

# BIN BROOK

The Magazine of Robinson College, Cambridge

**Robinson Alumni** in the **Media**



LENT 2010



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To book go to [www.robinson.cam.ac.uk/alumni2/viewnews.php](http://www.robinson.cam.ac.uk/alumni2/viewnews.php)

## A note from the editor

Professor Trevor Page's article in the Michaelmas 2009 edition of Bin Brook was well received by everyone and gave a fascinating insight into the early days of the buildings and people that make up the College. It has been noted by Izi Metzstein, however, that the design of the chapel was actually the work of Gillespie, Kidd and Coia, and not John Piper as was reported in the article and he points out that they were designers of churches, rather than restorers. Further information about the Chapel can be found at <http://www.robinson.cam.ac.uk/chapel/>.

Editor: Mr Gregoire Hodder  
Committee: Dr Stephen Trudgill, Dr Ros Love, Dr Judy Weiss, Ms Helen Cornish, Mrs Helen Winter and Mr Gregoire Hodder.

Front cover photograph: Evie Wright (1998) from films4.org. See page 8.

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# In the eye of the media

Nick Clegg (1986), Robinson's first major political party leader, talks to Bin Brook about his time at Robinson and his views on the forthcoming general election.



*What made you decide to go into politics?*

I think like anybody who goes into politics I had a restless feeling that things could be better, if only we did things differently. It sounds trite, but I actually think that is the basic motivation of most who go into politics. It was certainly mine. There was a feeling I had from the moment that I started being interested in politics as a youngster, that I still retain today, that we could do things so much better if only we escaped the tweedle-dee, tweedle-dum pattern of old-style, two-party politics in the country. And I think that applies to everything from how we organise education/higher education; to how we deal with the environment; to how we protect rather than trash civil liberties; to how we clean up the rotten state of Westminster politics. Really that has not changed for me one bit. I have always had a very strong feeling that there are so many great things about this country, but that there are so many mistakes we keep making because we are trapped in this very outdated way of doing politics. There is an assumption that there are only two answers to any question, which I have always held to be complete nonsense. So that was it. There was no great Eureka moment. I do think the fact that I am 43 now and that I was at Cambridge University in the mid to late 80s during the Thatcher revolution affected me in some way. I was like everybody in my generation, quite affected by the Thatcher revolution, and I certainly didn't like the very harsh dog-eat-dog sort of social view that she took, or the ideology that believes there is no such thing as society, which I found very bleak and unforgiving. That, combined with the complete obsession with Europe at the time and the constant insularity there was at that stage in the Conservative government, had quite an effect on me. It didn't propel me into politics immediately as there were several years that elapsed between university and me finally entering politics, but those influences certainly acted as a catalyst to push me in a slightly different direction, into a more liberal, internationalist, socially liberal direction.

*Did your party ideals or your love of politics come first?*

I am a party man, I have to be: I am a leader of a party, but the ideals came first and the party affiliation and membership came later. I think that it's not very healthy when it happens the other way round. Pure party tribalism is quite a limited creed. I remember actually going to the Student Union when I was at Cambridge and thinking about whether or not I wanted to dip my toe into student politics and I remember seeing all these young men and women braying at each other, much like MPs do across the floor of the House of Commons, with all these rigid party certainties and I found it completely off-putting. In many respects I was like any student, I had a number of ideals, but at that age I didn't know exactly what my subtle view was on a whole range of things. I had more questions than answers in my student days so I certainly wasn't attracted, if anything I was repelled, by the idea of shrill tribal student politics.

*So what do you do on a day-to-day basis? What takes up most of your time?*

My life very much revolves around my work, my vocation as a party leader and as a constituency MP in Sheffield on the one hand and my small children on the other. Today, I am now ringing you in transit between a visit to Romsey and a visit to Eastbourne, before then going on to Lewes and then back to London late tonight. I started the day at about 5.30 in the morning changing nappies for my 9-month-old baby boy, as my wife Miriam works as well, and had to leave very early this morning. I got the three kids up, gave them breakfast and walked them to school. Then I got on a train down to

Clapham Junction and on down to Romsey. Most importantly, my life is very much about my family and my small children, I am completely besotted by them. So my time is very much family and then a lot of travelling around the country. I am not a natural Westminster politician. I find that a lot of the archaic Alice in Wonderland ritual in the House of Commons is, quite frankly, ridiculous. I think it is increasingly a clapped-out place in need of reform, so I spend as much time as I can getting out and about in the real Britain in all of its diversity. I hugely enjoy my constituency work and will be up in Sheffield tomorrow doing my usual constituency surgery.

