

# pelican

The magazine of Corpus Christi College Cambridge



Patrick Farnbrough  
Teach First  
Page 4

Dr Alex Duncan  
Life in Afghanistan  
Page 8

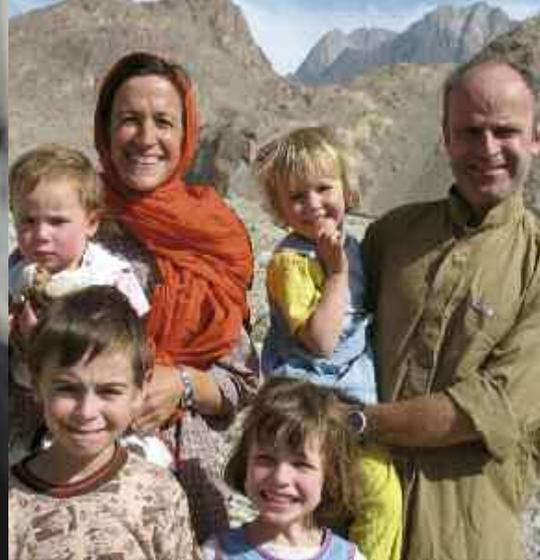
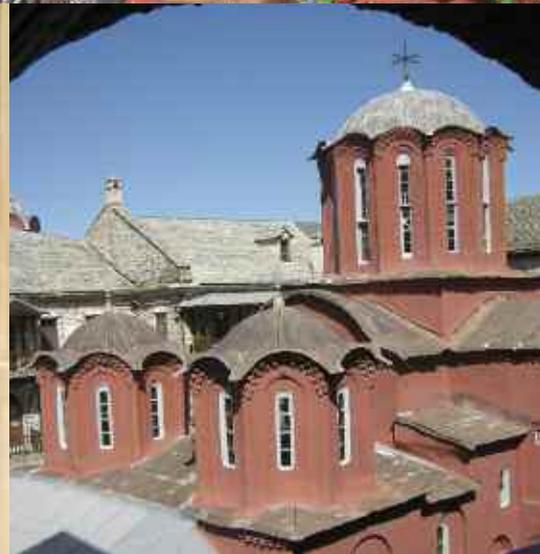
Interview with Prof  
Philippe Sands  
Page 20

Renovation of  
the Playroom  
Page 36



## Contents

- 3 The Master's Introduction
- 4 Teach First  
by Patrick Farnbrough
- 8 Life in Afghanistan  
by Dr Alex Duncan
- 12 New Praelector  
Dr Andrew Spencer
- 16 Donnelley Research Fellow  
Dr Thomas Land
- 20 Professor Philippe Sands QC  
by Dr Simon Heffer
- 28 Monastic Adventures  
by The Revd James Buxton
- 33 Leckhampton 50th Anniversary Party
- 36 The Playroom  
by Mark McCrum & Max Upton



Editor: Elizabeth Winter  
Deputy editor: Lucy Sparke  
Editorial assistant: Francesca Watson

Photographers: Phil Mynott, Sammi Sparke

Produced by Cameron Design & Marketing Ltd  
01284 725292



# Master's Introduction



We're delighted to present to you this edition of the *Pelican* another successful and attractive publication from our Development Office. We have continued with the trend of bringing you more articles from our alumni – this issue has fascinating articles by Alex Duncan, on life in a remote part of Afghanistan, and by Patrick Farnbrough, on his experiences at a disadvantaged school in inner London, with the organisation Teach First. At times, you wonder which was the more challenging destination! Teach First is a successful and expanding organisation, attracting an increasing number of

high-achieving graduates to work in schools facing considerable social and educational challenges. For some time, the College has had a connection with Teach First, who use our conference facilities for revision courses for school children; and they chose Corpus for their "Teach First Summit" earlier in the year, when HRH Prince Charles met here with Dame Julia Cleverdon, Lord Adonis, some of the school leaders and also a number of school pupils.

Features on our Fellows put the spotlight on our medieval historian, Andrew Spencer, who is also our new Praelector, and the current Donnelley Research Fellow from Chicago, Thomas Land. And we are grateful to Simon Heffer for conducting another interview with alumnus Philippe Sands, who gave an enthralling talk in the McCrum Theatre to those attending the Corpus Association dinner in July.

We also report on the 50th Anniversary celebration at Leckhampton; and in that context I am glad to report that work on the new building is progressing well, and we are still planning for it to be finished in time for occupation at the start of the coming academic year in October. The project is being funded mainly from sale of property that is now not suitable for College purposes; but there is a funding gap which we are hoping to close by donations. We have had a good response to our initial appeal, to Fellows and Honorary Fellows and those who came to the anniversary party; and now we are making a special appeal to our alumni who did postgraduate study at Corpus, and so are best placed to appreciate the very special environment which Leckhampton offers.

Please read right to the end, and don't miss the articles by Mark McCrum and Max Upton on the renovation of the Corpus Playroom. The Vice-Chancellor came in November for the formal re-opening of the Playroom, which is now looking very smart and with completely restored facilities in the basement for costumes, dressing and rehearsing. In addition we have a new relationship with the ADC for managing the Playroom – a great location for student theatre and new writing, ideally placed in the centre of Cambridge.

One final detail: I have been asked to clarify a comment made in Simon Heffer's interview with John Hatcher (issue 20, page 10), about the late Geoffrey Woodhead. The article may have implied that Geoffrey Woodhead resigned his Fellowship. In fact he resigned from the Governing Body in 1981 following the decision to admit women to the College, transferred to the Life Fellowship, and thus remained a Fellow of the College until his death in 2008.

Stuart Laing





# Teach First

by Patrick Farmbrough (m2007)

IT WAS THE FIRST LESSON OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, AND MY FIRST EVER AS A TEACHER. I WAS STANDING AT THE CLASSROOM DOOR OF ONE OF INNER LONDON'S MOST CHALLENGING SCHOOLS, TRYING TO LOOK AS IF I'D BEEN TEACHING FOR YEARS, AND NOT AS IF I HAD GRADUATED JUST OVER TWO MONTHS AGO.

