent with the high principles to which we aspire and the external image we project, so we can only gain from being more open. And, if our procedures do not display high standards, they ought to and we should change them!

Permeability, in the sense of linking Balliol more closely with its Old Members, is also clearly beneficial. You want to know what we are doing; we want to tell you and the new technology is making this ever easier.
Two recent initiatives illustrate what I mean. One is our online alumni network. If you have not yet signed up, please do so (www.ballionnetwork.com). The other is the creation of the Balliol Interdisciplinary Institute, the BII (www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/BII). As well as doing what it says on the tin (encouraging current members of Balliol to work on projects that bring together different disciplines), we hope that our alumni will be able to keep informed about BII activities and, if they wish, to participate in and contribute to some of the discussions. And, as described (on page 5), a fascinating set of projects is already underway. So, follow the links and make us more permeable. We welcome your interest!

Tuition fees

Talking of technology, I have already done a webcast about tuition fees (www.voicesfromoxford.com/tuition%20fees.html). However, if you missed this, let me summarise. The new system is a huge change for home and EU undergraduate students (graduates and non-EU undergraduates are not affected). Today, tuition fees are approximately £3,300 per annum. From October 2012, the fee will be at least £6,000 and at research intensive universities such as Oxford very probably £9,000 (this will be known by the time you receive Floreat). Only fifteen years ago students paid nothing. Prospective students are understandably disappointed and many are angry.

However, it is important to understand how the new system will work. No student pays any fee up-front. Education will, therefore, remain free at the point of use. Effectively the Government pays the universities by lending the money to the student and this loan is then repaid from later earnings at the rate of 9% on any earnings over £21,000. Below £21,000 there is no repayment. Thus this is not a loan like a mortgage, a debt that has to be serviced through thick and thin, but rather it is a debt that is repaid only when the income is available. Moreover, after 30 years any part of the loan not repaid is written off. In many ways it would have been far better to describe the new system as a tax with a cap, hypothecated to support the university the student attended.

For Balliol, at least in narrow financial terms, the overall budgetary effect is likely to be remarkably small. Our internal work suggests no substantial net change in our income as compared with now. The higher fees merely offset the reductions in public funding. However, the ‘now’ is one in which, across the whole University we are losing about £8–9,000 per home and EU undergraduate student. In short, these reforms, major as they seem and large as they undoubtedly are for students, are no solution to the present underfunding of the system. That problem remains untouched.

What should we think of these changes? It is not difficult to see that, from a student’s perspective, ‘free’ education greatly to be preferred to paying £9,000 per annum so I understand student anger.

Nevertheless, education provides not just public, but also private, benefits. This means that there is no cast iron economic reason why it should be entirely paid for by the state.

The earlier system also had drawbacks. Until 1997 (when tuition fees were introduced), those attending university received a ‘free’ education paid for out of general taxation. Then (as regrettably remains too much the case now) those attending university came disproportionately from social classes A and B. In broad terms, this meant that money was collected from those on average incomes and went disproportionately to the children of the better off. The university education then further increased these children’s chances of high earnings in future. Personally, I find it hard to justify a system which transfers money from the relatively poor to the relatively rich so that they can become richer still.

To say that there is a general case for those who benefit most from higher education to pay more is, however, not to approve of the plans now being pushed through. While Humanities and Social Sciences will receive income from fees, the support of their teaching from public funds has been cut to zero, without any credible justification; the cuts precede the fee increases, pushing some universities towards bankruptcy; and, with massive ineptitude, the fear of debt has been whipped up. Given that we know that student fear of debt is still more concentrated among the less well-off, the great danger is that the size and speed of the current changes will deter a generation of students from less well-off families from applying to university. Oxford ought to be a ladder of opportunity. For many it has been. Right now it is hard to see how we can sustain where we are on access, let alone improve it. Probably all we can do is to fund far more bursaries. But that is then an even greater strain on our already over-stretched finances. We will manage this as best we can but these are difficult times.
New Visitor of Balliol

In November 2010, the Master and Fellows of Balliol elected a new Visitor – the Right Honourable Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, a Justice of the Supreme Court. The Visitorship had fallen vacant following the death of the much-loved Lord Bingham of Cornhill on 11 September 2010 (see Annual Record 2010 for obituaries). Unlike other Oxford colleges, Balliol has the privilege of electing its own Visitor – a right granted in 1507. In the past, Visitors were often churchmen; in recent times, the election has fallen to Old Members who have gone on to become senior Law Lords, and the College is delighted to have such a distinguished member of the judiciary following in the footsteps of Lord Bingham.

Lord Rodger was educated at Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow University and New College, Oxford. He was elected a Dyke Junior Research Fellow at Balliol in 1969 and then Fellow and Tutor in Law at New College 1970–72. In 1989, Lord Rodger was appointed Solicitor General for Scotland and in 1992 he became Lord Advocate, a life peer and a Privy Councillor. After being Lord President of the Court of Session and Lord Justice General of Scotland from 1996 to 2001, he was a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary until 2009, when he was appointed to be a Justice of the newly-created Supreme Court of the United Kingdom. He has been High Steward of Oxford University since 2008.

The role of The Visitor

The Visitor may be called upon to give advice to the Master and Fellows of the College. There is also a ceremonial element to the role. However, the most important function of the Visitor within academic institutions is to determine disputes arising between its members (a rare occurrence at Balliol, where the last such instance occurred nearly 350 years ago). Traditionally the courts have been exempted from any jurisdiction over student complaints but as a result, latterly, there had been much speculation that this exemption contravened the Human Rights Act 1998. In 2004, the Higher Education Act transferred the jurisdiction of the Visitor over student complaints in English and Welsh universities to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The Visitor’s role as the giver of wise and confidential advice to the Master and Fellows continues, however. One of the best known of Balliol’s Visitors was Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham, who in 1807 played a central role in backing successful attempts to open college Fellowships to competition. ‘Balliol was the first college to do this and much of Balliol’s subsequent fame may be traced back to that decision,’ says Master Andrew Graham. ‘We are therefore rather proud of our Visitors.’

New Development Director

Judy Longworth returns to Balliol as Development Director. Having previously worked in the Development Office from 1993 and as Development Director from 1997 to 1999, she was drawn back to Balliol, she says, by an enduring love of the place. ‘I am a whole-hearted supporter of its internationalism, its liberal values, its public service ethos, its academic distinction and the fact that it treats its students as grown-ups.’

Previously Judy was Development Director at Oxford’s University College, where she was raising money for their £55 million fund-raising campaign. She helped Univ to achieve the highest gift participation rates in the UK for the last five years. I ask what she has in store for Balliol. ‘My main aim is to help the College, via philanthropic fund-raising, to achieve a more secure financial base to enable it to continue to be an inspiring academic community’, she says. ‘If we don’t achieve this together, we cannot take its survival in its present form for granted. It would be more wonderful still if we could not only survive but thrive, leading the way in teaching, research and the support of our students’. Before Univ, Judy worked at Radley College as Foundation Director, but, after an eleven-year absence from Balliol, she seems genuinely happy to be back. I ask Judy if things have changed since she’s been away, and she remarks fondly that Balliol feels like an old friend – one you can meet up with after a long time apart and resume conversation as though it had never stopped. ‘The atmosphere in College feels very much the same as before’, she says. ‘Mostly it’s people who have changed and I am enjoying getting to know the Fellows and Old Members who have become part of the community since I was last here.’
New Fellows
Balliol is pleased to welcome seven new Fellows.

Andy Gardner
Andy Gardner is a Junior Research Fellow in the Department of Zoology. Andy’s research focuses on social evolution theory, in particular the evolution of ‘altruistic’ and ‘selfish’ behaviours, with application to a wide range of organisms from malaria parasites to humans.

Tom Douglas
Tom Douglas joins the College as a Junior Research Fellow in Humanities (Philosophy). He holds a Wellcome Trust Research Fellowship in Biomedical Ethics, and works on the ethical and philosophical issues raised by clinical medicine and the biomedical sciences. During his Fellowship he will investigate the ethics of producing dangerous knowledge, for example, knowledge about how to construct pathogens for use in biological weapons.

Joe White
Joe White was John G Winant Visiting Professor of American Government in Michaelmas term 2010. He is also Luxenberg Family Professor of Public Policy, Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatics, and Director of the Center for Policy Studies at Case Western Reserve University. His research interests are in public policy, especially federal budgeting policy and politics, and health care finance in the United States and other rich democracies.

Adrian Travis
Adrian Travis is Visiting Fellow and Oliver Smithies Lecturer (Engineering). He was a lecturer at Cambridge University until 2007 when he moved to the USA to work for Microsoft in order to help them develop new computer/user interfaces. He was recently made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Edward Fisher
Edward Fisher is George Eastman Visiting Professor (Medical Sciences). He is the Leon Charney Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at the New York University (NYU) School of Medicine. He is also the Director of the Center for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease and Director of the Marc and Ruti Bell Program in Vascular Biology at NYU.

Andrew Lister
Andrew Lister is a Visiting Fellow and Oliver Smithies Lecturer (Politics). He is Associate Professor of Political Studies at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. His specialty is normative political theory, particularly in relation to questions of pluralism and toleration. While at Balliol, he is working on a book about public reason, and a series of papers about the relationship between justice and reciprocity.

Alan Wolfe
Alan Wolfe is John G Winant Visiting Professor of American Government, Hilary and Trinity terms 2011. He is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College. He is the author and editor of more than 20 books, including, most recently, The Future of Liberalism (Knopf, 2009).
Penny Bulloch’s retirement celebrations

BY ROSALIND THOMAS (TUTOR IN ANCIENT HISTORY)

Penny Bulloch’s dual role as Balliol’s librarian and scholar left several groups wishing to pay tribute to her on her retirement. In June, a one-day colloquium was arranged in the Classics Faculty in honour of Penny’s work and her teaching of Greek literature and, above all, Aristophanes. Several of her students have gone on to become classical scholars and they returned to join other colleagues to give papers on areas related to Penny’s interests – Angus Bowie (Queen’s), Peter Brown (Trinity), Matthew Wright (Exeter and Unv), Matthew Leigh (St. Anne’s), Edith Hall (Royal Holloway) and Ian Storey (Trent). Organised by Bob Cowan, previously Tutor in Latin and Greek Literature and Adrian Kelly, Tutor in Greek Literature, subject and participants combined to make it a most enjoyable day fizzing with wit and warmth.

Next was the fascinating research consilium Penny gave to the fellows on a late 15th-century manuscript in Balliol Library. MS383: a French translation of Ovid’s Heroides with beautiful illuminations. Her talk covered forgery, perjury, territorial greed and the lonely death of the girl whose father, Jean de Chabannes, had the book made in the first place. The beautiful book offered a stark contrast with the cruel behaviour of the father and the powerlessness of the minor actors in this drama.

Penny’s thirty years of service to the College (from 1980 to 2010) were celebrated in a series of special occasions, from the last Library Committee ever, to the garden party for classicists to say goodbye to finalists, Bob Cowan and Penny. We expressed the sincere hope that she would now have time to write her definitive commentary on Aristophanes’ last surviving play, Wealth.

The grandest occasion was the Fellows’ farewell dinner on 21 June 2010 in the Hall. Carl Schmidt gave a brilliant and elegant speech praising her devotion to the Balliol library, her meticulous learning and wide knowledge. Once term was truly finished, there was a dinner given by the sub-faculty of Classics. Penny sat between her old friends Professor Anna Davies and Professor Peter Parsons; Peter gave a characteristically kind, witty and ironic speech.

At the end of the summer she was surprised by a lovely send-off at the last meeting of the Committee of College librarians and on her very last day the Balliol library staff took her to the Randolph for a very large tea. Finally, in October, the Balliol Society, which has had much to do with conservation work for the library, invited her as their special guest and presented her with an extraordinary illustrated edition of Aristophanes’ Lysistrata. It was translated and signed by Jack Lindsay, illustrated by Norman Lindsay and owned by James Robertson Justice (1926, limited edition), cleverly chosen by Seamus Perry, Tutor in English. This is a good place to add that Penny has been deeply touched by all these kindnesses and would like to express her gratitude. In turn, they show the warm regard and esteem of her colleagues in both College and University.

The Balliol Interdisciplinary Institute

In September 2010, the Balliol Interdisciplinary Institute (BII) was established to support innovative and speculative research projects led by members of Balliol College. The institution is made up of various projects, the funding for which has been made available by generous Old Member donation, and is overseen by a newly formed Balliol Research Committee. Projects funded so far include: Conceptual Foundations of Systems Biology – analysing the fundamental concepts and methods of the rapidly emerging field of systems biology; Evolution of Business Ecosystems – exploring the roles of formal quantitative models, informal qualitative metaphors, rational myths and ideologies in explaining how complex socio-economic ecosystems evolve; Duty of Care in Finance – exploring ways to reform the financial system by increasing self-regulation as opposed to ever-tightening regulatory structure; Tense and Time – using a theory from the philosophy of language to investigate afresh the tense systems of various languages, and developing a software model that fits the linguistic phenomena; and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Time Series – exploring disciplinary connections between different approaches to analysing time series, from such systems as financial stock markets to medical recordings, climatology, and astrophysics.


There will be an official launch of the BII in spring 2011; and for more information see the BII pages on the Balliol website at www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/BII. There is also a BII WebLearn site available to logged-in users; you can ask to join by contacting the relevant lead investigator or by mailing bil@balliol.ox.ac.uk.
The Master’s gender seminar

BY SILJA BALLER (2000, ECONOMICS)

On 4 December 2010, the Master of Balliol, Andrew Graham, hosted a seminar on the topic of ‘gender’, addressing the underrepresentation of women among Balliol students, in the Balliol fellowship, and among Oxford graduates with first-class degrees. The participation of about 50 Balliol alumnae, Fellows, graduate and undergraduate students – representing a diversity of experiences and viewpoints – made for a day of stimulating debate. There was a broad consensus on the need for action and over the course of the day, a wide range of discussion points were developed to form practical recommendations. The impetus for the event came from last year’s celebration of 30 years of women at Balliol, and Peggotty Graham and Lyndal Roper played a crucial role in its realisation.

Discussions focused on three broad themes: the Balliol JCR and MCR gender balance; the Oxford finals gap (that is, the gender gap in finals results whereby, in some subjects, proportionately fewer women than men achieve first-class degrees); and the gender gap in Balliol’s SCR. The starting point for the day was a set of thought-provoking and highly informative keynote speeches on various aspects of the three topics by Dr Alice Prochaska (Principal of Somerville College), Dr Sally Mapstone (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Personnel and Equality), Sara Smith (Secretary to the OU Gender Panel and Balliol Old Member, 1990) and Laura Hoyano (Fellow of Wadham College and Balliol Old Member, 1990).

The discussion of the JCR and MCR gender balance was based on Balliol application and admission numbers in recent years. Admission rates are roughly in line with application rates, but because there are many more male applicants than female, the net result is a substantial skew towards men at both the undergraduate and graduate level. While part of the undergraduate gap reflects university-wide developments, a significant part is idiosyncratic to Balliol, arising mainly from subject mix and differences in success rates. Participants acknowledged that the subject mix is difficult to change in the short term, the discussion therefore centred on ways to increase the number of strong female applicants and successful candidates. Participants discussed the themes of Balliol’s ‘male’ reputation outside of Oxford, and the need for outreach in PPE and the Sciences (most agreed that sexism or other forms of discrimination were not factors impacting on the success chances of female candidates). Practical recommendations included ways to achieve a heightened visibility of Balliol’s many female facets, starting with the College’s founder Lady Dervorguilla of Galloway, and followed by our notable female Old Members and current students. While the available evidence suggests that the reasons for the Oxbridge finals gap are many, participants decided to focus on the role of expectations as the core theme of the finals gap discussion. In particular, the discussion explored how an expectation of one’s capabilities is formed, how it can be changed or affected, and what role it has to play in influencing exam results. It was noted that expectations formation is influenced both by external factors, such as tutors’ comments and previous examinations as well as internal factors, like one’s academic self-image. Practical recommendations therefore focused on different ways of using external sources positively to change female students’ images of themselves and to foster their expectations of being capable of achieving a first. The third topic of discussion was the underrepresentation of female academics in Balliol’s SCR. Currently, under one third of all academics at Balliol are women and a number of subjects employ no female academic staff at all. The problem of underrepresentation is most marked in the allocation of Fellowships. The seminar participants recommended that the College show its commitment to achieving greater gender equality by making an explicit policy decision to attract more women into academic posts. Participants agreed that any strategy to increase female representation in the SCR needed to have both external and internal elements – recruitment of top female academics from outside and internal career development of junior academic staff should be treated as equally important. Many practical recommendations were made regarding how to optimise these processes. For more information about women at Balliol, go to www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/about-balliol/balliol-women

Help to close the gender gap

At last year’s events celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of women at Balliol and at the successful gender seminar organised as a result of those celebrations (above), a number of alumnae expressed an interest in returning to visit their former schools in order to address the students and to encourage the female students, in particular, to aspire to university education and to consider applying to Oxford University in a range of different subject areas. We feel that our alumnae have an incredible wealth of experience and advice to share with prospective applicants and believe that such visits would be a good way to promote Oxford University and Balliol College as places in which both female and male students, whatever their background, thrive and reach their full potential.