*You talked about the archaic nature of the House of Commons and politics. What place do you think the media has in modernising politics?*

I think the media plays an immensely powerful role. Some of it is bad, the slightly breathless historical focus on personalities and on the passing schools of politics, rather than the big choices facing the country. But a lot of it is really good, it keeps powerful people on their toes. Particularly in an environment when we have such a mutant parliament under this lopsided electoral system, which hands the government of the day almost unqualified power. I think that it is very good that the media is challenging the people in power, so I think the traditional media has good and bad influences. I think what has changed dramatically is that the traditional media, the news print media, is a lot less significant than it used to be and I suspect a lot less important than people in the print media think that they are. Simply because there are so many people now who rely on broadcast, electronic, web-based and other forms of media for their information. The days when people used to sit down patiently with a cup of tea and read a newspaper from beginning to end are over and I think that, by the way, is reflective of a much more diverse and fluid politics too. With the breakdown of traditional media you also get a breakdown of the traditional duopoly of British politics. There used to be a time, in the 1951 general election, when only 2% of people did not vote for one of the old traditional parties, Conservative and Labour, so duopoly was pretty well complete. In the local elections this year that figure had shot up to over 40%, so I think that there is a general fluidity and pluralism in politics and a fluidity and pluralism in media, which is very exciting. But it does mean that the self-obsessed and introverted way that a lot of coverage of Westminster is done, by a very small clique of people in the press who also spend

all their time in Westminster, is increasingly looking like a little bubble world that doesn't really have anything to do with the real world out there.

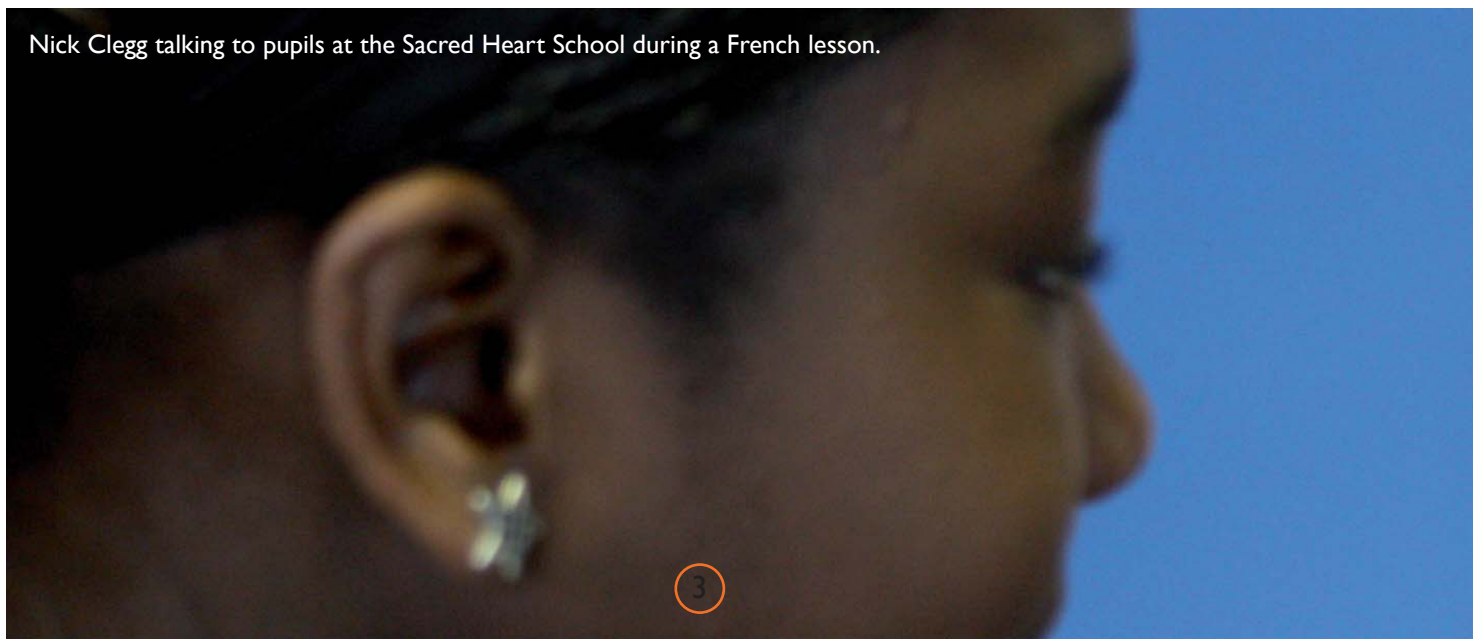
*It does seem that politics needs to be more relevant to the people and that using media and new technologies could make politics tactile and accessible.*

I agree, and that is one of the reasons why I have my Facebook page, I tweet and I have completely revamped my website to make it more interactive. That is also why I am on my way to hold a public meeting in Eastbourne. Every single week I hold a public meeting in different parts of the country that I advertise locally. Anyone can turn up and ask any questions that they like because I think that there is a longing to return to a face-to face politics, rather than this self-obsessed bubble in which a lot of Westminster politics is conducted.