As my first class, my year 10 GCSE English bottom set, began drifting in, I spotted Omar<sup>1</sup>. I'd memorised the pictures of my class and had been warned about him. Remembering vaguely that my training emphasised the importance of making a strong and positive first impression, I thrust my hand out.

"Morning Omar, I'm Mr Far..."

"What you doing, why you trying to touch me? You a paedo, bruv?"

"You a paedo, *Sir*?" I corrected him. It wasn't quite the strong and positive start I was hoping for.

The rest of the lesson was a blur of barely-suppressed blind panic. Eighty minutes later, my class jostled its way out of the room, leaving me feeling shell-shocked. The classroom looked like a warzone; chairs were knocked over and there was paper everywhere. I wondered, not for the last time, what I was doing there.

When I came up to Corpus to read law, I had never considered teaching; I had always wanted to be a lawyer. Towards the end of my second year, though, I received an email from Teach First asking if I could help arrange a recruitment event in Corpus. I decided to do a bit of research before I agreed, so I typed Teach First into Google.

<sup>1</sup> Names have been changed



Ten minutes later, I didn't want to be a lawyer anymore.

Teach First is a charity addressing educational disadvantage in the UK by recruiting graduates from top universities who would not otherwise consider teaching. After a six week crash course, participants are placed in some of England's toughest schools. After two years of teaching a full timetable and completing a PGCE on the job, graduates can either stay in teaching (around half do so), or move on to other careers, taking with them leadership skills learnt in the classroom, and an awareness of one of the biggest issues in the UK today.

The challenge is huge. Educational disadvantage is pervasive and destructive. Swathes of children are trapped in cycles of low aspiration, inequality and unrealized potential. Out of the 12% of pupils in England and Wales who receive Free School Meals (FSM), less than 50% achieve five A\*-C grades at GCSEs – less than half the average rate. The gap widens after GCSEs, where just 16% of pupils on FSM progress onto university, compared to 96% of pupils from independent schools. The better the university, the greater the divide. Out of the 81,000 pupils eligible for FSM in 2006/07, only 45 went to Oxbridge.

Pupils at independent schools were fifty five times more likely to go to Oxbridge than FSM pupils. This isn't an

indictment of Cambridge's admission policy; these students simply don't apply.

It seemed wrong. I applied the same day to teach English in London.

After an intensive selection process, I was given a job and placed at Westminster Academy, a medium sized inner-London Academy which opened in 2006. Located in Westbourne Green, on the north west corner of central London, the school is situated in an extremely deprived part of London. Around 60% of students receive Free School Meals, and over half have Special Educational Needs. A similar number come from families where neither parent is employed. Many only have one parent at home. Almost 90% speak English as a second language, one of the highest rates in the country. Our students come from a bewildering array of countries, many of them refugees from Kosovo, Bangladesh, Somalia, Iraq and Libya.

We'd been told, again and again during training, that we'd be embarking on an emotional rollercoaster over the next year, but nothing could have prepared me for my first day.

Inner-city schools are often associated with challenging behaviour, and there have been times when my job felt

# Teach First

by Patrick Farmbrough

closer to a policeman than a teacher. I've been shouted and sworn at, and have had to physically break up fights. I've had kids who refuse to leave the classroom, and others who won't stay in it. When I left my year 7s with a supply teacher, they chased him out the room and barricaded the door. I'd like to think this means they missed me.

Within a month, all my assumptions about controlling children had been blown out of the water. Shouting at misbehaving pupils didn't work; they just shouted back, usually louder. Neither did threatening hour long detentions; nobody turned up. And why would they? Many of them have endured incredibly traumatic childhoods, whether it's seeing their parents put in jail or watching members of their family be killed in a civil war. Nothing I could say or do would even begin to compare. With all this against them, it's a small victory every time we get some children to turn up at all.

But behind all the bravado, they're just kids with crippling low aspirations and self-esteem. They come from communities where many people don't have a job, let alone go to university. Many of them, even at fifteen, still struggle to read and write. Society has written "people like them" off too many times, until they come to believe it too. When I told my year 10s that I'd been to Cambridge, they were genuinely angry. Why, they wanted to know, was I wasting my time with them when I could teach at a "proper school?" This really stuck with me; their belief that they really were worth less than other children.

In this setting, teaching comes down to establishing positive relationships. It's not enough to bully students into working in silence; you have to build up their confidence and challenge them to achieve things they didn't know they could do, even if it's something as small as writing a coherent paragraph.

There have been days when I've wanted to quit, but every time, another student reminds me why I went into teaching. For every difficult student, there are more who come in smiling and ready to learn. And there's always the knowledge that the most challenging ones are the ones who need you most and will ultimately give you the most

satisfaction when they finally make some progress. Nothing can compare to the buzz of teaching when a lesson is going well, or the look of pride on a child's face when they get a grade they never thought they could achieve.

There's also so much more to teaching than what goes on in the classroom. It's incredibly humbling when a child seeks you out to confide in, and I am always impressed by the maturity with which so many cope with difficult home lives.

In May I led twenty three students, most of who had never been outside London, on the school's first Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expedition in the Chiltern Hills. Away from their overcrowded tower blocks and suddenly given some responsibility, they became different people; calmer and more mature. That said, some of them missed their home comforts: I walked past one tent to overhear an irritated student snapping "Abdullah, it's the countryside, I swear there's no Greggs here!"

One week and one year after graduating, I returned to Corpus with my top set year 9s for an access visit arranged by Juliet Foster. It was amazing to see the awe on their faces as they were shown round Old Court. Sadly, too few of them will get to Cambridge. Most of them are cleverer than I was at their age, but where I was getting A\*s, their situations mean they're more likely to be getting Cs. But even so, it really helped to demystify Cambridge and get the students to aspire to going to a top university, whether Cambridge or not.

It was also a time for me to reflect on the past twelve months, and going into my second year, I couldn't help but feel optimistic. My classes did well in their exams – Omar got a C, I have no idea how – and I'm looking forward to building on their results, becoming a better teacher and taking an expanded role in the Academy. I'm lucky to work in a school full of brilliant and committed teachers; I'm never alone when the building closes at 7pm each night. But more importantly, the students are amazing. Despite everything in their way, they get up and come into school each day. They're clever, kind, funny, and they have so much promise. At the end of the day, if I can help some unlock their full potential, it will have been worth it.