If you are interested in helping us with this project, or have any comments or suggestions, please contact either Dr Sophie Marnette, Tutor for Admissions (sophie.marnette@balliol.ox.ac.uk) or Dr Maria O’Sullivan, Deputy Tutor for Undergraduate Admissions (maria.osullivan@balliol.ox.ac.uk).
Women at Balliol sundial revealed

In December 2010, a new sundial was unveiled to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the admission of women undergraduates to the College. The piece, by David and Sophie Harber, is a magnificent silver globed sun- and moon-dial and is dedicated to women of Balliol, past, present, and future. The apt engraving ‘About Time’ – on the base of the sundial and reflected in the globe of the sundial itself – won the competition among students for an inscription that captured the essence of the anniversary. A time-capsule within the sundial contains the names and signatures of current Balliol women – Fellows, graduates, undergraduates and staff. There is also a list and signatures of those women who were among the first cohort of 1979, or who contributed to the commission, among them Nicola Horlick (pictured left). A line on the dial, which marks the day the first female undergraduate entered Balliol, lights up each year on that date thanks to a special notch on the time-telling gnomon. The unveiling of the new work was followed by a Master’s Seminar on the subject of gender (see page 6 for a summary of the report). If you would like a copy of the Women at Balliol booklet that was published to mark the thirtieth anniversary please contact the Publications and Web Officer (sophie.petrou@balliol.ox.ac.uk).

Women’s boat club go head of the river

BY ELIZABETH MUMFORD (2008, MEDICINE)

I am sure many of you will have already heard of our success in Torpids (blades) and Summer Eights (Head of the River) from the Annual Record 2010 and you will be pleased to learn that the celebrations have continued this academic year too.

After the summer vacation, we returned to Oxford to mark up a shiny new chalking on the side of hall. In October, a dinner was held: all female rowers from the last 30 years were invited and over 150 people turned up for the occasion. Various members of the first ever W1 were there to show their support, and many flew in from abroad. Among these were the Rogers family, whose boat had taken us to the top (see page 41 for more information). Our eternal gratitude goes to all those who help us with support, coaching and donations.

One last thing remained to be done. The Eight that was no longer river-worthy was burned the following night on the Master’s field with a fireworks display of red and blue. ‘Bonfire night’ marked a great achievement for the club and for College, and was a magnificent culmination to the thirtieth anniversary of female undergraduates at Balliol.

Gently down the stream?

On the 31 January 2011, Anna Lewis (2003) set off in a rowing boat across the Atlantic in a crew of 14. Far from gently rowing down a stream, Anna and her team were part of the Woodvale Atlantic Allum Cup Challenge aiming to break the world record for the fastest row boat across an ocean. You can track how they got on at www.woodvale-works.com.

Their trip in facts and figures

Approx number of strokes: 450,000
Amount of Haribo sweets on board: 50kg
Max amount of consecutive sleep possible: 3.5 hours
Hygiene rations: 10 wetwipes and 2.5 tissues per person per day
Number of potential pairwise personality clashes: 91
Captain’s description of starting weather conditions: ideal
Captain’s definition of ‘ideal’ weather conditions: 30 knot winds and >5m waves

One of Anna’s friends was recently diagnosed with MS and she was part of her inspiration for signing up for this challenge. Those who would like to support Anna and her chosen charity – the MS Society – can visit her JustGiving page at http://www.justgiving.com/Anna-Lewis0
New Year Honours

Two Balliol Old Members have received Honours in 2011.

Sir Richard Lambert (1963) was appointed a Knight Bachelor in the 2011 New Year Honours List ‘for services to Business.’ Former Director-General of the CBI and former Editor at the Financial Times (where, during his 35 years, he doubled circulation and launched the title in the US), he is now on the Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee.

Peter Usborne (1958), founder of children’s publisher Usborne Publishing, was awarded an MBE for services to the publishing industry.

Old Member gives first London lecture


The new annual lecture, held in association with the Financial Times, aims to connect a wide audience with research emerging from the University, showing how that research is immediately relevant to topics of significant public interest.

Professor Donnelly is head of the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics and has been at the forefront of efforts worldwide to identify genetic variants linked to common diseases. In his lecture he described the latest advances in genetics and their impact on improving healthcare. He also highlighted the challenges the revolution in genetic information is bringing for the individual and for society – for example, the question of whether the NHS is well placed to take advantage of advances in genomics; or how information about an individual’s DNA sequence should be handled.

The lecture is available to audiences worldwide through the University’s iTunes U site and YouTube channel.

Improving drug delivery

A new drug delivery technology, developed by Professor Dermot O’Hare (Balliol Tutor in Inorganic Chemistry and Vice-Master (Academic)), in collaboration with Oxford Nutrascience Group, has been licensed to Isis Innovation Limited for products to be developed and commercialised. Oxford Nutrascience Group signed a worldwide exclusive licensing agreement with Isis Innovation Limited, the technology transfer company wholly-owned by the University of Oxford, in February 2011.

The new drug delivery technology masks the bitter aftertaste of drugs and can enhance drug stability. It may also allow for ‘tunable drug release’. This is a huge development as the technology is applicable to a broad range of pharmaceuticals including major drug categories such as NSAIDs (Non-steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs) and statins.

Oxford Nutrascience is now developing taste masking for over-the-counter (OTC) popular pain-relief drug ibuprofen, using Isis Innovation’s drug delivery technology. Having recently demonstrated proof of concept for the taste masking of ibuprofen, which has removed the typical burning sensation, Oxford Nutrascience is now developing ‘no burn’ chewable and liquid ibuprofen products which it will commercialise via the OTC and prescription markets.

Professor Dermot O’Hare commented that he never thought he would end up eating his compounds. He said he hadn’t realised that the taste of drugs was a major issue until he tried to take pure ibuprofen: ‘even a few grains on your tongue results in a severe burning sensation in the back of your throat. Our inorganic matrix completely suppresses this reaction’. Marcelo Bravo, Executive Chairman and Chief Technology Officer at Nutrascience believes this is a strong partnership which gives the company ‘significant firepower to innovate and extend the lifecycle of existing branded generic medicines and soon to be off patent Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)’. He also believes this will pave the way for the future of such pain-relief drugs: ‘The superior taste masking of ibuprofen and ease of formulation delivered by Isis Innovation’s drug delivery technology will enable us to develop next-generation ibuprofen products for markets worldwide.

Humboldt Research Award

John P Maier FRS (1969), Professor of Physical Chemistry at the University of Basel, Switzerland, has been awarded one of this year’s Humboldt Prizes (from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation) for his contributions to the study of molecules in interstellar clouds. These awards are given to internationally renowned scientists and scholars outside Germany who have made significant breakthroughs. Maier’s research over decades has been concerned with laboratory studies of the electronic spectra of unstable molecules that are of interest to astrophysics, and more specifically, with identifying them in diffuse interstellar clouds.

Professorial Fellow wins IMA Gold Medal

Professor Nick Trefethen was awarded the biennial IMA Gold Medal in 2010 for outstanding contributions to mathematics and its applications over a period of years. The award, which goes back to 1982, numbers among previous winners Balliol Emeritus Fellow, and Nick’s predecessor in the Chair of Numerical Analysis, Bill Morton (2000). The award of the medal will take place at the Royal Society on 29 June 2011.

Professor Trefethen is President of the US applied mathematics society, SIAM (Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics).

Academy of Science Medal

The Australian Academy of Science Medal for 2010 has been awarded to science journalist Dr Peter Pockley (1958) for outstanding contributions to science by means other than the conduct of scientific research. Peter Pockley is Australia’s pioneer science writer, broadcaster and commentator. He established specialist reporting of science in the Australian media in 1964, leading teams and fronting programmes which transformed the medium.
Balliol conservation

If, like me, you watched the BBC1 documentary Lost Land of the Tigers and got caught up in the team’s passionate search and ultimate discovery of a ‘lost’ population of tigers, or saw The Bear Family and Me (BBC2), in which wildlife cameraman Gordon Buchanan gained the trust of a wild bear family in a spectacular American wilderness: then you’ll be pleased to hear that Balliol has a number of students working on exciting conservation projects of their own.

Studying tiger populations in India

Arjun Gopalaswamy (2009) is a DPhil student of Zoology who has been working alongside the Wildlife Conservation Society studying tigers all over Asia. After spending two years as a software entrepreneur in India, and armed with a bachelor’s degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Bangalore, he briefly met Dr Ullas Karanth, an exceptional tiger biologist. That five-minute meeting, in a small office, propelled me into a life of meaningful adventure with the Centre for Wildlife Studies and Wildlife Conservation Society’, Arjun explains. Supported by the Clarendon Scholarship and the Jason Hu Scholarship (see box below), Arjun is currently reading for a Balliol DPhil at the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Department of Zoology. He is under the expert supervision of Professor David Macdonald (1976) – a Dawkins prize winner for outstanding research into the ecology and behaviour of animals whose welfare and survival may be endangered by human activities. Arjun’s thesis involves the study of tiger metapopulations in the Western Ghats, India, and forms part of the largest and longest-standing research project on tiger demographics. ‘Functioning of metapopulations of apex predators such as the tiger is intricately linked to local population dynamics of their prey species and of co-predators’, he says. ‘The primary purpose of the project is to develop knowledge gained from earlier site-level research in reserves to understand the metapopulation dynamics of tigers, co-predators and prey in the 33,000 km² Malnad-Mysore tiger landscape in Karnataka, recognised as a high global priority conservation landscape.’ Another key objective for Arjun is the development of biological-technical tools required to address some of these study questions. The results of Arjun’s study will lead to testing and validation of an array of widely applicable conservation tools. The challenge of working on such a large-scale project motivates Arjun, and his passion and gratitude for the opportunity he has had to work in this area are tangible: ‘Had it not been for the generous support of the scholarships, I would not have had the experience of studying in one of the most vibrant communities at Oxford, he says.

Practical application of elephant studies

Lucy King (2005) has recently completed her DPhil at Balliol and with the Department of Zoology is working on an unusual hypothesis that African elephants are scared of honey bees (an earlier account of her studies was featured in Floreat Donum 2009, page 29). Her research, in collaboration with Save the Elephants in Kenya, stems from a need to find alternative – and natural – solutions to stop elephants from crop-raiding in rural farmers’ fields. Using a playback method, Lucy has discovered that elephants will run from the sound of disturbed honey bees and, in doing so, will emit a unique low frequency rumble vocalisation which warns neighbouring elephants to retreat as well. These published behavioural discoveries have revealed that elephants appear to retain a negative memory about honey bees (possibly due to being stung by swarms) that ‘scares’ them away from an area.

Over the last three years Lucy has been working hard to apply this behaviour practically for farmers’ fields and she has designed a unique beehive fence consisting of Kenyan Top Bar Hives (pictured below) strung every 10 metres between strong upright posts. These beehive fences have not yet been built around dozens of farms in three communities in Kenya. Her research has involved monitoring the effect of the beehive fences on deterring crop-raiding elephants as well as understanding how farmers adapt to the new technology. To date, the beehive fences have been extremely successful in stopping elephants from breaking through to enter the farms and the fences are being maintained effectively due to the financial incentive of farmers gathering honey from the beehives. Lucy and her team of farmers have gathered approximately 200 kg of honey from the hives over one year and the sale of this ‘Elephant-Friendly Honey’ has considerably raised the profile of her project. Lucy is now being sponsored by Disney’s Worldwide Conservation Fund to write a beehive fence construction manual so that other farmers and wildlife managers across Africa can test out her new human-elephant conflict mitigation method. For more information refer to her website: www.elephantsandbees.com
**The Alligator: a fierce competitor in media award shortlist**

BY MICHAEL WEBB (2008, PPE)

There was a gap in Oxford student journalism that needed filling: Cherwell and the OxStu catered to the ‘hacks’ who want to write underwhelming local news stories every week so they can land a job at The Times, while for over 100 years Isis has published ‘edgy’ pieces about ‘culture’ once a term. This left untapped the wealth of students who had things to say – and to say extraordinarily well – but didn’t necessarily have the time to write frequently to tight deadlines or the willingness to bend a story in a particular editorial direction.

Imaginative students had noticed this before, and publications fulfilling this need sprung up – and withered away. It is only with the advent of new online technology that such an enterprise has a chance to be sustainable: hence thealligatoronline.com. The publication is online only (so no printing costs or space to fill), updated every day (not once a week or once a term, with the consequent deadlines), and has no staff writers, only ‘contributors’. Any Oxford student can submit an article, and might do so once a week, or once ever: all we ask for is creative, original and distinctive content, on any subject.

This being Oxford – and Balliol in particular – that’s what we get. If you browse the site today you’ll find articles on Lebanese rap, the ethics of cognitive-enhancing drugs, cyberwarfare, and the London Underground; analytical pieces on education reform and the German economy; subversive observations on what Britain’s coalition government could learn from the 18th century; creative writing, obituaries, reviews of everything from books to ballet – and video interviews with everyone from Sir Tom Stoppard to General Sir Mike Jackson, the President of Albania to Martin Sheen.

The Alligator has no editorial stance. In fact, it has no public ‘editor’ at all: only a decentralised team of subeditors who ensure the quality of the writing and occasionally commission articles from students and prominent figures outside the university. Most of the time, however, this isn’t necessary. Students enjoy reading the site, and one day decide to click the ‘submit an article’ button. That’s it simple.

Of course, when Oxford students put time into writing about subjects they care about, the results speak for themselves. This was recognised most recently by the Guardian when they shortlisted The Alligator for Student Media Publication of the Year. The site is now expanding to Cambridge and a small number of universities in the United States, and is also exploring whether to launch a termly ‘best of’ print edition. To find out more visit www.thealligatoronline.com

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**Award-winning economics blog**

MPHil economist Ronan Lyons (2009) has had continuing success with his economic analysis blog. He has a self-professed interest in the Irish economy, the world economy and property markets and these three topics form the backbone of the site. How did your blog begin? I ask him. ‘At the start it was very much an open journal – as lots of early blogs were – where I would write about things like politics, history and genealogy. However, the defining moment came one evening in early 2009, when I was watching a debate about public sector pay in an Irish current affairs programme. I couldn’t understand why all participants were talking in vague terms about the gap between public sector pay and private sector pay, when all the facts were available. I decided that night to use official statistics and my economist’s skills to show the exact gap and how it had changed over the previous decade.’ The blog post went viral, Ronan enthuses. ‘I’m told the Irish Prime Minister saw it in the space of a couple of days’. So far Ronan has won two awards for his blog, Best Blog at the 2009 Golden Spider awards and Best Blog at the 2010 Digital Media Awards. However, the reward for him is more to do with his number of readers. ‘Ultimately, what I am most proud of is the readership I have built up in the last two years. There are on average, about 10,000 readers per month on the blog, which is about the same as the Irish circulation of The Economist magazine.’ This is a huge achievement for a personal blog. How does a personal blog become such a success? I wonder. The reasons are threefold he tells me. The first is luck: ‘I couldn’t have predicted the huge international interest in Ireland’s economy.’