*How did Robinson help you, if at all, into politics and where does your degree in Archaeology and Anthropology come into that?*

I should stress, by the way, that what I said about the student union illustrates how little I was involved in student politics and I only went once and turned tail. I am sure that it has changed a lot, but at that time it was full of right-wing conservatives who seemed to dominate entirely and I found the whole thing unedifying. My studies on the other hand, were inspiring. There was one particular lecturer who was a very radical Marxist anthropologist. He had done a lot of work on the informal economy in West Africa and he had quite a radicalising effect on a lot of students, including myself. Not in an indulgent cardboard cut-out propaganda way, but he was very provocative and keen to challenge peoples' ideas and certainties. I went on to do Social Anthropology, after dropping Archaeology in the first year, and Social Anthropology in its broadest sense is quite a radicalising study. It opens up the possibility that society, or different societies, can be organised in completely different ways. That there is nothing fixed, no patterns to organised societies. Ernest Gellner, who I think died shortly afterwards, was the really great figure in the world of Anthropology and Comparative Sociology at the time and he gave a few lectures that I attended. I remember that he had written and published a book while I was at Cambridge called *Plough, Sword and Book* (1988) that explored evolutionist ideas about how society has evolved from agricultural communities, as the title implies. All

Nick Clegg talking to pupils at the Sacred Heart School during a French lesson.



of that had a thought-provoking effect on me, but it didn't at that stage make me think that I wanted to become an MP. The link was never direct at that stage. I was very interested in what was going on around me and, as I said before, I was quite angry about what I saw Thatcher doing to Britain at the time, so I left Cambridge open to further political influences. I didn't come out of university fully formed in my political views, far from it; it took several years and working elsewhere for that really to happen. I have to say that, in hindsight, I am immensely grateful for it because, whilst I am relatively young as a leader at 43, I actually started active politics really quite late. I didn't do it at university after which I went on to do two postgraduate degrees, I then worked in London, I worked in Hungary, I then worked in the European Union for 10 years before I became an MP. All of those things that happened in the decade/decade-and-a-half after university were incredibly important, I think, in giving me a perspective before I finally took the plunge.

*It seems to be a special role that Cambridge University has in opening people's minds, rather than forcing them down a certain route.*

One of the other things that I am most grateful for about my time at Robinson is that I made some incredibly close friendships that I still retain. In fact tomorrow I am spending the day with a friend I made at Robinson College - I am Godfather to her child and she was a witness at my wedding. That, of course, is the greatest legacy that most people have from going to university.

*Do you have any particularly strong memories of Robinson?*

I remember my room in the first year. I was in J or K staircase. The one opposite the Porters' Lodge as you come up the ramp. I was in the room which, I think you can still see that it has got a little bit that sticks out at the top on its own. It hasn't got a walkway in front of it like many of the other rooms and it was one of the smaller rooms, but I liked it a lot. I always felt, and I still feel, that going into Robinson gives the sensation of going into a very large ocean liner. It feels like an enclosed physical space, but what I liked about it a lot was that it had none of the stuffiness of the established colleges. There was a very human, unpretentious attitude about it and I very quickly made some very close friends. I actually moved out of College for my last two years and shared a house in the second year on Mill Road and then in the third year I shared a beautiful house not too far from Magdalene. So I actually only lived in College for a year, and

it wasn't that I was immersed in College activities, but I had a very strong circle of friends from College, some of whom I have retained. I played in the College tennis team, which I enjoyed hugely and I did a lot of acting. A lot of am dram stuff, some of it in the College, a lot of it outside. I remember being in a play directed by Sam Mendez. Little did I know that he was going to become a great phenomenon later. So I had a very happy time and I was lucky in a sense that I was able to balance time inside the College with time outside the College.

My first impression of Cambridge that I remember was the first evening I arrived in September and biking down Burrell's Walk and it was very warm, there were lots of mosquitoes about, but I could not believe it and my breath was literally taken away by how beautiful it was and what an amazing freedom it felt just to be able to bicycle in 2 minutes flat from my room into one of the most beautiful university towns in the world. It really did take my breath away.

