UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
800 YEARS
1209–2009

Cambridge Alumni Magazine
Issue 58 Michaelmas 2009

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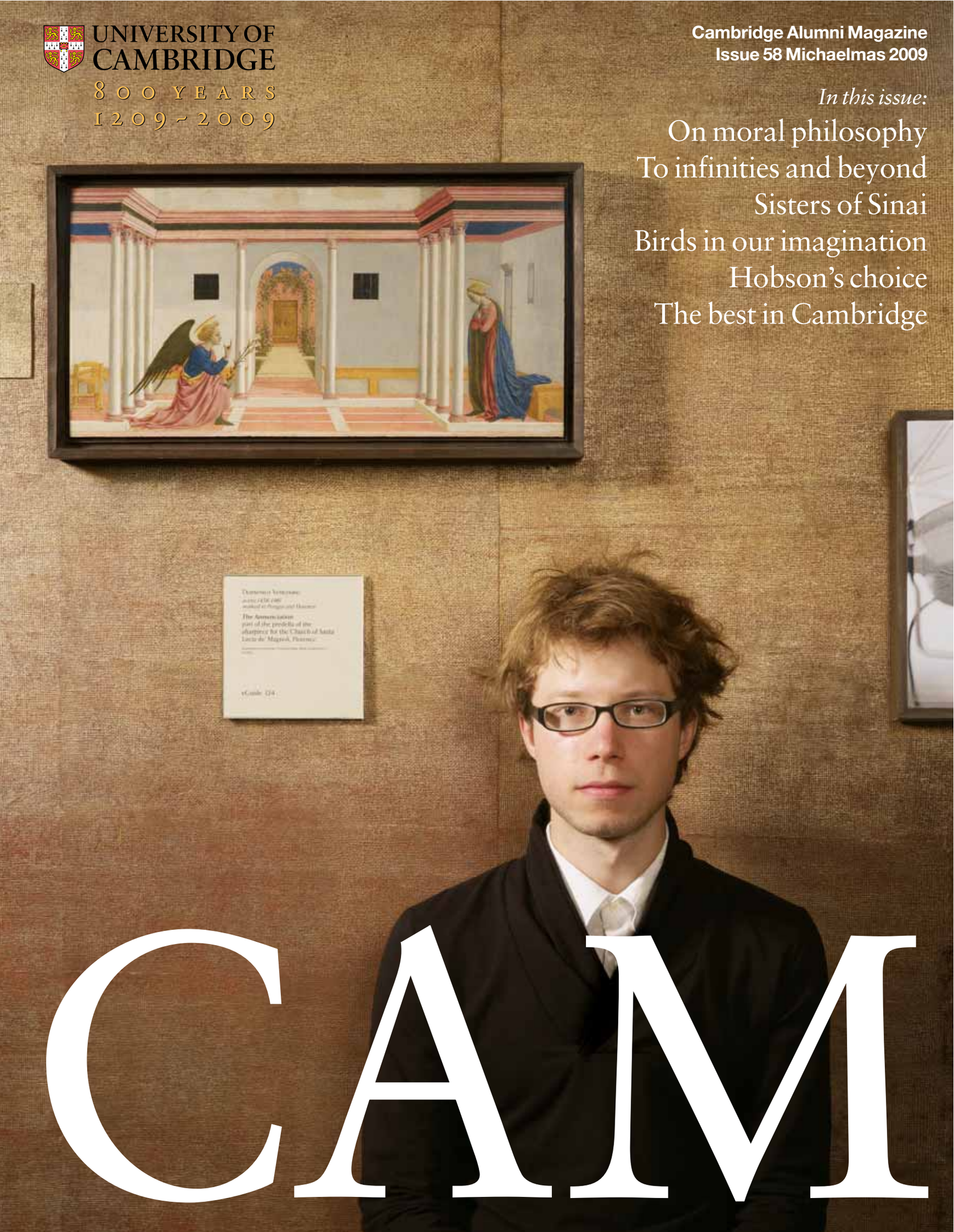

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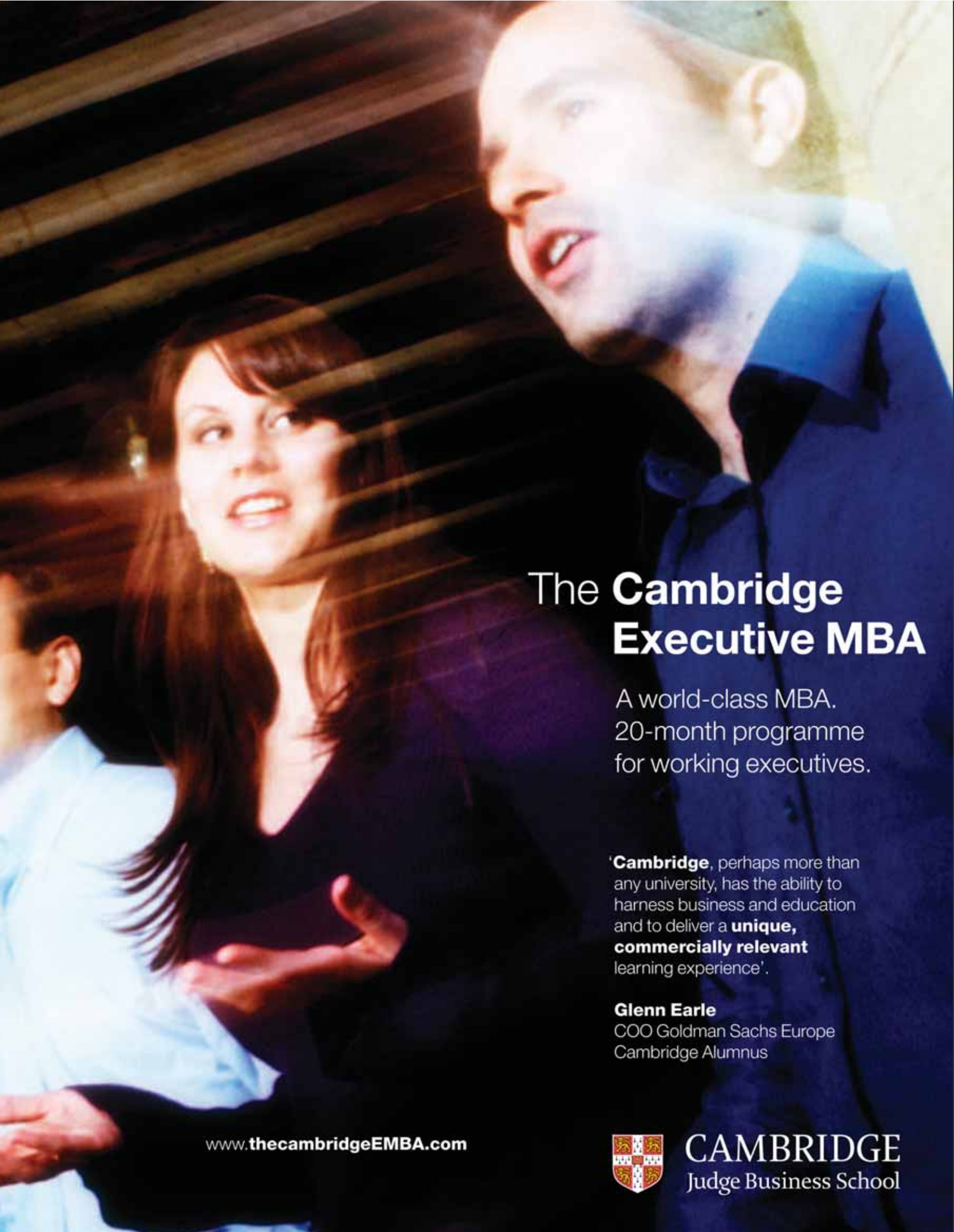
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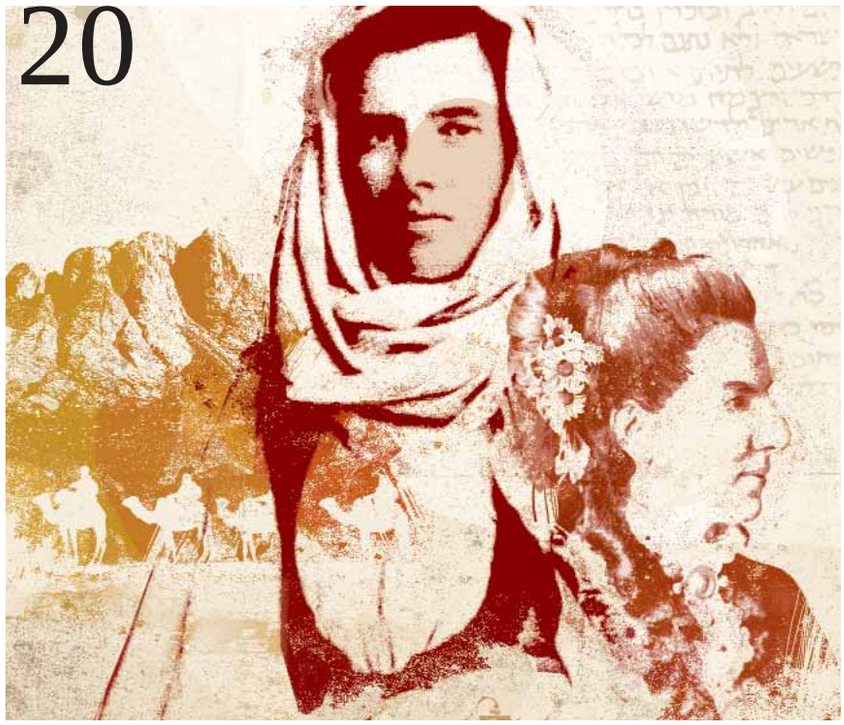

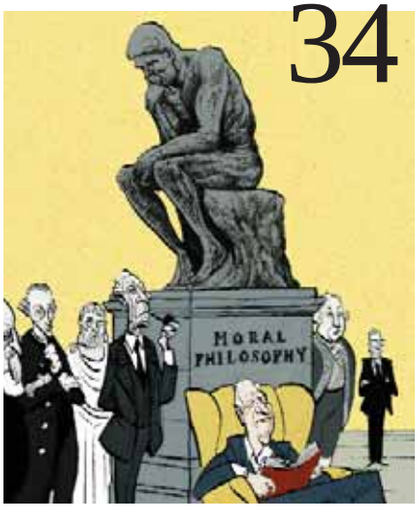

Regulars

Features

CAM is published three times a year. The opinions expressed in its columns are those of the writers concerned and not necessarily those of the University of Cambridge.

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Cover photograph:
Robert Stagg and Veneziano's Annunciation, at the Fitzwilliam Museum. Photographed by Charlie Troman.

Autumnal industry

Welcome to the Michaelmas issue. The autumn term is always a special time in Cambridge: the ancient yellow stone is washed gold in the late October sun, the streets bustle with students and after the long summer vac and the departure of most of the tourists, the town has an air of getting down to the serious business of reading, writing and talking.

At CAM, the serious talk has been about whether Professor Simon Blackburn is right about moral philosophy (page 34), whether Veneziano's Annunciation can really be the best painting in Cambridge (page 13) – and CAM letters.

It's a tricky decision. We received a huge postbag for CAM 57, with writers ranging across subjects as varied as the miners' strike, the Parker's Piece lamp-post, and just what happened to those Andy Capp cut-outs. We also received many letters praising the new design, and a few urging change: to all those who took the time to send an email or write a letter, thank you.

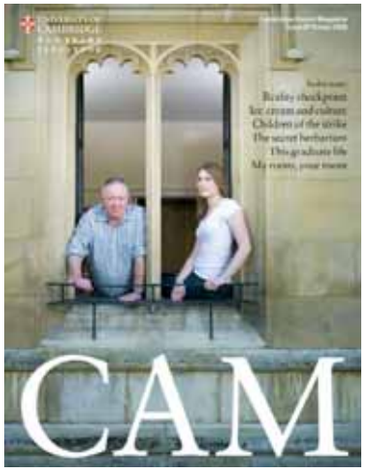
Opposite is a small selection of the letters we received; to resolve the conundrum, we have published a far larger number online at www.alumni.cam.ac.uk. We hope you will follow the lively debate.

As we approach the end of the University's 800th year, we'd like to draw your attention to the Winter Finale, which will take place on 16-18 January 2010.

Of course, by then, the bitter Russian winds will have reached Cambridge; we hope you'll join us, wrapped up against the cold, to mark the start of the University's 801st year.

Mira Katbamna
(Caius 1995)

Your letters



'The glow of the lantern was enough to illuminate the legend: "You are now entering Narnia".'

Children of the strike

In the piece on the 1984 miners' strike (CAM 57) Alexander Deane, former chief of staff to David Cameron, was quoted as saying: "Sometimes, despite all the shades of grey that make up political life, there are clear rights and wrongs, and when that's the case one has to fight for the right. That was the case with the miners and that is what Thatcher did. We owe her a great debt."

By 'the right' does Mr Deane mean the right of the political spectrum or what is correct? If it is the latter then I amazed by his arrogance.

Neil Laurenson
(Homerton 2000)

Ordinary folk?

I was rather put off by the anti-elitist flavour of some of the things said in CAM 57. Cambridge is about striving. It would be a negation of this to elevate the ordinary, and by implication, denigrate the unusual or successful. The fact that I am ordinary does not mean that I think I am interesting. But I am interested in the out of the ordinary a lot more than in the ordinary.

Michael Forrest
(Trinity 1951)

Your room – and mine, too

I enjoyed your piece about G2, New Court, Corpus (CAM 57) – that was my room in 1961. Like Michael Bywater, I also changed courses, from engineering to English. The shift from Bernoulli's equation to Pope and Henry James opened a new world, and one that I have been grateful for ever since.

In winter, the room was bitter; the bedroom, which looked onto Trumpington Street, used to freeze on the inside of the window.

But that last summer was special. I remember the freshness of the New Court sun; and madrigals, and bumps, and friendships that we promised to keep – and in several cases we have.

Richard Larcombe
(Corpus 1959)

I was amused by Michael Bywater's comments regarding the cartoon cut-outs (Andy Capp et al) which graced the Corpus May Ball in 1974, produced by Francis Maude. Sad person that I am (but I was May Ball president that year so have half an excuse), I still have one surviving example, residing on the staircase at home.

Brian Phillipson
(Corpus 1971)

Five at Homerton

There must have been something in the air at Homerton in the 1950s! When we five friends read the article "History of a Friendship" in the Easter Cam

We are always delighted to receive your letters and emails. Email CAM at alumni@foundation.cam.ac.uk or write to us at CAM, Cambridge Alumni Relations Office, 1 Quayside, Bridge Street, Cambridge, CB5 8AB. Please mark your letter 'For Publication'. Letters may be edited for length.

magazine, we all said, "That is exactly us too."The friendships we made when we were 20 are so precious that we recommend to everyone the effort to it takes to keep in touch by email, Facebook or old-fashioned letters.
Kath Abrahams, nee Gray; Peggy Baker nee Hollingworth; Wendy Cotton nee Brazier; Jean Packer nee Ellis; Rachel Rowlands nee Edwards
(Homerton 1951)

A Narnian checkpoint

Edward Hollis' article on Reality Checkpoint reminds me of another graffitoed witticism, certainly current in my era, 1977-80, on that solitary lamp-post. On the return journey from the serried terraces of the Kite towards the University, the glow of the lantern was just enough to illuminate the legend: 'You are now entering Narnia'.
Stephen Cooper
(Trinity 1977)

A new design for CAM

The unsolicited arrival of CAM on my doormat has in the past aroused only mild interest. But the Easter issue was a joy. Special gems were Reality Checkpoint, Mind Games and Children of the Strike; not to put down the remainder of the magazine into which these three articles led me.
Barbara Herzmark
(Newnham 1946)

A fairer sex

At last you have produced an edition of CAM which has a fair representation of women in its pages. So often the journal seems to feature lots of men – with the occasional token woman. But this time it seemed as though there was some sort of attempt at equality of representation. It made the journal much more interesting and readable.
Jan Pahl
(New Hall 1956)

Don's Diary

Professor David Spiegelhalter is Winton Professor of the Public Understanding of Risk in the Department of Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Statistics, Centre for Mathematical Sciences.

I start a typical day by pedalling to work along the riverbank, muttering to myself in a distracted way – but conscious enough to appreciate the good fortune of living and working in Cambridge. My work is unusual: it's more outreach than traditional academic research, although I try and keep a bit of that going too. But mainly I work with others to try and improve the way that risk and uncertainty are handled by society and individuals, particularly by using ideas from probability theory.

Talking to sixth-formers brought to Cambridge from comprehensives by the excellent Widening Participation team seems an ideal way to do just this. I am supposed to enthuse the kids with the mathematics of uncertainty, so I talk about gambling, teenage pregnancy, illegal drugs, knife crime, and how using probability can help us understand the magnitude and the underlying structure of the risks. I ask how many would like to know how long they are going to live, and as usual around 1 in 20 put their hand up. I have to admit that I can't tell them, but show an animation of their chances of survival that vividly illustrates the hazards their age-group will face in the next five years. The cool lads sit with their legs stretched out but ask questions and even laugh at the jokes.

This term I've been lecturing for Part III Mathematics in the Centre for Mathematical Sciences. I enjoy the teaching because I feel the topic, Applied Bayesian Statistics, is so important, and I try to get over the underlying ideas of using probability theory to represent your own uncertainty about any event or fact, whether it's the result of a coin-flip, who will be the next Prime Minister, or who committed a crime. The Cambridge students are so good that it becomes a serious challenge to impress them with something interesting, subtle and elegant. I don't always succeed.

I am new to scientific journalism but have found that there is a demand for analysis of topical stories that involve risk and uncertainty, whether it's swine flu or weather forecasting. There's been a real step forward in the willingness of newspapers and radio to take apart and discuss statistics and numbers instead of treating them as if they were some mystical entity that had to be either unquestioningly believed or dismissed out of hand. A lot of this may be due to bloggers, both unofficial and 'official' (eg BBC journalists) but, in spite of the visual possibilities of graphics, television still can't seem to deal with serious analysis of statistics and risks. But writing an article for a national newspaper takes ages.

I've also been spending time with two skilled animators, Mike Pearson and Ian Short, who produce wonderful animations to illustrate the size of various risks and how people can be manipulated by changing the presentation – we're part of a growing global community that works on visualising data to tell stories. We've got a website, www.understandinguncertainty.org, and we're working with a number of organisations who want to put use our animations to explain the possible consequences of, for example, breast cancer treatment or radiation exposure.

Our team spends ages picking what images we want to present, how they interact with the data, and how we want them to move in order to grab attention and, hopefully, improve understanding. We've just completed an animation of all the major league football results in Europe over the last 15 years, showing how much of the spread of points in the league table is due to chance (now down to around 20% in the English Premier League, a level typically found in Greece and Turkey).

My MPhil student, Yin-Lam Ng, did a dissertation that used a statistical model to predict Premier League results and we were featured on BBC Radio 4's More or Less and Radio 5 Live. With practice I have got better at radio interviews, and now feel fairly relaxed going to the familiar Radio Cambridgeshire studio, although it's odd never meeting the interviewers. I'm pleased and relieved to say that our predictions turned out to be rather better than those of the resident BBC pundit.

In the afternoons I struggle through the backlog of email. If people had to write letters maybe I would not get so many unsolicited requests for help, each of which I call a URH, which resembles the noise I make when examining the size of my inbox. Fortunately each Friday brings Happy Hour at 5pm, so I can have a drink with my colleagues before pedalling off home.

UPDATE MICHAELMAS TERM

EVENTS

Alumni Weekend report

Imagine all your favourite things about Cambridge: beautiful buildings and gardens, old and new friends, and a spot of gentle mental exercise. Spread it over three days – and raise a glorious September sun over the proceedings – and you have the 19th Alumni Weekend.

The first alumni weekend, almost 20 years ago, was attended by just 230 people, and while the style of the event has hardly changed (ambling around Cambridge never goes out of fashion) the scale of the event certainly has. This year, over 1500 guests attended – and as well as enjoying Cambridge at its most beautiful, punting and reminiscing, many alumni took part in the 170 scheduled events.

As ever, the programme reflected the diversity both of Cambridge and its alumni. Lectures covered subjects as varied as Confucius, polygamy, music, Julius Caesar, memory, time travel and the Hadron Collider (no doubt, someone, somewhere in Cambridge, is working on a theory that unites the lot).

Garden tours took in the particular (Selwyn's celebrated Victorian borders) and the general (the vast and inspiring Botanic Garden). Musicians sang Haydn, Mendelssohn, Purcell and Handel at the Come and Sing event and the sporting rowed in the Alumni Regatta.

And for the first time, alumni unable to attend in person followed proceedings online, from the alumni website, on Twitter and Audioboo.

Alumni Weekend is open to all alumni, and their guests. To request a brochure for next year's Weekend, to be held on 24-26 September 2010, contact the CARO team.

APPOINTMENTS

First woman head porter

Helen Stephens has become head porter at Selwyn College, making her the first woman head porter in Cambridge.

Stephens, who was an NHS manager before becoming the University's first woman porter (at Jesus), leads Selwyn's seven-strong team of porters. "It's very exciting and everyone's been very positive about it," she said. "I had done quite a few things before getting the job at Jesus but I love being a University porter. I really think I have found my niche."

"We've had women porters and women deputy head porters - although not many," said a University spokesman. "But Helen is the first female head porter. It's an historic appointment."

Clearly, Stephens is more than comfortable dealing with students and dons alike. But she does have one worry. "I suppose people think of Skullion [the fictional head porter of Tom Sharpe's 1974 novel Porterhouse Blue] when they think of Cambridge University college porters - but I hope I'm nothing like him!"

800th ANNIVERSARY

Winter finale

Save the date! Join us in Cambridge for a spectacular finish to the 800th year. The Winter Finale will take place from 16-18 January 2010. Free and open to the public, it promises to be a dazzling sequel to the light show which opened the 800th celebrations. Visit the website in December for more details.