# Vesa on Teach First



VESA IS A CURRENT YEAR 11 STUDENT, WHOSE FAMILY ORIGINALLY COME FROM KOSOVO. HAVING COMPLETED AN INTERNSHIP WITH TEACH FIRST, SHE'S UNIQUELY QUALIFIED AMONGST STUDENTS TO COMMENT ON THE PROGRAMME, SO I ASKED HER TO WRITE ABOUT HER THOUGHTS ON TEACH FIRST, AND WHAT SHE THINKS OF HER TEACHERS:

'I think Teach First is a great idea. All of us at our school know how hard it is to succeed coming from our backgrounds. We've all been told how difficult it is for kids like us to succeed in life because of where we come from and due to our family's financial circumstances.

Teach First are really helping do something about this. My Teach First teachers have helped me realise that even though I come from a disadvantaged background, I can really go far if I work for it. They're all really good teachers, but they put so much more in too. They put so much effort into really getting to know us, and to help us achieve our full potential. You know they will always be there for you, and you feel like you can tell them everything.

I have had three amazing Teach First teachers since last year: Mr Patel is my economics teacher. I like how economics is made to seem really hard when you see it on the news, but Mr Patel really breaks it down and makes it simple. He really believes in our class and he really wants us to go far and get good jobs in business. Mr Patel got me an internship with Teach First, which is how I first found out about it.

Ms Jurkiewicz taught me science. I didn't like science before, and I wasn't very good at it. But once Ms Jurkiewicz was my teacher, she made it fun and really helped me build my

confidence. She has so much energy and enthusiasm for teaching, and she always made time for us after school. She's not teaching me this year, but I know I can go to her if I have any problems in science.

Mr Farmbrough has given me loads of opportunities. He started the Duke of Edinburgh's Award along with Ms Jurkiewicz, and was really determined to make it happen when we had never had it here before. DofE really gave me a sense of responsibility, boosted my confidence massively, and taught me to rely on myself and not just my parents. It also really changed my relationships with all my teachers, as I began to realise they're normal people outside school! Mr Farmbrough also introduced Monitors to the school, and he chose me as one of the first group. Being a Monitor has really helped me develop my leadership skills. Having a monitor system has also been really good for the whole school, as everyone (teachers as well as students) has been much calmer, and have been getting into much less trouble.

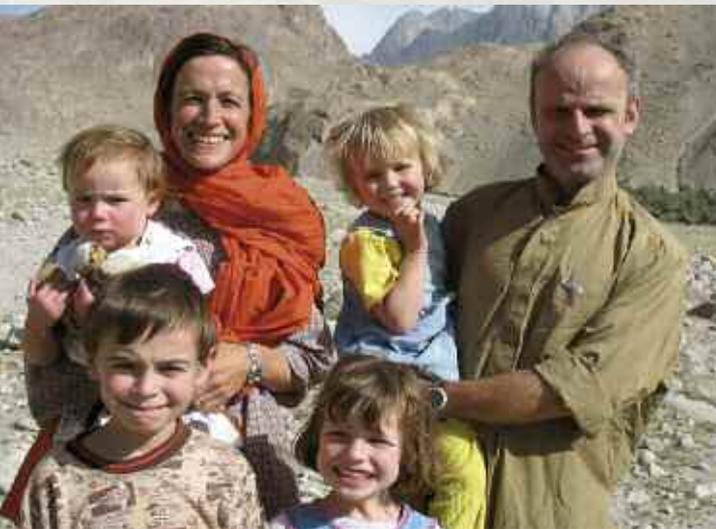
Overall, I'm really happy that our school has Teach First teachers. They really are inspirational, and as a result in the future I want to join Teach First, so I can make the same difference to the next generation.'

By Vesa Kahramani

# Life in Afghanistan

by Dr Alex Duncan MBE (m1984)

I GREW UP IN SOUTH LONDON, AND I CAME UP TO CORPUS IN 1984 AFTER A GAP YEAR TEACHING ENGLISH IN AN INDUSTRIAL CITY IN PAKISTAN. AT CAMBRIDGE I SPENT THREE VERY ENJOYABLE YEARS ON THE RIVER AND SINGING IN THE CHOIR, INTERSPERSED WITH SOME WORK - MEDICAL SCIENCES, AND PART II IN HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE. MY THREE YEARS OF CLINICAL TRAINING WERE AT THE LONDON HOSPITAL IN THE EAST END OF LONDON. THIS BECAME 'THE ROYAL LONDON HOSPITAL' THREE MONTHS AFTER I LEFT. I'M NOT SURE WHAT THE MESSAGE IS IN THAT...