*I still get that sometimes walking down Burrell's Walk.*

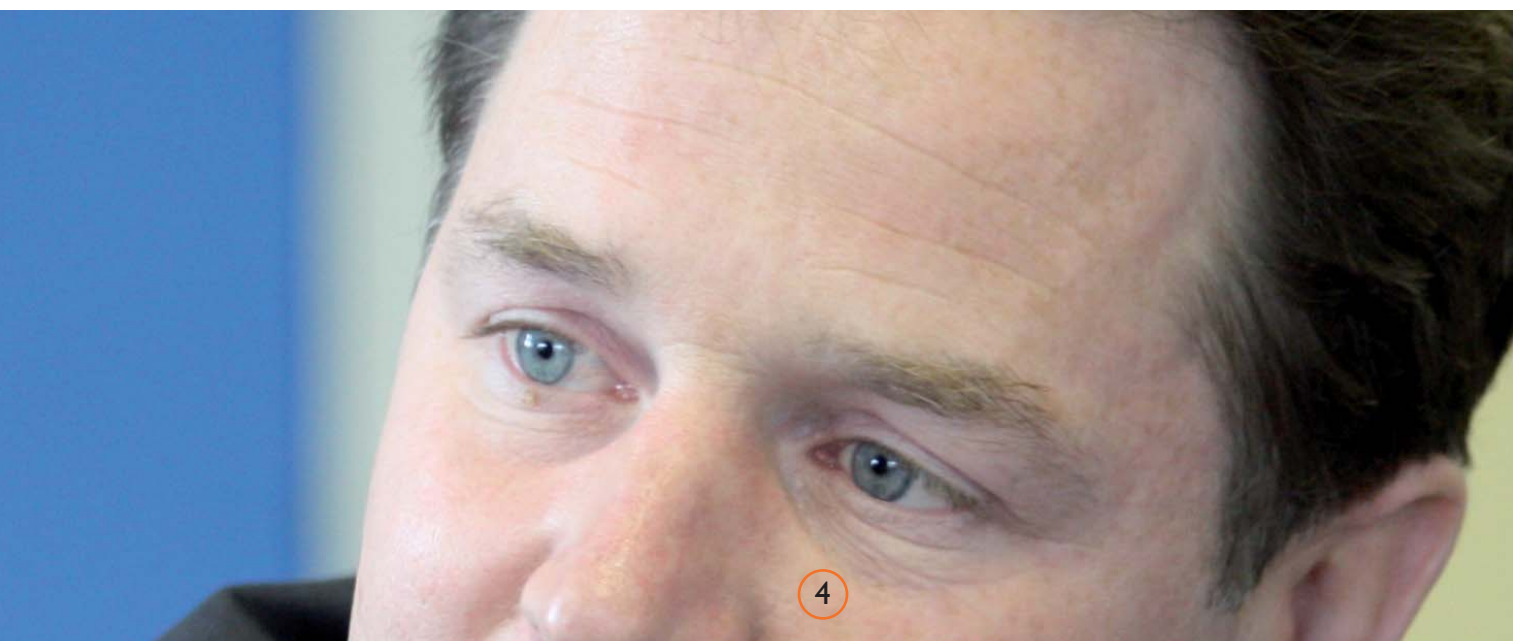
It is a really special thing. I remember ringing my folks at home and saying that I couldn't believe that I had landed there.

*Do you have any memories of the staff here at the time?*

I never really got the Boyne treatment while I was there, but he was certainly a formidable bulldog figure and we were all slightly intimidated by him, but I think I kept a sensible distance from him!

*What advice would you give anyone who was thinking about going into politics?*

I think that is very important to do it because of strong reasons, principles and the key values, rather than seeing it as a career. It is much more of a vocation. It's a rough and tough environment, so you have got to have to be able to dig deep into the reasons and motivations that you have to see you through the thick and the thin. After a certain level in politics you get attacked a lot by opponents and the press can be very unforgiving, so I think it is very important not to be a careerist who just joins parties because they think it would be a nice, interesting 9-to-5 job, as you will invariably fall by the wayside. You have to dedicate much more of your life to it than that and you have to make sacrifices





that are only justifiable if you are really driven by a purpose.

*Is that not true in many professions where you have to work hard?*

Yes, exactly, I mean that the last thing I want to do is to put people off politics: I think one of the great problems is that people look at the preposterous spectacle of Westminster politics and think these people are on a different planet, that they are a different species and nothing to do with me. I am very keen on encouraging people, if they are very keen and want to make a difference, to throw their hat in the ring, but I think it is important to do it for strong and clear motives, rather than on a speculative basis, because I think that it can be quite disappointing for people. There are also different ways of getting involved in politics, you can be involved in a local party, which is immensely important; as an activist; as someone who delivers party material; you can stand as a councillor; or you can stand as an MEP. There are different levels and I guess I am talking more about people who want to take serious steps to take it on at a national level.

*You have talked about the unqualified power of Westminster and its rotten politics, what do you think it will take to change the future of politics and the government of the future?*

I think that it requires upsetting the apple cart. We have this very cosy stitch up of the two old parties, Labour and the Conservatives, who basically are increasingly scrabbling around in the middle ground of politics while people are starting to switch off altogether. We need to challenge that cosy duopoly directly and I think that is only possible by electing the Liberal Democrats in such large numbers that we can turn British politics upside-down and inside-out. Politics is now in a profound state of crisis, in the last two elections more people did not vote than voted for the first time in modern British political history. That should set off serious alarm bells to anyone who cares about the quality of our democracy, but nothing is going to change as long as the two old vested interests keep playing “pass-the-parcel” from one

election to the next.

*It does seem to be constantly the same argument batted about and never really upheld anyway.*

And they keep making the same mistakes. I think that is why the Liberal Democrats were right to take a distinctive position on the Iraq war, and the MP expenses scandal where we are pushing for far greater reform than the others. We have always been very distinctive on civil liberties and the environment because I think people are crying out for something that is distinct and different, rather than the same old mush.

*Coming up to the next elections what do you think will be the most important policy or idea for you to focus on?*

I think that the central value will be fairness. Britain is still a woefully unfair society where you have an astonishing inequality of opportunity and those inequalities haven't narrowed at all under Labour. So, for instance, we will constantly be banging on about fairer taxes. Cutting taxes for the vast majority of tax payers by raising the income tax threshold to £10,000 so no one pays income tax on the first £10,000 that they earn, paid for by asking the people at the top to pay a bit more. I think those kind of simple ideas in the wake of this recession is what we need to come out as a fairer and socially mobile society. I think it has real resonance for the moment and very much relates to where Labour has failed, where the Conservatives can't be trusted and where I think we very much are pushing that progressive agenda.