Honorary degrees
The Duke of Edinburgh's private secretary, Brigadier Sir Miles Hunt-Davis, and celebrated local historian and road sweeper, Mr Allan Brigham, were admitted to honorary MA degrees by the Vice-Chancellor on 18 July. This follows the conferring of honorary doctorates, in June, upon 10 distinguished individuals including two alumni, Professor Elizabeth Blackburn (Darwin 1971) and Professor Amartya Sen (Trinity 1953).

Nobel Prize winners
Professor Elizabeth Blackburn (Darwin 1971) and Dr Venki Ramakrishnan, senior research fellow at Trinity, have been awarded Nobel Prizes.

Professor Blackburn won the Nobel Prize in medicine for her research on telemorase. Dr Ramakrishnan, at the Laboratory for Molecular Biology, won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for his research into of ribosomes.

Eighty-five affiliates of the University of Cambridge have won the Nobel Prize since 1904.

800th ANNIVERSARY

Stamp of history

To celebrate the University's 800th anniversary, Royal Mail is issuing 10,000 limited edition commemorative stamp sheets, featuring 10 'Fireworks' stamps alongside some of the great achievements of Cambridge academics and alumni.

Darwin's theory of evolution, Newton's Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica and William Harvey's description of blood circulation are all represented, along with Thomas Babington's History of England, the Boat Race and Footlights.

The Royal Mail commemorative sheets consist of 10 x 1st class stamps with commemorative labels and border. Sheets cost £13.50 each and are available from local post offices and the Fitzwilliam Museum Shop, on Trumpington Street, Cambridge.

800th ANNIVERSARY

Box of layers

Syrian-born architect and artist Issam Kourbaj is artist-in-residence at Christ's. His work is collected by major museums and galleries including the British Museum. To celebrate the University's 800th anniversary, Kourbaj has created 'A Cambridge Palimpsest: a box of layers charting the development of Cambridge'. Working with Andrew Hall and Christopher Evans of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit and historical geographer Jon Harris, Kourbaj invites the viewer to uncover the layers of Cambridge, piecing together geology, history and architecture.

The Palimpsest, published in a signed and limited edition of 800, is available from the Cambridge University Press Bookshop.

SPORT

Ospreys flying high

What links pentathlete Stephanie Cook, cyclist Emma Pooley and rowers Cath Bishop, Sarah Winckless and Annie Vernon? Olympic medals – and membership of The Ospreys.

Open to sportswomen holding Blues or Second Team colours, the Ospreys was founded in 1985 to raise the profile of women's sport at Cambridge and to provide bursaries to individuals and teams.

The group also aims to bring together past and present sportswomen. With this in mind, the Ospreys will kick-off its 2010 calendar with a social at the University Women's Club in Mayfair, London, on 18 March 2010. Alumnae are also invited to the Ospreys' annual dinner.

To join, find out more, or to update your contact details, please contact the committee at: ospreys@cantab.net or www.sport.cam.ac.uk/ospreys

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TRIBUTE

Professor Sir David Williams

In September, the death was announced of Professor Sir David Williams, Life Fellow and Honorary Fellow of Emmanuel College, President of Wolfson College from 1980 to 1992 and Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1989 to 1996.

Sir David came to Emmanuel College as an Open Scholar in 1950 to read History and Law, where he completed his MA and LLB.

Called to the Bar, he was Commonwealth Fund (Harkness) Fellow at Berkeley and Harvard 1956-58. He then taught at the University of Nottingham for five years and at the University of Oxford (Keble College) from 1963 to 1967.

In 1967 he returned to Emmanuel College as a Fellow in Law and between 1970 and 1976 he was Senior Tutor and Tutor for Admissions. He became Reader in Public Law in 1976, and was Rouse Ball Professor of English Law from 1983 to 1992. In 1994, Sir David was appointed an Honorary QC (Queen's Counsel).

Sir David served on bodies such as the Council on Tribunals, the Royal Commission on the Environment, the Commission on Energy and the Environment, the Animal Procedures Committee (of which he was chairman), and more recently the Senior Salaries Review Body. He was appointed President of the University of Swansea in 2001 and Chancellor in 2007.

Paying tribute, the current Vice-Chancellor Professor Alison Richard said: "A great scholar and a great leader, Sir David contributed to collegiate Cambridge in so many ways. As the first Vice-Chancellor in almost 800 years to hold the position full-time, he was a real pioneer as well. We will all miss him greatly."

ARCHAEOLOGY

1000-year-old bones found eight feet under Old Schools staff tearoom

A hoard of medieval and Roman finds – including 1000-year-old dog bones – has been found eight feet under the Old Schools staff tearoom.

In Anglo-Saxon times, a cluster of domestic properties started to emerge. The dog, which appears to date back to that period, would probably have been a valuable ally for its owners. The remains of the 11th-century dog and other pre-Conquest remains are significant, according to Richard Newman, site director with the Cambridge Archaeological Unit. "The dig has enabled us to prove what we previously had no proof for – that, by the time of the Norman Conquest, there was a thriving settlement in the middle of Cambridge.

"Until now this was one of the least-investigated parts of the city. What it has shown is that a century and a half before the University arrived and 300 years before it started to build in this area, people were already living and working here. The boundaries marking where their homes begin and end do not change for several centuries, until the University moved in."

The dig shows that by the time the first scholars arrived, in 1209, the area was already a busy commercial centre – archaeologists have found the remains of a number of 13th-century houses and large quantities of Stamford Ware pottery.

APPOINTMENTS

New mistress at Girton

October is always a time of change in Cambridge, and this year two illustrious new faces joined freshers at Girton and Sidney Sussex.

Girton's new mistress, social geographer Professor Susan J Smith, has had a distinguished career at Oxford, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Durham. Her current research focuses on the housing economy: house prices, mortgage debt and financial risk.

At Sidney Sussex, Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill OBE has been elected Master. An expert on Roman history and literature, Professor Wallace-Hadrill is also the Director of the Herculaneum Conservation Project.

Steve Bond

CHEFS COMPETITION

College cook-off

College chefs across Cambridge have been anxiously putting the final touches on signature dishes as they get ready to compete across eight categories in the University of Cambridge Culinary Competition 2009.

The annual cook-off, which is open to all Colleges and to the University Centre, is the focus of a great deal of rivalry among kitchen staff, with some teams starting their preparation up to six weeks in advance.

Chefs will assemble at the Guildhall on Thursday 5 November for judging and inspection by the public. College front-of-house staff will demonstrate table laying, waiting skills and table decoration. Prizes will be presented at Magdalene College on 26 November.

DIARY
AUTUMN/ SPRING

EVENTS

From surviving to thriving in your career

Saturday 23 January 2010, Edinburgh

How is the current economic climate affecting your career? Are you on the right path? As the 'portfolio career' becomes more popular and the job for life a fading prospect, join CARO and the University Careers Service to ask the big careers questions at Edinburgh's iconic landmark, The Hub.

As well as networking with fellow alumni, participants will be able to share career ideas, concerns and hear about the professional lives of some well-known alumni.

Gordon Chesterman, Director of the Careers Service, Polly Courtney (Trinity 1998) author and ex-investment banker and other guest speakers will be on hand to answer your careers questions. Refreshments and a buffet lunch are included. To register interest, email alumni@foundation.cam.ac.uk

Contact CARO

www.alumni.cam.ac.uk
alumni@foundation.cam.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 332288

Cambridge Alumni Relations Office
University of Cambridge
1 Quayside, Bridge Street, Cambridge, CB5 8AB.

MUSIC

Opera on Lake Constance

Saturday 31 July 2010, Austria

Famous for astonishing productions on the world's largest floating stage, the Bregenz Festival on the Austrian shore of Lake Constance is a unique meeting of spectacle and culture.

But just how do they do it? This year, Festival Director David Pountney (St John's 1966) is inviting alumni to experience Bregenz with tickets for two operas – and an exclusive backstage tour.

The 2010 festival promises to be particularly special. Graham Vick's flamboyant Aida is sure to draw the crowds, but the real gem will be the world premiere of a work Pountney believes to be an undiscovered masterpiece: The Passenger by Mieczyslaw Weinberg. The opera will be performed in the Festival Opera House as part of a unique weekend retrospective devoted to the composer. "Weinberg's music is in the great Russian 20th century tradition of Prokoviev and Shostakovich, vivid and accessible," Pountney explains. "He was a popular and prolific composer in the Soviet era, but is still rarely performed in the West."

Alumni are invited to join David Pountney and Lord Watson for a reception and introductory talk on Saturday 31 July, with tickets for The Passenger, Aida and a behind-the-scenes tour of the floating stage.

For more information visit www.alumni.cam.ac.uk or contact the Alumni Office.

Graham Vick's Aida at Lake Constance

Every month

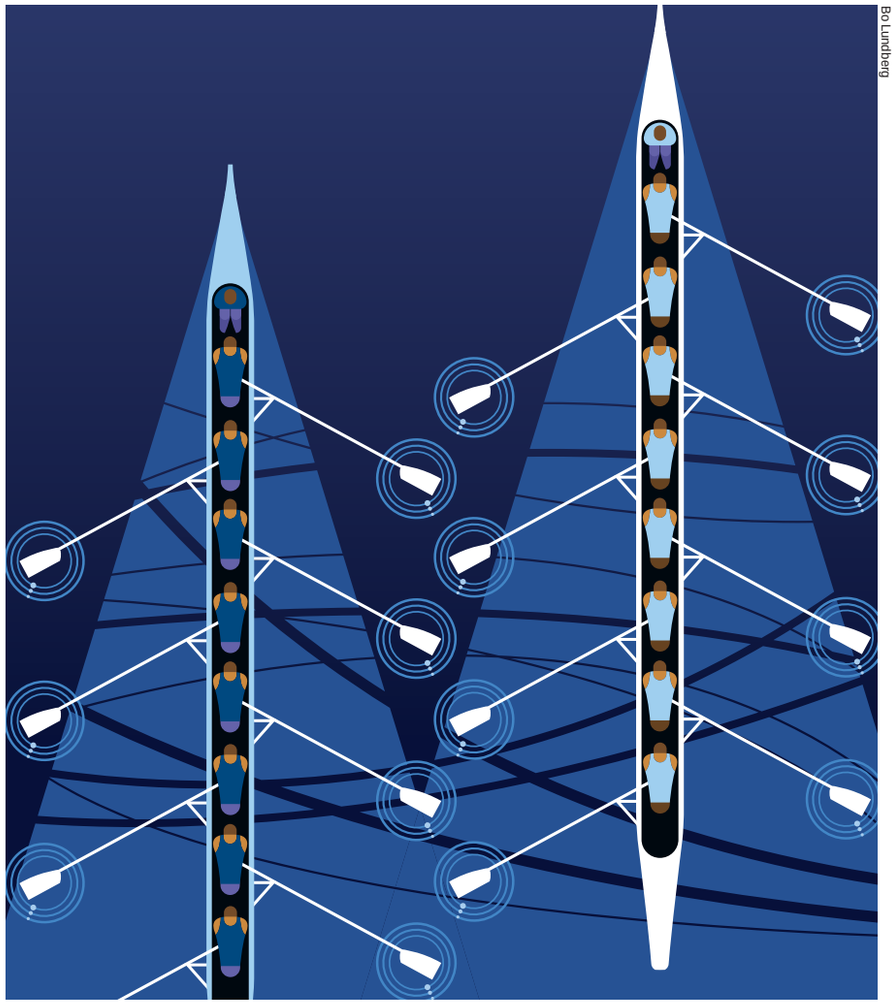
Cambridge alumni monthly drinks
Meet old friends and make new ones at the Cambridge alumni drinks night, held on the second Tuesday of every month at a central Cambridge location. Please feel free to invite friends or other alumni. No need to book, just turn up! Check the events page at www.alumni.cam.ac.uk for details of festive drinks in December.

Saturday 1 May 2010

Codebreakers at Bletchley
Join Professor Christopher Andrew and other distinguished speakers at Bletchley Park, the historic site of secret British wartime codebreaking activities, for lectures, a guided tour, buffet lunch and refreshments. Tickets cost £55 per person.

Saturday 19 July 2010

Imperial War Museum, Duxford
Tickets will soon be on sale for our annual visit to Europe's premier aviation museum. To register your interest, please contact the Alumni Office.


Bo Lundberg

SPORT
156th Boat Race

Saturday 3 April, London

Forget battling through the crowds. Instead, witness the epic battle of strength, courage and tactics that is the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race in style and comfort at the Alumni Boat Race Event. For the fourth year running, we will be hosting the hugely popular event at Putney Pier, London.

The idea for a rowing race between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge came from two friends, Charles Merivale and Charles Wordsworth. On 12th March 1829 a challenge was issued, and a tradition begun. Join fellow alumni, the Alumni Relations Office and the Vice-Chancellor for a celebration of the 156th competition. We will be entertained by a guest speaker – and, of course, a perfect view of the start of the race.

Tickets cost £95 per person and include drinks reception, lunch, official programme, tea and coffee.

Needless to say, this event is invariably sold out – so early booking is strongly advised!

EVENTS
US 800th Anniversary Gala

Saturday 5 December, New York
Thursday 10 December, San Francisco

This December, Cambridge in America (CAm) will celebrate the University's 800th anniversary with a festive black tie gala at New York City's Gotham Hall and a cocktail reception at St Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alison Richard, and other dignitaries will be in attendance at both events. Sir David Frost will join CAm in New York as Master of Ceremonies, with entertainment provided by the University Dancesport Team, the Choir of Clare College and other special guests.

Gotham Hall, in the heart of midtown Manhattan, is overlooked by the Empire State Building, which will be lit in blue in honour of the University's anniversary.

Following a very enthusiastic response from alumni and friends in the United States, the Gala Dinner (New York City, December 5) and 800th Anniversary Reception (San Francisco, December 10) are now sold out. Tickets for the NYC Gala 'After Party' in New York are also sold out. Cambridge in America is operating waiting lists for both events. Please e-mail gala@cantab.org (for New York) or sf@cantab.org (for San Francisco) to add your name to the lists. If you have already asked to be placed on the lists, we will contact you if any spaces become available.

These events are organized by CAm. Please visit www.cantab.org for more information.

Two anniversary keepsakes celebrating Cambridge across the years

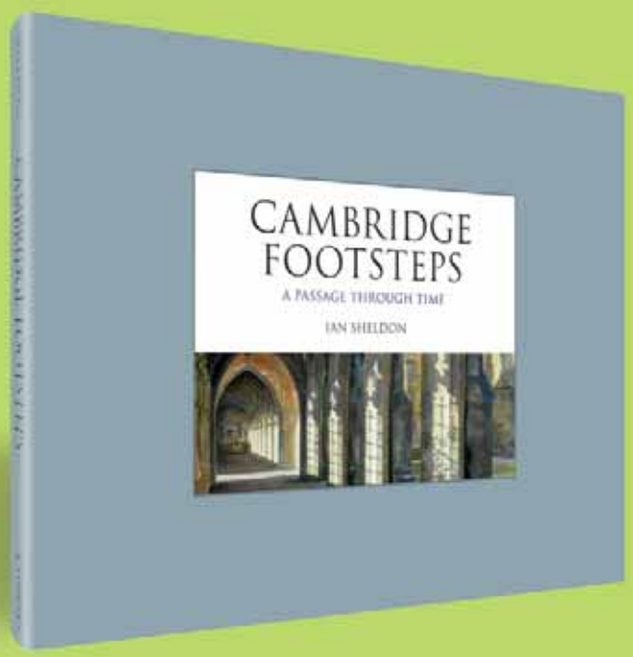
A Cambridge Palimpsest

Issam Kourbaj

With Andrew Hall,
Christopher Evans and Jon Harris

This puzzle invites you to look back in time, uncovering layers of Cambridge and discovering why some places have changed whilst others remained the same.

A signed and numbered limited edition of 800.
978-0-521-15543-4 £75.00



Cambridge Footsteps

A passage through time

Ian Sheldon

This book contains fifty-one images depicting two walks from the north and south into central Cambridge, evoking the beauty and historical richness of the University, the colleges and their surroundings.

978-0-521-19721-2 £15.00

To order, contact the Press Bookshop on bookshop@cambridge.org / +44 (0)1223 333333.

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Noticeboard

CARO online
Want to link up with your fellow alumni, get discounts on books and restaurants, travel the world with the experts or just keep up to date with University news? You can do all these things – and find information on events, benefits, merchandise, alumni groups and links to the Careers Service at: www.alumni.cam.ac.uk

Cambridge local
If you're one of the 11,000 alumni who live in or around Cambridge, keep up to date with alumni events and activities across the city with the Cambridge Local pages of our website and the Cambridge Alumni in Cambridge Facebook group.

ALUMNI GROUPS

There are over 332 alumni groups in the UK and around the world, engaged in everything from socials to lectures on rocketry! Information on how to get in touch, as well as notices of upcoming group events and reunions, can be found on the Alumni Groups pages of the website.

New alumni groups

A new group now exists for alumni living in or visiting Egypt: contact Mohammed A. K. Hassouna (Magdalene 1964) at makh@hassouna-abouali.com or Alifiya H. Abdul Hussain (Caius 1999) at alifiya.husain@gmail.com.

The Cambridge Society of Tayside would be delighted to hear from alumni resident in or visiting Dundee, St Andrews and surrounding areas. Contact Dr Ruth Stephen (Sidney Sussex 2007) at r.stephen@dundee.ac.uk.

Want to help establish a new Cambridge and Oxford Society for Macedonia? Contact Bosko Stankovski (St. Edmund's 2009) at bosko.stankovski@cantab.net or +389 (0)70 816722; or Vaska Koceva (Homerton 2005) at vaskakoceva81@yahoo.co.uk.

A new group has been set up in the Canary Islands: contact Dr Fernando Conde (Clare Hall 1988) at fernando.conde@cantab.net.

The Cambridge and Oxford Society of Tunisia is keeping the Cambridge spirit alive with informal meetings and socials. Contact Melika Pasic Ben Amara (Lucy Cavendish 1997) on +216 96 023 748 or at pasicm@yahoo.com.

Lost alumni
We have received enquiries about the following alumni:
Robert Eason, St John's 1968
Mike Powell, Fitzwilliam 1970
Mike Cotton, Fitzwilliam 1971
If you know them, please do ask them to contact the Alumni Relations Office.

New email or address?
If your copy of CAM is still forwarded from your last address (or indeed, your parents') you can update your details at www.cam.ac.uk/alumni or return your CAM cover sheet.

MY ROOM, YOUR ROOM

B8, ST MICHAEL'S COURT, CAIUS

Interview **Leigh Brauman**
Photograph **David Yeo**

Stephen Mangan (Caius 1987) is an actor best known for his role as the insufferable Guy Secretan in the television series Green Wing and as Alex in Free Agents. He recently played Norman in The Norman Conquests on Broadway.

James Dunne is a third year historian. Although his mum is keen for him to make a decision about what he'd like to do 'when he grows up', James, a first class student, has wisely settled on enjoying his final year before making any life-changing decisions.

For a few minutes it's as if it is 1989 again. Having climbed the four flights of stairs up to B8, actor Stephen Mangan looks a little dazed. "Being back is a bit overwhelming," he explains. "You're at Cambridge for a very short time, but they are such incredibly important and vivid months. When I matriculated, Thatcher was prime minister, the Berlin Wall was still standing, there was no internet, no mobile phones. And yet being here it feels as if nothing has changed."

Back in the present, B8 is very orderly - something that third year historian James Dunne, the current resident, admits is not quite the normal state of affairs. "My bedder was very nice and helped me tidy up this morning," he says, "so this is definitely the tidy version of my room! I like a bit of chaos, I can't write an essay without a bit of clutter. It makes you feel at home."

From Stephen's descriptions of the guitars (several) the CDs (stacks) and the books ("I was slightly OCD about second-hand book buying - I'm still working my

‘When I matriculated, Thatcher was prime minister, the Berlin Wall was still standing, there was no internet, no mobile phones. And yet being here it feels as if nothing has changed.’

way through the books I bought then”) it seems ‘cluttered’ is B8’s natural state. Stephen also recognises the furniture. “It’s Caius standard issue,” James confirms.

Stephen wants to know what has changed since he’s been away. James reckons that things are much the same: Caians still eat in Hall most nights, everyone still gathers in the Undercroft and the loos in B staircase are still in the basement.

“The loos and the showers,” James points out. “But you get used to it.” Stephen agrees. “You do! I don’t remember it being a problem. The only thing that was a little tricky was if you passed out from drinking too much. Finding your way back could be quite confusing.”

Stephen reckons technology must make a difference. “We didn’t have mobile phones which meant we couldn’t get in touch with each other. You had to go to someone’s room and leave a note, and if they didn’t answer, it could take hours to find them.” But James disagrees. “At any one time, half my mates don’t have phones. Student life isn’t really compatible with keeping your phone with you,” he explains, cryptically. “I’m on my fourth handset already!”

The two agree that B8 is ideal for entertaining - not least because if you have a friend in B7, you can take over the whole of the top floor. So did Stephen go in for wild parties? He reckons no more (or less) than most students, but it’s hard to see how he could have found the time. As well as regular fixtures for Caius First XI football team (“I was very, very bad”) and playing in a band (“It was called Enormous Derek”) Stephen was acting. A lot.

“I was a thesp. I was in something like 23 plays over three years and it was really Cambridge that set me on the road,” he says. “I remember sitting in this room with Paul Ritter, who was at John’s, and the two of us declaring that we just wanted to be actors - we were quite happy to be in Darlington living in digs, so long as we could act.”

What would Stephen bequeath B8 if he could? “I went to Thailand in 1987, which at the time was a reasonably novel thing to do, and I brought back a bottle of whiskey with a snake in it,” he says. “It sat on my mantelpiece and no one would drink from it until Chris Barnes finally had a slug in the third year. He was confined to bed for three days. I’d quite like to see that back here.”