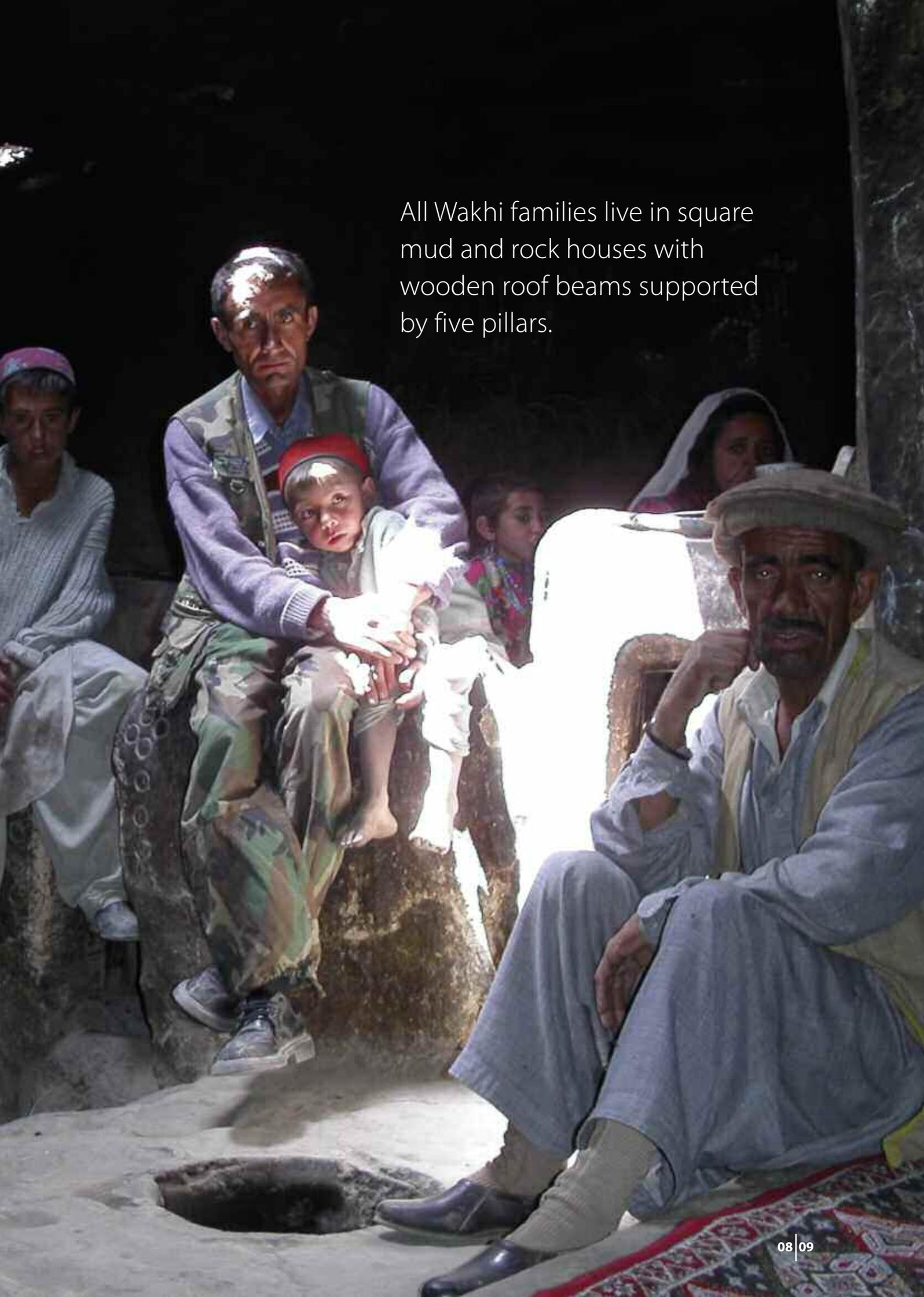
After a year of junior medical jobs, I worked for three years for a charity running activity holidays for teenagers, and then returned to medicine, and trained in general practice. I spent some more time working in Pakistan, this time in a hospital, and decided that medical development work was what I wanted to do. I did courses in anthropology and tropical medicine, got married to Eleanor, a bright and beautiful Oxford languages graduate, who had given up a career in insurance for something more exciting. In November 1999, we left the UK with our five month old baby to work with Afghan refugees in Peshawar, 40 miles from the Afghan border in north west Pakistan.

We spent six months doing a full time language course, learning Dari, the Afghan dialect of Farsi. Dari is one

of the national languages of Afghanistan, and it is spoken in the north and west of the country. We spent the summer of 2000 in Badakhshan Province in the north west of Afghanistan, part of the small remnant of the country not controlled by the Taliban. We wanted to see for ourselves what the situation was in this remote corner, and what sort of project was appropriate in these border areas. We spent almost a month in the Wakhan District, which is the small finger of land pointing out of the north east corner of Afghanistan towards China. The organisation for which we were working was doing some detoxification and rehabilitation work with opium addicts in this area. Many people became addicts when they were ill and used opium medicinally, as there were no other medicines available. Our idea was to see if it would be possible to establish a community health programme, partly to prevent addiction.

The rest of that year, and most of 2001 were spent learning to read and write Dari, and also helping with medical projects for refugees in Peshawar. In April 2001, we had our second child in Abbottabad, about five miles from where 10 years later, Osama Bin Laden had his hideout. We prepared to return to Wakhan in September to do some more detailed survey work, but our plans were thwarted by the 11th September attacks, after which we were evacuated back to the UK. After nine months of frustration (and some medical professional exams for me), we went back to Peshawar and straight back to Wakhan. We spent eight weeks camping whilst doing a detailed house to house

All Wakhi families live in square mud and rock houses with wooden roof beams supported by five pillars.





survey. When our car gave up the ghost, we walked back into Pakistan over the mountains. In December, we moved into Faizabad, the provincial capital of Badakhshan, where we spent the winter and spring analysing our survey data, working on a project plan and raising funds. In June 2003, we moved to a mud and stone house in the village of Qalae-Panja, half way along the Wakhan valley, a fifteen hour drive from Faizabad, the nearest significant town.

### **Anglo-Russian border**

The Wakhan Corridor is the product of an Anglo-Russian border negotiation at the height of the so called Great Game, the struggle for control and influence over vast swathes of central Asia in the 19th century. The British judged that the Russians might be able to march an army with artillery over the Boroghil pass to invade Imperial India. It was vital that the approaches to this pass should be in a neutral country, so after much negotiation, Afghanistan was persuaded to take it, and the border was demarcated in 1895. Wakhan is a single valley 300km long, rising to 3200 metres above sea level at the valley bottom 200km east at Sarhad-e-Boroghil. East of there, the Pamir mountains rise steeply for another 100km to the short - and tightly shut - border with China. To the north lies Tajikistan, to the south Pakistan. The peaks rise to 6500m, and the high mountain pastures, at 4000m, are occupied by 1800 Kirghiz nomads.