*If you won by a landslide victory and were made Prime Minister what would be the first thing you would do?*

I think the first thing that I would do would give everybody the power to sack their MP if their MP had been found to be doing anything wrong. I think you need to do something quick and urgent, so that you give the people the sense that they are in charge and not these rotten politicians in Westminster.

# Telesuccess

The 2009 telephone campaign raised a record amount to support College activities for resident members of College, thanks to the generosity of our members around the world and their families – thank you to everyone who took the time to speak to one of the student callers. The total committed to date is just under £151,000 and will allow the College to support students in their academic work and pastorally. Gifts will help us to maintain a suitable living and working environment for all resident members, to purchase books for the library and to support students who find themselves in financial need through no fault of their own, allowing them to focus their efforts on their academic work and to gain the maximum benefit from all that a Robinson and a Cambridge education and research base has to offer. This would be impossible without the support of you, our donors – thank you!

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# Conserving media

ALUMNA EVIEWRIGHT TALKS ABOUT THE WORK THAT SHE AND NICK LYON ENJOY (EVIE - FRONT COVER, NICK - BELOW, BOTH ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY, 1998). IN CAPTURING THE PLIGHT AND BEAUTY OF BOTH ANIMALS AND HUMANS ON FILM AND CAMERA, THEY HELP GIVE THE MESSAGE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVATION ON A GLOBAL LEVEL.

Since 2005, Nick and I have been producing a variety of film and multimedia projects as [www.films4.org](http://www.films4.org), covering both natural history and human interest stories.

A lot of our work to date has been focused in South East Asia, specifically on the effects of rapid forest destruction in Indonesia for the purpose of palm oil expansion. Palm oil has been widely used in supermarket products for years – from lipstick to breakfast cereals – but increasing demands for biofuels are now causing production to skyrocket.

In 2007, in partnership with an Indonesian production house - Gekko Studio - Nick and I embarked on making a series of Indonesian-language films exploring the impact of palm oil expansion on two local communities – one in Sumatra, the other in Kalimantan. Indigenous people in particular have seen little benefit from the rapid expansion of large-scale agro-industry. Customary land rights get subsumed in the name of national development, under the jurisdiction of national laws stating that

any land legally designated as “forested land” is the property of the state.

Working with Gekko Studio we homed in on the idea of using film as a means to promote dialogue and understanding between local communities and palm oil company executives. Our aim was to try to create a conversation, using film, between groups of people who would not normally meet due to geographic or cultural distance.

In Sumatra we worked with a community of Orang Rimba living in Jambi Province. Traditionally the Orang Rimba are nomadic hunter-gatherers, occasionally raising some money by selling non-timber forest products such as honey, resin, rattan and rubber. Palm oil has been expanding into Jambi since the mid-1980s, and with companies and government refusing to recognise their claims on the land, the Rimba have found themselves increasingly marginalised. Their rivers are polluted, burial grounds have been built on, important fruit trees and



Evie demonstrates equipment to a local girl.



other trees of cultural significance have been felled – and with animal numbers in steep decline it has become harder and harder for the Rimba to find enough food.

For the second film we travelled to a remote village on the banks of Lake Sembuluh in Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo). The villagers of Sembuluh are not as culturally isolated as the Orang Rimba – they are Muslim, and literacy figures are high – but this area is very remote, and at the forefront of palm oil expansion. Reaching Sembuluh village takes up to ten hours of driving, mostly on un-surfaced roads, and mostly through previously forested land that has been razed to the ground to build plantations (picture - middle right). The inaccessibility of this part of Borneo means there's often a vast difference between the policies agreed upon by company executives and what's actually happening on the ground.

In both Sumatra and Kalimantan we asked people from the communities to testify on camera – directly to the companies involved – and to voice their concerns and worries for the future. We then screened these testimonies to representatives from the relevant companies, and they in turn were asked to respond on camera.

The resulting films – *Orang Rimba: Happiness Lies in the Forest* and *Sembuluh Voices: Stories from the Palm Oil Lake* - can be viewed on the Films4Forests project's dedicated website, along with masses of accompanying background information and longer interviews with the Orang Rimba: [www.films4.org/forests](http://www.films4.org/forests).

Working with the Orang Rimba and the Sembuluh villagers was both inspiring and felt like a privilege, but the Films4Forests project was not without its challenges.



Gaining funding was a gargantuan task in itself. We were fortunate to receive some seed funding from a small charitable trust, and soon after had several major NGOs, including Oxfam and Greenpeace, on board. Other funders included the Dutch Lottery and Lush Cosmetics. Juggling the different interests of so many different sponsors was tricky at times, but having lots of different organisations involved has helped ensure that the films continue to have an impact and are still finding new audiences.