THE BEST... PAINTING IN CAMBRIDGE

Robert Stagg is a third-year English student at Emmanuel

I remember the first time I saw Veneziano’s Annunciation, a tiny painting suspended in a long hall of the Fitzwilliam Museum. I thought, for at least a moment, that I was in church. I keep going back to it every term. It doesn’t change. It doesn’t even appear to change. I get no feelings of development or sensations of progression from it. I get only the strange reminder of a chapel passing across my senses. It stings and chills.

The painting is studied for the History of Art tripos. In the illustrious upper drawers of Tripos, one finds painters such as Durer, Bosch, van Eyck, Ghiberti, Holbein, van der Weyden, da Vinci. But I suspect Veneziano is a third-drawer-down artist. His life was flat; his work, taken whole, is dark and crushed by religiosity. He doesn’t sell well in a semi-secular era and the gallery-going public don’t buy him either.

But everyone I know (which is to say, everyone I’ve yanked in to see it) agrees: the Annunciation is simply beautiful. The lines are calm. The colour is dappled. The construction is silently effective. So why my fussing? Why the feeling of church-wardness? Is it just an efficient painting, with its successful coincidence of techniques only working when properly seen, three feet in front of you? Yes, I suppose.

But for all its reverent summonings, I can’t help but be darkly mesmerised. There are the sirenic black squares mouthing out at you, an intrusion of the night into the midday sun. Too long staring at them makes all the softly pencilled remainder of the painting look unreal, like the residue of a gentle dream. It’s a spooky pre-emption of the ‘Rothko effect’. There are the figures, too. The angelic sadness and duty of Mary; the sneering Gabriel with dead brown foot; the wilting flowers between them. (Gabriel points upward at what would have been the crucified Christ: this was part of a predella to Veneziano’s Magnoli altarpiece.) Our eyes tumble out to the garden but the bolted door is a nasty tease: Veneziano says you are to look no further. Everything is in perspective and yet out of kilter.

The Annunciation shows the price of the Christian saviour-tale: a son brutalised for a mother to mourn. That Veneziano is willing for such a price to be paid is remarkable. That he painted the price is extraordinary.

Charlie Tronan

HISTORY OF A FRIENDSHIP

Mark Perrett (Fitzwilliam 1983), **George Taylor** (Fitzwilliam 1985) and **Russell Newton** (Fitzwilliam, 1983) became friends as members of 1980s university band Mr Creosote.

Words **Anna Melville-James**
Main photograph **Chris Floyd**

Right:
2009 (from left to right): Rus Newton, Mark Perrett and George Taylor.

Below:
Back: Henry Gee, keyboards (Fitz 1984); Mark Perrett, guitar (Fitz 1983).Front: Jonathan Coad, bass guitar (Jesus 1976); Sonita Alleyne, backing vocals (Fitz 1985); George Taylor, vocals (Fitz 1985). Pipe: Russell Newton, drums (Fitz 1983).

RUS NEWTON might look like a proper city gent, but back in 1983 he was rocking out. Along with Fitzwilliam friends Mark Perrett and George Taylor, Rus was a member of six-piece band Mr Creosote, which ran for one year, notching up an impressive following, and offering its members a suitably rock'n'roll excuse for missing 9am lectures.

Rus remembers meeting band impresario Mark Perrett on R staircase. "He recruited me through my window while I was playing the drums." Lead singer George Taylor remains unconvinced by the audition process. "I joined through an advert, though 'singing' is an optimistic word to apply to what I was doing," he says. "Mark was mulleted, pixie-booted and into Brian May. Rus was a jazz drummer and I was into alt rock. Quite how we ended up with a band that sounded like Wham is beyond me."

The band's musical alchemy might have been greater than the sum of its parts, but so too was its mix of characters. "It's an indefinable thing, personal chemistry – it either works or it doesn't," says Mark. "I was the serious one, the main music writer with keyboard player Henry Gee. I think they saw me as the tyrant who ran the band and took it all a bit seriously. Whereas Rus was popular with the girls, regularly bringing an entourage to gigs. He would sit behind his drums grinning."

Rus raises his eyebrows. "I think George was the heart-throb actually. He was the classic larger-than-life front man. One of my friends came to see us and asked to be introduced to him. Not a good idea!"

However, despite their enduring friendship, all three admit that without the band they might never have been friends at all. For Rus, the band was the gateway to friendship with Mark. "If you weren't in the band, you weren't in his group, I think. He was the driving force – he's still that Alpha type – organising everything and looking for gigs. Every Wednesday evening, we'd borrow a trolley from the porters, put our gear on it

"Mark was mulleted, pixie-booted and into Brian May. Rus was a jazz drummer and I was into alt rock. Quite how we ended up with a band that sounded like Wham is beyond me."

and run it down to a church hall to rehearse. We did a huge number of gigs – and were paid, amazingly enough. There was such a great music scene in Cambridge at the time. And we also supported some main bands at balls: Q Tips, New Order. We definitely had delusions of grandeur!"

What New Order made of George's signature bright yellow suit, covered in black car paint handprints, is lost in rock folklore. But although Mr Creosote regularly played to full houses on Saturday nights, they seem to have done so with a distinct lack of guitar-smashing cliché. "One May Week Girton gig I was hammered and didn't keep time very well," admits Rus. "But really we were 'medium rockers' and quite sensible. Although, Mark did love the riffs." Mark laughs. "Of course I did, that's what guitarists do! I wasn't allowed to do a Jimmy Page 20-minute wig-out though, so I had to cram everything into 20 seconds."

George likens being in a university band to "being on an endless tour in one, very small, town". However, despite their success the band wasn't immune to 'artistic differences'. "I think it was just fun for us, but Mark maybe had bigger dreams," says Rus. "I remember a period when the band talked about getting another drummer. I learned then I was prepared to let it go."

Mark groans at the memory. "To my eternal shame I'd seen a town band which had a good drummer, sidled up and asked him if he fancied joining Mr Creosote," he says.

"It was one of those moments where you suddenly realise what it would be like to have played in a professional band. I could have ended up sacrificing friendship for fame and success. I've apologised to Rus since then, and we're still talking so I think that must mean he's forgiven me."

So how does a friendship fired in the white heat of on-stage electricity fare over the years? "It's nice to look back at a moment like the band and have people to talk to about it. Rus and I both work in the City now and I see him a couple of times a year for dinner, and a beer occasionally," Mark says. "It's a very modern friendship. George has carved a real musical career as a composer and we ping emails back and forth about the state of modern music. It says a lot that even though we've nothing in common professionally we're still mates."

For Rus, when the three meet up the years fall away – but the dynamic continues to evolve. "We've all been reasonably successful in our fields, which changes the balance of power, although I never wanted to run the band. Now there are areas where Mark and I would converse as equals."

George, however, is typically wry about the passage of time. "Get-togethers are always weird, like a Star Trek film with everyone wearing prosthetics. We all have exactly the same mannerisms, but there are all these wrinkles and bellies now! Rus has gone from a slightly shambling jazz drummer to Mr Uber Hedge Fund Manager Guy. And Perrett is Chancellor of the World, and even more terrifying than he was back then."

And while the mullets and the pixie boots are long gone, music remains a central focus. Mark still performs, George writes music for TV and Rus plays the drums – and harbours a desire for one last gig. "It's complex in terms of getting together," he says, "but we've got an open invite from Fitz to play a ball if we ever do re-form."

So will Cambridge see a triumphant Mr Creosote comeback? George is sceptical. "Is anyone still alive? Does anyone remember us? I'd probably say yes to a reunion gig, then back out at the last minute, with some freak food mixer accident. They'd have to cancel and everyone would hate me. Plus, I probably can't reach a lot of the notes now..."

If you would like to share the history of your friendship, please do get in touch with CAM by email alumni@foundation.cam.ac.uk or by post (see page 8).

r) Christ's – First Court

r) Clare – Old Court

r) Emmanuel – New Court

d) Sidney Sussex – Gate House

r) Queen's – Cloister Court

r) Corpus Christi – New Court

d) St. John's – New Court

h) Downing – Main Court

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TAKE THREE

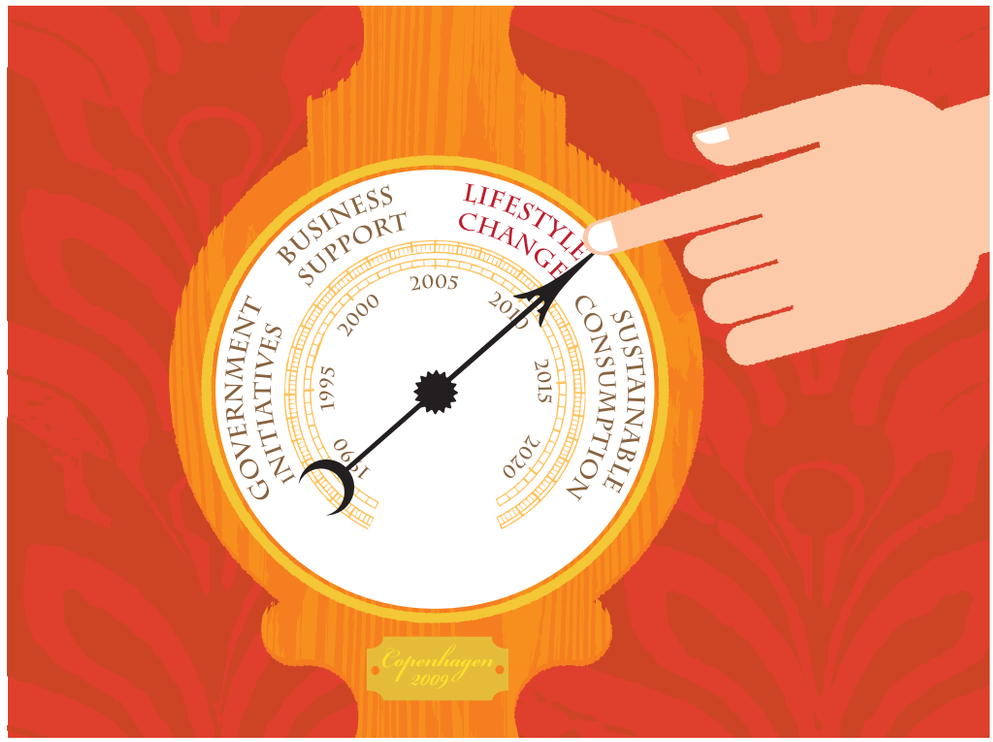
Is it up to individuals to tackle global warming?

Lord Giddens (King's 1969) is Emeritus Professor at the London School of Economics. He is the author or editor of more than 40 books, which have been translated into as many languages. His latest work, The Politics of Climate Change, was published earlier this year.

Professor Mohan Munasinghe (Clare 1964) was co-winner of the 2007 Nobel Prize for Peace, as vice-chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He is currently chair of the Munasinghe Institute of Development, Colombo, Sri Lanka; director-general of the Sustainable Consumption Institute at the University of Manchester; and honorary senior adviser to the Sri Lanka government.

Professor David MacKay (Trinity 1985) is Professor of Natural Philosophy in the Department of Physics at Cambridge University and a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was recently appointed chief scientific adviser to the Department of Energy and Climate Change but his comments here are as a private academic. His book, Sustainable Energy – Without the Hot Air, was published in December 2008.

Interviews **James Randerson**



Gillian Blease

LORD GIDDENS

One of the prime difficulties about responding to climate change is that it is so easy to define it as someone else's problem. What difference can the actions of any single individual make to an issue which is global in scope? Yet if we approached climate change in such a way we would have no chance of effectively responding to it.

The starting point has to be quite to the contrary: this is everybody's problem and it is not an option to remain on the sidelines. I don't think it's a question even of "what can I do to help?", as though it were a matter of individual choice. It is an obligation that should be taken seriously by every citizen.

Nor is it a matter of "every little helps". Individuals should think big: major changes in lifestyle are necessary if emissions are to be reduced. Everyone should look at his or her carbon footprint and seek to reduce it substantially, in the short and medium term.

I'm strongly in favour of the 10:10 campaign, which asks both individuals and organisations to reduce their emissions by 10% or more within a single year, 2010. Two-fifths of the UK's carbon emissions, for example, come from buildings, an area where home owners (helped by government subsidies for insulation and other measures) can have a major impact.

PROFESSOR MUNASINGHE

I would say that all stakeholders have to contribute, but the focus so far has been mainly on governments and businesses – the role of civil society, and of the individual, is the most overlooked aspect. I think their time has come.

You need political will to make the changes that are necessary but I personally feel that consumers are generally ahead of the political leadership in most countries. Many of our activities are already unsustainable, and we can do something about them today. It is not rocket science. We don't need to theorise, delay or wait for government to act for us – simply empower ourselves as individuals to take action.

Vested interests drive mainly the economic engine. They are concerned with increasing GDP. But that does not equal increasing human happiness. It is a false sense of wellbeing. It is up to us as individuals to say there are other things we value in the social and environmental areas, beyond just going after the economic buck.

> "Be under no illusion: to achieve our goal of getting off fossil fuels, the reductions in energy demand and increases in energy supply will have to be big."

Companies certainly know how to tweak consumer demand through advertising in order to get them to buy their products. At the Sustainable Consumption Institute at the University of Manchester we are working on using the same tools to tweak consumer demand in the direction of greater sustainability.

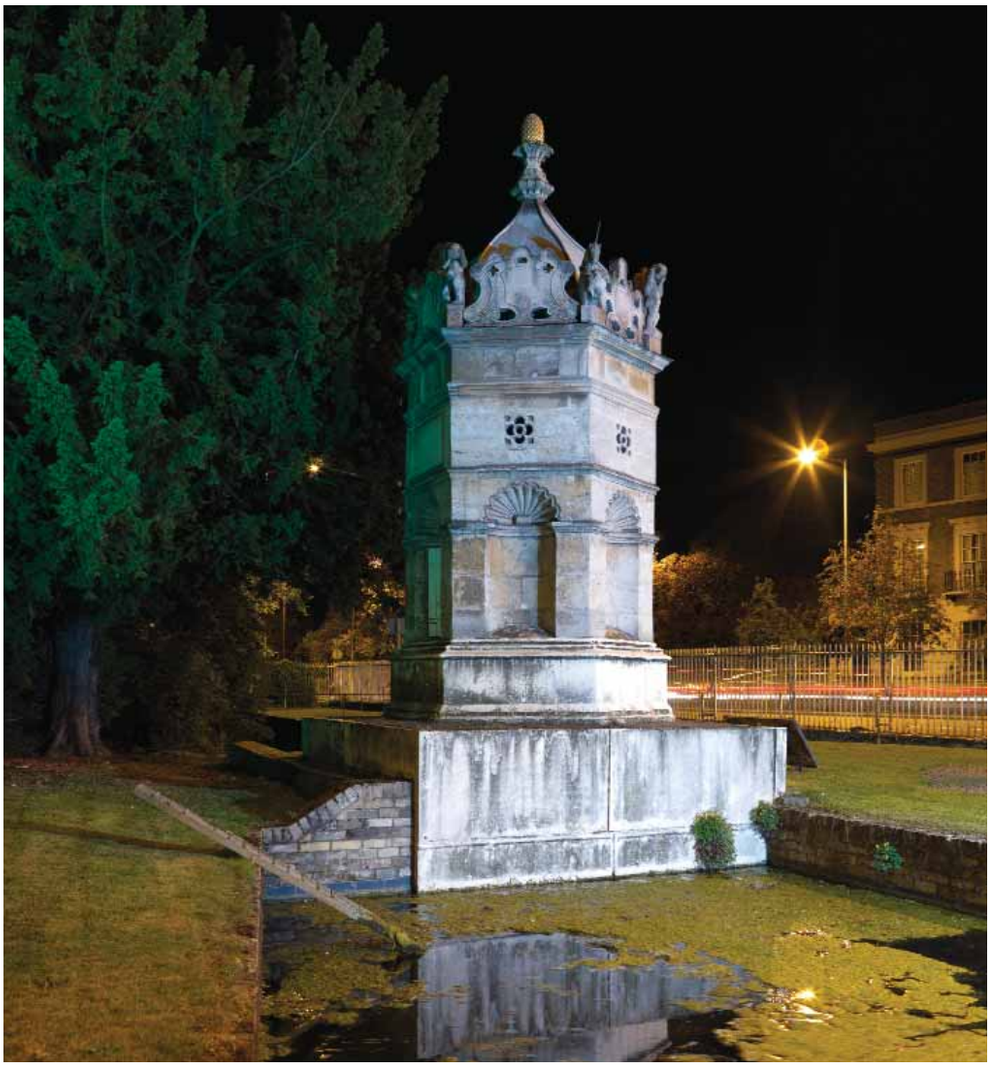
That is the sustainable consumption pathway that has been neglected, mainly because governments think of people as voters not consumers. There is a great deal that could be done but we have not scratched the surface.

PROFESSOR MACKAY

Individuals can make a significant contribution to tackling climate change, but make sure you are doing the things that will really make a difference – for example, turn your thermostat down, read your energy meters, stop flying, drive less, walk and cycle more, change to low energy light bulbs, don't buy clutter, avoid packaging, don't replace your old gadgets early and eat vegetarian six days a week.

Be under no illusion: to achieve our goal of getting off fossil fuels, the reductions in energy demand and increases in [energy] supply will have to be big.

Just as important as individual action are the things that only central and local government can do, such as long-range investment in energy infrastructure, regulations for buildings old and new and financial support for new technologies such as electric cars. Government can also make low-energy choices for individuals easier, for example by improving cycle routes and public transport.



Left: Hobson's monument at Lensfield Road
Opposite page: Monument marking the start of the conduit at Nine Wells.

SECRET CAMBRIDGE

HOBSON'S SLUICE

Professor Gillian Evans traces a secret waterway and its connection with a colourful English expression.

Photography **Steve Bond**

LIKE LONDON'S now buried River Fleet, Cambridge has a hidden waterway. Sometimes mistaken for a truant branch of the Cam, Hobson's Conduit runs under Lensfield Road and in broad gutters along Trumpington Street. And it gets its name from a carter whose sharp practices gave the English language a rather colourful expression: Hobson's choice.

The idea of bringing fresh water in a conduit from Nine Wells near Great Shelford was first suggested by Andrew Perne while he was Vice-Chancellor in 1574. The old King's Ditch had become cluttered with rubbish and a miasma of infection, that was blamed for the frequent episodes of plague, hung over it. No longer a viable watercourse to supply the town, the Conduit scheme was put into operation in 1610 as a successful collaboration between University and town.

From 1614, until the nineteenth century, the channel for the stream led to a fountain in the Market Place, where the townspeople could get drinking water. From here, streams ran on in several branches, some of which went into the open conduits in the grounds of Pembroke College and along Trumpington Street. These still flow in season as a watery wheel-trap for the unwary motorist trying to reverse into a parking space - though not when the 'wrong kind of leaves' fall in autumn. Old Addenbrooke's, refurbished in startling colours in recent years as accommodation for the Judge Business School, once took water into its basement from the conduit. The stream, in its two sections, the Pem (the Pembroke section) and the Pot or Peterhouse section, was moved to the side of the road in 1788 from its original position down the middle of the road.

But a fire in 1855 resulted in the Jacobean Conduit Head being moved from the Market Place. It is now to be seen in Brookside, in front of a row of houses alongside Trumpington Road near the junction with Lensfield Road (once known as Conduit Road). The modern Lion Yard development included blocking off the flow to the Market Place and it has not been restored since.

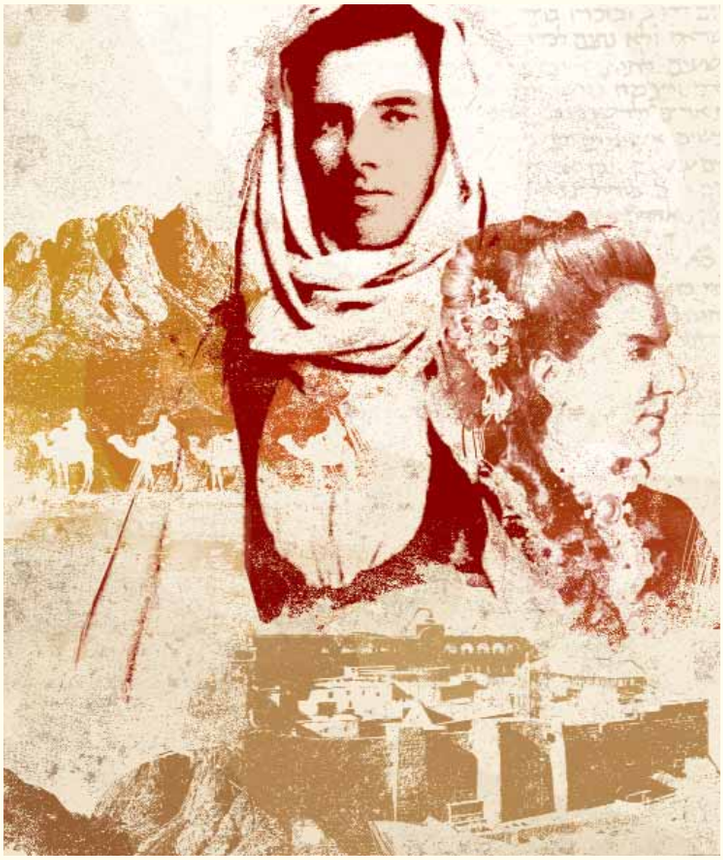
In 1630–1 another Vice-Chancellor got a new branch-line opened. This ran down Lensfield Road and into St Andrew's Street, where it diverged in various directions. The open streams in St Andrew's Street were covered for the convenience of modern pedestrians in the late 1990s. One stream ran through what is now Drummer Street Bus Station, where the public could bring vessels to take water to drink or for domestic use. Others ran to fill ponds in the grounds of Emmanuel and Christ's Colleges. Emmanuel stopped using it to top up its duck pond only in 1960. Another branch went along Lensfield Road to Parker's Piece, where it fed into a pond for cattle.