We served a population of 6200 Wakhi people in 28 communities spread out along the Amu Darya (also called the Oxus River). The people of Wakhan just about manage to feed themselves with wheat and barley grown from the very poor sandy soil, irrigated by glacial meltwater. All the work in the fields is done by hand, and harvesting work that could be done in a couple of hours by a combine harvester takes six weeks, finishing precariously close to the first snow of the winter. Most families eat bread and drink tea with salt four times a day. Wealthier families will sometimes eat rice at night. The bread is mostly made from wheat flour, but from July to late September, this is eked out with flour made from ground green peas, which fills the gap between the time of the pea harvest and the wheat harvest. A green mustard plant is

harvested from the mountain sides to augment this. For three weeks in August, some families have apricots. The summer also brings plentiful dairy products, and for four months from the beginning of June, many families send their women and a few young men into the high pastures of the Pamir mountains to graze their animals, and make butter and dried yoghurt for the winter. This diet contains just enough calories, protein and vitamins to keep people going, but in the area we served, there were only three fat people (who had got fat elsewhere!) and there was a significant problem with malnutrition. All Wakhi families live in square mud and rock houses with wooden roof beams supported by five pillars. This construction is relatively strong in an earthquake. In the centre of the house is the open clay tandoor oven, which is lit twice a day to make the 35cm round flat naan. The smoke escapes very slowly through a hole in the roof, and in any house more than a year old, the ceiling is tarred black.

The winters are long and cold. Snow can fall from mid October to late April, and covers the ground from late November to mid March. In mid-winter, the temperature gets down to minus 25 celsius, and does not rise above freezing in the day for three months. Everything freezes. Our neighbour washed our clothes for us in a geothermal spring up the mountain, but they came back to us in a frozen lump, to be thawed and dried (and frequently scorched) by our diesel room heater.

### **Risk of pneumonia**

Our survey in 2002 showed that around a third of children died before their fifth birthday, many in the first few days of life with no known cause, and most others from pneumonia. Half of one-year-olds were malnourished, and this, combined with the high altitude and smoke-filled houses increased the risk of pneumonia. Anecdotally, the under-five mortality was closer to 40%; when surveyed, older men tended to forget about small children who died, and at the time we did the survey many of the women, who would have remembered the deaths of their own children, were up in the high pastures. Only 14% of men had had more than two years of schooling, and 2% of women, but even among those who had been to school, literacy skills were very



limited. The local language, also called Wakhi, is an archaic distant relation of Farsi. All Wakhi people speak Wakhi as their mother tongue, and most men and a few women also speak some Dari. We did all our work in Dari, which was translated into Wakhi by our project supervisor when required. We learned a little Wakhi; our efforts were always greeted with laughter, not just because it was so bad, but because people were so surprised to hear an outsider speak their language, however inadequately.

### **Reduce child mortality**

Our project aimed to reduce child mortality by training local women to treat common illness in the villages. We asked each community to select a woman to attend training, and over the next three years, they received about 50 days of training. We adapted a WHO protocol for treating pneumonia, in which antibiotics were given to any child with a cough and a fever breathing above a threshold rate (50 breaths a minute for children under one year, and 40 per minute for those over one year). None of these women could read a watch (although a few had them for decoration), so we developed a system with a pendulum made with a small stone and a piece of thread with two knots; a pendulum of 35cm swings at 50 per minute and 58cm swings at 40 per minute. We trained our women to reduce the child's fever, rehydrate them and then compare the breathing rate of the child with the swinging of the pendulum, and if the breathing rate was faster, the child was given antibiotics. We also trained them to treat diarrhoea, to teach mothers how to improve nutrition, and how to do a hygienic delivery for childbirth at home. In the last 18 months of our project, with the help of a slightly expanded project team, we also introduced a child growth monitoring programme, got permission to administer the government vaccination programme and started a 'family spacing' programme, as contraception is called in Afghanistan. I also did a research programme to see whether giving antibiotics for distribution to women with so little training reduced child mortality, and also whether the rate of antibiotic resistance increased significantly. To do this, I set up a laboratory (starting with the construction of a small building next to our house) and then spent three winters collecting bacteria from children's noses,

and growing and testing the bugs in the lab. I also became the owner of three sheep which I had to bleed to make the bacterial growth media. Living in a dusty environment and not having any electricity, lab heating or running water made this a challenging project, but it worked in the end with a wind turbine and some solar panels, and I got an answer (and a PhD): child mortality falls, and antibiotic resistance increases but not enough to be clinically significant in the short term.

In the summers of 2006 and 2007, we made trips into the high Pamir mountains, to visit some of the Kirghiz nomads who live up there. The nearest Kirghiz settlements were three days' walk away, so we loaded our (by now) four children onto yaks and trekked off to survey their situation. Child mortality among the Kirghiz proved to be even higher than among the Wakhi, and in most households, at least one woman had died in childbirth. In 2007 our trips included bringing vaccinations. Keeping vaccines cool for a week was a challenge, as too few ice packs in the thick insulated box meant the vaccines would be too warm at the end of the tour, and too many meant they would freeze. After some experimentation, we put the vaccines inside a thermos flask in a very cold box, to keep them warm. After a week's travel, some hapless lad would be sent up the mountain in his oversized wellies to bring down some snow to keep them cool...

### **The project continues**

We lived in Wakhan for five years, returning to the UK in 2008. In that time, child mortality was reduced from a third to 21%. The project is continuing under our local Wakhi staff, with continued support from an ex-patriate team. Physically it was a very hard place to live, but our neighbours were a great community with which to work, and we are very grateful for the privilege of serving them.

Alex and his wife Eleanor were both awarded the MBE in the 2010 New Year's Honours List, for their work in Afghanistan. Alex is now working to set up a charity to provide training for medical personnel in the developing world. If anyone would like to support this work, please contact the Development

# Research Fellow in medieval history and Praelector

by Dr Andrew Spencer

AS THE YOUNGEST OF FIVE CHILDREN OF A CLERGYMAN, MY EARLIEST MEMORY OF THE MEDIEVAL IS VISITING COUNTRY CHURCHES WITH MY FATHER. IT WAS A STANDING JOKE IN THE FAMILY THAT DAD COULD NOT PASS THROUGH A VILLAGE WITHOUT HAVING A LOOK INTO THE CHURCH, SOMETHING HE KEPT UP ON HIS MOST RECENT VISIT TO CAMBRIDGE BY INSISTING ON LOOKING IN ST BENE'T'S CHURCH, KEEPING MY MOTHER WAITING FOR HER LUNCH AT THE EAGLE: OLD TRADITIONS DIE HARD!