The second is his style of writing: ‘I may not always get it exactly right, but my aim each week is to be accessible, relevant and trustworthy.’ And the third is down to website management: ‘In addition to how the site visually looks, there is a lot going on behind the scenes, from the arcane, such as search engine optimisation, to the obvious, such as posting each week at the same time, so your readers know what to expect.’ To read Ronan’s blog go to www.ronanlyons.com

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**I couldn’t understand why all participants were talking in vague terms about the gap between public sector pay and private sector pay, when all the facts were available**
Balliol graduate wins sensor video competition

Balliol Engineer Victor Prisacariu (2008) has won an international competition called SenseTheWorld run by Freescale – a global company that delivers embedded processing solutions. He defeated seven other finalists in the competition to take the winning prize, an award he shared with his supervisor, Dr Ian Reid. Victor’s Facebook video entry (which can be found at www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=10100399322531320), features ‘3D hand tracking’ – a process by which the 3D position (rotation and translation) of a hand, relative to a camera, is recovered from every image coming from that camera, so that given an image, the algorithm is able to say how deep, how much left and right, and at what angle, the hand is from the camera. The video uses techniques developed in Victor’s doctoral thesis. ‘The video and the paper describing the system and algorithms used are the final result of around one and a half years of work,’ says Victor. Freescale received a large number of creative and outstanding submissions over the course of the six-week contest, so it is a huge achievement to win. I asked Victor how it felt to be victorious. ‘It obviously felt great. It’s an amazing feeling to know that your work is useful and is appreciated by so many people.’ Read the full announcement at www.businesswire.com/news/home/20101213006284/en/Freescale-Announces-Grand-Prize-Winner-Sense-World.

Second year DPhil Engineering Science student Vit Sipal (2009) reached the final of the UK ICT Pioneers competition. Organised by the Engineering Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the competition was open to all second and third year UK post graduate research students in ICT-related subjects, the challenge being for students to demonstrate the ‘exploitation potential of their research.’ Vit’s entry was ‘Ultrawideband Radio’ – a relatively new way to use the radio spectrum that could allow us to build wireless links between TV sets and DVD players, for example. He tried to utilise the latest findings about wave propagation to reduce the complexity of the system, and hence reduce the cost of such a system. The cost has, so far, been the main barrier to the success of this technology in the market place. Asked about his place in the final, Vit says, ‘I am extremely happy because I will get the chance to meet many important people from academia and industry and to present my project to them.

This will be a great experience and I am sure that, regardless of the outcome, their feedback will be invaluable for my further work.’ There are five categories and each has four finalists. The winner in each category will win £2,000 and will also get five minutes to present their work to senior government ministers, senior business executives, and senior academics. The panel of judges will determine the overall winner, who will receive an additional £1,000. We wish Vit the best of luck for the finals in March.

Balliol wins Fencing Club Cuppers

The Balliol Fencing team were successful this year in the annual Oxford University Fencing Club Cuppers tournament. The OUFC is one of the oldest clubs in Oxford – founded in 1891 – and although Balliol has featured prominently in club life, in recent years the tournament has been dominated by the teams from Lincoln and Jesus. Last year, despite an immense solo effort from Balliol captain and Great Britain International Alexander Crutchett (2008), Balliol could manage only second place. This year however, the arrival of England under-20s Katrina Young (2009) and the introduction of fresh talent – Tomer Faraggi (2009) and Aleksander Petrovic (2007) – allowed Balliol to field a menacing team. The sabre competition saw Crutchett cruise to victory and Young take second place in the ladies event, while Young won the women’s épée in style. These results meant Crutchett and Young won the ‘Master at Arms’ in the men’s and women’s competitions respectively. Across the three weapons, the captain scored 22 points, Young scored 12, Faraggi 6 and Petrovic 4; giving Balliol a total of 44 points – a full 15 points ahead of second-placed Jesus College. This was a thorough and well-deserved victory for Balliol and one which new Captain Kat Young will endeavour to repeat this coming year.

Alex Crutchett
A map of the heart

By Sophie Petrou

The heart is one of the most complex organs in the human body, working tirelessly from the minute it starts to the minute it stops with more than two and a half billion beats in an average lifetime. As the American author and essayist Charles W. Chesnutt once said, ‘The workings of the human heart are the profoundest mystery of the universe. One moment they make us despair of our kind, and the next we see in them the reflection of the divine image.’

While we are no nearer to solving this sort of mystery, our understanding of the physical workings of the human heart are far more comprehensive now than they were 50 years ago, thanks in large part to the ground-breaking research of Professor Denis Noble. The 5 November 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of his paper published in the scientific journal, *Nature*, which laid the basis for computer modelling of the heart.

Denis Noble is known as one of the pioneers of Systems Biology. Educated at Emanuel School and then at University College London, he began his investigations into mechanisms of the heartbeat in 1958. In 1960, he developed the first viable mathematical model of the working heart in his paper ‘Cardiac action and pacemaker potentials based on the Hodgkin-Huxley equations’ (*Nature* 188: 495–497). His research focused on using computer models of biological organs and organ systems to interpret function from the molecular level to the whole organism. From this work, it became clear that there was not a single oscillator which controlled heartbeat, but rather this was an emergent property of the feedback loops in the various channels. Together with international collaborators, his team used supercomputers to create the first virtual organ, the virtual heart. On the strength of his growing reputation he was offered a tenured post as Fellow and Tutor of Physiology at Balliol College in 1963.

Some years later, in 1979, he was awarded a CBE, and elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. In a recent interview for the Royal Society, when asked why he became a scientist, he said his initial inspiration came from his school days: ‘I was inspired by enthusiastic science teachers at my school (Emanuel School), I originally decided to study medicine (at UCL) but was attracted by physiological research, so I never qualified as a doctor. I was also inspired as a young researcher by the work of Hodgkin and Huxley in 1952 on their mathematical model of the nerve impulse. My supervisor, Otto Hutter, not only directed me in obtaining the necessary experimental results but greatly encouraged me to follow in Hodgkin and Huxley’s footsteps.’

Noble continued to develop his work on computational frameworks of physiology and, as Secretary-General of the International Union of Physiological Sciences from 1993 to 2001, he played a major role in launching the Physiome Project, an international collaboration to use computer simulations to create the quantitative physiological models necessary to interpret the genome. In 2009, he was elected President of the IUPS at its world congress in Kyoto.

Among his many successes, Noble is also a leading philosopher of biology, and his internationally acclaimed book *The Music of Life* challenges the foundations of current biological sciences, by questioning its central dogma, its unidirectional view of information flow, and its imposition of a bottom-up methodology for research in the life sciences. A more recent article, published in the *Journal of Physiology* 2011 (and available to read in pre-press format at www.musicoflife.co.uk/pdfs/Selfish%20Genes.pdf), engages people in a current debate about genetic and biological systems. Noble acknowledges that events in Balliol have been critical to the development of this article, both the Conceptual Foundations of Systems Biology seminars (see page 5), and the ‘Homage to Darwin’ debate held in Oxford in May 2009, involving Lynn Margulis (George Eastman Visiting Professor at Balliol 2008) and Professor Richard Dawkins FRS (1959, author of *The Selfish Gene*).

1 Taken from the The Franklin Institute online at www.fi.edu/learn/heart
2 http://rsif.royalsocietypublishing.org/site/misc/denis_noble.xhtml
Venture past Blackwell’s bookshop on the second Tuesday evening of every month, and you may notice a gathering in the coffee shop; head inside and you will discover a crowd of people of all ages and backgrounds with one thing in common: a desire to talk about science.

This is ‘Café Scientifique’, a forum through which open discussions and debates about interesting, important and relevant science can take place between those who are interested in science but may not normally get a chance to discuss it, and those who are ‘in the know’ (so to speak). Loosely based upon the concept of the French Café Philosophique, Café Scientifique was started in 1998 by Duncan Dallas, who founded the Leeds branch and allowed other enthusiastic scientists to borrow his idea and format. Since then, the concept of the Café has spread to over 40 locations across the country and 250 across the world. The Oxford Café was co-founded in the autumn of 2000 by Dr Rachel Quarrell (Lecturer in Organic Chemistry, Balliol College). Now in its eleventh year, the Café is still going strong.

The format of the Café is quite simple. We start with a short talk from the guest speaker, usually a scientist or a science writer, on a topic that they are interested in. No knowledge of science is assumed by the speaker, making the topic accessible to all. We then take a short break, allowing a chance for the helpers to refill glasses, and conversations to strike up. After that, we get on to the main part of the Café: opening the floor to the audience. Questions are asked and discussions are engaged. The motto of the Café is ‘there is no such thing as a stupid question’. Indeed, often the most insightful (and interesting) questions are those that are prefixed with ‘this may sound stupid, but …. : ’. The Oxford Café Scientifique regularly attracts around 30–60 audience members each month, with a wide variety of backgrounds and interests. These range from our Café regulars, who never miss an event, to young students who have an interest in that month’s topic (who often go on to become regulars themselves). There truly is a diverse and stimulating audience. Many of the speakers comment after taking part in the Café on how refreshing an experience it is to discuss their work with interested people in such an informal environment – quite a contrast to the traditional setting of academic seminars.

Topics discussed at the Café are extremely wide ranging, from fairly ‘traditional’ subjects through to applications of science in our modern way of life, and occasional dabblings in the odd bit of philosophy! There is not enough space to list everything that has been discussed at the Café, but to give the reader a flavour, we’ve talked about thermodynamics, particle physics, cosmology and the ‘Big Bang’, the hydrogen economy, low carbon lifestyles, nuclear fusion, climate change, homeopathy, cystic fibrosis, carbohydrates in sports drinks, and the origin and extinction of species, all of which are mulled over with equal enthusiasm.

The inaugural speaker was Professor Richard Dawkins, quickly followed in the first year by Baroness Susan Greenfield and the head of Cancer Research UK, Sir Paul Nurse. Other well-known speakers have included popular science writer Professor Peter Atkins, Bad Science writer Dr Ben Goldacre and, more recently, the Oxford Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrew Hamilton, who explained how drugs are designed, including a recent potential cancer therapy. Many local researchers have contributed, and enjoy the Café’s informality, which has a discussion time twice the length of the original talk.

The Café could not take place without volunteers to assist with the set up, run front of house and pour the wine. The long list of Balliol students who have become Café helpers includes Geoff Cowling (2001), Tom Sharples (2002), Tom Markland (2002), Beth Cummings (2003), Mike Pitcher (2003), Lee Moore (2004), Richard Dear (2005), Helen Lochead (2005) Carl Poree (2006), Jules Camp (2006) and Andrew Rickards (2007). We are grateful to all those who have helped in the past, and would be very happy to hear from any interested Balliol students and alumni who would like to help out (or indeed speak at a future Café).

Oxford Café Scientifique meets at Caffè Nero in Blackwells Book Shop, on the second Tuesday of every month, and in September 2011 will move to Science Oxford, on St Clement’s. Follow the Café on Twitter: http://twitter.com/oxcafesci

Cosmology is just one of many topics discussed at Café Scientifique
The Oxford Student Consultancy (featured in last year’s *Floreat Domus* (2010) – Balliol in Business article, pages 26–27), was founded by Michael Strahlman (2005) and Joerg Metzner (2005). The aim was to provide a pro bono student management consultancy targeted towards Oxford businesses, charities and community organisations and, since pitching their idea to the Careers Service, it has gone from strength to strength. Two current Balliol undergraduates describe their involvement with Oxford Student Consultancy in Hilary Term 2011.

Lizzie Durham (2009, Modern Languages)

‘Meetings, clients, presentations and proposals – doesn’t sound much like an average day at Oxford. But this is exactly what is involved in the Oxford Student Consultancy programme.

Having heard so much about commercial awareness and market knowledge, I felt pretty confused – how could I ever hope to get a job when I didn’t even know what these meant? So when I saw an advert in the Careers Service weekly email for the Oxford Student Consultancy, I thought I’d give it a shot.

Sitting in the waiting room of the assessment centre felt like being on *The Apprentice* – nervously wondering what awful task they might set us, while also checking out the competition. I was surprised to find the task was actually interesting and enjoyable, and came out in a good mood, despite the formidable opposition. Everyone was really confident and polished, so I was genuinely surprised to get an email saying I’d been accepted on the programme.

**What it involves**

At the end of the first week of training sessions, designed to give us an interactive introduction to consulting (creative thinking, market research, presentation skills), we were assigned our clients. The clients are small businesses and local charities, with particular business needs. My group, of four people, is working for Happen, a ‘creative innovation agency’ (I’m still trying to figure out what that really means, but they seem to have an exciting outlook on consultancy, and have worked with some impressive companies, so I’m anticipating an eye-opening experience). Our job is to research the company, its competitors, its place in the market, with the end goal of proposing ways in which they could improve their business strategies, profits, and client base.

**The benefits**

It’s a tough job but has so far been enjoyable and very insightful. Taking part in the Oxford Student Consultancy is certainly a much better way to learn about business than to attend endless talks and presentations, and I’m looking forward, in the course of the project, not only to learning more about business, but also to contributing to the local community.

Sailing Lang (2009, Engineering, Economics and Management)

The OSC provides exactly the type of student work experience I was looking for while at university and I applied for it as soon as I saw it advertised in the Careers Service newsletter. The students work in teams to address a strategic issue or business problem affecting a local business or community organisation.

**What it involves**

In my first week of participating in the programme I had four two-hour training sessions together with all the other OSC students on various consultancy skills, such as presentations and interviews. I found these sessions very beneficial and some of them were actually fun. After the first week, students get to choose which project they want to work for so I am now on a team of four working with a company called Eco Concierge that creates lifestyle management services to help people get greener. Our two main tasks to be completed in the Hilary term are identifying potential corporate clients for Eco Concierge in Europe, and European competitor analysis. The final report we produce will be presented to the client in the last week of term. Each of us in the team is expected to work for about three hours a week on the project.

**The benefits**

The thing I love the most about a student programme like the OSC is that I get to work with very interesting people who share similar values. In addition, being able to contribute to a local company while developing the skills and ability required to be a consultant is both rewarding and self-fulfilling. I am looking forward to working with my group on this project and I hope to learn as much as I can through this valuable opportunity.
In July and August 2010, I travelled to Malawi and Zimbabwe with University College student Olga Owczarek, as part of my field research for the MicroLoan Foundation, a UK-based NGO providing microcredit to over 20,000 women in Malawi, Namibia and Zambia.

The purpose of the trip was to evaluate the feasibility of microfinance investment in Zimbabwe. In March 2008, the Zimbabwean currency was declared worthless and a multi-currency system put in its place. Under this system, a basket of foreign currencies float freely within the economy, with each supermarket, market trader and streetseller exchanging US dollars, South African rands, Botswanan pulas and even some British pounds at fluctuating exchange rates.

With this new currency system putting an end to hyperinflation and with a new government of national unity bringing a semblance of political stability to the country, the MicroLoan Foundation was able to begin considering whether to establish a new microlender similar to its existing operations in southern Africa.

A viable microfinance investment
Prior to the political and economic crises of the last decade, Zimbabwe had one of the most developed microfinance industries, with high literacy rates, relatively good infrastructure and stable government providing the conditions for a booming microfinance sector that achieved one of the highest lending densities in southern Africa in the 1990s.

Acquiring the necessary information for making the evaluation was a difficult task, though, with virtually no relevant information having been placed in the public domain. This meant that a field trip was vital, and in-between long hours spent travelling on unreliable buses, we interviewed key people in Zimbabwean finance and scouted potential locations for initial investment before preparing a report with the support of a further ten students from Oxford who formed the rest of the project team.

The conclusions of the project were broadly positive. A relative political stability, a favourable regulatory attitude, and a Zimbabwean financial sector starved of liquidity at all levels meant that an investment was not only possible, but very much needed.

Student involvement with OMI
This project was undertaken by the Oxford Microfinance Initiative (OMI), a pro-bono consultancy set up last year and aimed at supporting microfinance institutions in the developing world without access to traditional consulting with high-quality research services.

Microfinance has expanded tremendously in the last two decades, with thousands of new microfinance institutions expanding their lending portfolio to hundreds of millions of the world’s population. The Oxford Microfinance Initiative aims to link talented students, who – crucially – are willing to work for free, to microfinance organisations with specific challenges and limited resources, both remotely from Oxford, and on the ground.

With two members of the committee, including the President at Balliol, and with more than five other Balliol students working on its consultancy projects, the OMI has taken on projects this year in Kenya, Guatemala and India – advising an Indian MFI with 70,000 clients and facing bankruptcy on possible strategies for financial survival and sustainability.