In November 2007, Oxfam screened the *Orang Rimba* film to an audience of 500 of the most influential players in the international palm oil trade, coming from 28 countries – including Government ministers, heads of industry, finance, and retail – at the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in Kuala Lumpur. The film caused quite a furore, providing a reality check for investors who believe that membership of RSPO is enough to ensure sustainable palm oil and/or good press. The screening was also essential in providing the Orang Rimba – who cannot read or write but have a strong tradition of oral testimony – a voice within this forum.

In late 2008, Nick and I made a return visit to the Orang Rimba, this time accompanied by a team from Lush. The Rimba and Lush spent a couple of days sharing their knowledge of sustainable sourcing, and discussing the potential outcomes of the credit crunch. Lush have since run fundraising campaigns across their stores internationally to help improve access to healthcare and education for the Orang Rimba in Jambi Province. As a result of the success of the project, we were awarded Conservation Filmmaker of the Year by Filmmakers for Conservation, and *films4.org* won the best new media award at the Wildlife Asia Film Festival.

For most of 2008 Nick and I found ourselves back in Kalimantan, this time with a much bigger camera and a dedicated cameraman, directing and producing a *Natural World* and a 6-part series for the BBC. In 2005 we'd met an inspiring young Frenchman who goes by the name of Chanee (meaning gibbon in Thai), who'd moved to Borneo when he was 18 years old to open a gibbon sanctuary and radio station in the town of Palangkaraya. It was fairly apparent to us at the time that his charisma and enthusiasm, combined with his obvious dedication to what he was doing, would make good TV. *Radio Gibbon* – a one-hour programme for *Natural World* – focused primarily on Chanee's gibbon sanctuary, and was screened on BBC2 last December. The six part series – *Good Morning Kalimantan* – focuses on Chanee's unique radio station and sees Chanee getting to grips with some of Borneo's most iconic species, including sun bears, proboscis monkeys, hornbills, and orangutans. *Good Morning Kalimantan* is due to air later this Spring and is narrated by Robinson alumnus Robert Webb (1992). Updates @ <http://bit.ly/radiogibbon>.





# Media People

Ben Cole (Natural Sciences - Biological, 2005) talks about his passion in life and his road to becoming a professional photographer

## *How I got into photography*

I got into photography in my second year in Robinson. My Mum and Dad bought me a Canon 350d digital slr for my birthday and I started out just taking photos of me and my mates messing around out in town and around College. Soon after that I discovered photoshop and began editing a lot of my images, staying up well into the early hours of the morning compiling albums that I would then upload on Facebook. People started telling me how much they liked them, and bolstered by their kind words I did more and more of it, until I became even more brilliant. I had a good friend, Debbie 'Napoleon Dynamite' Skywalker, from Newnham who was taking lots of photos for Varsity newspaper, and we would often go on little photography journeys out into fields and take each other's portraits. Then one day in exam term in my last year we were talking and realised we had no real ideas as to what we might do with our lives once we graduated (it wasn't that Robinson College hadn't given me lots of options or avenues, rather I hadn't given it enough thought!) and so we decided there and then to become professional freelance photographers, and so that's exactly what we did.

## *How we did it*

We began by taking lots of pictures of our friends, who we thought might one day become famous. We guessed quite accurately, and we have so far worked with a lot of familiar faces from Cambridge, such as Joe Thomas who's now acting in *The Inbetweeners*, Jonny Sweet who's touring with his own one-man comedy show, and Ed Hastings who's touring the world with his singing voice. We also took Ruth Jones' headshots for Spotlight, and with all this material we set up our own website - [www.rogue-photography.com](http://www.rogue-photography.com). We started taking a lot of photos at weddings as well, and have so far covered 12, with another 10 booked for later this year.

## *What we do now*

We run the 'Rogue Photography' wedding and portraiture photography company, and have recently set up alongside that, a fine-art photography company, 'Cole and Scanlan' ([www.coleandscanlan.com](http://www.coleandscanlan.com)). We learnt early on that it's impossible to marry the two, since people who like our fine art portfolio get put off by happy wedding shots, and couples wanting to book us for their weddings get a bit weirded-out by nakedness in our fine art section.

## *Day to day*

Life as a freelance photographer is extremely varied. In different quantities, we juggle going on shoots, editing in the office, setting up meetings with potential clients to show them our portfolio, networking, fundraising, visiting galleries, running stalls at wedding shows, harrasing famous people with interesting faces to take their portraits, buying props for future shoots, updating our website, preparing to write a blog, and counting our money to see if we can buy bigger, or smaller but better, cameras (a Leica M9 please).



### Current projects

We have just finished editing a series of photographs of underwater scenes that we took out in Spain last year. One of them has been chosen to be included in the 'A Positive View' exhibition in Somerset House, running from 10th March until 6th April and also includes contributions from the likes of Mario Testino, Rankin and Henri Cartier-Bresson. You can check it out at [www.apositiveview.com](http://www.apositiveview.com).