At the age of nine I went to my own medieval church, when I was sent to boarding school in Devon to be a chorister in Exeter Cathedral. The rhythms of cathedral life, eight services a week and over 300 a year, taught me discipline and the importance of teamwork and a sense of connection with the past: knowing that generations of boys going back more than 700 years had been doing the same thing as me instilled a sense of awe and responsibility. This was never more so than at the annual Christmas Eve service, known as the Grandisson, where two boys sang music composed in the fourteenth century by one of Exeter's greatest bishops, John Grandisson.

At senior school in Sussex, although history was always my favourite subject, it was music and singing that still dominated my school days. Although bright, I was rather lazy and usually did just enough to get by except in the subjects which really grabbed my attention such as history and English. As a result, my GCSE and A-Level results were decent but not of a level to make me competitive as an Oxbridge candidate.

It is with some embarrassment that I look back at the way I handled my UCAS application. I took a gap year after leaving Eastbourne and spent it as a choral scholar in Truro Cathedral in Cornwall in order to apply to be a Choral Scholar at King's, Cambridge. I made the classic mistake of applying not to read history, my favourite and best subject, but theology because I thought it would be an easier option. My interview quickly proved how wrong I was and I went back to Cornwall with my tail between my legs, but with a determination to stick to history and one day to win a place at Cambridge on my own merit. Fortunately I hugely enjoyed my year in Cornwall and met my wife there, so it turned out to be the right decision in the end! Helen-Jane (Howells) is an opera and concert singer so these days I leave the singing to her and I just listen with pleasure and pride.

I went to study history at King's College, London (chosen, again foolishly, though as it turned out fortunately, simply because I liked the name), and arrived convinced that I was a modernist, having studied nineteenth and twentieth century history exclusively from GCSE onwards. I thought I would try out some other periods in my first year, just to broaden my mind a little, and then return to the comforts of modern history in my second and third years.

As it turned out the French Revolution was the closest I got to the modern day in my entire degree. A particularly inspiring, knowledgeable and dedicated lecturer in medieval history there turned me towards England in the middle ages and much of my degree course was spent looking at various political, social, economic and religious aspects of medieval life.



It was then possible to write two dissertations in your final year at London and mine represented the end of one chapter in my life and the beginning of another. My first dissertation was on John Grandisson, the same bishop of Exeter whose music I had sung a decade before at Christmas, and the second was on John de Warenne, earl of Surrey. As part of a course on the reign of Henry III I had chosen to write on Warenne as he was the most powerful lord in Sussex (the estates of medieval earls often bore little relation to the location of their title), the county of my birth and cricket allegiance. Warenne was, by medieval standards, very long lived and he did not die until 1304, aged 73, near the end of the reign of Henry III's son, the great Edward I. For my Master's dissertation, therefore, I decided to complete the study of the earl's life which I had begun as an undergraduate.

(most of which he never paid) and forced to walk barefoot in penance from the Temple Church to Westminster Abbey.

Despite all this Warenne was a vital supporter of the crown, particularly during the civil war against Simon de Montfort and Edward I's campaigns in Wales and Scotland, even campaigning well into his seventies. My Master's and, subsequently, my PhD investigated the role played by Warenne and the other English earls in war, politics and local society during Edward I's reign.

There were two important areas where I felt historical orthodoxy needed to be challenged. The first was that Edward I was a king who adopted an aggressive and predatory stance towards the baronage, and the earls in



Warenne was an exceptionally unpleasant person. A harsh landlord, criticised for this by the archbishops of both Canterbury and York, he was unbearably proud and excessively quarrelsome. Once, when questioned about his rights by the king's justices, he famously brandished a rusty sword belonging, he said, to his ancestors claiming that it alone was sufficient warrant for his lands and rights as his ancestors had conquered their lands with it. Not content with waving his sword about in front of the justices, on another occasion he even stuck one into another baron in the middle of a law suit in Westminster Hall itself. The man died of his wounds and the earl was fined a massive £10,000

particular, and that he preferred to dominate them rather than manage them. It struck me as odd to think that a king as successful as Edward (one of only two English monarchs between 1066 and 1688 not to face a rebellion from his English subjects) could have achieved what he did if he adopted a deliberately provocative position towards his greatest subjects. Instead, the evidence seemed to suggest that Edward developed a co-operative relationship with his nobles that set the template for the most successful monarchs of the later middle ages. Edward was certainly capable of demonstrating his masterfulness when necessary, as the earls of Gloucester

and Hereford found out when they started a private war against each other on the Welsh March and ended up being imprisoned for their pains, but he mixed this with a subtlety and an ability to lead that many historians had not fully appreciated.

The second area was the role the nobility were playing at a local level. In the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many nobles dominated their areas of influence by controlling the local royal administration: having their men appointed to positions such as sheriff and justices of the peace which meant that they could protect the interests of those and their followers. Many have compared this to the mafia, but in an age with no police force it was also a means of ensuring the king's peace and that disputes between

I was fortunate enough to achieve my aim of coming to Cambridge to do my MPhil and PhD and was very happy at Peterhouse where there was a lively graduate community. It has been a somewhat winding path to get to Corpus, via a year spent working in admissions at Sidney Sussex (where I was able to tell lots of prospective university students exactly how not to approach their applications) and three years working for Bernard Jenkin, MP for Harwich & North Essex and Corpus Old Member.

I have immensely enjoyed my first year at Corpus and, now my wife and I are settled in Leckhampton, am very much looking forward to getting even more involved in college life, particularly in my new role as the College's praelector. It is a little daunting to be following in the footsteps of



landowners, always a danger in a society based on the ownership of land, did not get out of hand. Some historians have suggested that this phenomenon, known as bastard feudalism, was happening in the thirteenth century as well as later. My own detailed work on the way Edward I's earls operated in their areas of influence, however, suggested that they used much older, more traditional methods, to protect and extend their interests. My post-doctoral work, funded by the British Academy, is looking at this question more broadly across the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries to see just how local government and society really worked and the role the nobility played in it.