The projects are geared towards making a significant impact for microfinance institutions and their clients, while at the same time giving students an opportunity to develop their skills and gain experience in consulting. Growing industries need common best practices and accountability, and the Oxford Microfinance Initiative is hoping it can play a valuable role in the growth and development of microfinance.
People-powered politics

BY SOPHIE PETROU

We live in a democratic society where we have the right to vote and freedom of speech, but in which the actual amount of power we have—our ability as individuals to make any significant change—is minimal. Without spending a huge amount of time gathering support for a campaign or getting together a protest, we can have little effect on how the world around us is run. But modern technology and communication means we have more collective power than we might assume. Ricken Patel (1996) is co-founder and Executive Director of Avaaz, an online advocacy group which empowers millions of people from all walks of life to take action on pressing global, regional and national issues, from corruption and poverty to conflict and climate change.

Avaaz—meaning ‘voice’ in several European, Middle Eastern and Asian languages—was founded in 2007, by Res Publica, a global civic advocacy group, and Moveon.org—an online community that has pioneered internet advocacy in the US. The co-founders were a group of global social entrepreneurs, including Balliol Old Member Ricken Patel (1996), who is the Executive Director. The idea developed when Ricken spent time in areas of conflict. After I left Balliol I went to Harvard and then I spent several years in conflict zones like Liberia and Afghanistan. While I was out there I realised that there was such a void in global political will toward the world’s ability to bring an end to conflict. It seemed to him that there was a huge determination among people to help with the world’s crises and no means to bring people together.

‘Conflicts are like an onion’, he says, laughing at the seeming absurdity of the simile before making his point. ‘There are so many layers of complexity and there is a need for people from a wide range of backgrounds to come together to resolve them.’ When he returned to the US in 2003, he saw a new model of internet communities and realised that it would be the perfect way to unite people globally toward a common cause. I saw how quickly the internet makes this process of campaign-building, and rallying together to achieve a common goal, far easier than ever before. It enables multiple campaigns to build support and funding all at the same time.

Gathering speed

Previous international citizens’ groups and social movements have had to build a campaign and grow support for each separate issue, year by year and country by country, in order to reach a scale that could make a difference. But today thanks to new technology and a rising ethic of global interdependence, that constraint no longer applies. Avaaz’s online community can draw immediate attention to new issues, harnessing broad public concern and structuring it to form a targeted campaign. ‘There are a multitude of crises happening all over the world at the same time, Ricken says. ‘And people’s time and money are precious. Avaaz brings together all these crises and provides a focus so that people can channel their support—thousands of individual efforts can be rapidly combined into a powerful collective force.’

It sounds very idealistic but Ricken’s enthusiasm is infectious. ‘I remember sitting around at Balliol and discussing how great it would be if there was some way to unite people to make a change. It was an inspiring dream at the time— that has now become a reality. Idealists of the world unite’, he laughs, a slight admission that the dreamy slogan sounds too good to be true. However, with six and a half million Avaaz members, this dream is now very much a reality. Given that Avaaz was founded only in 2007, this represents huge growth by any standard. ‘Our aim was to hit five million members in five years,’ says Ricken. ‘But instead we hit six million in four years!’

Free membership

As it is free to sign up to Avaaz, you could (in theory) be a member of a site and not necessarily contribute anything. So does the number of members reflect the amount of support they receive? ‘For an overwhelming majority, signing up to be a member is just the first step on the ladder of action,’ says Ricken. Many people start off donating a small sum and then get deeper and deeper into the community, he explains. ‘We’ve had half a million donations so far and raised around $17 million online.’ His media team inform me that in January, five million people visited Avaaz site to take action on various issues, including protecting whales, putting
a moratorium on GMOs in Europe and preventing the stoning to death of the Iranian woman named Sakineh. People can contribute as much or as little as they like to any particular cause, the average donation being around €36.

Impressively Avaaz campaigns in 14 languages – no small feat and something many individual campaigns cannot achieve or afford. This multilingualism is all the more remarkable given that it’s run by a relatively small group: a core team on four continents … and thousands of volunteers. As Executive Director, Ricken’s most important role entails ensuring the site promotes the most urgent and needy causes and offers people an effective way to navigate the site to support the causes they care about.

No lost cause
But who decides which causes are supported and promoted by Avaaz? Causes in need of help come from many sources. ‘We get thousands of emails, says Ricken. ‘And staff follow all the breaking news stories.’ Unlike other campaigns, the agenda is not set by Avaaz staff with the aim of gathering support; rather, it’s the Avaaz members who determine the causes they are most passionate about by way of huge-scale polls. Each year, Avaaz sets overall priorities through all-member polls, and campaign ideas are tested weekly to 10,000-member random samples. Only initiatives that have a strong response are taken to scale.

‘Campaigns that do reach the full membership are then super-charged by, often, hundreds of thousands of Avaaz members taking part within days or even hours,’ Ricken says.

Avaaz now has regular monthly victories but the one Ricken feels most proud of is when Cyclone Nargis hit Burma in 2008. ‘The government stopped all aid at the borders and when they did let aid through it was a moratorium on GMOs in Europe and preventing the stoning to death of the Iranian woman named Sakineh. People can contribute as much or as little as they like to any particular cause, the average donation being around €36.

Impressively Avaaz campaigns in 14 languages – no small feat and something many individual campaigns cannot achieve or afford. This multilingualism is all the more remarkable given that it’s run by a relatively small group: a core team on four continents … and thousands of volunteers. As Executive Director, Ricken’s most important role entails ensuring the site promotes the most urgent and needy causes and offers people an effective way to navigate the site to support the causes they care about.

No lost cause
But who decides which causes are supported and promoted by Avaaz? Causes in need of help come from many sources. ‘We get thousands of emails, says Ricken. ‘And staff follow all the breaking news stories.’ Unlike other campaigns, the agenda is not set by Avaaz staff with the aim of gathering support; rather, it’s the Avaaz members who determine the causes they are most passionate about by way of huge-scale polls. Each year, Avaaz sets overall priorities through all-member polls, and campaign ideas are tested weekly to 10,000-member random samples. Only initiatives that have a strong response are taken to scale.

‘Campaigns that do reach the full membership are then super-charged by, often, hundreds of thousands of Avaaz members taking part within days or even hours,’ Ricken says.

Avaaz now has regular monthly victories but the one Ricken feels most proud of is when Cyclone Nargis hit Burma in 2008. ‘The government stopped all aid at the borders and when they did let aid through it was being delivered to all the wrong places’, he says. ‘It was such a mess; people had fled to the monasteries for safety. We were able to deliver $2 million in one week to provide food and medicine.’ The money came from donations from Avaaz members in response to one email sent by a monk pleading for help.

‘That’s what is so great about Avaaz’, Ricken concludes. ‘It’s a small team using smart methods combined with a huge number of caring people that makes it a very powerful model’.

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An interview with Hugo Dixon

BY JACK MORETON BURT, (2009, PPE)

Hugo Dixon (1984) went from Balliol to The Economist and then to The Financial Times (FT). After thirteen years at the FT, Hugo left to set up a financial commentary company, Breakingviews. In 2009, Breakingviews merged with Thomson Reuters in a multi-million pound deal. Hugo still manages Breakingviews and I met with him in December 2010, at his new offices in Canary Wharf, to discover the key to his success, and to find out his views on the future of journalism and the European economy.

Jack: Could you tell us a little about your founding of Breakingviews and what your work involves?

Hugo: Breakingviews is the company that I started in 1999 – during the dot-com boom – and is one of the few dot-coms not to go bust. It was established when the internet was in its infancy, and we saw that there was a need in the financial markets that wasn’t being met. The financial markets needed to know information extremely rapidly, and at that time they could get basic news and data in real time, but not analysis. People were being swamped with information, and we provided a real-time service that could cut through the jungle of information and make sense of it for people. By doing it online we took into a real-time environment what had been the preserve of daily newspapers and magazines.

Jack: Establishing a successful media company isn’t easy. How did you make it work?

Hugo: I certainly learnt a lot from my years at the FT, and brought my experience and sources with me to Breakingviews. I also benefited immensely from the reputations, brands and sources of the colleagues who joined me. In the media there is a sort of chicken and egg issue; a need to have relevance. You need people to think you are influential or they won’t talk to you and if they won’t talk to you, then you can’t be influential! My background at the FT helped to overcome this problem, and we were also helped by a string of newspaper deals in various European publications, starting with the Wall Street Journal Europe. Getting our comments seen by a large readership helped people see that we were influential while we were still building up our readership and our brand. This was especially important for us given that we took the decision very early on to charge for our online content, which limited our potential to gain a large readership online.

Jack: But you think that the decision to charge for online content helped your company?

Hugo: Certainly it did; although it restricted our reader base, it meant that we had money! Charging enabled us to survive and thrive where others went bust. Of course, the issue with charging for content is that you must be producing something people are willing to pay for.

Jack: And what was it that persuaded people to buy into Breakingviews, and what gave it an edge over its media competitors?

Hugo: Well, we had an original idea. The idea of financial commentary may not have been original, but the idea of delivering it over the internet and doing it on a real-time basis was original. We also have a very disciplined process. Fast food companies might have a ‘secret sauce’; here we have what we call the ‘Breakingviews method’. It helps us to produce great content very rapidly. The dot-com crash also helped us.

Jack: In what way?

Hugo: Well the media industry in general is a very difficult one to get into. But there was a moment, a window, in 1999 or 2000, when the dot-com boom was at its height and the internet was throwing everything up into the air. In financial terms that meant you could get people to fund you – you could get people excited. And then the window snapped shut. At that point the game had changed, there were no new entrants coming into the market. We were the new entrant, up against the big established organisations like the FT and Reuters. At that point it was our single-minded focus that helped us to grow and succeed. So, for example, we didn’t have a newspaper to split our focus and our resources.

Jack: How do you think the merger with Thomson Reuters has helped Breakingviews?

Hugo: In quite a lot of ways actually. I see it as a marriage between Breakingviews and breaking news. We think that Reuters does the best breaking news coverage in the world, and we like to think that we do the best real-time commentary. Reuters is an extremely well-funded organisation and that means that we are as well. So our expansion has been much more rapid. Currently we’re expanding into Hong Kong, Dubai and India and we’re looking to move into Brazil and China. We would probably have got there anyway but it would have taken us longer. The other thing that helps us is that Reuters have about 500,000 new terminals on the desks of finance professionals worldwide, which gives us a global audience.

Jack: You’ve mentioned the financial crisis and its impact on the media, what future do you see for journalism and how will it remain profitable?

Hugo: I think that more and more media organisations will charge for content, or at least they will try to. But the problem is that you can only charge for things people are willing to pay for, and people are only willing to pay for distinctive content. Much of the journalistic work that goes into today’s papers adds little of value. There is probably too much journalism about today in terms of quantity, and not enough quality. I foresee a big shake up and a decline in the conventional media in the short term, along with a decline in quality because of the financial difficulties. Publications really need to think about what makes them distinctive and develop their identity and competitive advantages. I feel that most will delay making the hard choice of cutting out entire areas of content in order to focus on their more distinctive journalism. They should be buying more content in from organisations like Reuters; but instead they’ll cut budgets across the board and we’ll see quality decline.

Jack: So things are looking pretty bleak for the industry then?

Hugo: In the short term. But I do think that out of the decline there will be some pioneers who will recognise the importance of quality, and once the quality of free content declines it will be easier to charge for good quality content. I think that readers will become more discriminating as well. Ultimately people want a guarantee of reliability and they want to find information easily which isn’t always possible online. So I do think that brands will ultimately come through, but it will be a messy process.
Jack: Can I ask what your take is on the financial fiasco with Ireland, Portugal and Spain, and what you think will happen over the coming months?

Hugo: The core problem, I think, is that the Euro, while it has quite a lot of appeal as a political project, is not mature. These different countries have not made sufficient micro-economic adjustments to operate efficiently within the straightjacket of a single currency. Things might have worked out differently, but in the decade after the founding of the Euro we saw steady growth and benign financial conditions, so there was no pressure for people to take the necessary difficult decisions. There was easy money and interest rates that were too low for the peripheral economies. In some countries, particularly Ireland, the banking system ran amok. The main problem with the banking system is the massive distortion of incentives and free market economics caused by guarantees of state aid. There were incentives for banks to take too many risks. Ireland’s key mistake was guaranteeing bank liabilities in 2008. Following the collapse of their banks, the country itself is on the verge of bankruptcy. While I don’t see this crisis tearing the Euro apart, there is a non-zero risk of that happening. I think Portugal will soon go into a bailout of some kind and Spain will also struggle to avoid being pulled into the whirlpool.

Jack: Finally then, if the problem is one of incentives, have those incentives been shifted or will we see these same problems repeating themselves?

Hugo: The incentives have been shifted, but not enough. When you bail people out, it means they will take more risks in future, even though the rules are being changed. Throughout this crisis we have heard the phrase ‘too big to fail’, and at the start of the crisis most thought that it applied only to large organisations like RBS. Now people have decided that Allied Irish Banks, in international terms quite a small organisation, is too big to fail. The concern is that the collapse of the Irish banks might bring about the collapse of the Euro; I personally would have taken a slightly tougher line. So creditors will draw the conclusion for the future that you can get bailed out, sadly.

Jack: Thank you, Hugo.
Special feature

More than money

BY KATE RAWORTH (1990, PPE), BARNEY MAYHEW (1983, CLASSICS) AND AN ANONYMOUS DIARIST.

In the current financial climate, where money is tight and work stress is high, and where the news seems full of redundancy and unemployment, it’s easy to feel like it’s every man for himself. Or at least, it’s harder to focus on the things you do have rather than those you lack or may have had to cut back on. So it’s an inspiring reality-check to hear from those people whose employment is of a more altruistic nature. Three Balliol graduates describe their work in development: a career worth more than money.

Kate Raworth (1990), Senior Researcher in Oxfam’s Policy Research Team

As a teenager, I wanted – with some naivety – to work for a cause, and I imagined it being with Amnesty or Greenpeace. When I studied PPE at Balliol, I discovered economics – and discovered it before it got hijacked by maths. I did a paper in development economics and was instantly hooked, so stayed on to do an MSc in Economics for Development. My only regret is that there was no option to study environmental economics within PPE in those days – it may have saved me from a 20-year love-hate relationship with economics.

What difference can you make?

I was lucky to get onto the Overseas Development Institute’s Fellowship Scheme (a sort of well-paid VSO for economists) and was posted to the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Zanzibar. On one of my first evenings there, I met a cynical old expat who said, ‘So, what difference do you think you can make here?’ It was a jolt, but that question has always recurred to me.

The answer I chose in Zanzibar was to spend three years going from village to village, meeting people who made traditional crafts – mats, pots, soap, carvings, metalwork – and advising on how they could adapt them for the booming tourist market. I aimed to be half-local (I worked in Swahili and knew what was on offer) but also half-’mzungu’ (I had the eyes of a tourist and knew what would sell). It worked – and it was probably the most fulfilling job I will ever have in my life because I saw how people who owned nothing but their wits and determination could transform their livelihoods and lives. But I also found the life of an expat challenging: sticking out in a crowd when I wanted to melt in; having far more money and security than my local friends could imagine; and not being able to speak out against government corruption or incompetence, both of which were rife at the time.

Changing direction

Three years on, I was offered a post in New York as a researcher on the UN’s annual Human Development Report. I was curious about the shift from working hands-on at the village level to working my socks off in international policy debates. But it felt like a huge leap and I wasn’t sure I could make it. I had become a specialist in spiced soap and cushion cover design – could I really switch to analysing global trends in human development? I did, and it taught me how re-inventible we all are.

I got intrigued by the report’s themes – from globalisation to human rights – and stayed for four years, becoming one of the authors. But I grew wary of the smooth UN life: the solid salary; business-class travel; and the intense focus on high-level meetings. I missed the village connection, and the recognisable impact on people’s lives. So when I saw a job in The Economist for a policy researcher at Oxfam, I jumped at it.

Oxfam soon felt like my natural home because it makes the macro-micro links, highlighting how the policies of governments and companies affect people living in poverty – be they in Lusaka, Glasgow or Lima. Still the question from Zanzibar came back to me: what role can I play that will make a difference?