And Hobson's choice? Thomas Hobson (1545–1631), was one of the Conduit's planners, setting up Hobson's Conduit Trust, which still has an honorary engineer appointed by the City Council.

Hobson had inherited eight horses and a cart, taking over his father's business as a carrier between Cambridge and London. A canny man, Hobson junior expanded the business, hiring out spare horses to students – but with a catch. Not wanting his best horses worn out, he gave them 'Hobson's Choice'. Any student who wanted a horse had to take the one tied at the entrance to the stable – or forgo the horse altogether. Hobson used to tell disgruntled students they would get to London fast enough provided they did not ride the horse into the ground.

As an undergraduate, Milton wrote a jesting epitaph for Hobson when he died, fit for a man who never failed to exploit his business opportunities: "Here lieth one who did most truly prove / That he could never die when he could move."

Professor Evans's latest book, The University of Cambridge: A New History, was published in October by IB Tauris.



One of the great scholarly stories of this summer has been the publication, for the first time, of the Codex Sinaiticus, one of the two oldest copies of the Bible in existence. The bulk of the manuscript is in the British Library, with some pages in St Petersburg, Leipzig and Sinai – a circumstance which dictated 'online' publication for what is not only one of the oldest Bibles, but one of the oldest books (codices), in the world. Dating from the 4th century, this superb work must have been commissioned by a wealthy or even regal patron very soon after Constantine made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire. Its discovery at the remote Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai by Constantin von Tischendorf, and eventual progress to the British Library, are the stuff of legend.

Cambridge has its own place in this tale. For in 1892, some 50 years after von Tischendorf made his famous discovery at Sinai, a pair of Scottish twin sisters journeyed from Cambridge to the same monastery and there found an ancient Syriac manuscript of the gospels. Middle-aged, both widows, and at the time without any academic qualifications, they went on to make the discoveries that led to the Cairo Genizah, a hoard of Jewish manuscripts which is now one of the University Library's greatest treasures.

Agnes and Margaret Smith were born in the small Scottish town of Irvine in 1843. Their mother died shortly after their birth. Their father, a local lawyer, never remarried and educated the twins much as he would have done sons. One element of this was a pact whereby, for every language learned, they would be taken to the country where that language was spoken. In their teenage years, their father, already prosperous, came into a large fortune from a distant kinsman. When he died unexpectedly a few years later, his 22-year-old daughters were left alone in the world, and very rich.

The Sisters of Sinai

Professor Janet Soskice explains how independent lady travellers, twins Agnes and Margaret Smith, mastered Syriac, charmed monks and scandalised Victorian Cambridge.

Words **Professor Janet Soskice**
Illustrations **Lee Woodgate**

All alone except, of course, that each had an identical twin with whom she could hatch exciting and improbable plans. While still in deep mourning they planned a trip up the Nile, with Murray's Guidebook to Palestine apparently their only guide. Since they spoke most European languages, they felt no need to employ a translator or courier, or to take a male escort. Instead, they invited one of their former teachers, Grace Blythe, as chaperone. In 1868, these three young women (Grace Blythe was only 36) made their way by coach, train and boat across Europe, down the Danube to the Black Sea and by packet steamer to Egypt, only to be roundly swindled by their Maltese dragoman during their Nile expedition. This did not, however, deter their ambitions to be independent lady travellers. Rather, it merely impressed upon them the importance of their own travel maxim: never visit a country whose language you do not speak. They would learn Arabic for their next visit.

This was not to be for some time. Life in London, more travels, and the acquisition of more languages filled the intervening years. With private tutors Agnes and Margaret learned Arabic and modern Greek – a language few British travellers spoke but one which facilitated another extensive trip on horseback through the Peloponnese. It was on this trip they first made the acquaintance of Orthodox monks who, contrary to expectations, proved quite hospitable to lady travellers, at least ones who spoke Greek.

'Harris told the twins of a dark closet containing manuscripts which could lead back to the fountainheads of Christianity. To prepare for their impending adventure, Agnes learned Syriac - not so difficult, she said, if you already knew Hebrew and Arabic.'

After an unsteady engagement of some 13 years, Margaret married James Gibson, a former Presbyterian minister. His death in 1886, after only three years of marriage, prompted Agnes and Margaret to go another trip – but this time only as far as Cambridge. On the last day of their inspection of the city's ancient courts and lustrous halls, the twins encountered Samuel Savage Lewis, librarian of the Parker Library of Corpus Christi College, antiquarian, collector and dedicated traveller. Samuel and Agnes began their acquaintance with a vigorous argument over the correct pronunciation of ancient Greek. They were married nine months later.

Agnes and Samuel built a spacious home, Castlebrae, at the foot of Castle Hill, which was home to Margaret as well. Landscaped with pines to bring Scotland to mind, the house incorporated, in its central tower, ropes on which the twins could take daily exercise – apparently their exercising on parallel bars in the garden of their rented house in Harvey Road had raised eyebrows. Samuel Lewis was immensely sociable and brought home a string of visitors, often unannounced, to take luncheon or dinner at a table where they were surprised to find French, German, Italian, even Greek were spoken freely. Wealthy and independently minded, the Heavenly Twins, as they were soon dubbed, made a forcible impact in Cambridge, although were not always welcomed by every 'set': the unkind, or perhaps envious, said that Castlebrae aped a Master's Lodge.

VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY
CRUISES TO CLASSICAL CIVILISATIONS

AN INTRODUCTION BY JOHN JULIUS NORWICH

The Mediterranean nurtured three of the most dazzling civilisations of antiquity, and saw the birth or blossoming of three of our greatest religions; in consequence, the lands surrounding it are richer in painting, sculpture and historic monuments than any comparable area on earth.

Voyages to Antiquity cruise itineraries have been planned to reveal as much as possible of the literally inexhaustible wealth that the Mediterranean lands have to offer, and to explain it to people who are genuinely eager to see and to understand.

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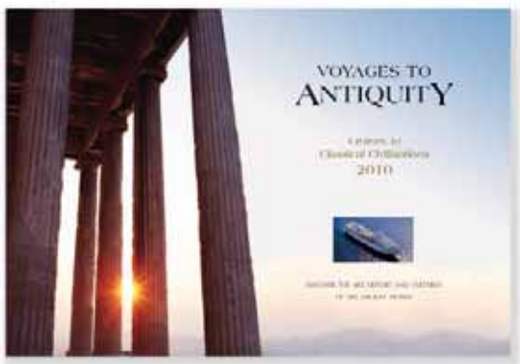

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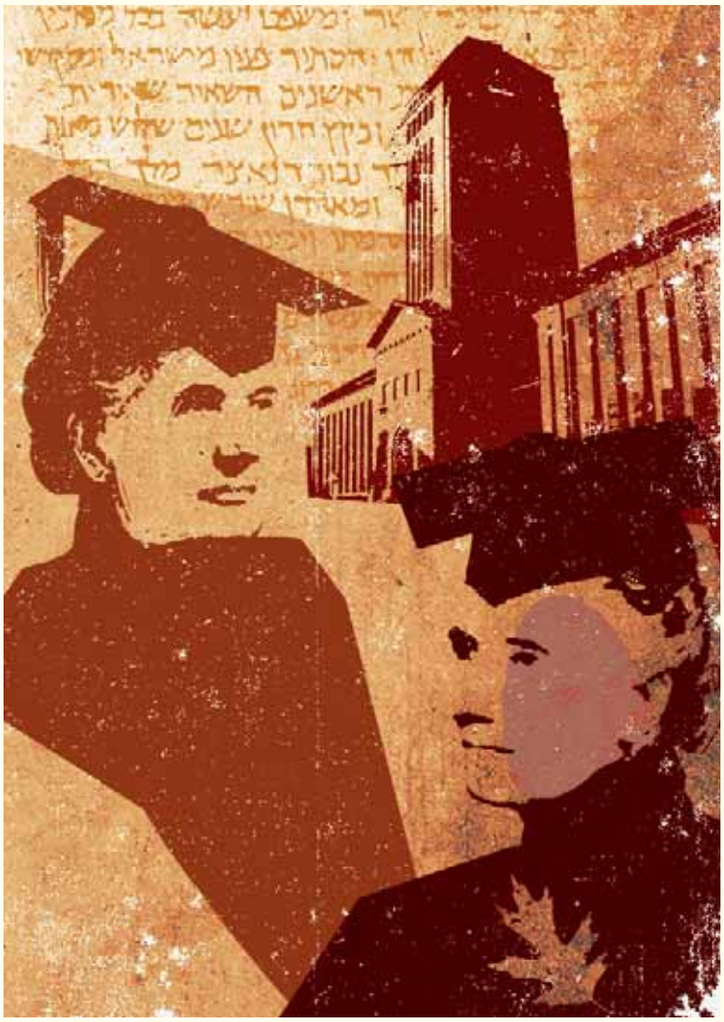
But Agnes's marriage was, like her sister's, happy but short-lived. After only three years of matrimony, Samuel Lewis was forced to run to catch a train. Sitting down in the carriage next to his wife, he started to comment on the Arabic newspaper she was reading – and promptly succumbed to a heart attack.

Now 49 years old, the twins determined to realise an old ambition to go to Mount Sinai and the ancient monastery of St Catherine's, a trip that would involve getting to Cairo and then travelling by camel for nine days across the desert. It was widely supposed that von Tischendorf had found everything of interest at St Catherine's, but Agnes read that a Quaker scholar, James Rendel Harris, had recently discovered there an important lost text from the early church in the Syriac language. The twins made his acquaintance and Harris told them of a dark closet with chests containing other manuscripts he had not had time to examine, but which might lead back to the fountainheads of Christianity. Agnes, in the nine months between Samuel's death and their setting out for Sinai, learned Syriac – not so difficult, she said, if you already knew Hebrew and Arabic.

Many in Cambridge doubted that Agnes and Margaret, being women, would even be admitted to St Catherine's, much less see its precious library. But letters of recommendation from Rendel Harris and the University's Vice-Chancellor saw the twins welcomed by the brethren, who were enchanted by their fluency in modern Greek. As soon as tact permitted, Agnes asked if she could inspect the contents of the dark closet. One manuscript in particular caught her eye: it was a palimpsest whose vellum had at some stage been scraped clean of its initial writings to bear a new text. The upper writing was a familiar text of lives of women saints, but Agnes detected the underwriting to be the gospels. In the fierce cold of an Egyptian January the twins, assisted by the monk librarian, Galaktéon, took 400 photographs of these manuscripts.



It was an enormous undertaking. But their efforts at Sinai would be as nothing to what the twins faced back in Cambridge, trying to get the experts to verify their find. The University's two best Syriac scholars, Professor Robert Bensly and Mr Francis Burkitt, disdained to look at their photographs – even, Agnes said, when she tried to show them to Mr Burkitt in his own garden! By the ruse of asking the young Mrs Burkitt to lunch – 'and of course, Mr Burkitt' – and displaying a selection of their best photos on the grand piano, the twins made it impossible for Burkitt at least not to glance at them. To his credit, he at once perceived their importance and informed the Professor; a secret expedition was put together to go to Mount Sinai and transcribe the text at the first opportunity. The twins refused to be left behind, so Burkitt and Bensly brought their wives to maintain decorum when travelling in a mixed party.

At the twins' request Rendel Harris joined them, but once in the desert, the party soon fell into acrimony, with Burkitt and Bensly suspecting Harris of wanting to beat them to any great new discoveries at St Catherine's. The expedition's purpose in producing a transcription triumphed, but hostility amongst its participants endured even once back in Cambridge. Burkitt tried to minimise Agnes's 'amateurish' involvement with its publication, yet she had received overall editorial responsibility from the Cambridge University Press and was not to be excluded. By dint of sheer hard work, in their 50s and 60s the sisters were setting out on a new life as seekers and transcribers of ancient manuscripts across the Levant.

In 1896 they learned of Hebrew manuscripts mysteriously appearing in the markets of Cairo. During a rapidly planned trip, they purchased some 3000 manuscripts – some as little as half a page, others a full book – and once back in Cambridge asked their friend, Solomon Schechter, to look at them. Schechter, the first Jew to be the University's Reader in Rabbinics, quickly came to the conclusion that someone in Cairo was dismantling a genizah (an ancient repository for discarded Hebrew texts) and made plans to visit. So keen was he to preserve secrecy that Schechter did not even apply to the University for a travel grant: his plans were known only to a few closest friends, including Agnes and Margaret, and his expenses were met by his fellow Hebraist, Charles Taylor, Master of St John's.

After days spent charming Cairo's Chief Rabbi with cups of coffee and cigarettes, Schechter was shown to Cairo's oldest synagogue where a windowless room, reached by ladder from the women's gallery, was feet deep in thrown-away books, papers and manuscripts. There Schechter found holy writings, hymns, love-letters, business contracts, letters from medieval Jewish schoolmasters to medieval Jewish parents, even autograph drafts of Maimonides' Guide to the Perplexed. The twins went out to join him as, with the permission of the Chief Rabbi, Schechter bundled the contents of the genizah into gunny sacks for shipping to the University Library.

The Taylor-Schechter Genizah collection remains one of the most important finds of manuscripts to be made in modern times. It is also just one more feather in the bonnets of those most unlikely of 19th-century Orientalists, Mrs Gibson and Mrs Lewis.

Janet Soskice is professor of Philosophical Theology at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of Jesus College.

Sisters of Sinai: How Two Lady Adventurers Found the Hidden Gospels, by Professor Janet Soskice, is published by Chatto & Windus

MIND'S FLIGHT

Birds roost in our minds and imaginations – and sometimes in our nightmares. **Jeremy Mynott** explores our cultural birdscape.

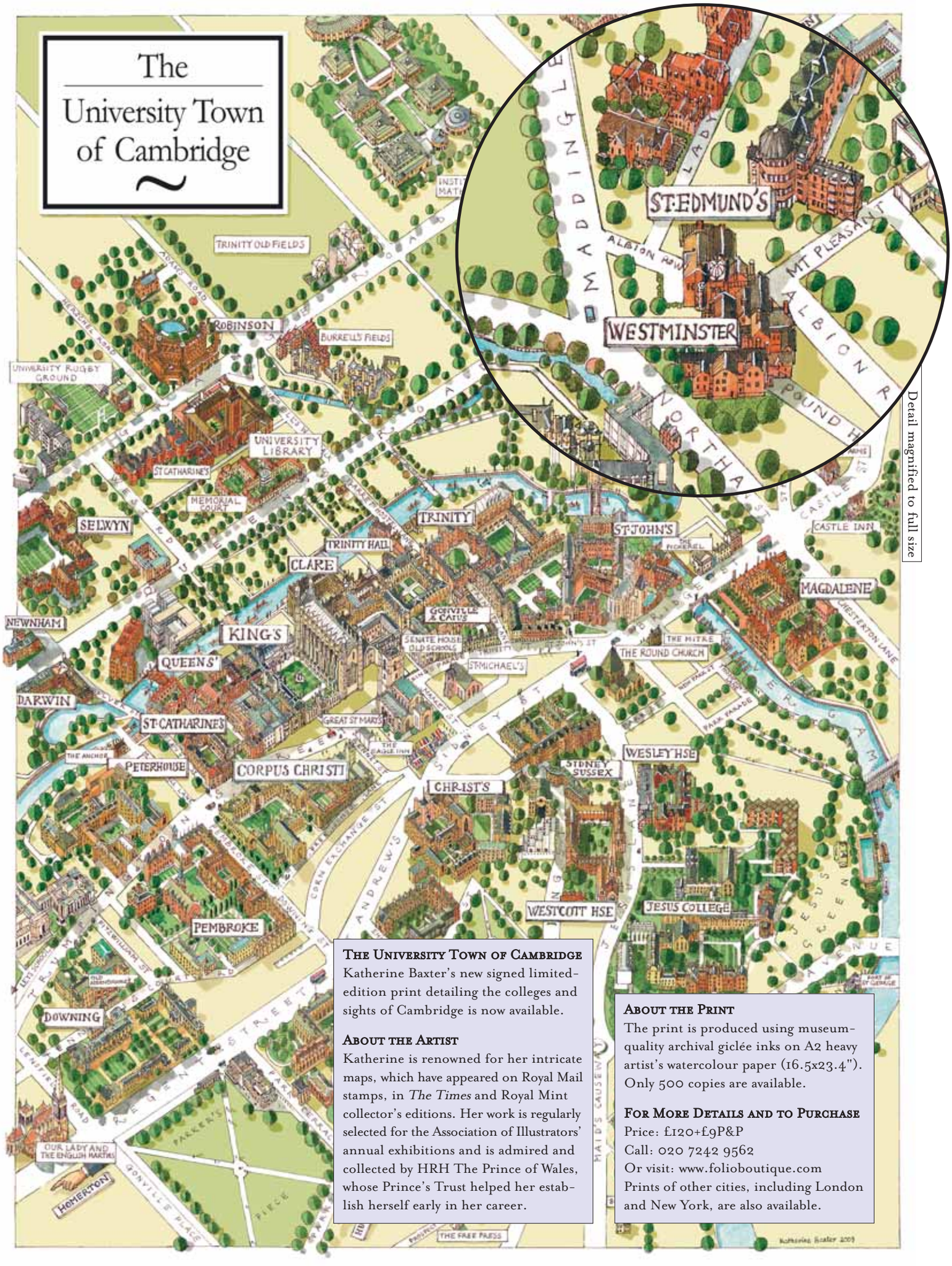
Words **Jeremy Mynott**
Photography **Charlie Troman**

IN A FAMOUS PASSAGE, Bede compares human life to the flight of a bird through a banqueting hall: the bird flies in one door out of the dark of a winter's storm; for a few moments it enjoys the warmth and comfort; then it disappears through another door at the far end, never to be seen again. Birds have been providing such images for us from the earliest times. In one of the very first examples of European art from ancient Greece, two swallows tumble together in the sky, instantly recognisable as markers of the season we eagerly await each year. Why are birds so prominent in our minds and metaphors?

Consider landscapes. The word has an interesting history. 'Landscape' was first used to refer not to the scenery but to the act of representing it in a painting, and only later did it transfer to what was painted, when in the 18th and 19th centuries people developed a taste for the picturesque and started thinking of the Lake District as 'magnificent', Constable country as 'charming' and so on. So 'landscape' acquired this double sense of being both something 'out there', the brute physical facts of geology as shaped by history (rocks, rivers, woods), and also an idea to which we contribute in our imaginations through the reactions and associations we bring to it. Mountains are not 'magnificent' in themselves: we make them so.

Isn't it the same with birds? Birds are certainly 'out there'. There are some 10,000 species, distributed through out the whole world from the Arctic to the Antarctic in every kind of environment (polar regions, jungles, deserts, oceans, mountains, cultivated land, gardens and the middle of huge cities). Once you become sensitive to birds you can't help seeing (and hearing) them everywhere. In this sense birds too are just physical objects – in this case biological species adapted by evolution to take the various different forms that can be classified, studied, recorded and experienced. But they are also here 'in our heads': they populate our minds and imaginations (and sometimes our nightmares, as Alfred Hitchcock well understood). We have opinions and feelings about birds, they stimulate associations and they are embedded in our language as metaphors: so we know just what is meant when we call someone a dodo, vulture, magpie, albatross, grouse or gannet; or when we label politicians as hawks and doves; or make verbs of bird names like rook, gull, snipe, crane, lark, swan and crow; and indeed some of this is even unconscious – for example, 'jinx' is the ancient Greek name for a wryneck, thought to be a bird of ill-omen.

And then, once the birds are in our heads, they go out into the world again, this time as symbols. Cambridge is full of such birds. Look up at the St John's gatehouse in Trinity Street and you will see an eagle on the coat of arms at the foot of St John. This is not the golden eagle known to scientists and birdwatchers as Aquila chrysaetos, but instead the 'idea of eagle', associated with St John because his gospel is held to be the most soaring, revelatory and far-seeing. This is also why eagles are often seen propping up lecterns in church pews across the country – there's a huge one in Great St Mary's just down the street. Make your way



The University Town of Cambridge

Katherine Baxter's new signed limited-edition print detailing the colleges and sights of Cambridge is now available.

About the Artist

Katherine is renowned for her intricate maps, which have appeared on Royal Mail stamps, in *The Times* and Royal Mint collector's editions. Her work is regularly selected for the Association of Illustrators' annual exhibitions and is admired and collected by HRH The Prince of Wales, whose Prince's Trust helped her establish herself early in her career.

About the Print

The print is produced using museum-quality archival giclée inks on A2 heavy artist's watercolour paper (16.5x23.4"). Only 500 copies are available.

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down Trumpington Street to Corpus and you will find a pelican (another religious symbol with a complicated history), and just round the corner in Bene't Street there is the more secular symbol of the Eagle pub. And you can't go into Heffers without seeing Puffins and Penguins. When Allen Lane was searching for a good marketing name for his new imprint in 1935, he canvassed various options like 'Dolphin', 'Phoenix' and 'Albatross' (this last quickly rejected, surely!) and fastened on to 'Penguin' because he thought it had 'a certain dignified flippancy'. Bird names have these sorts of connotations, regardless of their actual etymology (in fact, 'penguin' comes from the Latin, pinguis, meaning 'fat').

Birds are also used for many other kinds of branding: on national flags (eagles again) and on commercial products – wallpaper, mugs, T-shirts … and biscuit tins. I had an urgent call one day from a distinguished professor at the University about an interesting sighting he had made in south Cambridge. We made a field trip together to Waitrose to 'obtain a specimen', as they used to say of birds that were shot to be identified. In this case it was a splendid Christmas biscuit tin featuring a traditional snowy scene with a partridge in a pear tree. The partridge (grey) has the doctrinal authority of the carol, even if ornithologically suspect (they don't sit in trees), but in this case the main interest was in the very unseasonal swallows and terns swooping in at the top. Knowledge of biscuit tin iconography is needed to explain these remarkable images.