Professor Rackham and Dr Kress, two of the best known Cambridge praelectors of recent years, but one which I know I am going to enjoy. Although mostly ceremonial, the job has the important function of representing the College at matriculation, the moment when members arrive, and at graduation, the moment when they leave for pastures new. At the coming in and at the going out the praelector is there while the College goes ever on.

# Donnelley Research Fellow in Philosophy

by Dr Thomas Land

WHAT DOES THE PARKER LIBRARY HAVE IN COMMON WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS IN THE COASTAL REGION OF SOUTH CAROLINA? BOTH ARE THE RECIPIENTS OF MAJOR GRANTS BY THE GAYLORD AND DOROTHY DONNELLEY FOUNDATION, A US CHARITY TIED TO THE CHICAGO-BASED COMPANY OF RR DONNELLEY, ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST COMMERCIAL PRINTING BUSINESSES, AND PRIMARILY DEVOTED, IN ITS CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES, TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND THE ARTS.

Besides supporting the Parker Library, the foundation sponsors the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Research Fellowship, a unique postdoctoral exchange program for recent PhDs at Corpus and the University of Chicago. The three-year fellowship, which was established in 2008, allows early-career scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and religious studies to focus exclusively on their research. The Donnelley family's ties to both Corpus and the University of Chicago date back to the middle of the previous century: Gaylord Donnelley studied at Corpus after graduating from Yale and served on the University of Chicago Board of Trustees from 1947 until his death in 1992. His granddaughter Shawn Donnelley continues to maintain the foundation's relationship with Corpus.

Being the latest recipient of the Donnelley Fellowship (the third overall), I have just arrived in Cambridge and would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to the Corpus community. I work in philosophy and recently completed my PhD at the University of Chicago with a dissertation on Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Being originally from Germany, I decided to go to the US for my PhD after I did an exchange year at the University of Massachusetts and found the intellectual climate there much

more stimulating and rigorous than at my home university of Heidelberg. The idea of living in an English-speaking environment also appealed to me. I had taken English for the Abitur at school, and quite enjoyed the language.

Although it was by no means clear to me when I started graduate school that I would end up writing a dissertation on Kant, people sometimes ask me whether I regret moving to the US, given that I now study the work of a German philosopher. My response to this is 'Not at all!' Kant studies are alive and well in North America, and the general quality is very high. What is more, I received an excellent education at Chicago, and having some familiarity with two different academic communities, and indeed two different cultures, has served me well, I think. I now look forward to getting to know a third one.

During my time at Corpus I plan to refine and extend the exegetical position I developed in my dissertation, initially in a series of journal articles, but eventually working up to a book entitled Kant's *Philosophy of Perception*. The larger philosophical issue at stake here can be characterized as follows. One of the central questions of philosophy is what it is to have reason: what it is to be able to think and act in the kind of way that seems to be distinctive to human beings.



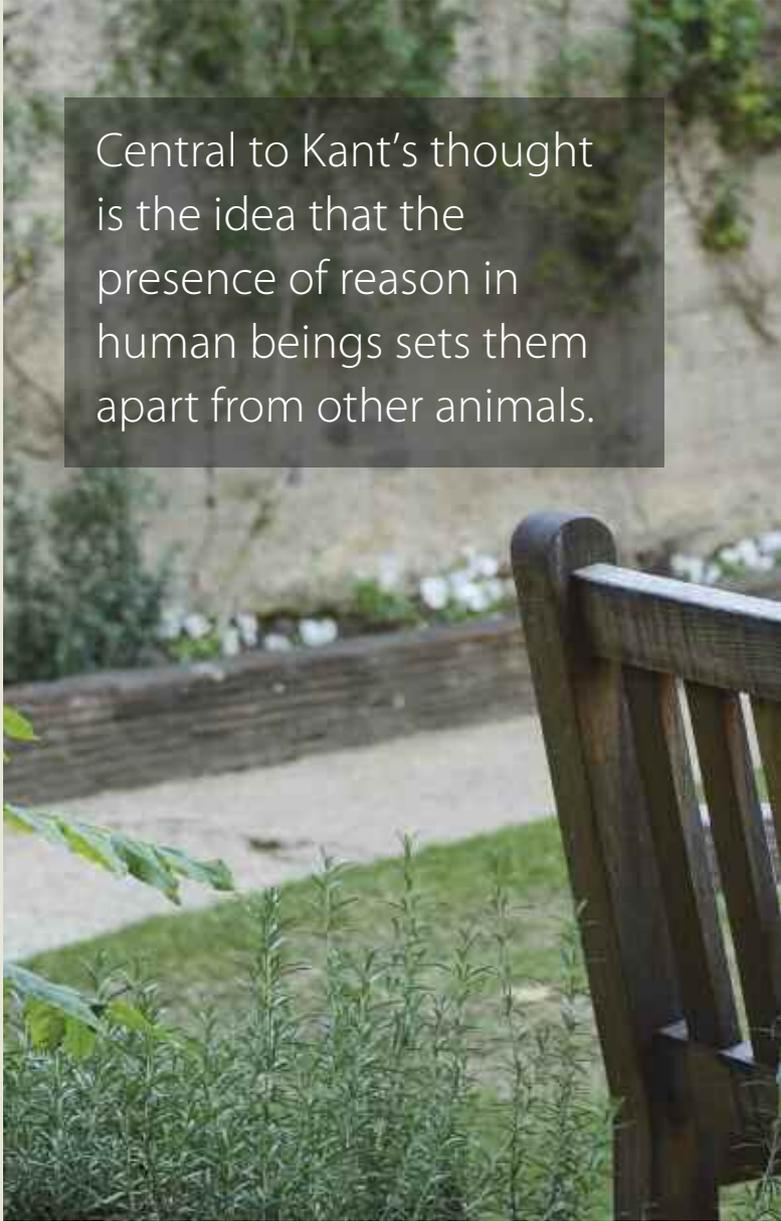


One of the central questions of philosophy is what it is to have reason.