Kate Raworth (1990), Senior Researcher in Oxfam’s Policy Research Team

Kate Raworth at the 2007 UN climate change negotiations in Bali, talking on a panel discussion about the impact of climate change in developing countries

Kate in Zanzibar

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Barney Mayhew (1983), Independent Consultant to aid agencies and government

When I left Balliol I joined the army for four years to get trained up in leadership and teamwork – and, so I thought, to do my bit to stop wars from breaking out. To my surprise it was tremendously enjoyable. When not in Germany valiantly deterring the Warsaw Pact from heading west, there was UN peacekeeping in Cyprus, a tour in Northern Ireland, and training the new Namibian defence force, combining the two sides from the recently ended civil war.

Once a civilian again, I joined the EU team negotiating ceasefires in Bosnia and Croatia. That was followed by jobs coordinating aid agencies for the UN in Rwanda and running aid programmes in Congo. I now train aid workers, civil servants and military officers.

The highlights and low points

Highlights of my work have included providing seeds and tools to hundreds of thousands of Congolese people displaced by the war; flying the first medicines into a town that had been trashed by fighting; and less pleasant but necessary, negotiating with Balkan and African warlords; giving evidence at trials in The Hague. But there have also been some lows: failures in leadership top the list. The Rwandan genocide is a dreadful, towering monument to what can happen when leadership fails. Other lows: I think of the 5,000 people killed in a single day in Rwanda, leaving to a quarter of a million fleeing across the hills. Or the murder of tens of thousands of civilians in Congo, ignored by British officials because the killings had been carried out by those they thought were the goodies.

War, poverty and injustice motivate us all. Around 30,000 children are said to die from preventable diseases each day. Something like a billion people exist on less than one dollar a day. In Congo alone the war has caused the deaths of around four million people. Yet more people are employed developing a new car than in stopping the average war.

Getting into it

For Balliol undergraduates drawn to the aid world, presumably brains are already there. Add professional skills and experience before launching out. Most aid agencies don’t teach skills but rely, unsteadily, on recruiting people who are already skilled. I hope they will professionalise. In the meantime, it’s better to get trained in business, the professions, the armed forces or elsewhere before you apply.

Then it’s a case of finding a team you like. There are three types of aid agency: UN, Red Cross/Crescent, and NGOs (non-governmental organisations). Most aid workers flit between agencies, and between types of agency. The aid world has uneven standards and poor management is common, so look carefully. It can be hard to get the first job but the more sold your skills the easier it will be. Get close, and network.

Which organisation to work for? Some think the future lies with indigenous NGOs such as BRAC (a Bangladeshi NGO which employs 120,000 people), Grameen Bank (the famous pioneer of microcredit) and the millions of small community groups around the world. The ‘big eight’ international NGOs which spend something like 75% of emergency aid will also have a role for years to come. The UN is a tremendous asset, but with serious weaknesses. Internal politics make it exceptionally tough working for the UN, so exceptionally good people need to go into it. And the Red Cross Movement, particularly the International Committee (ICRC), has a place of special honour for the torture it prevents and the tens of thousands of lives it saves among prisoners of war and war-affected populations.

What’s it worth?

There is high excitement, more than you want, in trying to bend your brain around a fast-moving crisis involving millions of people. The range of work is glorious: management of every kind; health; water and sanitation; agriculture; shelter; logistics; infrastructure; finance and accounting; governance; economics; trade rules; law; human rights; anthropology; journalism; political campaigning; … and the chance to lead at a young age. The enjoyment trumps the relatively small risks any day. It is not that scary even in the middle of a shooting war if you are properly prepared. You’re unlikely to be where the bullets are landing and you’re doing all you can to keep it that way.

A constant companion is the intellectual challenge of trying to work yourself out of a job by enabling others to do what an aid agency may temporarily have to do. If poor countries govern themselves well and trade their way into prosperity – and if rich countries drop their trade barriers – aid will be wonderfully redundant.

The Dominic Simpson Memorial Trust

Set up in March 2005, in memory of Dominic Simpson (1982), the trust aims to advance education for individuals and communities in the Middle East. Dominic graduated from Balliol in 1985 with a first class honours degree in history. He subsequently joined the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, where he specialised in Arabic and the Middle East, then moved to Kroll (an international risk analysis company) in 1997 until his death in 2004. Kroll helped establish the Trust in his memory and continues to be a major corporate sponsor. One of his close friends from Balliol, Susan Cooksey (1982) was a founding director, Matthew Edwards (1982) has recently become a director and other Balliol Old Members including Andrew Marshall (1982) and Helen Quinn (1982) are loyal supporters.

The trust has been established for almost six years now and has been achieving steady results. One of the projects is a scholarship fund to support disadvantaged girls to complete the equivalent of sixth form education at the Dar El Tifl School and Orphanage in East Jerusalem. The film, Miral, released in December 2010 is based on the story of a former pupil of the school. To find out more about the Dominic Simpson Memorial Trust, go to www.dominicsimpsontrust.org.uk
**I**

I live in Ramallah’s Old City, in the West Bank. The time is 15.30 and the streets are busy. The call to prayer has just sounded.

It is the holy month of Ramadan. In a few hours, the city will fall silent as people break their fast. Free food will be served in a makeshift tent in front of my apartment block for iftar. So far, I have only seen men dine there.

After they leave, local kids will come to play football in the adjacent parking lot. I will go up to the rooftop terrace to watch the sunset. For the last few days, it has stained the sky bright pink. The contrast against Ramallah’s dully shaded, creamy-grey buildings is stunning.

I am very fortunate to have such a high terrace. From here, all the large mosques and churches are in view. You can also see the reserve water tanks above the buildings. These serve the city’s inhabitants when Israel redirects water for itself from the shared aquifer.

**II**

I work for an international human rights NGO. It operates in over 40 countries and has four offices in the West Bank. Here, the organisation provides legal assistance to children who have been arrested, imprisoned, or abused by the Israeli Defence Forces or the Palestinian Authority. Part of my work involves compiling statistics on the number of children detained at any one time. At the moment, it is 284.

I arrived in Ramallah one month ago. The city is teeming with foreign workers like me. There are six young European aid employees and journalists living on my block. We relax on our terrace in the evenings and exchange stories about our day. They are a great source of perspective. A quick conversation reminds me where public opinion lies in France, Germany, Spain, Greece. I am in the middle of this conflict now, and sometimes that makes it hard to keep up with what the international community deems ‘the centre ground’.

A few weeks ago, my friends and I were enjoying evening drinks in a bar on Ben Yehuda Street, a hangout for young Israelis in West Jerusalem. A small explosion sent us running out of the bar and into the scramble outside. It all happened so fast. Before I knew it, we were 100 metres away from the building, and had forgotten to pay for our drinks.

I’m not a veteran of conflict zones. Less than a year ago, I was on a slow-paced MPhil degree at Balliol and tied up with teaching at Wadham. After the explosion, it took me a while to collect myself. Afterwards, we walked back to our hostel where I met a young Palestinian-Israeli called Adam. He told me that Arab-Israelis are consistently denied building permits in the city. The Israelis want Jerusalem to be a Jewish city, he said.

‘If we are prevented from building here, we will have less space to have families... Eventually, Arab-Israelis will be forced to move further east, until we are on the other side of the wall. Jews can build whatever they want. Have you seen the skyscrapers from the Mount of Olives? All of a sudden, our buildings in East Jerusalem are illegal. We are in and out of court defending our rightful claim to our homes.’

Adam’s English was almost perfect. Where did he learn to speak so well?

Adam had embarked on a medical degree in the United States but had to leave after two years. He told me that the Israeli government had refused to renew his passport while...
he was outside the country, so he came back to Jerusalem to forward his application. Israeli citizenship was all he had. If he lost it, he would be stateless. But when he arrived 18 months ago he found something strange happening.

‘First I noticed that my medical files had gone. I asked the doctors why and they said that this had happened to a number of their Arab patients who have left Israel. Then, at the embassy, there was no record of my request for passport renewal. It was humiliating.’

Adam was being slowly deleted from official Israeli records.

‘I was born in Israel, I am a native Hebrew speaker. I went to school here. To top it off, my father is a lawyer. I have been to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and I have witnessed the racially segregated roads and housing that reminded me so much of the conditions we experienced in South Africa under the racist system of Apartheid.

I have witnessed the humiliation of Palestinian men, women, and children, made to wait hours at Israeli military checkpoints routinely when trying to make the most basic of trips to visit relatives or attend school or college. And this humiliation is familiar to me and the many black South Africans who were corrallled and regularly insulted by the security forces of the Apartheid government.9 I am sympathetic to the South African apartheid analogy. But back in the UK, I rarely discuss it. The debate is too charged. People switch off. It is easier for me to just describe what I have seen. Whoever spends time here can observe which way their sympathy swings and make up their own minds.


2 See UN Security Resolutions 446, 452, 471, and 476. The Council resolution on 18 February 2011 condemning Israeli settlements in Palestine. The US accepted that settlements are illegitimate, but argued that the resolution could harm chances for peace talks.


III

Israel is a relatively rich country, a melting pot of different cultures, and a bona fide member of the ‘international community’. But most people’s eyes are on its back garden. In international politics, the occupation of Palestine is an open wound.

Israel’s treatment of Palestinians is often compared to colonialism and South African apartheid. One can see why. Israel has occupied Palestine militarily for over forty years. It applies two systems of law in the same area, where individuals’ rights depend on their nationality. It unfavourably regulates most of Palestine’s civilian, economic and legal affairs. Only 2.7% of the West Bank is governed independently by the Palestinian Authority.

A barrier runs along the West Bank, which extends beyond the 1967 Green Line. It prevents Palestinians from entering both Israel and the Palestinian land that the barrier has annexed. In a 2004 statement, the International Court of Justice ruled that the wall is illegal.1

Israel continues to build settlements in the West Bank. Many Israelis move here to benefit from government-provided economic incentives. Settlements forestall the prospect of a viable Palestinian state by physically dividing the land and making it hard to govern.

Again, international intergovernmental organisations like the EU, and every major organ of the UN, including the ICJ, have declared that settlements violate international law.2

IV

Apartheid is a legal concept. It is defined in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. John Dugard, an ad hoc judge of the ICJ and the UN Special Rapporteur for investigating the state of human rights in the Palestinian territories, declares that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid, as a matter of law.

Many international lawyers reach the same conclusion – Israel is an apartheid state, whether or not its apartheid resembles South Africa’s. But many of us are still uncomfortable relating Israel to South Africa. Is the comparison intellectually lazy? Does it overlook the complexity of the situation?

Israel’s human rights record and settlement policy in the West Bank warrant criticism. But, according to Israel, the rationale is security, not racism and discrimination. Some people argue that this is evidenced by the rights Israel affords its Arab-Israeli citizen. They can vote, serve in the Knesset, go to the same beaches and restaurants as Jews, travel on the same trains, buses and taxis, visit each other’s homes. None of this was possible in apartheid South Africa.

Consider some of those who have lent their weight to the South African apartheid analogy: Ehud Barak; Ehud Olmert; Hendrik Verwoerd; Jimmy Carter; Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann. The list goes on. Several months ago, in an open letter to the University of Berkeley, Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote about the situation in Palestine.

‘I have been to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and I have witnessed the racially segregated roads and housing that reminded me so much of the conditions we experienced in South Africa under the racist system of Apartheid. I have witnessed the humiliation of Palestinian men, women, and children, made to wait hours at Israeli military checkpoints routinely when trying to make the most basic of trips to visit relatives or attend school or college. And this humiliation is familiar to me and the many black South Africans who were corrallled and regularly insulted by the security forces of the Apartheid government.9 I am sympathetic to the South African apartheid analogy. But back in the UK, I rarely discuss it. The debate is too charged. People switch off. It is easier for me to just describe what I have seen. Whoever spends time here can observe which way their sympathy swings and make up their own minds.

V

Last night, there were two power cuts in Ramallah. The first cut came at 22.30. It lasted ten minutes – enough time for me to run to the terrace and catch a beautiful view of the city shrouded in fog and darkness. The second cut came one hour later. Everything in my bedroom disappeared (except for the glow-in-the-dark stars stuck to the ceiling, which I hadn’t noticed when I first moved into my slightly strange rented apartment). I was engrossed in Lewis Carroll’s Through the Looking-Glass when the lights went out. I kept reading using the light from my mobile phone. After about fifteen minutes, I dozed off.

In the morning, I found that there was no running water in my apartment – no drink, no shower, no toilet. ‘This is the third day in the row!’ I told my landlord. What was his response?

‘You know the four settlers Al-Qassam Brigades killed last week near Hebron? Israel is collectively punishing us by cutting our water supply!’

Friends in Israel say he is having me on. Who to believe?


2 See UN Security Resolutions 446, 452, 471, and 476. The US vetoed a recent UN Security Council resolution on 18 February 2011 condemning Israeli settlements in Palestine. The US accepted that settlements are illegitimate, but argued that the resolution could harm chances for peace talks.

Plain living and high thinking

by Owain Williams (2006, PPE)

Clean mountain air, basic provisions and space for quiet contemplation in beautiful surroundings, what could be more inspiring for a student? In 2009, Balliol celebrated 100 years of providing just that; Owain Williams describes the charm of Chalet des Anglais.

As the jeep pulls away to begin our mountain ascent, Olivier, our driver, does not offer us the usual slug of some unnamed propellant. I wonder whether perhaps this is a sign of a newfound seriousness, and that he plans a less eventful journey than usual. No such luck, as he proceeds to entertain himself, if not his passengers, with a spectacular reversing manoeuvre when we meet an oncoming car at a particularly steep point in our climb. At last we arrive and Olivier more than makes up for his previous abstemiousness by presenting us with a bottle of his cousin’s homemade calvados. ‘For Dooglas’, he explains. We promise to help the Chaplain make good use of it, and wave cheerily as he starts off down the driveway. Soon, the faint growl of the engine fades away, and with it – for a week, at least – the Sartrean hell that is other people.

The history of the Chalet

The Chalet des Anglais is one of Oxford’s best-kept secrets: a large, wood-framed Alpine summer house in the Mont Blanc range, shared between Balliol, New and Univ, it sits in glorious isolation two-thirds of the way up a mountain with Les Houches in the valley on one side, near Chamonix, and Saint Gervais on the other, playing host to Balliol undergraduates, including CV Crossman, W G Hayter, JPR Maud, JHA Sparrow (all New College); and Q McG Hogg (Christ Church).

Another charismatic and much-loved Dean, Douglas Dupree, has – along with Adam Swift and Dominic O’Brien – led Balliol’s participation at the Chalet in recent years. Adam and Dominic lead subject-specific parties, while Douglas’ groups involve undergraduates and graduates from a mix of disciplines. This year, those of us present are fortunate to witness the end of one era and the beginning of another: it is Douglas’ final party as a trustee, and we are joined for the week by the Senior Tutor, Nicola Trott, who will take over from him. Like each Chalet visit, the week is a great opportunity for socialising between a varied group of Balliol students from all backgrounds who may otherwise not cross paths. Many new – and unlikely – friendships are forged as we have great fun getting to know one another over some rambling walks, the odd game of volleyball, and even some washing-up by candlelight.

Life without the luxuries

Plain living and high thinking are the hallmarks of the week. Though the house is large, comfortably sleeping up to twenty guests, it retains a Victorian-Edwardian feel (which may be no bad thing in this Age of Austerity). There is no electricity and no running water: we shower in the Alpine waterfall at the end of the garden. After a simple breakfast, everyone mucks in to make sure that the day’s main chores are taken care of – sweeping, cleaning, and the burning of waste – after which, the rest of the morning is spent reading. Lunch is again a simple yet hearty affair, usually consisting of some soup and fresh bread, though this year we manage to regularly supplement it with some wonderful goat’s cheese from the little farm at La Charme, a 45-minute walk away round the mountain. One particular lunchtime, early in the week, provides the backdrop for one of those surreal nineteenth-century moments that continue to exist only in one’s imagination – or at the Chalet. We are busy tucking into the cheese board when a group of rather English-looking explorers appear on the lawn. At first, our minds and manners clouded into the cheese board when a group of rather English-looking explorers appear on the lawn. At first, our minds and manners clouded by the tasty Beaufort cheese, we fail to acknowledge them, but they are soon entering the dining room. ‘Good afternoon. You must be the Balliol party’, says one of them. ‘Tin the Dean of Keble’. It turns out that his daughter visited with Univ a few years earlier, and upon examining the copies of the records which are kept in the Chalet library, we soon find a photograph of her.
Work hard, play hard

Balliol’s visits are still very much reading parties, usually focused around a single book for group study and discussion. This year follows a familiar pattern, with mornings being devoted to personal study. On a sunny day, those in the know take a wicker chair onto the west-most side of the lawn, which is the best spot in which to enjoy the London Review of Books or to work one’s way through the next year’s reading list. Colder days see the whole party take refuge in the main salon, huddling under quilts while someone tends to a stove fire. After lunch, attention usually turns to the texts which have been selected for discussion at our daily five o’clock seminar. This year, Seamus Perry leads us on an exploration of the concept of liberty, with Mill’s On Liberty, Carlyle’s The French Revolution and Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities being the main exhibits. Mill, in particular, inspires a catholic exchange of interpretations of liberty which reflects the rich academic, social and cultural diversity of this year’s party.