As part of our ongoing work with Crisis (one of the UK's biggest homeless charities) we have also been commissioned to undergo a personal project photographing homeless people in their favourite places in London. It will be showing in Proud Galleries in Camden later this year and we are also in talks with Thames and Hudson to have it published and sold to the masses!

### The future

We have a big fan in a guy called Andy Page at Crisis, who is the curator for all the art in the Positive View exhibition. He seems to like most of the work we throw his way, and one series so much so that he's told us to go away and tweak it a little so he can send it Vogue's way. We don't think we're destined for fashion photography stardom, but we're trying our hand at anything we can, so this could turn into a fun little project. It's based on the Corpus collection we had exhibited in St John's Wood last year, for anyone that went!

### Who inspires me?

David LaChapelle and 'Merkley???' are two artists who I find particularly inspiring. It's all vibrant colours, lots of props, nice and shiny and retouched etc. Ryan McGinley is another photographer who I admire a lot; and maybe Terry Richardson, though there's a bit too much flesh sometimes.

### How Robinson affected me creatively

I have always loved taking pictures of people, and being around so many of them at College allowed me a pool of subjects who were always willing to have my lens in their faces.

### You!

You can get involved in Rogue and/or Cole and Scanlan since we are ALWAYS looking for models in our shoots, and should you need your headshots or pets or weddings photographed, we can do just that!

Much love,  
B.C.

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# The Mighty Maintenance

**Bin Brook talks to Bill McKim (Facilities Manager) and Gary Hollis (Carpenter and Joiner) about the work that happens behind the scenes to keep the College in working order.**

Bill - The maintenance team consists of a group of multi-skilled trade professionals. The range of skills within the team is extensive and wide-ranging, with the current team consisting of 2 carpenters, 2 plumbers, 2 decorators, 1 electrician, a part-time general builder, a Deputy Works Manager and the Facilities Manager.

The Garden Ramp (construction pictured above) to the Maria Björnson Theatre started as a design put together by myself to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, but very much brought to life by the skills and efforts of the entire team. The project took around 3 - 4 weeks to complete, but was entirely done in-house by the team. This was my first project in charge, but I quickly understood the skills and approach of a very proactive team of tradesmen.

Gary - We get on well and one of the best parts about it is that everybody mucks in. Nobody says 'I am not doing that because it is not my job'. If there is something to be done and you need a hand, then you can just ask anybody and they help out. They are a lovely bunch of lads really.

Bill - There are not a lot of projects that we will not have a go at. They range from day-to-day tasks such as, repairs to leaking taps, fixing the odd lock and replacing faulty light bulbs, through to major projects such as the recent renovation works to Flat 2 Thorneycreek House. The project saved the College a significant amount of money and it is my and many other people's opinion, including the students using the facilities, that the work was completed to a much higher standard than other externally-contracted projects.

Another example of the effectiveness of the team can be seen with the sundial, which was donated by the Consul General Dr Janusz Kochanowski of the then Republic of Poland, that had fallen into a state of disrepair. Attempts to restore it by external contractors had failed, yet Alan Giddens (pictured above right) stepped up to the mark and, with the support of the decorators

and the team, has restored the Sundial to its former glory. The Sundial is now back in the rose garden of Thorneycreek House.

The team is responsible for keeping the College fabric and responding to maintenance requests on the same day as the request is made, wherever possible. We pride ourselves on the way in which we deal with work requests. In September 2009, the team responded to 249 requests for maintenance work, with almost all being completed within 24 hours of the request being made. We also tackle environmental issues by changing our light bulbs to low energy bulbs, monitoring water consumption and making appropriate changes wherever possible.

We recently undertook a survey of the months November, December and January. Of 456 urgent and priority requests for repairs, 98% were completed on the same day: a statistic that I am very proud of.

Gary - A lot of the work that we do is never really seen. For the moment, we have a programme of replacing all the fire escape doors at the top of the staircases, as they have all rotted because they get a lot of weather on them. We are probably about two-thirds through doing that, but nobody ever sees you doing it and nobody would be able to tell that you have been up there doing anything. You get up there while the students are out and it's probably a day's work to take the door off, put a new one on and all the metal work on it and everything and then you clear up and get out. I think it's the same for all the blokes. We get in and do our work and probably no-one really realises what we are doing.

Bill - The atmosphere within the team is always buoyant and humorous, with each member being prepared to help and support each other, as well as working with other teams in the College such as the Gardeners and those in IT and Housekeeping. Such support speaks volumes of all the departments and the College in general. Every strong building must have a strong foundation and I firmly believe that the College has this in abundance.

# OBITUARIES

## Stephen Bacon: 07 April 1962 – 26 September 2009

Robinson Alumnus Stephen Bacon died at the tragically young age of 47, having spent many years battling against the deleterious effects of a rare form of heart and muscular disease. Stephen's medical condition was highly unusual, and was shared by his mother and maternal aunt, who both died prematurely. For nearly eight years, he was treated at the leading medical centres in the world; he was fitted with both a pacemaker and an implantable defibrillator. Stephen became an extremely knowledgeable patient who was invited to speak at some of the leading medical meetings as a patient advocate. He spent much of the past two years living in Cleveland, Ohio, where he had hoped to obtain a heart transplant.