Street names are another rich field. A few miles east of Cambridge is the town of Haverhill, where you will find a small estate with a bird theme. There are the expected Robin and Kingfisher Closes – estate agents are practised in such 'nominal cosmetics' – but you will also find the more surprising Gannet Close (there can't ever have been a gannet within 70 miles of Haverhill) and the astonishing Rosefinch Close (a very rare vagrant to Britain, evidently confused with a robin by residents I interviewed).

The ultimate case of this sort of town planning must be in Longreach, Queensland, in the Australian outback, where all the streets are named after birds. Indeed, with a basic knowledge of Australian species and their habitats, you can handily navigate yourself around, since all the streets running north/south are named after land birds and all those running east/west after water birds. The plan thus implements a taxonomy that goes back to Aristotle in the 4th century BC, remained unchanged for 2000 years, was adapted by the Cambridge natural theologian John Ray in the late 17th century, and then emerged again in the great work of 1797 by Thomas Bewick, whose History of British Birds was published in two volumes: Land Birds and Water Birds.

Birds, like landscapes, appear to us in many forms and attract many different kinds of interest. Some of these are aesthetic – we find birds beautiful both to look at and to listen to, and it is interesting to muse on just what the criteria are. Some are scientific – it is endlessly fascinating to explore such aspects of bird behaviour as migration, courtship and song, and this curiosity spreads downwards all the way from the specialist to the ordinary garden watcher. Some seem to be more acquisitive or competitive, like the obsession the kind of birder known as a twitcher may have with counting and listing species identified. This is in fact a phenomenon of some cultural and psychological interest in itself, and relates to some other kinds of hunting and collecting.

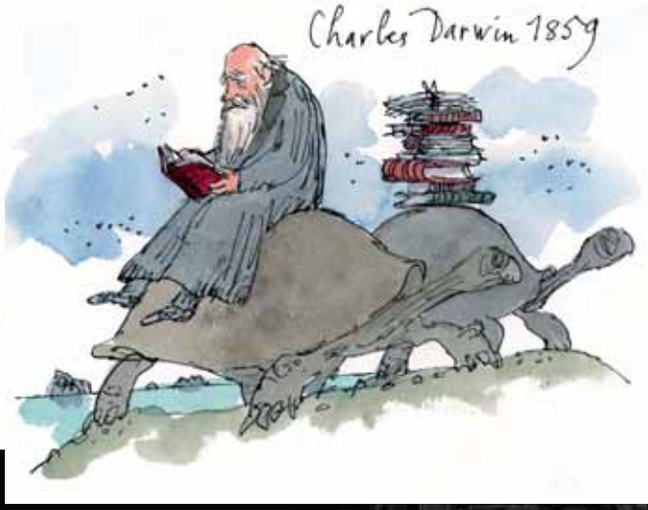
Consider the 'Mona Lisa Twitch', for example. If you approach the famous painting in the Louvre you will encounter a large group of people clustered around the great work. What is interesting, though, is that most of them are just photographing it with their mobiles or digital cameras held aloft; they all want to have *seen* it but no one actually seems to want to *look* at it very much. What they want is a souvenir to confirm the occasion and add to their collection. They then move on rapidly to other sights in Paris on their check-list. But for most of us, I suggest, the pleasure and interest in birds is more often a matter of association. We relate birds to the times, places and settings in which we experience them: the barn owl over the marsh at dusk, the swift screaming round our cities in high summer, the robin in the garden in winter, the oystercatcher piping on the shore, the electric blue flash of the kingfisher along the stream, the eagle soaring over the mountain ridge. These Proustian moments stay in our mind's eye or ear and may define encounters of personal significance for us. But are they universally shared across time and culture? Most of us find the swallow's song a cheerful and pleasing conversational outpouring, but the ancient Greeks, who so admired the grace and beauty of its flight and plumage, may have heard this rather differently, since they had a myth (Tereus and Philomela) to explain why the swallow couldn't actually sing but could only twitter tunelessly; indeed the comic dramatist Aristophanes likens its voice to some barbaric tongue translated from the Thracian (the worst ethnic slur he could think of). So I challenge Keats's famous lines on the nightingale:

The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown;
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.

These 'self-same songs' may mean very different things at different times, even within the history of a single life, and the differences may be precisely what make them emotionally significant.

'I had an urgent call one day from a distinguished professor about an interesting sighting he had made in south Cambridge. We made a field trip together to Waitrose to obtain a specimen: in this case, a splendid Christmas biscuit tin.'

Jeremy Mynott, is the former CEO of Cambridge University Press, and author of Birdscapes: Birds in Our Imagination and Experience, published by Princeton University Press. *We would like to thank the Museum of Zoology for their kind help and participation. www.zoo.cam.ac.uk/museum*



AN INFORMAL PANORAMA

To celebrate the 800th anniversary, illustrator Quentin Blake (Downing 1953) has created a mural depicting the University's history.

To celebrate the 800th anniversary, the renowned illustrator Quentin Blake (Downing 1953) has produced his own distinctive pictorial history of the University of Cambridge.

Entitled 'Cambridge 800: An Informal Panorama', the 13 drawings form a mural more than 20 metres long, depicting some of the University's most recognisable alumni and personalities.

Henry VIII with the choir of King's College Chapel, Lord Byron with his pet bear and Charles Darwin riding a Galapagos tortoise all make whimsical appearances.

The mural has been donated by the University to Addenbrooke's Hospital, where it will form a centrepiece of the hospital's Art Walk, opened in 2002. This is not the first time that Blake has produced work for such a setting. He is patron of the Nightingale Project, a charity that puts art in hospitals, and began producing murals for hospitals and health centres in London and Paris in 2006.

Blake has already made a high-profile contribution to the anniversary year. In January, his drawings of two of Cambridge's most famous alumni, Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin, were a highlight of the light show which ran over three days and launched the 800th anniversary celebrations.

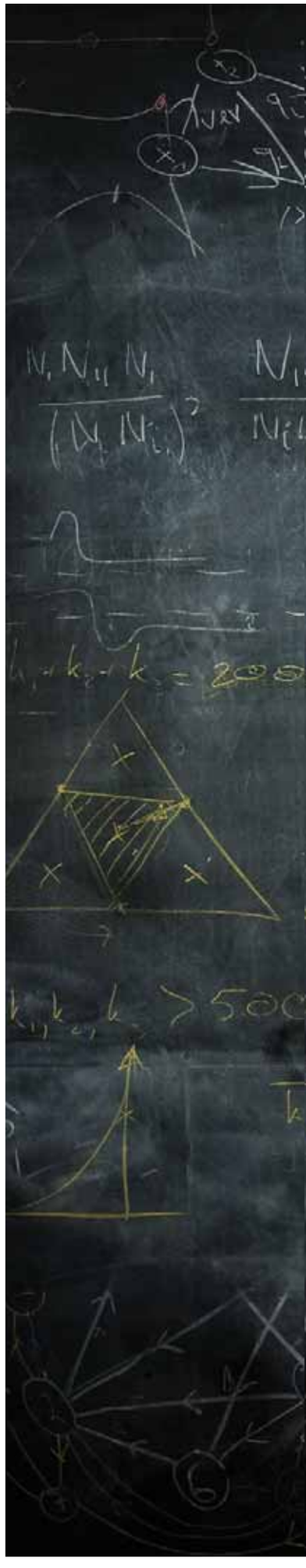
The illustrator has remained close to the University since his undergraduate days reading English (as well as a BA, he was awarded an honorary degree in 2004). In September 2008 he stepped down as president of Downing Alumni Association but maintains his commitment to the College. He is also an Honorary Fellow at Downing.

A small range of merchandise featuring Blake's images – including posters, Christmas cards, postcards and mugs – will be available soon at the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Botanic Garden and online at: www.fitzwilliammuseumshop.co.uk.

For more details, please contact the 800th Anniversary Team on +44 (0)1223 761672 or visit www.800.cam.ac.uk.

Astronomer and mathematician **Professor John D Barrow** says that uncertainty is the natural state of physicists - it has to be, because the universe is a very mysterious place.

TO INFINITIES AND BEYOND...



Words **Mandy Garner**
Photography **David Yeo**

JOHN BARROW IS THAT RARE THING: a true polymath. In an era when everyone is a specialist, he appears to be able to turn his hand to almost anything.

He is a populariser of science, leads Cambridge's unique maths outreach programme, the Millennium Mathematics Project, has written an award-winning play and is an expert not only in maths but also astrophysics. He was Vice-President of Clare Hall. Oh, and on the side, he is also a bit of an athlete, having beaten Steve Ovett in the 800 metres in his youth.

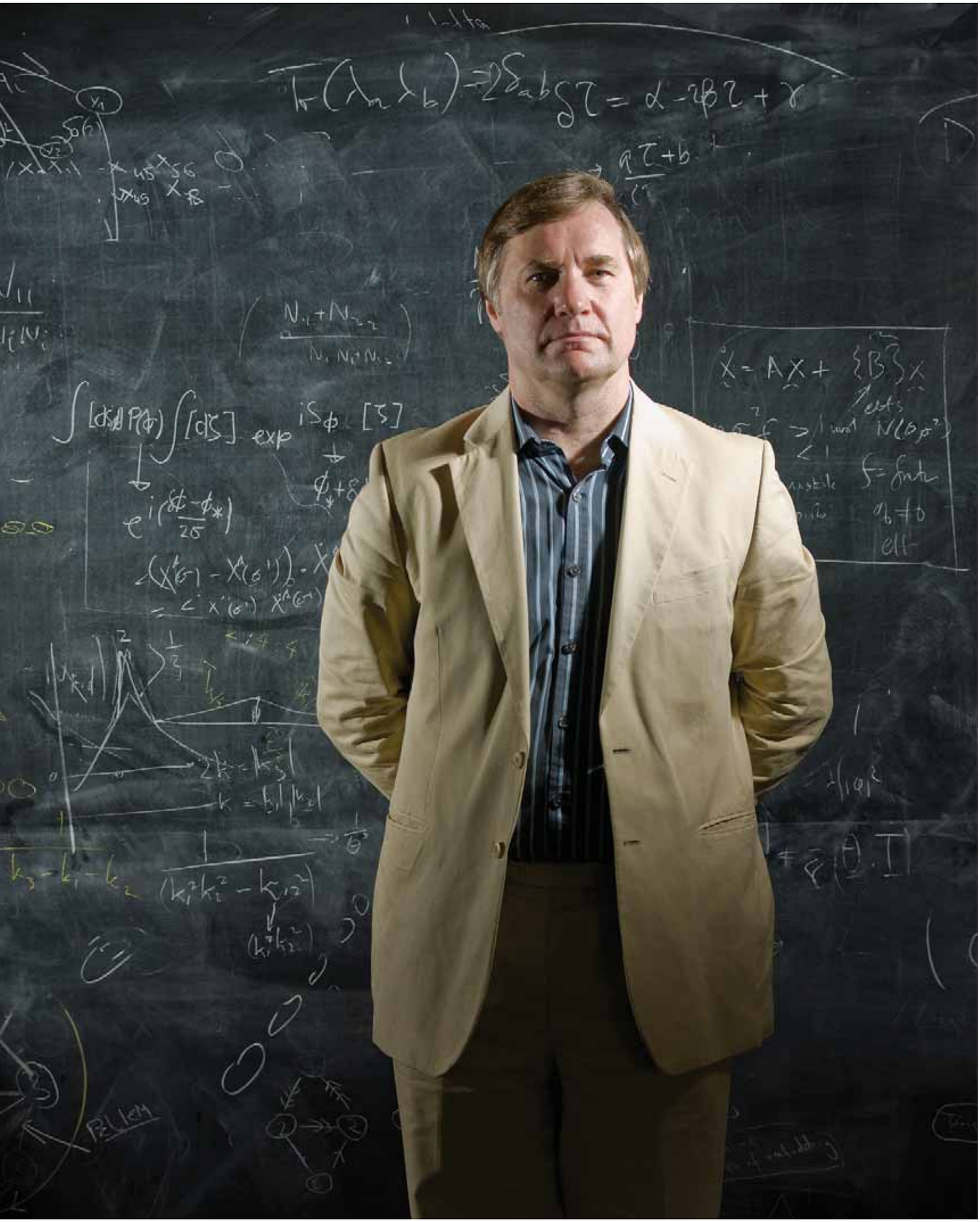
Yet, despite all his accomplishments, Barrow appears very modest. His office in the Centre for Mathematical Sciences, a futuristic and appropriately geometrically shaped building, is compact and lined with books, including those he read as a teenager, such as The Stars by Roger Tayler. His passion for maths and astronomy is palpable.

However, Barrow's first qualifications were in the humanities. At school, sat his English A Level at 15 and two other arts A Levels at the end of the first year of sixth form. Indeed, it was not until his final year at school that he finally sat four science A levels.

He says his parents "were not science people". However, when Barrow started at Ealing Grammar School in 1964, his brother-in-law gave him a chemistry set and science books which he used to construct a big chemistry lab. "I was creating appalling smells and colours which would no doubt be forbidden today," he says. At 15, he got hooked on astronomy after figuring out that by using simple maths and physics he could "understand how the stars worked".

He admits he was a "slightly unusual" teenager, but says the school gave its pupils a lot of freedom. It was the kind of school that no longer exists, he says – a boys' grammar school with some highly skilled and motivated teachers. His chemistry teacher had a PhD, another was a part-time university lecturer and two of the maths teachers had firsts from Cambridge. "It was before PCs were invented which brought the possibility of highly paid jobs for the kind of people who would have become maths teachers," he says.

After taking a first class degree in maths at the University of Durham, Barrow went on to do a PhD in astrophysics at Oxford and from there to the Astronomy Department at the University of California,



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CV

1974
Graduates from Van Mildert College, Durham University, with a First in mathematics.

1981-99
Begins as lecturer in the Astronomy Centre at the University of Sussex.

1983
Publishes his first book of popular science, The Left Hand of Creation: The Origin and Evolution of the Expanding Universe.

1999
Appointed Professor of Mathematical Sciences in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Cambridge.

2003
Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

2006
Awarded Templeton Prize for using 'insights from mathematics, physics, and astronomy to set out wide-ranging views that challenge scientists and theologians to cross the boundaries of their disciplines'.

2008
Awarded the Faraday Prize by the Royal Society for 'excellence in communicating science to UK audiences'.

2009
Awarded the Kelvin Medal by the Institute of Physics.

Berkeley, returning in 1981 to the University of Sussex where he became Director of the Astronomy Centre.

While he was at Sussex he turned his hand to writing the popular science books which have brought him to the attention of a huge readership around the world and have led to his giving lectures in the Vatican, at Number 10 Downing Street and at Windsor Castle.

His popular research includes drawing parallels between science and art, how science images have influenced the artistic imagination, for instance, the geometrical shapes of the London Underground map, and the parallels between actual scientific images, such as the first images from the Hubble telescope, and artistic depictions of the discovery of the western frontiers of the United States. He has explored the beginnings of probability and has looked at how maths has been used in race fixing.

Yet he has also done 'serious' research into themes like nothingness. He spoke at the World Science Festival last year about aspects of nothing. He says modern quantum physics shows that there is never an absence of substance. "A vacuum is not nothing, it is just the lowest energy level and things can be created from 'nothing'," he says. "Just as in music silence can speak volumes."

Barrow's interest in the philosophy of science runs alongside his scientific research. His main research interests are in cosmology, the possible changes in the constants of nature, dark matter candidates and theories of gravity.

Much of Barrow's work touches on questions of the mystery of the universe. Barrow himself is a member of the Emmanuel United Reformed Church and in 2006 he won the prestigious Templeton Prize for "progress toward research or discoveries about spiritual realities". He says physicists tend to study the laws of nature. "The laws are highly mathematical but very mysterious. You cannot see or touch them. There are mysterious symmetries in the universe. It is no coincidence that biologists like [Richard] Dawkins feel very uncomfortable with religion and unanswered questions because they are dealing with the messy complexities of nature. Physicists are very used to laws of nature that have no explanation of the same sort. They are used to dealing with uncertainty and being undogmatic. There is a real cultural difference between biologists and physicists."

Barrow's passion for his subject has translated into his books, which include those that draw on his interest in the arts, such as Cosmic Imagery, a book which shows the importance of images for illuminating the meaning of the universe. But they have also spilled over – perhaps unexpectedly – into drama.

After taking part in a panel discussion in Italy about science's portrayal in the theatre, Barrow was asked to write a science play. Michael Frayn's play Copenhagen was touring Europe at the time; Barrow felt that on the rare occasions science appeared on the stage it was usually in relation to scientists as people, rather than to the science itself.

"We are used to the idea that there is musical appreciation and people can go to concerts without having to be musicians," he says. "Why can't people appreciate maths and science in the same way as drama and music?"

The outcome was Infinities, written in English and then translated into Italian. "[Infinities] is an abstract topic but one which would appeal to the general public more than something about complex numbers," he says. Directed by Piccolo Teatro's Luca Ronconi, the play, which is divided into five parts that are then performed in repeating sequence on five separate stages, explores scenarios ranging from an infinite hotel, an old people's home where people live for ever, to parallel events and time travel. Despite its inherent complexity, the play was a staggering success, winning the prestigious Premi Ubu award. All from a first-time playwright.

Theatre might seem a departure, but really it is all part of the same thing: an overwhelming enthusiasm for getting people interested in science and maths. It's that enthusiasm that makes John Barrow the perfect choice to head Cambridge's Millennium Mathematics Project, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. Under Barrow's leadership, what began as two outreach programmes – an online maths programme (NRICH) and a mathematical sciences magazine, Plus – has grown to include maths video conferencing for schools, roadshows, and the Fast Forward Maths Programme, for children from deprived areas and their teachers.

Barrow takes me through the NRICH website in his office, showing off its new maths challenges. They are tagged by difficulty and by stage and aimed at giving primary and secondary school pupils and their teachers the kind of material that will stretch and interest pupils. He is clearly enormously proud of Millennium Maths, perhaps because it can go some way to meet a need created by what is widely believed to be a crisis in maths in schools.

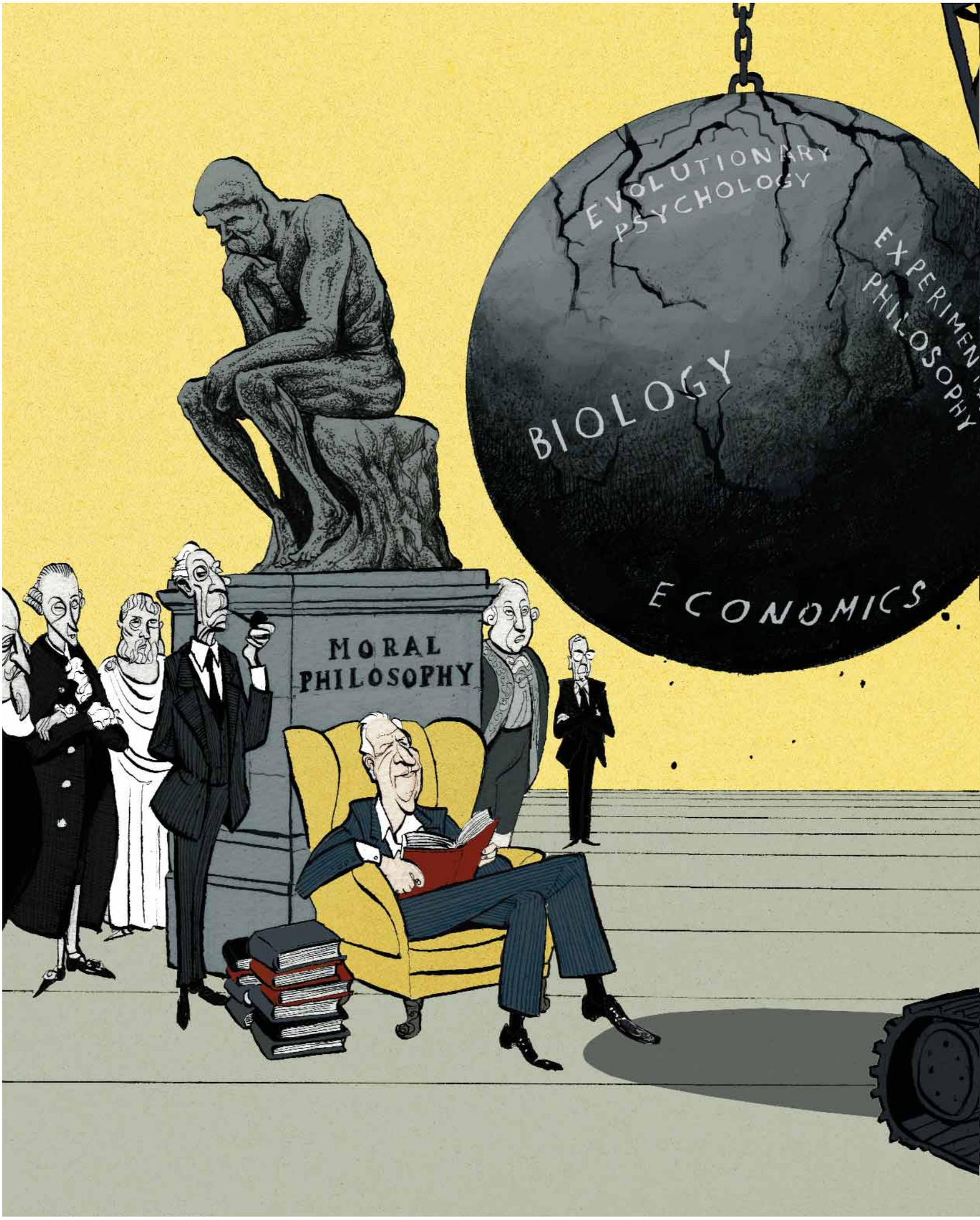
It is hard to quantify the project's impact, but Barrow says Cambridge maths students have mentioned to him that they accessed the site while at school - and the audience statistics themselves are impressive. NRICH gets 8.8 million page views a year. Plus got 2.8 million page views last year. "No print publication in science gets that many readers," he says proudly.