Most days also include some good walking: several short circuits present an inviting post-lunch stroll, but there are enough serious challenges to keep most people interested. As is traditional, we devote one day to an excursion for the whole party, while another day sees a smaller contingent climb to the Tête Rousse – the highest point of Mont Blanc reachable without specialist equipment. The hot chocolate, when we reach the camp at the Tête, tastes at least five times as good as it would at sea level. Over the course of the week, other sporting activities also feature strongly. Volleyball and badminton are popular, and while we fail to reinstate Sligger’s original golf course – which had eighteen holes stretching out over the mountainside – the front lawn proves adequate space for a game on a smaller scale. It also hosts the undoubted sporting highlight of any Chalet day: a post-seminar game of Chalet cricket. Once upon a time, the lawn was manicured to the extent that tennis and croquet were possible, but this must have been extremely labour intensive. Though we attempt some repairs during the course of the week, overnight wild boar visits mean that the playing surface is now more than a little uneven and indisputably favours the bowlers.

Those hours between the seminar and dinner are always the best time of day. Non-playing members of the party gather on the porch, the shutters are closed so as to protect the windows from a stray top-edge, and play begins. One evening, the Master manages to dismiss the Senior Tutor courtesy of a wily off-break, and by the end of it all even the Captain of the Boat Club is enthusiastically embracing the sound of leather on willow. After a series of invariably short innings, players and spectators alike decamp to the west-facing terrace to kick off the evening with a sundowner or two. Mint juleps were the flavour of the week in 2009, and a fruit punch always seems to go down well with the patrons as the sun sets – each year’s variation being named in honour of a guest, our mountain neighbours, or, of course, Sligger himself.

The tanned and contented chaletites sit and bask in the glow of the sun as it sinks behind the violent rim of the massif. Douglas, bourbon in hand, looks into the middle distance, and I wonder what he must be thinking. Even a few days here soon has you feeling that the place is yours: his tenure has been considerably longer. But as someone points out – rather like those cunning (m)admen at Patek Philippe would have us believe – you never actually own the Chalet: you merely look after it for the next generation.

I walk to the bar, and prepare another round of Sliggers.
Documentary makers of Balliol

When the Seven Up! documentary, directed and produced by Paul Almond (1949), first aired in 1964, it introduced a revolutionary style of filming: a method which can be said to have influenced many ‘reality’ TV programmes today. In 2009, Channel 4 aired Osama Bin Everywhere, presented by Farrah Jarral (2000) – an influential documentary using many of the techniques pioneered by Almond – to help mitigate negative feeling towards the Islamic faith.

Paul Almond, Balliol graduate, former editor of the Isis and president of the Oxford University Poetry Society, is perhaps most famous as a filmmaker. To name but a few of his successes, Paul wrote, directed and produced Isabel (1968) and Act of the Heart (1970) to critical acclaim. He is also the director and producer of the famous 1964 documentary Seven Up! It is a testament to the programme’s enduring influence that in 2005 it was voted number one in Channel 4’s poll of the 50 Greatest Documentaries.

Revolutionary technique
Taking an interest in the class boundaries apparent in Britain at the time, and inspired by the Jesuit motto ‘Give me a child until he is seven, and I will give you the man,’ Paul, along with Tim Hewat, decided to make a documentary about 7-year-old children from different social backgrounds. Both the concept and the lack of a script made the project revolutionary. Moreover, Paul decided to use what was, for the time, a generally disregarded filming technique. He instructed the cameraman David Samuelson to use a hand-held camera and film on a level with the children. Representing the vantage point of the children themselves gave the documentary a unique insight that more traditional work with tripods and scripts could not replicate. As Paul said of David Samuelson, ‘He grasped this “new” way of shooting with relish, and in fact, it later became the norm in many British documentaries.’

Although the documentary was originally intended to stand alone, the series was continued by Michael Apted, who revisits the original children every seven years, endowing them with minor stardom. Indeed, the honesty and frankness of the children’s interviews, both amusing and socially significant, has nourished the tendency among audiences to feel a connection with the subjects. What began as simple curiosity has become for many, far more invested with emotion.

Paul said of the filming process, ‘I was only interested in the subject and what – by filming – I would discover.’ Approaching the medium of documentary as an art form, he does not acknowledge any particular message, highlighting discovery for the individual as his main motive. Although many of the questions directed the children to consider their futures in terms of traditional measures of success – education, employment and marriage – the children, Paul says, were forthright and natural in front of the camera and in response to his questions. The simplicity and truthfulness of the interviews in Seven Up! has made it a valuable cultural resource.

Up close and personal
In more recent years, there have been concerns about the effect that participating in the documentary had upon the children involved. In similar shows all over the world, many participants drop out, increasingly valuing their personal privacy. Yet the original documentary benefited from a generally unjaded attitude to the ‘reality’ genre. Both the children and their parents, Paul recalled in an interview in Montreal last year, were unconcerned about invasions upon their lives.

Paul said of the participating children ‘I do have very strong affection for each and every one of them. I see them now as they were when they were seven years old.’ Perhaps, in this sense, his own feelings reflect those of the viewer; the continuance of the series, and the fact that many people remember the original broadcast, shows the great interest and affection that viewers felt for the children. This original
that makes for true documentary. Although Paul himself ‘gave up watching television entirely’, his documentary has a long legacy in programmes made in many other countries that follow the same format, and is evident in the more recent English version, Child Of Our Time. It also had an impact on filming and interview techniques in Britain more widely.

Farrah Jarral (2000) is a junior doctor, but, spurred by a desire to change the negative perception of the Islamic faith after the London terrorist bombings of July 2005, she also became a documentary presenter. Osama Bin Everywhere was first aired in 2009 in an educational slot on Channel 4, although it has been shown again since, in this country and many others.

Farrah calls the documentary ‘naïve’; it focuses on the integral humanity of people, regardless of faith or name. She and the documentary’s producer, Masood Khan, travelled the globe, searching for people who shared the infamous first name Osama and asking them all what they loved. Each interviewee held up to the camera a card with a big red heart and their main passion written next to it.

Like Paul Almond, Farrah has a career that goes beyond her involvement in documentary making. Studying medicine at the time of

Osama, she had to fight to get leave for filming. But Farrah sees links between the two professions, in her own interest in medical anthropology, and in the responsibility one holds for protecting trust as both a doctor and a presenter. Indeed since making the documentary, Farrah has won a Fulbright Award to study Anthropology after the completion of her GP training.

Farrah felt that this documentary gave her and those who share her cultural background – British-born of Pakistani Muslim extraction – a chance to express their own liberal interpretations of Islam and their disassociation from terrorism and radicalism. Despite having had no previous experience with television or documentary making, Farrah was cast for a position she describes as ‘not a presenter’ but simply a ‘person’.

Real filming of real people

Several of the techniques used in the making of this documentary were those pioneered by Paul Almond in the 1960s. Filming with only a hand-held camera, Farrah talked to Muslim Osamas from all over the world, never speaking directly to the camera. In an attempt to make the viewer feel directly related to those being interviewed, the documentary was largely unscripted.

In an attempt to make the viewer feel directly related to those being interviewed, the documentary was largely unscripted. The dialogue was directed by the Osamas that the team met, and depended on the simple motif of the heart-cards to create a sense of unity throughout the programme.

Dispelling misconceptions

Farrah’s desire was to foreground an honest and appealing human account of the modern Muslim world, and she is adamant that the documentary showed ‘completely, honestly what happened’. This ambition was indeed successful; the heart cards produce often hilarious and always insightfully human views of different people and their social backgrounds.

As often happens in documentary making, issues of agenda clashed with those of unbiased reportage. Farrah admitted to wondering about her own ‘liberal agenda’, though as a presenter she attempted simply to induce frankness in those she talked to. The team found liberal and not-so-liberal Osamas, but attempted to reproduce an accurate cross-section, using their own unique randomising tool of first names to showcase the overwhelming moderate majority.

After the success of the documentary, Farrah was also asked to do a short 4Thought piece on the London bombings. Although her own experiences led her to speak out about this particular tragic incident, she expressed that most common of documentarian desires; to communicate a common humanity. ‘The fact is,’ she told me ‘we are all the same.’
Putting Margate back on the map

Three Balliol alumni have been involved in an exciting new art gallery that opened in Margate in April 2011. Turner Contemporary draws inspiration from JMW Turner’s association with Margate and inhabits a beautiful new building in a prominent location on Margate seafront, designed by Stirling Prize winning architect Sir David Chipperfield.

JMW Turner first visited Margate at the age of 11 when his parents sent him to school in Love Lane in the Old Town. He returned to Margate to sketch when he was 21 and by the 1830s he had become a regular visitor. The unique quality of the light, which drew Turner back to Margate, led him to remark to John Ruskin, the author of Modern Painters, that ‘the skies in Thanet are the loveliest in all Europe’. More than a hundred of his works, including some of his most famous seascapes, were inspired by the East Kent coast.

The idea of an art gallery celebrating the connection between Margate and JMW Turner was first mooted as early as 1994, but the early years of the project were fraught with challenges. A prestigious design competition was originally won by architects Snøhetta but their proposal was abandoned in February 2006 due to technical problems and escalating costs. It is a testimony to the leadership of Kent County Council and the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA). The early challenges resulted in a degree of local scepticism about the gallery and some vocal detractors, but as the building grew out of the ground, the sense of positive anticipation in Margate was palpable.

The new Turner Contemporary building celebrates JMW Turner’s fascination with light, with spacious naturally lit galleries, vast windows with uninterrupted views of the sea, and an opaque glass exterior, which will absorb and reflect light. It occupies the same location as the lodging house in which Turner stayed while in Margate and the building is designed to be sensitive to the setting of two listed buildings: John Rennie and William Jessup’s Harbour Arm of 1815 and Droit House, which currently houses Turner Contemporary’s temporary visitor centre. The gallery exhibits Turner paintings loaned from the Tate and other collections, and a rich and varied programme of artwork from 1750 to the present, including newly commissioned pieces. If JMW Turner is Margate’s most famous son, its most famous artistic daughter is Tracey Emin, who has also been hugely supportive of Turner Contemporary. The centrepiece of Turner Contemporary’s dynamic opening show was a little known Turner painting ‘The Eruption of the Souffrier Mountains, in the Island of St Vincent, at Midnight’ and included works by Daniel Buren, Russell Crotty, Conrad Shawcross, Ellen Harvey, Teresa Fernandez and Douglas Gordon.

Architect David Chipperfield won the Stirling Prize in 2007 and is regarded as one of the most influential architects of his generation. The practice has developed a strong international reputation for innovative museum and gallery designs, including the Neues Museum in Berlin, the Museum of Modern Literature in Marbach am Neckar, Germany, and the Hepworth in Wakefield which will also open in 2011. In February 2011 David was awarded the prestigious Royal Gold Medal for Architecture.

Turner Contemporary will play a pivotal role in the regeneration of Margate and the surrounding East Kent area. Margate is one of England’s oldest seaside resorts, but like many other seaside towns its tourism heyday has long since passed and it now has pockets of severe deprivation. Turner Contemporary is expected to attract in the region of 100,000 visitors each year, and Margate’s charming Old Town is now being reinvigorated with a new kind of visitor economy, based around specialist shops, cafes, restaurants and boutique B&Bs. Turner Contemporary also has a very strong learning programme, which is already well developed and which enables both Kent residents and people from further afield to engage with high-quality historical and contemporary visual arts in exemplary learning spaces. Emphasis has been put on fostering community cohesion – the award-winning Times of Our Lives project in partnership with UCA (Canterbury) brought together young and old to form an intergenerational group working together on projects – and making a real difference in the local economy. The gallery has recently secured more than £150,000 to train local long-term unemployed people in the skills necessary to work in an art gallery environment. Andrew Nairne, Executive Director for Strategy at the Arts Council England said: ‘The opening of the Turner Contemporary will put Margate back on the map and the town will instantly become synonymous with the very best of contemporary visual art. That’s hugely exciting and of course there is a great deal of enthusiasm and anticipation not only in London and the South East but also around the UK.’

Turner Contemporary is not expected to regenerate Margate singlehandedly. Other major proposals, including the restoration of a ‘heritage amusement park’ (the former ‘Dreamland’ amusement park), site of a
listed roller coaster known as the Scenic Railway, will also play a major role in bringing visitors back to Margate and providing employment for local people.

Kent County Council initiated the development of Turner Contemporary and created a charitable trust to run and manage the gallery in 2008. The Chair of Trustees is author, broadcaster, commentator and Chief Executive of the Index on Censorship, John Kampfner, and the board of 14 trustees includes a local hotelier, former British Ambassador, artist, accountant, barrister and county councillor. Entirely by coincidence, the board also includes three Balliol alumni. Katy Ricks (1979) is the Head of Sevenoaks School. Katy says: ‘I was very excited when John Kampfner asked me to be a trustee. I’ve lived and worked in Kent for nearly 10 years and feel great affection for Thanet and its coastal towns. The opportunity to work on a project dedicated to its regeneration was a real pull. Contemporary art is a new area of interest for me, but I am a museum and gallery addict – and contributing in a small way to the cultural and educational vision and operation here is fascinating. I also believe passionately in the importance of the built environment. I grew up in an architect’s household, and in my role as Head of Sevenoaks I know what a real impact an outstanding building can have on a community. Governance makes a massive difference to any institution, and I do think Balliol develops a strong sense of public spirit in its students which makes us recognise this.’

Helen Hayes (1993) runs a company called Urban Practitioners which specialises in town planning and urban regeneration. Helen first visited Margate in 2006 when she was advising the Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry on ‘Coastal Towns’. The Committee visited Margate and we had a presentation from Victoria Pomery, the Director of Turner Contemporary about the emerging proposal for the new building. We also had a tour around the Old Town. I was struck by Margate’s immense potential, in its historic fabric, natural environment and the determination and leadership of a number of people who are really committed to seeing the town regenerated.’ Helen and her family became frequent visitors to Margate, and when the opportunity arose to become a trustee she jumped at the chance: ‘My work is very strategic and long term, which is rewarding in a different way, but Turner Contemporary is an opportunity to get involved in something which will make such a tangible difference to Margate, and that is hugely exciting. It has been a great privilege to work with the other Trustees and staff of Turner Contemporary, and to see the project develop to fruition. It is going to be an amazing gallery and I think everyone should visit!’

Roly Keating (1979) is the Director of Archive Content at the BBC. Roly said: ‘I was delighted to be asked to get involved with Turner Contemporary. My family roots on my mother’s side are in North Kent and many days of my childhood summers were spent in a beach hut at Tankerton, along the coast from Margate – that “Turner” light is something I know well. I’ve also long been fascinated by modern and contemporary art and architecture, so the chance to support a cultural project that can make a real difference to this wonderful but sometimes undervalued part of the UK was irresistible. It’s a challenging, long-term endeavour, but the creative team behind it is exceptional, and the building itself is simply beautiful.’

Turner Contemporary opened on 16 April 2011. For more information go to www.turnercontemporary.org
In the dark without nuclear power?

BY SOPHIE PETBOU

With Britain’s nuclear power stations coming to the end of their lifetimes and energy consumption ever increasing, Britain could be facing a serious dip in power production by 2015. In 2006, Alistair Darling (Trade and Industry Secretary at the time) delivered the alarming ultimatum that we need to support the re-building of the nuclear power industry or one day the lights will go out. But is this really the situation we are in? Five years on, David Lucas (DL), Balliol Tutorial Fellow in Physics, and Roger Cashmore FRS (RC), Chair of the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), discuss the future of nuclear power.