Born and raised in London, Stephen came to Robinson College in 1981 to read Engineering. As an undergraduate, however, Stephen was better known for his fun-loving personality than his interest in academia. His real talent emerged after he graduated and he started his own business, NetConnect, one of the first computer network security companies. He maintained an impressive, successful professional life until only a few years ago, when his health problems forced him to stop working.

I met Stephen several years ago through a mutual friend, Dr. Ariella Rosengard. His cheerful nature and the Robinson connection meant that we quickly became friends. Though Stephen was travelling back and forth between England and America hoping for a heart transplant, we managed to come to High Table together several times over the past few years. He was always pleased to return to Robinson, as he had fond memories of his time here.

Stephen had an extraordinary gift of empathy with people. One example stands out particularly: Ariella Rosengard's father, Dr. Michel Mirowski, invented the automatic implantable defibrillator. After Stephen and Ariella met, she relayed to him the story of the invention and her father's perseverance and determination make his novel idea a reality. From that point on, every time Stephen's defibrillator saved his life – and it was often – he would send Ariella an email that said: "Your father saved my life again." Even when his health was failing, he took the time to show his appreciation to his friend, because he knew how much it meant to her that her father's life work helped save people's lives.

Stephen's caring attitude was also expressed through his generosity to Robinson students. Stephen made annual donations to the Robinson College Bursary fund, whose purpose is to alleviate student hardship. (This is a very important fund since it is unrestricted in scope: many University funds are specific to Home/EU or Overseas students, so some students fail to qualify for help.) His other main contribution was for a Bacon Travel grant, which was normally awarded twice a year. Stephen wanted these



grants awarded for "academic enterprise". He was keen that the funds should not be just for travel to some exotic location, but rather travel allied to some serious work. One example is a travel and dissertation research project in Nepal coupled with teaching English in the local schools.

Stephen also had a strong Jewish identity. In Cambridge, he contributed greatly to the life of Beth Shalom Reform Synagogue, where many mourn him. On moving to Cleveland, he got involved with the Park Synagogue, where he made many good friends.\* When he decided to leave Ohio and return to Cambridge, they got together and published a book (<http://www.mypublisher.com>) about Stephen with records of their memories, photographs, and even recipes they had cooked together. His delight at their expression of friendship was to be one of his final moments of happiness, and remains a testimony of how valued he was by his friends and acquaintances.

Stephen's heart may have failed him, but his memory lives on in the hearts of many others.

Stephen is survived by his father David, his stepmother Leslie and his son Max.

\*An article that the Cleveland Jewish News published about him can be found on their website: <http://www.clevelandjewishnews.com>

Tribute by Sandra Smith, Fellow

## Monty Lentile: 27 November 1934 - 16 November 2009

We were very sorry to hear that Monty Lentile, whom many Members will remember as a part-time Porter in the Lodge between 1995 and 2000, recently passed away at the age of 74.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ALUMNI  
FELLOWS  
AND STAFF



Claire Palmer (Robinson College Chef) and Tom Jeffery (Emmanuel College Chef) were married on 7 August 2009 at Emmanuel College Chapel, followed by a reception at Robinson.

Josh and Thea Sherer (née Lee), both 1998, are delighted to announce the birth of their son, Barnaby Franklin, on 31 December 2009.

James Radcliffe (1995) and Katie Owen were married on 13 September 2008 in Cherington, Warwickshire.



Rebecca Bowtell (2002) married Tim White (of Barts and the London Medical School) in Poplar, London on 4 September, in a rare window of sun.

Rebecca Williams (Law Fellow 2001-2005) and John Armour (Law Fellow, Trinity Hall 2002-2007) are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter, Ellanorah Grace Armour, on 14 September 2009.



Paul Eden (1992) and Freddie Eden (née Mulliner 1992) had a baby boy, Thomas Matthew, on 14 June 2009, seen here with his brother, Daniel.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

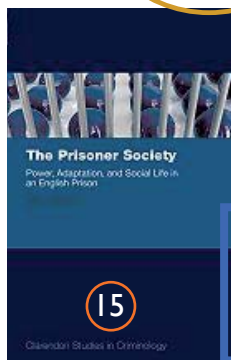
### ALUMNI FELLOWS AND STAFF



On 31 August 2008, Olivia Gordon (1997) married Dr. Philip Clark, a musician and writer, at Somerville College, Oxford. Two of their bridesmaids were Robinson alumni Rosalind Brown (1997) and Chloe Houston-Mandy (1997), at whose wedding in July 2008 Olivia and Rosalind were bridesmaids. Olivia and Phil were also joined on the day by other Robinson friends, Zoe Green, Alisa Pomeroy, Will Mandy (all 1996) and Catrina Davies (1997).



John Williams, Professor of Engineering Tribology, was awarded the prestigious Donald Julius Groen Prize by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (picture left).



Ben Crewe (1993) recently published his book *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison* - picture left (Clarendon Studies in Criminology).