Despite the project's success and the fact that Millennium Maths won the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2006, fundraising for the programme is still a constant worry. He thinks the programme may enlarge its focus in the years ahead to do more with teachers as they influence more people. With typical emphasis on enthusing the largest possible audience, he says "that's the way to make big changes that will last".

Barrow's workload shows no signs of diminishing. He is currently Professor of Geometry at Gresham College in London, giving lunchtime lectures to the public. Previously Gresham Professor of Astronomy, he is the only lecturer to have held two separate Gresham chairs since 1657. He receives invitations to speak almost daily and has had to learn to say 'no' to ensure he has time for writing his books.

It is fortunate, then, that Barrow appears to be able to write anywhere, including on planes, citing his three children – all now grown up – as a good training in the ability to focus. And, appropriately enough, he describes his writing work in mathematical terms. He reckons an average book to be about 75,000 words, and so will dedicate his evenings for a couple of weeks to the writing of a daily 1000 words.

He says matter-of-factly: "If I can do that for a couple of weeks, I get a substantial portion of the book done and in any case, once I have done one evening's work I know there are only 74 more to do." It is clearly a winning formula.


EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY
BIOLOGY
ECONOMICS
MORAL PHILOSOPHY

ESSAY: IN DEFENCE OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Words **Professor Simon Blackburn**
Illustration **Morton Morland**

Moral philosophy is under attack from biologists, psychologists, economists and even media columnists. But don't underestimate the discipline, says **Professor Simon Blackburn** – the more we look at moral philosophy's rivals, the more we realise we need it.

WHO NEEDS MORAL PHILOSOPHY? Not 21st-century man. Human behaviour is all in our genes (or, for the economists, in our inevitable selfishness). Need an applied, practical approach? Turn to the media, where newspaper columnists hold forth on subjects as varied and fundamental as the nature of goodness (The Telegraph: "We pay dearly for our belief that evil can be cured"), and the meaning of love (The Mirror: "Why do people in relationships cheat?").

But just as we need clean air, we need a clean moral climate – and one of the tasks of moral philosophy is to worry about whether we have it. An examination of the alternatives demonstrates just why this is true.

A current claimant to moral philosophy's throne is biology, and its offspring, evolutionary psychology. EO Wilson's famous remark about Marxism, "wonderful theory; wrong species", encapsulates the idea that what is possible for human beings is written into their genes, and that airy-fairy theories and utopian constructions cannot work unless they are firmly tethered to the unalterable facts of human nature.

Similarly, Margaret Thatcher's notorious remark in the same vein, that there is no such thing as society, was believable because the ideology of the self-interested agent in eternal competition with others seemed in line with the theory of evolution by natural selection. Thatcher seems not to have taken the time to notice that language, money and law (the last two were especially dear to her government) were socially constructed and sustained. But then, the lady was not for pausing.

Whenever a new set of 'psychological implications of Darwinism' is unveiled, we need to consider carefully first, whether they are true, and second, whether they are implications. Usually they are neither. We don't have to be self-centred and unresponsive, our psychopathic brains bent only on getting ourselves to the top of any competitive pile around us; it is quite consistent with evolution by natural selection to suppose that we are endowed with plastic, responsive, empathetic and socially intelligent brains ready to be moulded by culture and society. In other words, perhaps we are adapted to hang together rather than to hang separately, provided others are hanging in as well.

The word 'culture' can raise hackles among hard-nosed scientific reductionists. Interestingly, it would not have raised Darwin's hackles: the author of On the Origin of Species saw perfectly clearly how groups with firm moralities are apt to do better than groups with none. In any event, the hard-nosed reductionist is in the grip of a philosophical mistake, for culture is not a phantasm. It is simply a summation of the environmental influences on each of us, taking into account the fact that the people surrounding us are a very important part of that environment. It is doubtless because of my genes that I am able to speak a language, but it is because of my culture that I speak English. Many psychological variables are changeable: for all we know a confluence of cultural, environment and other forces could throw up people as averse to inequality and economic injustice as American Republicans are to taxes.

Evolutionary psychology is an easy target. The new, scientific, incontrovertible view of what we are really like, as revealed by neurological study, is more challenging: the science of the brain trumps philosophical reflection. Here too, however, caution is necessary. First of all, brain events, just as much as human behaviour, need interpretation, and indeed cannot be interpreted except by calibration against that behaviour.

For instance, it is only possible to correlate brain activity with emotional arousal or emotional deficiency by being sure that the subject is emotionally aroused or emotionally deficient. That has first to be manifest in peoples' sayings and doings. But even when a fairly robust result is established by these means, a lot of testing is needed to turn it into a fixed law of human behaviour.

Suppose, for instance, a large population of subjects undergo brain scans that show that when derogatory remarks are passed about their dogs, brain activity associated with emotional arousal jumps off the scale. Before laying it down as a law of nature that this must be so, we would need to know to what extent a stoical or Buddhist transformation of mastering the passions could change such things. Until we have tried this, it would be unscientific to declare such events impossible, especially as history and anthropology suggest that probably they are not – however much fun it is to play with the scanners.

Science, however, is not the only challenger to the moral philosopher's position: the selfish gene has filtered into economics, too. For a first example consider the dominant idea that the satisfaction of a person's desires or preferences is the best measure of their welfare, and the related idea that the amount people are prepared to pay in advance for something is the best measure of its value.

Both ideas appear to dominate government thinking: they underlie the constant demands that arts and humanities studies, just as much as mathematics and pure and applied sciences, should demonstrate 'impact'. In practice, this means impact on the economy, objectively measurable (that is, without deploying judgement) and showing how much people think it is worth paying for them. Both these ideas need critical attention.

Preferences are treacherous companions: wise are the many myths in which wishes become curses. In a modern economy, more often than not, it is not desire so much as seduction – by propagandists and salesmen – that directs our wishes. In this scenario, desire is really a confection of vague fantasy and imaginings, fears and dreams, and frankly, the less reality brings them to fruition the better. People dream of living the lives of celebrities and playboys, but should instead be thankful that their guardian angels prevent any such thing – as the example of the many broke lottery winners demonstrates.

Secondly, willingness to pay is a queer index of value. In January 2007, the world-class violinist Joshua Bell played six Bach pieces on a Stradivarius violin for an hour in a Washington DC station and collected the princely sum of $32 from over 1000 commuters. Yet a single seat to hear him playing the same pieces at a concert hall would cost well into the hundreds. And then, who is asking the question? If you were not already acquainted with Beethoven's late quartets, the poems of Donne or the paintings of Titian you might not be prepared to pay any great sum to have them preserved. "What are they to me?" you might reasonably ask. If you were also one of the people to whom, government constantly reminds us, social expenditure should be 'accountable', Beethoven, Donne and Titian might find themselves abandoned.

On the other hand once you are acquainted with these great works, even the idea of a monetary value may sound sacrilegious, and you

'Willingness to pay is a queer index of value. In January 2007, the world-class violinist Joshua Bell played six Bach pieces on a Stradivarius violin for an hour in a Washington DC station and collected the princely sum of $32. Yet a single seat to hear him play the same pieces at a concert hall would cost hundreds of dollars.'

might then be prepared to pay almost anything not to have them destroyed. Similarly you cannot know how valuable an education is before you experience it, but once you have, perhaps no incentive on earth would induce you to return to your previous state.

A more fundamental problem is that 'what people are prepared to pay' is not a fixture, but itself a moral issue. If we as a nation are not prepared to pay much for wilderness, art, music, architecture, philosophy or intelligent television, shouldn't that be fought, not fawned upon? Of course, often we are not prepared to pay much to preserve some aspect of life until it is too late, and it is only with hindsight that we recognise the value of what has been lost. Lord Keynes feared that "We are capable of shutting off the sun and the stars because they do not pay a dividend" and made it the lynchpin of his support for public subsidy of the arts.

All this has, of course, been known at least since Hazlitt, Coleridge, Carlyle, and others took issue with the utilitarian political economists of the 19th century. They lost the battle then, but it always needs fighting again, perhaps under John Ruskin's slogan that "there is no wealth but life". This suggests replacing economic measure with ones starting with the capacities, opportunities, freedoms and education embodied in the lives of people, and then using those as measures of their wealth, in substantial disregard of current preferences or of GDP. As Wittgenstein said, "If you put a ruler alongside a table, you may be using the ruler to measure the table, but you could equally be using the table to measure the ruler." The amount the public is prepared to pay to hear good music or read good books may be more a measure of the minds of the people than the value of the offerings.

The claims of science and economics to the role of philosopher may be well rehearsed, but just like those other disciplines, moral philosophy itself is not static. Just as technology has changed our working lives and personal relationships, so it is also changing not just the content, but also the means of conducting philosophical enquiry.

A new kid on the block in moral philosophy, and increasingly popular in the United States, is the movement known as 'experimental philosophy'. Principally, this garners information from web questionnaires on how people think about such things as responsibility, intention, proximity and outcomes in various scenarios. The most familiar are embellishments of the 'trolley problem' introduced to moral philosophy by Philippa Foot some decades ago. Here a railway trolley is careering down a track, certain to kill five workers, unless you pull a lever deflecting it onto a side track, on which unfortunately there is one worker who will then be killed. Is it permissible, or obligatory, to pull the lever? Would you say the same about pushing an innocent but fat bystander off a bridge into the path of the trolley, stopping it but only by killing him?

The evidence suggests that people worldwide have substantially similar reactions to these scenarios (we are more uncomfortable about using the fat bystander to stop the trolley than about simply deflecting it), and this in turn has led some to suggest an innate 'moral module' enforcing something like a worldwide similarity of moral views on people. The idea derives from Chomsky's similar views about innate grammars, although it ignores the many salient differences between coming to a moral verdict and coming to a verdict about grammaticality. Be that as it may, the danger lies in supposing that since nature has done it for us we can lie back and neglect children's moral educations. They will grow up with the right views just as they grow up with hair. My only comment about that is that I am glad to be old enough to hope not to be around when the experiment comes to fruition.

So what do moral philosophers do at the beginning of the 21st century? To some extent what we have always done, just as dramatists and poets do what they have always done. We try to understand where we are and where we might get to in the light of everything we can know about human beings and their lives. Some look to Plato and Aristotle, Hume or Kant, others look to the models with which game theorists and experimental economists like to analyse different situations, others learn from literature or history or anthropology, and others, as we have seen, garner empirical results from neuroscience or questionnaires.

Some even sit in armchairs with books. If I myself want to know what to think about responsibility and intention I consult the enormous historical deposit of philosophical and legal theory on risk, harm, intention, causation, accomplice liability and deflected threats. This does not require taking too much notice of web questionnaires. That is perhaps a generational thing, but what I firmly deny is that one approach is 'scientific' whereas the other is not.

My own work has been mainly with notions like objectivity, relativity, reason, knowledge and truth as they apply, or fail to apply, in the practical world. It proves impossible to get a sensible view of these without an entire philosophy of mind and language as part of it. On good days I can even convince myself that I have glimpsed such a view, but often, like Newton, I fear that there is an ocean of knowledge out there waiting to be discovered.

Shelley said that poets were the unacknowledged legislators of the world – and by poets he meant philosophers who knew how to write. Keynes famously concluded the General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money by saying that the world is ruled by little else than the ideas of economists and political philosophers, while practical people who regard themselves as above all that are simply the slaves of defunct theorists. The way out is to try to do better.

Professor Simon Blackburn is professor of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge. His latest book, How to Read Hume, is published by Granta Books.

Want to give something back but not sure how you can make a difference? Six alumni explain how they are contributing to University life.

TIME. SKILLS. EXPERTISE.

Words **Olivia Gordon**
Photographs **Charlie Troman and David Yeo**

Cambridge was built on philanthropy. Colleges, professorships, bursaries, scholarships and buildings have all been made possible by alumni generosity. But financial donations are not the only way in which alumni help to sustain the collegiate University: time, skills and experience could prove just as valuable.

In fact, contributing in this way far is more common than many alumni realise. Lord Watson of Richmond (Jesus 1962) is a case in point. Alongside his financial donations, his expertise as a presenter of BBC programmes such as Panorama and The Money Programme, and as a doyen of advertising, politics and chairing boards has proved invaluable. "So many people just think in terms of writing a cheque – but not everybody can," he says. His voluntary work for the University began when he was rung by the Vice-Chancellor's

Top left: Ed Stourton
Bottom left: Emma Fletcher
Top right: Amy Hunter Pescetto
Bottom right: Lord Watson of Richmond

office to say she had to appear on BBC Radio 4's Today programme – as it was her first week in post, would he lead a training session with her? "I did it pro bono with a tape recorder in Shepherd's Bush. She is a powerful communicator and advocate for the University and it was really good fun," says Watson. Ever since, he's advised the Vice-Chancellor on communications generally. "I realised I could make a direct contribution – not financially, but in terms of knowledge and imagination – which actually has an effect."

Often it's about professional skills, rather than industry expertise. In the mid-1990s, Watson – a history graduate – was surprised to be invited to join, of all things, the University's Chemistry Advisory Board. "It may seem odd," he explains, "but they needed a non-chemist to give a different perspective. I had to lay out a vision for the contribution of Chemistry at Cambridge for the 21st century – which is, I suppose, an historian's perspective." He's now doing similar consultancy for the Engineering Department, as well as being an honorary fellow of Jesus, Trustee of the Churchill College Archives, and Chairman of the Cambridge Foundation.

Of course, when you're busy establishing a career, 'giving something back' doesn't always seem a priority. Broadcaster and English Literature graduate Ed Stourton (Trinity 1979) now contributes in a host of ways – from sitting on the Alumni Advisory Board, to helping with alumni weekends, to editing a book for Trinity – but didn't consider reconnecting with Cambridge until later in his career. "Most of us go off and do things with life and come back to Cambridge later on. Your attention is focused on your career, but later on you have more to offer. We'd like to encourage more recent alumni to stay in touch – it isn't just about money."

In fact, newer graduates are getting involved, for example, those of Cambridge's youngest college, Robinson, the oldest of whom are in their mid- to late 40s. Director of Development Helen Cornish says, "Many alumni stay in touch and contribute in other ways as well as financially. It is very rare for them to lose contact with the college entirely."

Robinson law graduates host an annual dinner for fellow alumni and current students. John Pritchard, a former international rower and member of the London 2012 Olympic Committee, returns regularly to coach the Robinson boats each year. Many alumni are involved in graduate recruitment or give careers advice and mentoring to current students and fellow alumni by email or phone, or in person.

Starting up alumni groups is one of the most popular ways to re-engage with university life; overall, there are 332 regional Cambridge alumni groups around the world (the oldest known is the Cambridge and Oxford Society, Tokyo, formed in 1905). So why do alumni invest so much time in maintaining a connection with their fellow alumni?

Alumni like Lord Watson are playing a key role in advising the Vice-Chancellor on the strategy and direction of the 800th Anniversary Campaign to raise £1billion.

A Campaign Board, consisting of 18 committed alumni and friends who have made leadership gifts to the 800th Anniversary Campaign, provide advice and counsel about Campaign strategy and work closely with other volunteers, hosting events and informing and engaging others. The Board, formed in 2005, is chaired by Sir David Walker (Queens', 1958) and Dr Bill Janeway (Pembroke, 1965) and meets twice a year in Cambridge.

Thanks to the work of the Board and that of many other volunteers, the Campaign will probably top the £900 million mark in the financial year 2008-2009. More information will be available in the Campaign Report, available at the end of November.

Victoria Kimonides graduated from Newnham in 1998 with a PhD in Neuroscience, and is now a director at Microsoft in Greece. She runs the Hellenic Cambridge Alumni Association, bringing together 120 Greek alumni from their 20s to their 60s to network and socialise with, as the group describe it, 'likeminded, well-educated people'. They also support University activities in Greece, and the current batch of Greek students at Cambridge.

"I can still be an active member of the University. This is the beauty of it," she says. "When we matriculate we become members of our colleges for life. My friends and family are amazed by the passion that I have for running the group – but as a true Newnhamite, I feel the need to give back and promote everything that I was taught there."

The idea of 'alumni relations' was born the moment the first student graduated, but in recent years it has become more important and has seen significant growth. A University Alumni Relations team has been in place since 1990 and this year merged with the former Cambridge Society. The new Cambridge Alumni Relations Office (CARO) has also established an Alumni Advisory Board (AAB) to help find new ways for alumni (and in particular, recent graduates) to get involved with the University.

Former Land Economy student Emma Fletcher (nee Veale, Fitzwilliam 1999), is now a chartered surveyor and one of the 11,000 alumni still living in or around Cambridge. As well as being heavily involved in the Cambridge University Land Society – one of the oldest and most active professional Cambridge University alumni associations – Fletcher has volunteered to sit on the Alumni Advisory Board.

"My friends and family cannot understand how I fit it all in with a baby, and going back to work full time," she says, "but I'm lucky that I have an understanding husband and parents who don't mind babysitting or collecting 650 sticky buns from Fitzbillies the day before a dinner – and an employer who sees the benefits my alumni activities bring in terms of client networking."

Even current students can contribute by doing outreach volunteering. "I want to help dispel some of the myths about Cambridge," says Amy Hunter Pescetto, an undergraduate in her second year at Sidney Sussex reading Medicine. Hunter works as a 'Cambassador' for the Cambridge Admissions Office, going into state schools and talking to pupils, and working at guided tours and summer schools. She's been amazed to see the difference one person's contribution can make. "I particularly remember telling an inquisitive group of Year 7 boys that the Chemistry department was only a small part of the whole University," she says. "They asked whether I lived in the Chemistry department, and were even more surprised to learn that students lived elsewhere in Cambridge, in Colleges, without parents! I'll never forget their genuine astonishment – it was so amusing and endearing."

A remarkable 185,000 Cambridge alumni have made the effort to keep their contact details up to date – and as a reader of CAM you're one of them. If you're interested in taking your involvement one step further, the first port of call is the Alumni Relations Office to find out how you might help, whether it's by encouraging bright students to apply, starting a group, getting involved in events, or contributing skills and ideas to departments, colleges or boards.

"The financial generosity of alumni is vital to the University and very much appreciated, but the non-financial contributions are also critically important," says Head of Alumni Relations Nathalie Walker. "We're fortunate to have a large proportion of alumni willing to give back their time, skills and expertise, and we rely on them to be our advocates and ambassadors in, and our advisers from, the wider world."

Contact CARO on +44 (0)1223 332288 or at www.alumni.cam.ac.uk

Review

Our contributors

Professor Diane Reay
is Professor of Education at Cambridge. A sociologist working in education, Professor Reay specialises in research with a social justice agenda.

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University Matters
Deliberate diversity

Professor Alison Richard
Vice-Chancellor

On 1 October the Vice-Chancellor gave her annual Senate House address. This is an abridged version of Professor Alison Richard's speech. To read the full text, or to hear a recording of the address, please visit www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/v-c/speeches

Cambridge occupies a distinctive and distinguished place among universities, but our future health and that of UK higher education as a whole are interdependent. My goal is for Cambridge to remain an internationally acclaimed university, a magnet for the world's finest minds, a transformational force for good. But just as Cambridge's global reputation is a significant asset for many universities in this country, so we depend for our success on the university system to which we belong.

What has made the UK system so successful? Part of the answer to this question lies in the quality of what we provide, the talent we attract, and the diversity of strengths that, between us, we offer. The historic autonomy of this country's universities has surely been critical as well, underpinning creativity and experimentation for institutions and freedom of inquiry for individual academics.

But the success of the university system is threatened by an unresolved dilemma. Institutional diversity is a clear strength for students and society, and for universities themselves, yet public policy neither acknowledges this nor encourages it explicitly in national strategy. Why not?

One concern, which we must all share, is that diversity "by design" would reduce universities' autonomy. However, the funding arrangements in place today drive universities toward a single strategy. In a homogenous world, the depressed average will be the norm and the UK economy and society will suffer as a result. A second concern is that policies encouraging institutional diversity would map on to, and perpetuate, distinctions between students of differing social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Again, this is a concern for us all. Yet Cambridge admissions objectives, fervently espoused, run squarely counter to it. Those objectives are to seek out and admit students on the basis of merit. Social mobility, gender balance and ethnic mix are not driving forces, but they are important outcomes for society, and for Cambridge.

'Institutional diversity is a clear strength... yet public policy neither acknowledges this nor encourages it explicitly in national strategy. Why not?'

The idea of diversity "by design" raises legitimate concerns. Yet the current diversity of universities, appreciated as a strength by many, is at risk for want of mechanisms to sustain it. Is there a way out of the conundrum?

There is a middle ground between a "designed" system and the current course in the UK which is set to erode existing strengths. That middle ground would allow and indeed encourage institutional diversity and experiment. I call this middle ground "deliberate diversity". It is in the overwhelming interest of this country to find it.

Success in doing so will depend on broad societal acceptance of four propositions: (i) Students have a wide range of needs and talents, and should have a wide range of institutions available when considering further study, without barriers of socioeconomic background, gender or ethnicity standing in their way; (ii) post-secondary education and training are a public and private good and must be supported by multiple income streams; (iii) although the purposes of research are varied, fundamental research is of pre-eminent, long-term, importance; concentrated, sustained investment is essential to maintain the highest levels of international research competitiveness and the transformational contributions to society that flow from it; and (iv) universities must remain free to innovate, to shape their individual missions, and to excel in a variety of ways.

Three policy directions could enhance the high quality of the UK system today, amplifying its diversity without falling prey to the perceived perils of "design".

First, we need to do more to enable qualified students to pursue their ambitions across as well as within institutions. This would benefit students and also help address concerns about institutional diversity perpetuating distinctions within society.