The following discussion took place prior to the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and the resulting damage to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

DL: So the ability to ‘breed’ tritium in the reactors hasn’t been mastered yet?
RC: We know the process but you have to be able to make it work on a large scale.
DL: It was originally claimed that the problem of radioactive waste would not be an issue with fusion reactors, and the decommissioning of the power stations would be easier. Is that still true in light of our experience so far?
RC: I think it still stands because you’re not dealing with uranium or any of the atoms that break down into very nasty fission products that are radioactive. In a fusion reactor, you’re only dealing with isotopes like deuterium and tritium. Tritium itself is radioactive but decays in a much faster time.
DL: What about those energetic neutrons that come out of fusion reactions, do they bury themselves and make the walls of the reactor radioactive?
RC: The main problem with the fusion reactors, as I understand it, is with the tritium that gets distributed in the vessels even though the quantities are comparatively small. The problem with the energetic neutrons going through the rest of the material such as the walls of reactors – and this is common to fusion and fission reactors – is that these neutrons damage the materials used to build the reactor vessels because the flux of neutrons going through these materials is enormous. So one of the big things for fusion power to get right is the materials used to build the vessels.
DL: Yes, it seems to me that the nuclear physics has been known for 50 years but it’s the engineering of the power stations that’s the overall challenge here. To step back and think about nuclear fusion for a moment, which is the conventional way of making nuclear power, why, when it seems to be such an unpopular option with the public, is the government deciding to build new generations of nuclear power?
stations? What is the issue with nuclear waste – is it a real problem or a perceived problem?

RC: There are two reasons the government has turned to nuclear fission reactors. The first is that you get a secure supply of power. The second reason is that when you generate that power, there is no carbon footprint. If you are worried about climate change and the impact of CO₂ emissions, then nuclear power is a good way to go. Building nuclear reactors is probably the only way that the government will get near its claimed goal for CO₂ emission.

Something which worries people is plutonium. The first nuclear weapons were made from uranium, which exists naturally, and plutonium, which is made in nuclear reactors, so this understandably creates an emotive reaction. The second thing people worry about, quite rightly, is the highly radioactive waste and having that material around for a long time; we can't be complacent about this but there are ways of dealing with these two problems. The radioactive waste is kept in very secure places and kept safe with a radiation barrier. Only sophisticated nations could get to the plutonium and they would need a real intent to do that. The radioactive waste is kept on site in the reactors to begin with while it cools down and the radioactivity decreases. Then it goes to interim storage until it is eventually placed in a geological disposal facility deep underground out of everybody's way.

DL: I was reading¹ that the amount of nuclear waste generated by all the UK's nuclear power stations at the moment is about the same as the volume of a bottle of wine per person per year. Apparently only 3% of this is the really nasty stuff. This high-level waste has to be kept for around 1000 years until its radioactivity has dropped to the level of natural uranium ore.

RC: Yes, people are often not clear about what exactly comes out of a reactor. When you take the spent fuel out of the reactor, it's basically what you put in there in the first place except for uranium that has been used in producing your energy. It's only a very small amount, say about 5%, that make up these 'products' of the reaction; 3% of these are stable isotopes – they don't radioactively decay – 1% is plutonium, and 1% is this mix of long- and short-lived nuclei. You can re-process the spent fuel to extract plutonium and then these dangerous fission products come out at only 0.5% of the original weight. So actually, the high-level waste that will come out of the reactors is very small but you still have to find a safe geological disposal site and ensure it's contained properly.

DL: I guess people focus on the risks of the nasty stuff that comes out of nuclear reactors but are blind to the dangerous 'dripping-tap effect' associated with power generation by other means. For example a coal power plant will give out a small amount of fine particles in the smoke that have a certain probability of causing people to have lung cancer. You could never prove where those small air-born particles had come from, but that's happening all over the world wherever we're burning fossil fuels. Plus there's the more obvious deaths associated with coal mining, or accidents on oil rigs. Estimated death rates per amounts of energy generated for nuclear fission power are actually ten times below traditional methods such as coal and oil.

RC: Yes; and the other thing people worry about with nuclear power stations, is that there could be an accident whereby the dangerous stuff gets out and something akin to an explosive device – a bomb – is produced. But that's actually very difficult. In the two major accidents we know of, at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island, a large amount of radioactive waste got out but there was no 'nuclear' explosion; and since those two accidents an enormous amount of effort has gone into securing the safety of reactors.

DL: Okay, so the new generation of nuclear power stations will not be built for another ten years or so, but don't we have an energy gap to plug before then?

RC: Yes, but we're bringing in gas-fired power stations, which are the cheapest power station to build, and we'll import the gas from Russia, Norway, and Middle East.

DL: So the stories in the newspapers a few years ago, about the lights all going off in five years time; was that journalistic hyperbole?

RC: Well, not really, because if you have upheaval in any of these countries then you get possible interruptions in your supply of gas.

DL: Yes, but those are the unpredictable risks. Are there any foreseeable energy problems within the next ten years which the government hasn't acted on sufficiently?

RC: Well, they started acting on it about three (or so) years ago when they agreed the idea of going for new nuclear builds and they have been planning the way forward to get these reactors built. But it does take a long time to get through planning permission, the actual builds and securing of suppliers. As there has been such a slowdown in building of new nuclear reactors over the last 20 years, there are far fewer suppliers. At the moment, for example, you have to go to Japan for the vessels.

So to answer your question 'will the lights go out?' Well, there is a planned turn off of nuclear reactors in Britain and by 2023 we will lose roughly 20% of the electric power we currently have unless we do something about it. In addition to the new gas fired reactors (which replace older coal fired stations), we need to build more reactors and extend the lifetime of existing reactors (ensuring they are safe for operation) to give a much-needed breathing space in which to introduce the next generation of reactors. There will have to be a very careful phasing of these things otherwise there will certainly be a big dip in power. In fact, we will need a well-thought-out strategy and we will need to stick to it.

¹ http://www.iter.org/
² David J C MacKay, Sustainable Energy: Without the Hot Air, UIT 2008
Great adventurers

BY SOPHIE PETROU

‘You’re only as old as you feel’ as the saying goes; Sir Adam Roberts, Emeritus Fellow, born in 1940, and Anthony Smith (1944), born in 1926, certainly live up to the implicit challenge. Both men have embarked on amazing adventures, journeys for which the energy, stamina and commitment required might unnerve would-be explorers half their age.

Land’s End to John O’Groats by bike

In August 2010, to raise money for the British Academy, its President, Sir Adam Roberts, undertook a cycle ride from Land’s End to John O’Groats (LE JoG). He made the journey with his daughter Hannah, on whom he lays sole responsibility for the exploit: ‘She’s an international election consultant and an exercise enthusiast,’ he says fondly. ‘In about March (2010), she thought of jointly celebrating her 40th and my 70th birthday by cycling the LE JoG route.’ Initially Adam wasn’t sure he would be up to the challenge but after cycling from Oxford through the Chilterns to London, he decided he could do it. At this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun. The fundraising came at this point, the main aim was to mark significant birthdays and have fun.

‘On Day 9 – Hannah’s 40th – we followed a brilliant route… through Delamere Forest and the jigsaw-pretty town of Lymm. Day 20 – my 70th – was great too, if tinged with sadness that the ride was nearing its end. And John O’Groats, which is a mess, is excellent proof of the proposition that it’s the journey that counts, not the destination. It’s certainly a unique way to spend a 70th birthday.

‘So, was it worth all the training I ask? His response is a resounding yes. It was ‘amazing!’ It was tiring of course, ‘especially in headwinds and on the hills.’ He wrote of the first day’s exertions: ‘Balliol is supposed to be a college of ‘effortless superiority’ but all I’m feeling after the first punishing stage of the journey is laborious inferiority: the hills on Cornish roads are remorseless!’ Despite this he is still brimming with excitement about his trip: ‘I’d love to do it again. The only thing that would stop me is the fear that it could never be quite so enjoyable as this first time!’ You can read Adam’s full blog at www.britac.ac.uk/about/adam_roberts_blog.cfm

Crossing the Atlantic by raft

Anthony Smith is planning to cross the Atlantic Ocean on a raft made of water pipes, to raise money for WaterAid. A true adventurer, he has already travelled through 70 countries and shows no sign of stopping; or even slowing down. Anthony, among other things, is an author and former Tomorrow’s World television presenter. He is perhaps most known for his bestselling work The Body (originally published in 1968 and later renamed The Human Body), which has sold over 800,000 copies worldwide and was tied in with a BBC television series, known in America by the name Intimate Universe: The Human Body. Anthony is no stranger to adventure, having been the first Briton to cross the Alps in a balloon. The advert for his current adventure, placed five years ago in the Sunday Telegraph, was a brief quip: ‘Fancy rafting across the Atlantic? Famous traveller requires 3 crew. Must be OAP. Serious adventurers only.’ It attracted the attention of several experienced seafarers – and now 84-year-old Anthony Smith is preparing to lead his veteran team across the ocean in An-Tiki (by way of humorous reference to Kon-tiki, the raft which made the celebrated 1947 crossing of the Pacific). The constituent parts of An-Tiki are being assembled on the island of La Gomera in the Canaries, from where they set sail in January 2011. Balliol wishes Anthony the best of luck and hopes to catch up with him in the next Floreat Domus to hear all about this adventure. In the meantime, you can watch his progress on the website with regular pictures and news from the crew at http://gasballoon.com/antiki
The following titles by Balliol Old Members hit the shelf in 2010/11.

Tomfoolery: Occasional Writings by Thomas Braun (1935–2008)
Edited by Christopher Braun and Tim Head (1962).
(Antony Rowe Publishing Services, 2010)

This book is a collection of poems, parodies, public speeches and intimate letters published in memory of Tom Braun. Affectionately compiled, the book covers the many interests Tom maintained during his long association with Balliol. Christopher and Tim have chosen well over 100 items to reflect Tom’s sophistication, humour, generosity and imagination. In this interesting mix you will find irrevocent views of history and literature from the Old Testament to Tarzan, witty comments on politics, sensitive translations of poetry and plenty of puns.

Beyond Empire: Postcolonialism and Mission in a Global Context
Jonathan Ingleby (1960)
(AuthorHouse, 2010)

Colonialism has in the past often been linked to the Christian mission, but what about postcolonialism? Beyond Empire addresses issues of theology and mission with regard to postcolonial societies. Topics range from neo-colonialism and migration to hybridity and the urban landscape. This book will be a thought-provoking read for anyone interested in the Christian mission – in its theory or practice. But it is also completely relevant to our current state of environmental, economic and social crisis.

‘This book is a challenging and disturbing read.’
Christopher JH Wright, International Director, Langham Partnership International

The Deserter: Book One of the Alford Saga
Paul Almond (1949)
(McArthur & Co., 2010)

The first of a series of novels of historical fiction based on the author’s ancestors, The Deserter covers two hundred years of Canadian history, set in Shigawake, on the Chaleur Bay in the Gaspé Peninsula. It tells the story of Paul’s great-grandfather, Thomas Manning, who risked his life when he deserted from the British Navy in the early 1800s and whose desertion begins the epic tale of a pioneer family. This well-researched novel centres on relations between the hero and the Micmac people, who teach him how to survive in this new land. The next two novels will focus on Paul’s clerical roots: his father was an Anglican clergyman, as was his uncle who served as an army chaplain in the Boer War.

Education for Animal Welfare
Edward Earle (1968)
(Springer, 2011)

This book has one admirable aim – to improve animal welfare. It does this by creating awareness and facilitating change in the behaviour of humans. To this end, it presents academic texts that address how best to provide for those species that are managed and cared for by humans and covers a range of topics dealing with improving care given to animals and reducing the suffering they experience. Dr Earle conveys the improvements that can be achieved when people are educated to treat animals with the care and respect that they deserve.

Balliol Poetry
Edited by Anthony Kenny and Seamus Perry
(Titus Wilson, 2011)

Sir Anthony Kenny, former Master of Balliol, and Seamus Perry, Tutor in English, have compiled a new anthology, Balliol Poetry, featuring verse written by Balliol students, both famous and obscure, either while they were in residence or in later life recollecting their Oxford days. The book is beautifully illustrated with pictures and objects from the College’s collections, and handsomely bound in cloth. The book is on sale from the College at £12.95, to find out more, visit www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/about-balliol MERCHANDISE

The Network
Richard Heller (1966)
(Beanmomsey Publishing, 2010)

The sequel to Richard Heller’s highly-regarded novel, A Tale of Ten Wickets, The Network is about a teenage boy whose one dream in life is to become a fast bowler. The main character is Steve – the only child of a broken marriage, no social life, no girlfriend and no career prospects; his life seems pretty bleak. But his lonely pursuit of his dream brings him a network of new friendships and a new life. A dialogue-led fictional work that is both humorous and touching.

‘I can’t remember relishing any cricket fiction so much.’
Matthew Norman,
Evening Standard

Servants of the Empire
FRH Du Boulay (1939)
(IBTauris, 2010)

Du Boulay, an eminent historian, has cleverly reconstructed the lost world of his father’s generation from an outstanding collection of original letters exchanged between six siblings and their parents. Spanning three continents and several generations, his book offers an eye-opening insight into late imperial life and ranges from General Gordon’s Siege of Khartoum to the Boxer Uprising, the Boer War and World War One. Its compelling portrait of a British Victorian family which chose to make a life abroad will be a useful source for a historian of Empire as well as being an interesting depiction of British social history for the general reader.

‘This excellent book opens a window on what the empire meant to men and women of an English middle class family.’ Francis Robinson, Professor of the History of South Asia, Royal Holloway College, University of London.
Master on the move: conversations around the world

Andrew and Peggotty Graham, February 2011

Peggotty and I have been extremely fortunate, spending most of Hilary term seeing Balliol people around the world. We started in Hong Kong in mid-January – a welcome relief from the English winter – even though the day we visited Po Lin Monastery with William and Elizabeth Pang there was a howling icy wind. We then moved on to Singapore, Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Sydney (again), Wellington, Los Angeles, New York and back to San Francisco before returning to Oxford.

There were Balliol gatherings, sometimes two or three, in all of these places and we are extremely grateful to Charles Alexander, John Pickhaver, John and Myriam Wylie, John and Rose Wood, Barbara Hay, Adam and Elizabeth Zoia, and Nicholas Hope and Steve Schaffran for providing magnificent venues and/or funding the many receptions. Regrettably, at the time of going to print, we don't have good photos from Perth, Singapore or San Francisco – if anyone has some, do send them to us. But what matters more than the photos are the conversations and the ideas and memories that these evoke.

What stands out? Having seen more than two hundred alumni one obvious point is the diversity of ideas and thoughts and discussions! Yet there were some recurring themes. One was technology and the way that, wherever we were, everyone was able to watch, in real time, the unfolding dramas in North Africa and against this the dramatic backdrop of floods in Queensland (larger than France and Germany combined), bush fires near Perth and the record-breaking cyclone Yasi which devastated parts of Queensland (again), not to mention the snow storms that swept through the USA and, of course, just as we
returned, the earthquake in New Zealand. And then linked to the technical change was consciousness of what this plus globalisation in trade is doing to the world.

Thomas Friedman argues that the world is becoming flatter, but in many of our conversations, we were more aware that while world inequality may be falling, within country inequality appears to be rising. Related to this was a point that echoed from Hong Kong to New York about the potential effects of this on access to good education. In particular, as local income distribution and life chances widen so we observed the fear of falling behind increasing and thus the pressure on kids intensifying to ‘make it’ into the best possible higher education. Good? Up to a point. But not at the expense of time to ‘become a whole person’.

A second theme, not wholly unrelated, was that of work/life balance. We were encouraged to find several Balliol men consciously constraining job pressures to allow more time for their children, and talking openly about the difficult choices that had to be made. At a different stage in our own lives, but equally recognising the need for time to think as well as to do, we slipped below the radar for a few gorgeous days on the northern edge of South Island, New Zealand (see the photo!).

Above all though, what we noticed most was the continuing open-mindedness, social awareness and intense inquisitiveness of Balliol people, irrespective of age, nationality or culture. I went, for example, from conversations in Perth about the philosophical inadequacies of our concept of time with a Balliol man well into his 80s to see, on the recommendation of a Balliol woman in her 30s, the groundbreaking video work The Clock by Christian Marclay in New York. This explores the multifacets of time via excerpts from more than 3,500 movies edited together to form a 24-hour montage unfolding in a real-time multitude of different narrative possibilities and potential. Mind-expanding!

Everywhere we went, too, there was the sense that it was this combination of intellectual curiosity plus social awareness that had brought the people we met to Balliol in the first place and that Balliol, in its turn, had fostered, extended and honed both the open-mindedness and the humane values to a higher level. Everywhere we would have liked to have had the time to talk more.

A wider range of photos from our travels plus a few more comments can be found on the new Balliol alumni network. Please join, send your own pictures and engage!
Balliol’s 750th anniversary: securing Balliol’s future

As the College’s 750th anniversary, in 2013, draws near, preparations are underway to celebrate the occasion. The fundraising campaign to mark this historical milestone aims to raise at least £30 million (and to double the number of people giving to the College); by doing so, to ensure that Balliol continues to be a world-class educational institution. All gifts to the College in this period also count towards the University of Oxford’s wider campaign, ‘Oxford Thinking’.

Beyond continued support of the Annual Fund (see page 37), many of these gifts have been to Balliol’s endowment, income from which is used to pay for the College’s educational activities. Unrestricted endowment gifts are particularly helpful as they provide the greatest flexibility for the College since our financial needs naturally change over time.

Balliol’s endowment funds yield around one-third of our annual income but are significantly less than, in terms of endowment per student, the sums held by many Oxford colleges, and we must increase them if we are to continue to provide the same academic environment – with commensurate financial resources for Fellowships and student support – as our competitors not only within Oxford but also internationally.

We have received substantial donations over the past year towards the endowment of Classics at Balliol, and this remains one of our fundraising priorities. Others have chosen to support the Historic Collections Centre at St Cross Church (a full report can be found on page 39); our plans are continuing to develop for a hoped-for new building in the Garden Quad which will provide long-needed additional space for lectures, tutorials, seminars and receptions for College guests.

Whether or not individuals feel able to make a lifetime gift to the Campaign we hope that all Old Members will be willing to consider leaving a legacy to the College in their Wills. We’re very pleased that over 200 alumni and friends have chosen to support Balliol in this way so far, and this group meets annually at the College for a very enjoyable lunch.

We have been helped enormously by two fundraising committees composed of alumni – the UK Balliol Campaign Board, chaired jointly by Nicola Horlick (1979) and John Colenutt (1981), and the North American Balliol Campaign Board which is based in New York and chaired by Ben Heineman (1965) with Don Gogel (1971) as Vice-Chair. We remain extremely grateful to both groups for everything they are doing to help Balliol at this time.
Strong support for Balliol’s Annual Fund in 2010

The College is immensely grateful to its Old Members and friends who have supported the Annual Fund so generously in the past year. With their help, we were able to raise £638,000 in gifts – setting a new record for the Annual Fund and allowing us to provide more support than ever to current students.

In 2009/10, income from the Annual Fund allowed us to make 377 financial awards to undergraduates and graduates in financial need, in the form of Access Bursaries and hardship grants. This level of support allows many talented students from less privileged backgrounds to study at Balliol, and also provides much-needed help to students facing unexpected hardship during their time in College. The Annual Fund also enhances the College’s tutorial system, by allowing students to have tuition with specialists outside Balliol. This is invaluable for those studying subjects in specialised areas or where there is a particular demand for more teaching. Gifts to the Annual Fund also provide additional funding for Balliol’s numerous sports club and societies, and enable us to improve our IT systems for undergraduates and graduates.

The Women’s 30th Anniversary Campaign

To mark the thirtieth anniversary of the admission of women to Balliol, a group of patrons – co-chaired by Camilla Bingham (1988) and Charlotte Leslie (1997) representing the years 1979 to 2004 – spearheaded a successful effort to encourage fellow female Old Members to make contributions to the Annual Fund. The Women’s Campaign raised more than £38,000, and this money helped the College in many ways: from bursaries and scholarships, extra tuition and improved accommodation; to music, sport, student societies and many other aspects of student life. We are grateful to all those who contributed in this way.

Gaudy Campaigns

Balliol’s 2010 Gaudy campaigns, led by dedicated committees of classmaters, also proved very successful in inspiring contemporaries to support the College financially – sometimes for the first time.

The 1988–1990 Spring Gaudy Committee, chaired by David Lewis (1989), raised over £121,000. The Summer Gaudy Committee for the years 1994–1996 was chaired by Caleb Wright (1995), and raised over £109,000 in gifts and pledges. We would like to congratulate the committees warmly on these achievements, and to thank them for everything they have done to help Balliol.

There are two Gaudy Campaigns this year too, one for the 1991–1993 years – celebrating their Gaudy in the spring – which is led by a committee of ten Old Members chaired by Adam Constable (1991) – and another for the 1997–1999 years, which will take the form of a telephone campaign.

Talking about his involvement in the campaign, Adam says: ‘The committee is going great guns. The generosity of the members from 91–93 contacted so far has been overwhelming, and we hope that it continues in the weeks ahead.’

Telephone campaign success

We have just completed this year’s telethon and would like to thank all those of you who made time to talk to the student callers. Many good conversations were had, with an exchange of information on both sides, and just over 61% of those called decided to make a gift to the Annual Fund, which is tremendous. A total of £244,000 has been raised so far, with gifts still coming in. This will give a real boost to our Annual Fund total this year. Comments, such as the one below from Shira Schnitzer (1999), were also gratefully received and were very heartening to the student callers: ‘I happened to get called recently as part of the telethon. It was a real pleasure to talk to someone who was just beginning their own studies, to hear about their successes and challenges, and to sense the enthusiasm which they had both for their course and for Balliol. I think that the telethon is a great way to focus attention on the very real needs of student support, and a timely reminder of the value of a Balliol education.’

‘This is what struck me most about the financial position, to see it in context with competing Oxford colleges and universities, and – most importantly – to understand how our individual contributions can have huge overall impact: this is what struck me most about the Gaudy Campaign. It also gave me an excuse for a lot of reminiscing on long-lost undergraduate days!’

Caleb Wright (1995), Chairman, 1994–1996 Gaudy Committee
Re-launch of Alumni and Friends website and the new Alumni Network

BY CHARLES WELLS (1999, BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES) AND BEN ARMSTRONG (BALLIOL DATABASE, RESEARCH AND PLANNING MANAGER)

Recent visitors to the College website may have noticed a few changes – in particular to the Old Members’ pages. Our aim was to provide a modern and up-to-date online resource which is easy to navigate, and which integrates the Old Members’ area more effectively with the College’s main website while adding additional tools and functionality that Old Members can use to make the most of what Balliol has to offer.

The content of our previous pages has been refreshed to match the style of the College’s main website, which was re-launched last year. All previous bookmarks will still work as redirects have been put in place to ensure that pages on the ‘old’ site continue to be accessible.

Over the past few months we have also been rebuilding the password-protected areas of the Alumni and Friends website, which can now be found within our very own social network – ‘The Balliol Alumni Network’ – at www.balliolnetwork.com. The website has been built by Old Member Charles Wells (1999) and his company, Kinship Networking (www.kinshipnetworking.com).

The site hopes to build on the success of websites such as Facebook to help former Balliol Members to connect more easily, as well as to foster an online community by allowing them to communicate within a modern, innovative online medium.

The Balliol Alumni Network makes it easy to book Balliol events online; allows messaging and photo-sharing between members and enables them to set up their own online groups. We hope that this will help the College to communicate more effectively with you, as well as allowing all of our members, old and new, to connect or reconnect to benefit their working and personal lives.

Charles describes the site as ‘a great tool that can bring together the minds of Balliol members, both past and present, to share issues and ideas. This is the first step in creating an online social system for Balliol members.’

So far more than 1,500 alumni, students and Fellows have signed into the network, creating groups and communicating with friends. This number grows daily and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

We encourage you to visit the Alumni Network yourself and to become part of Balliol’s online community at www.balliolnetwork.com.

If you require log-in and password details for the site please email development@balliol.ox.ac.uk.
Most must now be aware of the College’s project to restore St Cross Church (next to Holywell Manor) and to convert it into an Historic Collections Centre. Balliol’s archives and manuscript treasures will, for the first time, be given a decent environmentally-controlled home, exhibited, and made available to scholars. The project also has the important indirect advantage of freeing space for development of the Library on the Broad Street site.

The College is approaching its 750th year but its archives include even older title deeds. As well as defining our corporate identity, the archives are rich with material for national history. And our mediaeval manuscripts, especially those given to us in the 15th century by William Gray, are one of the most complete mediaeval libraries to survive anywhere. These treasures have been enhanced in modern times by gifts of dozens of major collections including manuscripts of Matthew Arnold (e.g. Sohrab and Rustum) and Robert Browning; we have the most important collection of Browning material in the world.

I imagine that few readers of Floreat Domus had any idea when they were at Balliol how rich the College’s manuscript heritage was. I certainly did not, although I confess to distracting interests at that time. Hopefully future generations will become more aware than we were in our salad days, because everything will be so much more easily available.

Nor is this something for the classical, literary, and historical classes alone; the collections include political and economic papers too, and even for the chemists there is a gem: the original essay of Christopher Longuet-Higgins for Ronnie Bell in which he interpreted the then enigmatic structure of diborane, the most prodigious intellectual feat of any Balliol undergraduate ever!

It had been clear for many years that St Cross Church in Holywell was doomed to eventual redundancy. From time to time its use for the College archives was a passing dream – I lived for many years on the other side of the road. It suddenly became a real prospect in 2008 when redundancy was actually on the cards, and the Master interested Dame Stephanie Shirley in it. Her Foundation funded exploratory work, and when feasibility was established it pledged a million pounds towards the estimated total cost of over £3 million. Negotiations with the powers of Church and State took ages and saintly patience but ended with the College securing a 999-year lease of the Church for no consideration and a peppercorn (literally) rent.

The College decided to proceed in 2009, encouraged by support amounting to more than another million pounds from alumni. In due course a complete list of donors will be displayed in the Church.

The project was brilliantly directed by Robert Montgomery of Montgomery Architects, who has extensive experience of sensitive alterations to ancient buildings (the Church is Grade I listed). Five firms tendered, and Felthams Construction were appointed. Work on not only basic restoration of the structure but also conservation work on memorials, stained glass and painted ceilings took place through 2010 and has just been finished, within budget, I am pleased to report.

The small Chancel is in principle still available for occasional services, and is not officially redundant like the body of the Church, which is now set up for Balliol’s use as a repository and exhibition centre.

Throughout, the project enjoyed the patronage not only of the Chancellor of the University, all living former Masters of the College, and many other distinguished Balliol people, but also both the current and previous Bishops of Oxford and Sir Hugo Brunner, former Lord Lieutenant, Hon Fellow of Trinity.

For us, the complex work of moving our Collections in and getting set up has begun. We are doing this in-house by choice, and taking it slowly and systematically; we are at present hesitant about advertising a definite opening date, but we are aiming at 1 October 2011.

Planning the project and conservation work involved detailed research into the history of the Church, which has been written up with an account of the project so far in an illustrated booklet of 44 pages which is available from the College at £10 per copy.

There remains a shortfall of about a million pounds between what has been raised for this project and the original target. The College hopes members will be moved to help cover this debt.

Conservation work on memorials, stained glass and painted ceilings at St Cross Church
The William Westerman Pathfinders Programme

Now guaranteed and now East as well as West

The Pathfinders Programme at Balliol is well known. It was started in 1955 by Bill Coolidge (1924) who funded some eight Balliol students to go to the USA, post Finals, each year. A particular feature of the scheme is that the students stay with Old Members and other close friends of the College all over the USA (and more recently Canada) with the result that they have an experience far deeper than that of tourists. While in the USA, they also carry out a project and this, too, takes them behind the façade.

To name but a few, Tom Bingham (1954), Chris Patten (1962), Christopher Hitchens (1967) and Nigel Sheinwald (1972) were all Pathfinders and they and many others speak with passion of what a remarkable experience it proved to be and of their gratitude to the many Balliol hosts.

Bill Coolidge died in 1992, and from then until 2002 his niece, Kitty Lastavica, together with her husband, John, generously provided funding for the programme, as well as welcoming many Pathfinders to their superb house at Coolidge Point. In more recent years, the scheme was funded first by three anonymous donors before Matthew Westerman (1983) took over the funding of the Programme in honour of his father, William A Westerman (1946).

There is now wonderful news. On 16 November 2010, Balliol held a dinner for Pathfinder hosts (plus those Pathfinders able to attend) at the British Embassy in Washington, kindly hosted by Sir Nigel Sheinwald, the current UK Ambassador to the USA. It was a superb occasion and, at the end, Matthew Westerman announced that he and his wife, Siân, had made a very significant gift to Balliol. This would not only support the existing programme in perpetuity, but also provide extra funding to allow additional students with the requisite energy and vision to visit (willing) Pathfinder hosts throughout Asia and Australia, thus, for the first time, enabling US students to participate in the programme. The Master, Andrew Graham, responded: ‘With the world rebalancing and with Balliol people spread all round the globe, this is a gift not just of great generosity, but also of great imagination.’

Imaginative bursaries help students at Balliol

Elena Ambrosiadou, founder and CEO of IKOS, a leading global hedge fund based in Cyprus, is generously funding graduate bursaries for Balliol students to help them pursue their studies at the College.

Elena Ambrosiadou, the Chief Executive of IKOS, has a degree in Chemical Engineering from Leeds University, an MSc in Technology and Development from Imperial College London and an MBA from Cranfield. She co-founded IKOS approximately 20 years ago and has developed an award-winning team managing a wide range of assets. IKOS is a systematic hedge fund manager that currently manages US $2.3 billion. At the heart of its approach is the application of scientific principles to investment management. It has a team of 15 PhDs who create and refine computer models to carry out quantitative trading strategies. Elena is a Trustee of the Oxford Philomusica Orchestra and is a member of the Management Advisory Board at Cranfield. She has been a strong supporter of the British Red Cross and ARK (Absolute Returns for Kids).

In providing these bursaries, she commented: ‘IKOS is delighted to establish a bursary scheme to provide financial support for graduate students undertaking research at Balliol. We feel that we have found kindred spirits who share a common pursuit of the application of the highest academic standards in a supportive atmosphere. We strongly believe in the importance of academic research and look forward to the successful development of this scheme.’
The Rogers family and Balliol College Boat Club

In November last year, the Rogers family attended the naming of the Beeland Rogers boat for the Men’s First VIII, (named for Bee Rogers, second daughter of Jim Rogers (1964)), at the Boat House. At the Headship dinner in Hall that evening, held to celebrate the achievement of the Women’s First VIII in going Head of the River, it was announced by Happy Rogers (Jim’s elder daughter) that a new boat would be given to the Balliol Women’s Boat Club, and would be named the ‘Happy Rogers II’. Jim then handed out gold sovereigns to each member of the Women’s VIII and also to members of the Men’s VIII who had gone Head of the River in 2008 – both ably coxed by Zhan Su (2004), who received two sovereigns!

Peggotty Graham also named the new Boat Club Launch, the ‘Peggotty G’, and presented a brand-new trophy for the Women’s Headship to Beth Mumford (2008), Captain of the victorious Balliol Women’s First VIII, which will go on to be the University trophy. It was designed and made by the silversmith Tony Thomson.
Benefactors to Balliol

The College gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the contributors listed here, whose gifts were received between 1 March 2010 and 28 February 2011. We have respected the wishes of those who have asked for their gifts to remain anonymous; we thank them too for their support. We apologise for any omissions.

**Annual Fund Donors**

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**Classics Fellowships Campaign**

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**Emeritus Professor Emeritus**

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**Other supporters of Balliol**

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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
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Leaving a legacy to Balliol in your Will – an enduring way to support education

Gifts by Will can help the College in many ways – by helping to build our endowment, by endowing Fellowships, establishing scholarships, supporting the Library or helping to 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 Wills. 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 hope that you will consider joining them.

To find out how your bequest can help the College, please contact:

Laura Bianco, Campaign Officer, Balliol College, Oxford, OX1 3BJ

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