Second, investments in research must continue to allow the concentration of funding necessary for international competitiveness. Scale and breadth are as important to research training as to research, and funding for PhD programmes should have more exacting criteria.

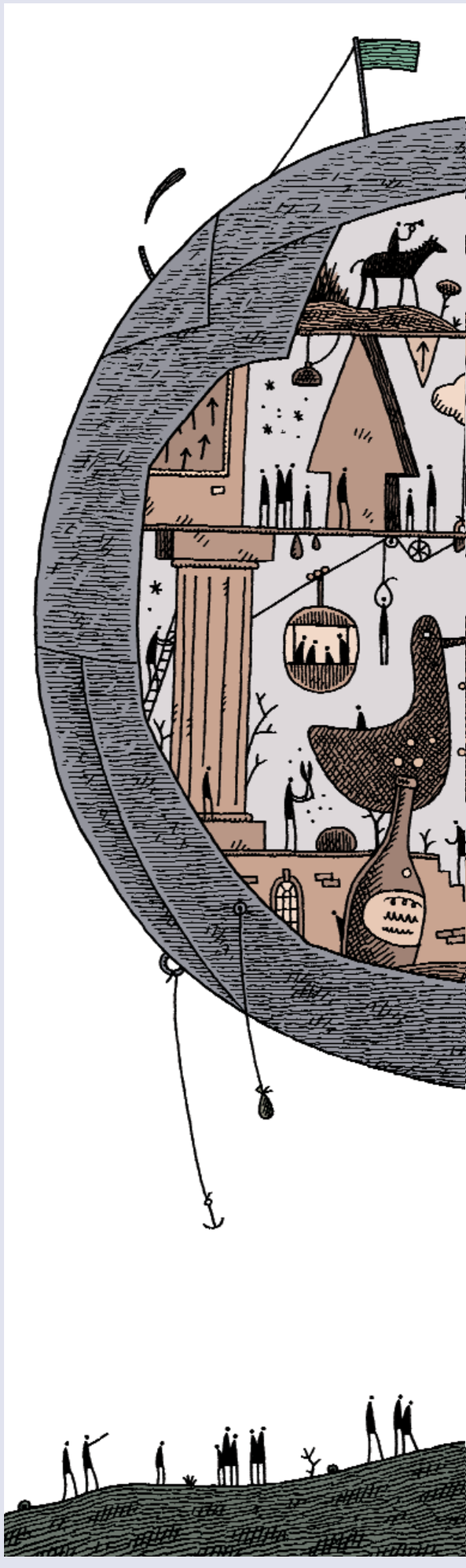
Third, public and private investment in higher education must continue to grow, and universities must have greater freedom to diversify and develop sources of income. Britain still spends less on higher education than most other OECD countries. This under-investment extends not only to the public purse but also to the private sector, including students and their families.

For Cambridge, the most significant feature of these propositions is less their financial consequences, vital as they are, than the assurance they would give. Cambridge has no entitlement to high levels of concentrated investments, public or private: holding fast to our values and ambitions, we must continue to merit those investments. But the assurance that the excellence of this University is valued by others and will be supported by government and society is essential to our future.

Debate:
A ladder to the top?

Professor of Education, **Diane Reay** and **Anastasia de Waal,** Head of Family and Education at Civitas, debate whether social mobility is primarily a working class issue.

Illustration **Tom Gauld**



Professor Diane Reay Social mobility is high on the agendas of all the political parties, and for all parties, social mobility is predominantly, if not exclusively, a working class issue, despite the fact that the term is usually avoided. We get 'disadvantaged', 'poor' and 'poverty' but when on the rare occasions the class word appears it is usually referring to 'the underclass'.

Political messages around social mobility are aimed at the working classes: and specifically the need for them to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and start seriously aspiring above their station. This focus is, amongst other things, a convenient means of allowing the middle and upper classes to slip out of view.

The uncomfortable truth is that social mobility implicates all of us, not least because a lot of the policies and practices of our political elites, both historically and currently, have been about maintaining social and economic privileges, rather than sharing them.

Anastasia de Waal The notion that the working classes are being told to 'mobilise' themselves upwards, that social mobility currently rests squarely on their shoulders, doesn't ring true. In fact, the major problem when it comes to social mobility today is precisely that the working classes have been disempowered, with both political parties placing social mobility in the hands of politicians. Far from slipping out of view, the ruling class are far too present in the pursuit of social mobility.

Clearly the chief way to narrow the educational gap would be to narrow the income gap. The introduction of the minimum wage was a very welcome move, but poor policy has resulted in a section of society falling into a workless abyss. What would empower the working class is what has made their categorisation redundant – work.

Under New Labour the number of young people not in employment, education or training has risen by 15%. In spite of high aspirations for the education system, too many young people are coming out of school ill equipped to join the labour force. The welfare system, in turn, has allowed a large number of these youngsters to just survive in a stagnant state of benefit dependency. A fairer, mobile society requires an education system that fosters opportunity, and policy that supports its progression.

DR I don't believe that concentrating on the educational system alone will work; it cannot compensate for society. We need to look beyond the educational system if social mobility is to become a reality.

By far the biggest influence on educational achievement is family background and what has the greatest impact here is the material and cultural resources families possess – which brings me back to social inequalities. Bigger income differences make the social structure more rigid and decrease opportunities for social mobility. 'Equal opportunities' becomes a significantly more distant prospect.

The Centre for Economics in Education at LSE has conducted research which demonstrates conclusively that as the income gap increases, social mobility declines. Similarly Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's book The Spirit Level shows that the most socially mobile societies such as Japan and Sweden are the most equal in terms

of income distribution, while the UK and US, with very high levels of income inequalities, are the least socially mobile.

But as we have seen in terms of the recent banking fiasco, the government has neither the will nor the courage to do anything other than tinker around the edges when it comes to dealing with growing levels of inequality.

AdW I agree that the education system cannot be an equalising panacea. However, I do think that schools have greater potential to generate the seeds of social mobility than they are currently allowed.

To do so, they need to be able to respond to pupils' needs. Together with an over-prescriptive curriculum, there is a confused equality-related notion that pupils must be treated as homogenous entities. This standardising approach is levelled at the middle, meaning that those below it, who are disproportionately from poor homes, are too often left behind.

Similarly, of course income inequality is a problem which works both ways. But a focus on the unfairness of ill-gotten wealth, while vital for fair government, will not get those in stagnant poverty into jobs. As unemployment is the single greatest impediment to social mobility which policy can directly impact on, that must be the top priority.

DR I'm not sure I agree with your prioritising of the unemployed poor as key to raising social mobility, and I am still just as worried about stagnation at the top as at the bottom of society. Until very recently we have had very low levels of unemployment, but they coincided with a period of very low social mobility. UK society has a large group of working, as well as non-working, poor stuck at the bottom.

The issue of whether schools have greater potential to generate the seeds of social mobility than they are currently allowed is a complex and difficult one. Schools have been endlessly held up as the means of achieving greater social mobility but they are also culturally implicated in the reproduction of inequalities of both social class and race (and in earlier times, gender).

Despite both the rise in the credentials of a new generation of students and an increase in access to higher education, the gap between the working classes and the middle and upper classes remains much the same as it was 30, even 50 years ago. Tawney wrote in the 1930s that social class was the hereditary curse of English education, and in the 21st century there has been a return to the pre-war belief that a good education is a prize to be competitively sought rather than a democratic right.

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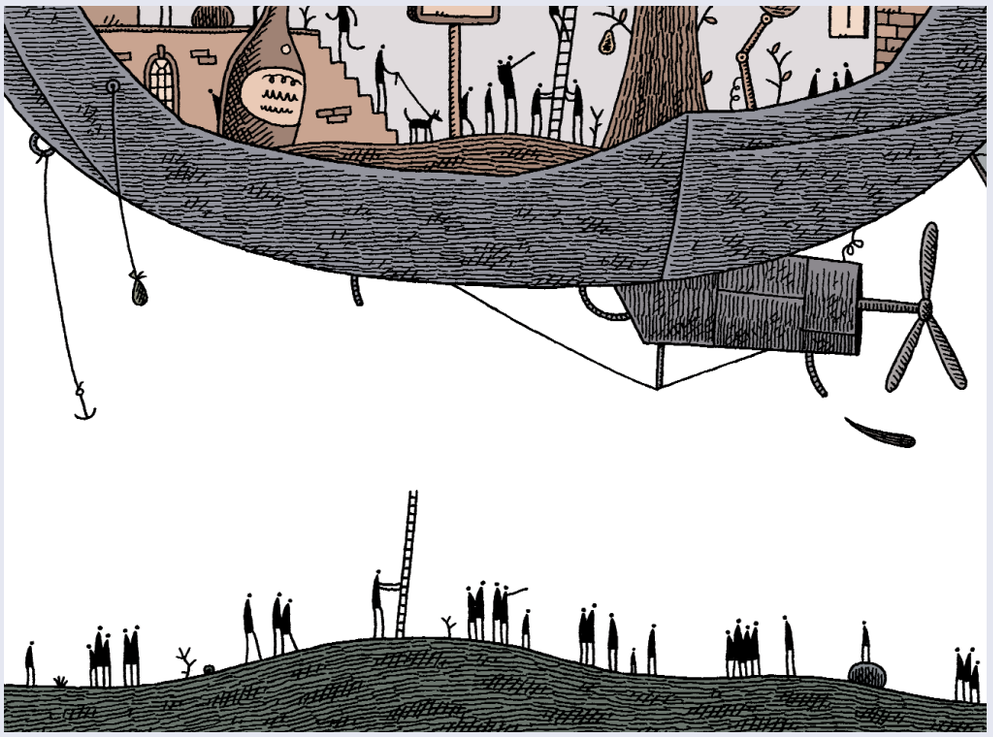
‘We get “disadvantaged”, “poor” and “poverty” but when on the rare occasions the class word appears, it is usually referring to “the underclass”.’



AdW When I was a Year 2 class teacher in Tower Hamlets, differentiation alone, within an often inappropriate curriculum focused on Sats targets, was never going to allow my 32 pupils, 30 of whom were on free school meals, to achieve as well as they could. Splitting the class in two, securing a strong oral English foundation amongst my Bangladeshi-origin pupils, ignoring inappropriate targets, and consolidating their knowledge rather than constantly having to move to the next topic, would have.

Unequivocally, the comparatively small amount we spend on education is shameful for a country that claims to have hoisted schooling up to the number one priority. Yet boost that sum, and past precedence suggests there is no guarantee that it would make the necessary difference. The Nordic countries tend to spend their education budget well because they are investing it in teachers – in training, conditions and salary. That extra expenditure, therefore, connects directly to teacher flexibility – and in turn to better educated, potentially more mobile, children. Until recently we have, as you say, had low rates of unemployment; we have also had a ‘hard core’ of unemployed who have become part of a perpetuating generational cycle.

As to employment: yes, poverty affects not only the workless. So a truly effective strategy would address the non-working poor as well as the working poor. This would be via welfare policy, which supports all those on low incomes, facilitating both work entry and progression within it. Making work pay, in other words, applies in both cases; struggling to makes ends meet eliminates potential social mobility.

Effective education in turn, is fundamental to minimising entry into lower-paid work. When it comes to the impact of schools on social mobility, I maintain that much more could be done.

DR I still maintain that the focus on the unemployed poor, or as media and political pundits term them, the underclass, is, in part, missing the point. They loom large in the wider social imagination as the stagnant strata of society, but equally worrying is the lack of movement at the other end of society. The Sutton Trust found in 2006 that over half the leading figures in journalism, law, medicine, politics and business were privately educated. It can’t be healthy for media, political and business leaders to come from backgrounds that are so different to the vast majority of the population.

Similarly, despite the hypocritical rhetoric of political parties, I think that education cannot alleviate low levels of social mobility without wider inequitable social conditions also improving.

I too was a Year 2 class teacher – in North Islington – and even in the comparatively resource-rich days of the ILEA we couldn’t compensate for the poverty and inadequate resources of the families whose children attended the school. These were not simply economic: with poverty came low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and a sense of failure and being unentitled. Sometimes resilience and strength of character were sufficient to overcome the enormous odds but not often enough.

However, I do agree that better pay and training of teachers plus improved targeting of educational spending would improve matters. I also would like to see the curriculum change from one that is content and tick-box driven to one that allows teachers the space and flexibility to develop students’ critical thinking and awareness.

Government over-regulation and prescription is producing teachers who learn virtually nothing on their courses about how social class impacts on children’s learning, let alone how to tackle the inequalities it generates. There is a very old quote from Basil Bernstein, made 40 years ago, but as relevant today as it was then: “If the culture of the teacher is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher.”

Professor Diane Reay is Professor of Education at Cambridge University.

Anastasia de Waal is the head of Family and Education at Civitas.

Books
Greeks, Romans... and Wikipedians

Books Editor **Fatema Ahmed**

The World and Wikipedia
by Andrew Dalby
Siduri Books, £14.99

Andrew Dalby's book about the internet encyclopaedia, started by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger in early 2001, reads like an extended article from Wikipedia itself. It's hardly surprising, though, since Wikipedia's entry on the author describes him as 'an interwikipedian' who has written articles in eight languages and made 'worthwhile improvements to articles in 31'. Whether this entry is to be believed, and who gets to change it, are two of the questions Dalby is most interested in. Along the way, the book also takes in a history of the encyclopaedia, and claims Roman naturalist, Pliny the Elder, as a proto-Wikipedian.

Dalby makes the largely convincing case that Wikipedia ('wiki' being a Hawaiian adverb meaning 'fast') has become more reliable as more people use it and that it has moved on from the early days when it was stronger on Star Trek than Charles Dickens. His grander claims for Wikipedia's role in our lives (at one point calling it a 'virtual nation') are less convincing and some are even rather worrying - would we, for instance, want the website to replace newspapers?

The Gropes
by Tom Sharpe
Hutchinson, £18.99

Tom Sharpe's latest novel features the Gropes, a family whose origins date from the arrival of a Danish Viking at an English nunnery. An unattractive nun, spurned by previous raiding parties and determined not be passed over again, secures her Viking – and then inveigles the marauder into marrying her. The first Mrs Grope's determination sets the pattern for the generations that follow: the husbands of female Gropes marry (often securing commitment by means of kidnapping) must change their names. Firstborn boys are rumoured to be strangled at birth.

Moving forward to the present-day (naturally, an alternative version of the present, that exists only in the novels of Tom Sharpe), the action centres on Myrtle, the current head of the family who lives at Grope Hall, a dwelling dominated by horse-drawn-ploughs, haystacks and hand-milked cows, and her niece Belinda – and a scheme to abduct a nephew-by-marriage from Croydon. Farcical fun.

God's Philosophers: How the Medieval World Laid the Foundations of Modern Science
by James Hannam
Icon Books, £20.00

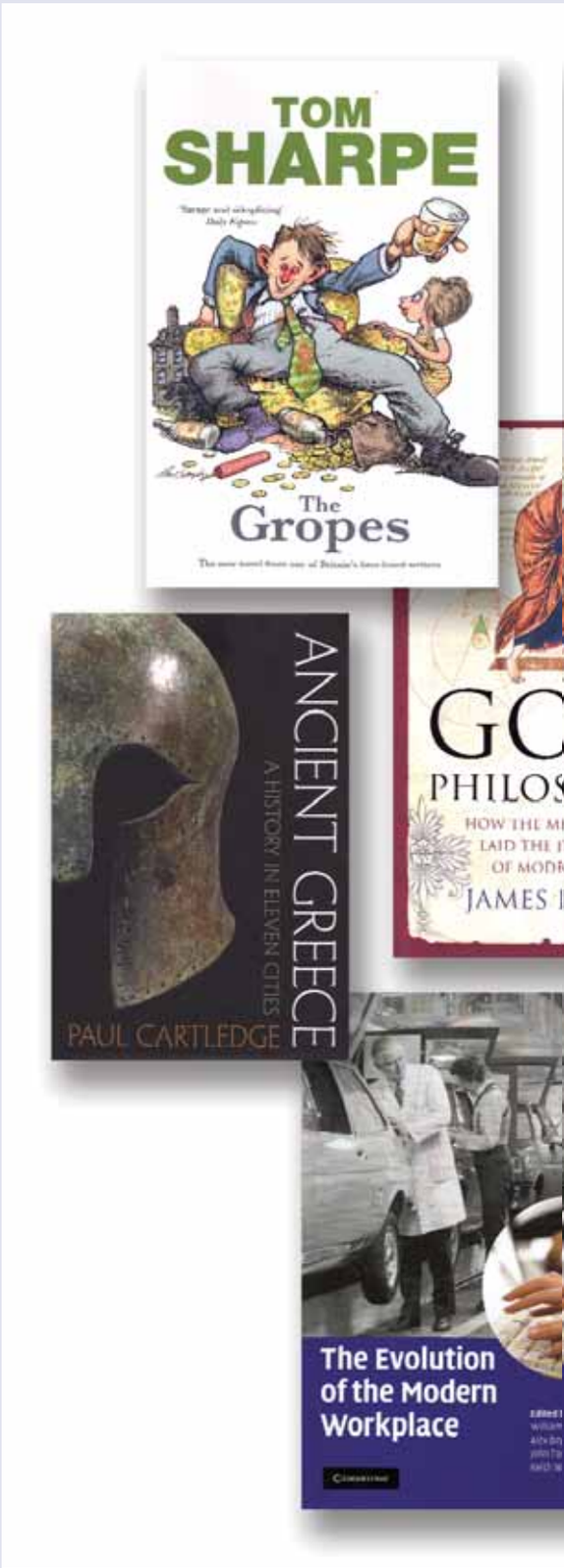
James Hannam's stated aim is to 'show just how much of the science and technology that we now take for granted has medieval origins.' Determined to correct misconceptions about 'The Dark Ages' (a term he detests), Hannam is particularly cross with the attention-hogging 'Renaissance' (the 12th century is more deserving of this term) and the 'reactionary' activities of humanists who set back '300 years of progress in natural philosophy'. He also has a habit of referring to 'modern people', as opposed to 'medieval people', when he clearly means to distinguish between the religious and the non-religious.

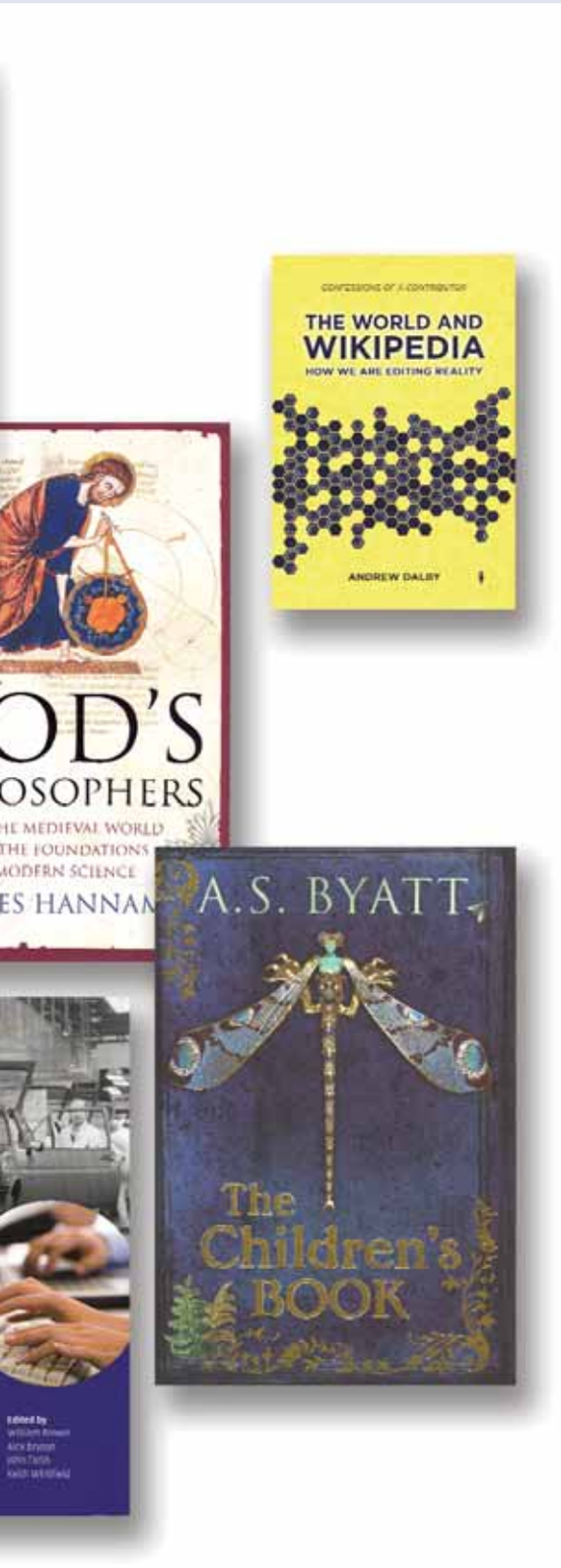
The book does however introduce figures who have been lost to view and successfully exposes unfamiliar facets of the more well-known. These include Gerbert of Aurillac, at one time 'the most learned man in Europe' and Cecco D'Ascoli who calculated Jesus's horoscope – and the wonderful detail that Abelard and Héloïse named their son Astrolabe.

The Evolution of the Modern Workplace
Edited by Professor William Brown, Alex Bryson, John Forth, Professor Keith Whitfield
Cambridge University Press, £55.00

The story of the evolution of British employment is – perhaps surprisingly – both fascinating and unexpected. Between 1980 and 2004, five Employment Relations Surveys have been conducted in Britain. Based on over 2,000 face-to-face interviews, the surveys provide a unique data set. At the start of this period, incomes policies, trade union membership (70% of workers in private manufacturing and 82% of the public sector) and collective bargaining were taken for granted. By 2004, the first two had disappeared and union membership had fallen by 40%.

The authors never rely on hindsight; one of





‘The book successfully exposes unfamiliar facets of the more well-known - including the wonderful detail that Abelard and Héloïse named their son Astrolabe.’

the book’s great strengths is to stress how unexpected these changes were. They also discuss the shift in sectors in the economy, the rise of institutional investors and foreign investors. Some findings go against common perception: the percentage of individual investors, for instance, halved between 1981 and 2004. The book neatly leaves the reader to come to his or her own conclusions: either that change constitutes ‘the desirable transformation of the British industrial scene’ or that it is ‘an unimaginable tragedy of broken institutions’.

Ancient Greece: A History in Eleven Cities

by Paul Cartledge

Oxford University Press, £12.99

In this slim book, Professor Paul Cartledge sets out to provide ‘a fairly painless and highly stimulating introduction’ to ancient Greek civilization from 1400BC to the foundation of Constantinople (formerly Byzantium) in around 330AD. He succeeds.

Centring his account in 11 Greek cities, Cartledge examines the polis, in both its urban centre and state forms: although up to 90% of Greeks in the ancient world may have lived in the countryside, it was the polis that defined how Greeks lived and interacted with other Greeks. The 11 cities naturally include fifth-century Athens and Sparta, but the book also discusses cities which may be more unfamiliar to non-classicists. These include Miletus on the Ionian coast (modern-day Turkey), home to the philosopher Thales, ‘the West’s first intellectual’ and Hippodamus, father of urban planning, and Massalia (modern-day Marseilles), founded by Ionian Greeks.

The Children’s Book

by A. S. Byatt

Chatto & Windus, £18.99

The Edwardian era was a golden age of English children’s literature, from Peter Pan (first performed as a play in 1904), to The Wind in the Willows and The Railway Children. AS Byatt sets her latest novel between 1895 and 1919, packing it with hundreds of real figures: Oscar Wilde, Emma Goldman and Margot Asquith weave their lives in and out of the fictional ones.

It’s hard to name a main character in this complicated, complex book: Olive Wellwood, a successful children’s writer not entirely unlike E. Nesbit, is the closest Byatt comes. Married to a banker with Fabian leanings, and living in a large farmhouse suggestively named Todefright, Olive writes fairy stories which are for, and based on, her children. The heart of the book is the effect of these stories on her Peter-Pan like son, Tom.

As in her 1990 novel Possession, where Byatt wrote pages of poetry for her Victorian poets, here she provides us with Olive’s fairy tales too. The book is full of things as well as people and is perhaps the most interesting novel Byatt has written in years.

Music
Fitzwilliam Quartet at 40

The Fitzwilliam Quartet – a CD shortlist:
Shostakovich Complete Quartets, Decca 455 776-2 (6 CDs)
Haydn Seven Last Words, Linn CKD 153
Brahms Clarinet Quintet (with Lesley Schatzberger), Linn CKD 278

Words **Richard Wigmore**

The string quartet seems the most civilised of musical institutions: four equal players tossing around ideas in a spirit of selfless give-and-take: bantering, questioning, challenging and undercutting each other, yet always working democratically towards a common goal. Behind the scenes, relations between this ménage à quatre can be less than harmonious.

In the 40 years since four Cambridge undergraduates gave their debut concert, the Fitzwilliam Quartet has certainly had its turbulent phases, with changes of personnel provoking clashes of ego and musical style. Alan George (King's, 1968) is a leader by temperament (whoever said viola players were self-effacing?) and the only remaining member of the undergraduate quartet who played Haydn, Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich at that inaugural 1969 concert.

While sparks can still fly, for George, as for second violinist Jonathan Sparey who joined in 1974, the chemistry of the Fitzwilliam, in its newest incarnation, is as good as it has ever been. What Alan George dubs 'crusty experience' is nicely balanced by two younger players: first violinist Lucy Russell, who joined fresh from York University when the Fitzwilliam relaunched itself after a hiatus in 1988, and recently-recruited Canadian cellist Heather Tuach, whom Sparey describes as 'a much-needed calming presence'.

"Heather has a beautiful sound and an acute ear for intonation," adds Lucy Russell. "Intonation can be notoriously subjective – how wide to pitch thirds, whether to use equal or unequal temperament. I felt instantly that Heather and I were speaking the same language with intonation. And since she's joined the quartet our playing has become more fluid and more resonant."

The Fitzwilliam famously made their reputation in the 1970s through their association with Shostakovich, giving the Western premieres of his last three string quartets and recording the first-ever complete cycle of his quartets. As Alan George recalls, "When we became quartet-in-residence at York after leaving Cambridge, I wrote to Shostakovich asking if we could perform his Quartet No. 13, which had never been played in the West. In reply he sent a handwritten copy and said he'd like to come to our performance

'When we met Schostakovich he was somehow both terrifying and pitiful, like a great wounded bear.'

when he returned to the UK later that year.

"When we met him he was somehow both terrifying and pitiful, like a great wounded bear. He'd had a heart attack in 1966, and was slowly dying. His face was lopsided, and his hands trembled constantly – he tried to shake hands with all four of us, but couldn't manage it. The thirteenth quartet seemed a confessional self-portrait of this frail, death-haunted yet generous man."

The Fitzwilliam's friendship with Shostakovich continued to the end of his life. In 1975, the year after giving the Western premiere of No. 15, the group were due to stay with Shostakovich in Leningrad. But he died the month before the planned visit. "We had wanted to discuss that incredibly bleak, tragic final quartet with him. What we do know, though, is that Shostakovich got fed up with everyone politicising his music. He was ravaged by ill health throughout his life. The late quartets, with their desolation and their sardonic humour, are essentially personal, not laments for Russia or the evils of the Soviet system."

Three decades after their Decca recording of his complete quartets, Shostakovich is still central to the Fitzwilliam's repertoire. Haydn – in his anniversary year – and Tchaikovsky have also featured frequently in the group's 2009 programmes, together with a series of specially commissioned fantasias inspired by Purcell. "We all love the Purcell fantasias," says Lucy Russell, "partly because they're such amazing music, partly because they are such great discipline for a quartet. For Purcell's anniversary we decided to get our composer friends to write their own fantasias inspired by Purcell. These include Carolyn Sparey, and Duncan Druce, whose Palimpsest was inspired by both Purcell and the fantasia in Haydn's Quartet Op. 76 No. 6.

"Playing so much Haydn this year, on both gut and metal strings, has upped our game. Haydn calls for a certain kind of precision, a spontaneous response to his wit, and attention to so many tiny, subtle details in the score. His music is often about unusual, irregular phrase lengths, and in rehearsal we've worked intensively to shape phrases to bring out that irregularity."

The Fitzwilliam's association with Linn Records has already produced a memorable recording of Haydn's sublime series of meditations on Christ's Seven Last Words. A recording of the three Tchaikovsky quartets is in their sights. But when we spoke they were avidly rehearsing another particular passion: the String Quintet by Anton Bruckner. "The challenge in this music is to achieve a natural flexibility, plus a symphonic weight and depth without being ponderous," says Alan George. "I see the Quintet as paving the way for Bruckner's Sixth and Seventh Symphonies, works in which the monumental yields to the lyrical." As to the ongoing link with Fitzwilliam College, the quartet is optimistic. "In the last couple of years we've enjoyed coaching students in works like Dido and Aeneas and Purcell anthems," says Russell. "We love being hands on. It means at least as much to us as giving concerts, and helps us to enjoy our own music-making all the more!"

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Sport: Dancesport Team David Tan, captain

Interview **Sophie Pickford**

"The nerves, the anticipation, the lights, the audience; then the music, the rhythm; keeping composed, relaxed, gliding, not grimacing, stiffening or forcing: more than anything else, dance is a mental and psychological game. The flirtatiousness of the cha-cha-cha, the sexy samba, the passionate rumba, the swinging, cheeky jive or the fiery tango: each has a different story to tell and each is a different act.

The Cambridge Dancesport team has been active for the past couple of decades, but it is only recently that we have come into our own, fielding one of the most broadly competitive teams in the country, and winning the Varsity Match for the last three years and the National University Championships for the last four. The club has hundreds of members and caters for all levels of ability but it is an elite core of 30 dancers who dedicate themselves fully to the competition circuit and who train endlessly for the honour of representing the University.

Their commitment is impressive: and it's not only physical but financial, too. A conservative estimate of the annual cost of competing in the University Dancesport team comes in at £900 per person, covering lessons, costumes, accessories, jewellery, make-up, travel and competition entry fees. Many University sports require this level of commitment but nevertheless it stretches student budgets. People take part because they love dancing – and because it gives some respite from the intensity of academic life.

Of course Dancesport has its critics. The essentially artistic notion of 'dance' coupled with the athletic, competitive quality of 'sport' doesn't sit well with some people, who are reluctant to view the discipline on a par with other athletic pursuits.

For core team members, who train 8–10 hours per week, with additional dance camps, workshops, classes and private practice, this attitude is frustrating. The time and aerobic activity involved is comparable to other more traditional sports, but the additional artistic (some would say subjective) element thrown in confuses those with preconceptions of what 'sport' is.

Performances are weighed and measured by a panel of judges without the clarity of points, goals or tries to objectify the process. Perhaps this is the underlying reason Dancesport continues as a half blue sport in Cambridge, despite consistent lobbying of the Blues Committee for full Blue status.

Charlie Tromans

'The administrative heartache, expense, training and aching limbs are all worth it when you are dancing. The feeling of stepping onto the floor is incomparable, and the emotional landscape intense.'

Another cliché team members have to contend with is the garishness and glitz associated with the Strictly Come Dancing school of performance. For the girls, sexy dresses covered in rhinestones combined with big hair, loud make-up and buckets of fake tan result in an effect more chav than chic. The boys contend with many of the same issues, though initial reservations about the height of Latin heels are usually quickly overcome, and soon complaints give way to requests for brighter, bolder costumes. Members are trained to deal with the limitations of this dress: restrictive tail suits, heavy accessories, high heels and acres of uncontrollable feathers are coached into submission before major competitions.

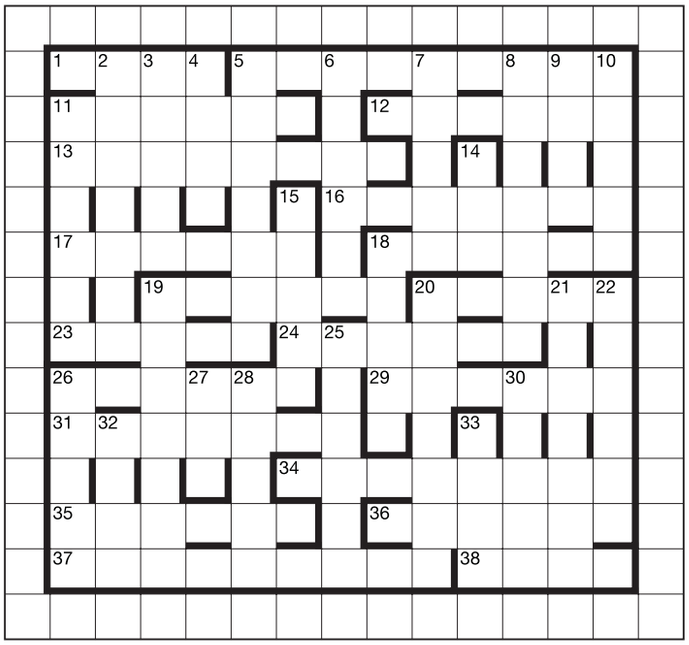
So what is the secret of Cambridge's success? We have thousands of students to choose from, geographically we're in a good position with access to professional dance coaches, and consequently the last few years have seen consistent coaching from a dedicated group of staff. A solid work ethic has filtered through from year to year, and the club's ground-floor-up recruitment policy means novices can progress quickly. Despite this there are still set-backs. There is no access to a dedicated dance space. Funds are wasted booking venues, with the Varsity Match alone costing £3000–£4000 to host, over half of which is spent on the venue.

The administrative heartache, exorbitant expense, intensive training schedule and aching limbs are, however, all worth it when you are dancing. The feeling of stepping out on the floor is incomparable and the emotional landscape intense. It's exhilarating and heartbreaking: the climax of an emotional, physical and psychological journey and the culmination of hours of tedious, repetitive practice. But it's also the ache of muscles, the burn of lactate, the effortless glide and the unplanned stumble. Your heart sinks if you make a mistake, but you have to pick up and move on. When it's going well it's the best feeling in the world; your body moving in synch with your partner's and with the music, commanding attention. Anyone who has done it will recognise these feelings, but there are a few of us so addicted to it that we spend all our funds and time pursuing it – a little like rowing, rugby, lacrosse, football, or any other 'real' sport."

Read about the Dancesport Team's latest triumphs at www.cambridgedancers.org

Great Circles
by Schadenfreude

CAM 58 Prize Crossword



The first correct entrant drawn will win a copy of
The University of Cambridge: An 800th Anniversary Portrait.
There are two runners-up prizes of £35 to spend on Cambridge University Press publications.*

Completed crosswords should be sent to:
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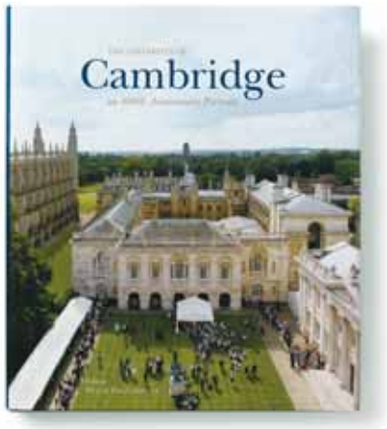
Cambridge CB5 8AB
or by fax:
+44 (0)1223 764476

Entries to be received by 16 December 2009
Please remember to include your contact details!



Solutions will be printed in CAM 59 and posted online at www.alumni.cam.ac.uk on 11 January 2010.

* Excluding journals

Instructions:
The clockwise perimeter (starting in the NE or SW corner) is to contain a set with one item missing, which solvers must highlight in the completed grid. Two letters must be removed from the answers entered in each row and column and placed at either end of that row/column.
All answers are affected and the four corners will emerge from the thematic items. Before solving, one letter must be changed in the definition part of seven clues.
The new letters suggest the theme which is detailed in Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable. Chambers (2008) is recommended.

Across

1 Jock's ball stopping a foot behind (5)
5 Greek character playing moriscos? In one of these? (10)
11 Brother that's carrying officer shot in court (7)
12 A retired minister is beginning to modify Stahl's 'soul' theory (7)
13 Solids with twenty faces – one oddly had a score (10)
16 Men came in changing a fundamental pantheistic conception (9)
17 Cooler in church before eight perhaps (7, 2 words)
18 What could be a young cuckoo left us flying north at first (7)
19 Who eagerly succeeded with nothing lawful? (7)
20 He's taking it easy on southern terrace (6)
23 An olefin nurse found in cracked tube (6)
24 Insult vagrant with empty life (7)
26 Rex replaces lecturer in generative class (7)
29 Valve initially switched by telephone operator (7)
31 A bare tree ruined by brown insect (9)
34 A bird dog's no pet struggling to bite one (10)
35 Wards seem untidy after hospital's final examination (7)
36 More than one death note signed off (7)
37 All readers can become clever (10)
38 Doyle's ridiculous farce (5)

Down

2 Branch close to such diseased tracheal part (8)
3 Strengthened force I once dispersed (6)
4 Fastening on measuring device (5)
5 Blame over king leaving ground not fixed (8)
6 Mutes of low ideals, but not deserted in rising (7)
7 Stinging organs can die unexpectedly (6)
8 A rise I propounded in memo (8)
9 An exotic herb has flourished in zero degrees centigrade (5)
10 Cake tin containing one medium Spanish article (6)
11 Indian tree, black with one main branch? Indeed (7)
14 Somebody backward succeeded Cain's nephew (4)
15 Governess rarely caught girl chasing engineers (7)
18 A navy chap returned the same medicine (7)
19 Fellow gets aged uncle for one term (8)
20 An epic illusion absorbed by Hindu prince (8)
21 After extremes of excitement I love Harvard's dull study of causes (8)
22 Handful of corn found in fox's stools (7)
25 A grenadier legally limited after rank reduced (7)
26 Tainted society prostitutes (6)
27 A gnat that's cross without starting to bite (4)
28 Former squadron supporting assurgent government engaged in a quarrel (6)
30 A nut married in London next to academy (6)
32 A pipe run under river is supported by earth (5)
33 A witch's place some women do remember (5)

Solution and notes to CAM 57 crossword

Murder in the Cathedral: Extra letters spelt THE PLAY'S THE THING (Act II Sc2), HAMLET(VILLAGE) The reference to his play called THE MOUSETRAP (in Act III, Sc2) (CHEESE)-(also the Agatha Christie play). This unlocked the quotation WHO WILL RID ME OF THIS..., Henry II's reference to BECKET as a "turbulent priest" (hence 7, 1D, 32 and 42). T.S.ELIOT wrote MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL and SAMUEL BECKETT ENDGAME, providing the chess context, where the King is threatened by a Bishop which is attacked by four knights.
Winner: Simon Shaw (Emmanuel 1980)
Runners-up: Martin Rupp (Fitzwilliam 1959); Dr Stephen Whitehead (Trinity 1972).

E	R	G	O	T	F	V	R	I	P	E	S	T
S	A	G	U	A	R	O	U	S	E	P	T	S
P	C	S	T	V	I	L	L	A	G	E	E	E
R	E	C	R	E	A	T	E	R	K	E	E	L
I	M	E	E	R	B	E	N	C	H	U	T	I
T	E	N	O	N	L	S	E	S	O	T	H	O
C	H	E	E	S	E	B	S	E	C	R	E	T
E	A	R	T	H	L	Y	O	N	A	I	A	S
R	V	Y	V	E	N	A	L	D	A	L	G	P
M	A	S	U	A	S	M	U	G	G	L	E	R
E	N	M	A	R	I	M	B	A	A	O	I	I
T	A	I	N	T	Z	E	L	M	I	E	S	T
S	T	R	I	P	E	R	E	E	N	A	T	E

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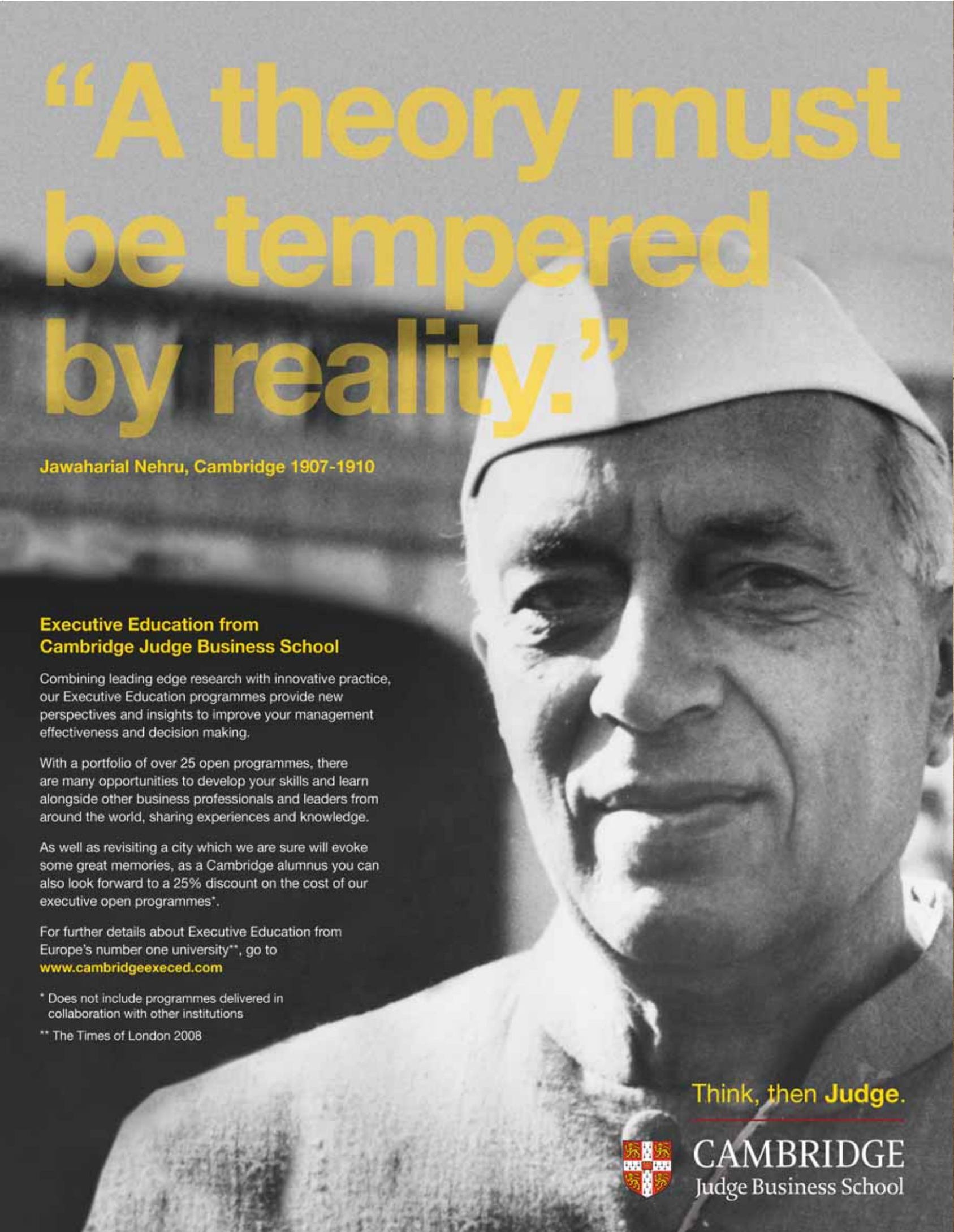
Christ's
Corpus Christi
Downing
Emmanuel
King's
Magdalene
Pembroke
Peterhouse
Selwyn
St. Catharine's
St. John's
Trinity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