In a more traditional vocabulary, this is the question of what it is to be a rational animal. An important aspect of this question is what the relation is between the more narrowly rational, or cognitive, capacities of a human being (such as conceptual thought, language use, or the ability to derive conclusions from premises), on the one hand, and its perceptual capacities, on the other; that is, between reason and the senses, or thought and perception, or indeed between the rationality and the animality of a rational animal.

This question greatly occupied Kant. Indeed, he thought of his own achievement in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as one of identifying the correct middle path between two equally problematic answers to this question, each of which overemphasizes one of these two aspects while downplaying the other. Thus, in Kant's view, rationalists like Leibniz overemphasized the importance of reason, and conceived of perception as merely a confused form of thinking. By Kant's lights, this amounts to an improper assimilation of perception to thinking. Conversely, empiricists like Locke made the opposite mistake: they conceived of reason on the model of the senses. For Locke, as Kant reads him, conceptual thought is nothing more than a more complex form of perceiving. In truth, however, conceptual thought is different in kind from sense-perception, and for this reason, neither can be assimilated to, or conceived as a derivative version of the other. In short, then, Kant is convinced that the key to getting clear on what it is to be a rational animal lies in a proper appreciation of what we might call the heterogeneity of reason and the senses.

At the same time, it is equally characteristic of our cognitive predicament that these two capacities must cooperate in a certain way: Knowledge, for Kant, requires both a perceptual component and a conceptual component. However, the particular way in which he conceives of this cooperation creates a tension in his account. For it looks as though the required cooperation threatens to undermine the heterogeneity of perception and thought that Kant so adamantly insists on. Here is why: Central to Kant's thought is the idea that the presence of reason in human beings sets them apart from other animals. Our cognitive capacities, although in some ways similar to those of other animals, are yet categorically different, precisely on account of the fact that we possess the capacity to reason. Because we possess this capacity, a different set of conceptual tools is needed to make sense of our cognitive situation compared to that of other animals. And although some non-rational animals have perceptual faculties very similar to our own, the



Central to Kant's thought is the idea that the presence of reason in human beings sets them apart from other animals.

presence of reason in our case has the effect of making our perceptual faculties different in kind from those possessed by other animals. There are, we might say, two kinds of perceptual faculty: there is perception in a rational animal, and there is perception in a non-rational animal. Neither can be understood as merely a variant of the other. Rather, both are generically the same (they both belong to the genus of perception), but specifically different (they constitute different species of the genus 'perception').

If this is right, then human perceptual capacities themselves manifest the presence of reason in humans. Or, to put it differently, Kant's point is that rational thought somehow informs perception. But if this is Kant's view, then it becomes difficult to see how he can at the same time insist on the heterogeneity of thought and perception. For it now appears that perception is no longer independent of thought, and, as a consequence, does not have its own distinct nature – which was, however, what the claim of



heterogeneity asserted. It rather seems that perception itself has become a subspecies of thought. Indeed, commentators sometimes accuse Kant of changing his mind on this point half way through the *Critique* in effect, of wanting to have his cake and eat it, too.

In my own research, I try to save Kant from these charges. That is, I seek to find a way of making the heterogeneity claim compatible with the claim that the perceptual capacities of a rational animal themselves involve reason. For this purpose, I develop a new account of what reason is, for Kant. The central idea is that the tension I have described arises only if we conceive of reason in a relatively narrow way. But once we broaden our conception, we can see that the way in which reason is involved in perception does not undermine the characteristically sensory nature of perception, and therefore allows Kant to hang on to the heterogeneity claim. It's only when we operate with an overly narrow conception of what reason is that reason's

involvement in perception is incompatible with the heterogeneity of perception and thought. However, once we recognize that there is a distinctive kind of exercise of reason, which is responsible for its involvement in perception, we can see that Kant's view is not only perfectly coherent, but offers a rather subtle and intriguing account of our cognitive situation.

This, at any rate, is my contention, which I will seek to defend against rival interpretations of Kant during my time at Corpus. In addition to working out some of the details, part of the challenge is that my position combines several rather heterodox elements. As a consequence, I will have to fight battles on several interpretive fronts at once – a feature that makes my work both exciting and, at times, quite difficult. But I could not ask for a better environment in which to hatch my battle plans than Corpus, where, based on my first impressions, a commitment to first-rate scholarship and research goes hand in hand with a strong



# Professor Philippe Sands QC (m1979)

Interviewed by Dr Simon Heffer (m1979)

IN DOING THIS SERIES OF INTERVIEWS FOR THE PELICAN I'VE INTERVIEWED DISTINGUISHED OLD MEMBERS SENIOR TO ME, AND THE ODD METEOR WHO IS YOUNGER: BUT PROFESSOR PHILIPPE SANDS QC, ONE OF OUR MOST SIGNIFICANT AND CONTROVERSIAL INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS, PROFESSOR OF LAW AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, IS THE FIRST OF MY EXACT CONTEMPORARIES TO GET THE TREATMENT. I AM NOT SURE WHICH ONE OF US IS THE MORE ANXIOUS ABOUT IT. WE MEET ON A SUMMER'S DAY AT MATRIX CHAMBERS IN THE GRAY'S INN ROAD, MORE THAN THREE DECADES AFTER WE MATRICULATED AT CORPUS TOGETHER IN 1979. WE KNEW EACH OTHER PRETTY WELL THEN, AND WORK OUT THAT WE HAVE SEEN FAR LESS OF EACH OTHER IN THE INTERVENING YEARS THAN WE SHOULD HAVE LIKED, AS OUR LIVES TOOK DIFFERENT COURSES.

Philippe was always genial, easy-going but deceptively committed to his studies when an undergraduate. Little has changed apart from his haircut. He reminds me of something I had entirely forgotten about him – 'I started off doing economics, with a very good guy called Michael Kuczynski, with whom I am still in touch. Corpus didn't have an economics tutor, so I was bumped next door to Pembroke. I soon saw that the economics I was doing in my first year overlapped with the economics I'd done at A level and I thought I didn't want to spend another year doing it all over again, so I changed to law.' That is the Sands I remember. 'I regret that I changed to law.'

Why is that? 'I'm very happy doing what I'm doing, but I don't think that law at university is really an intellectual pursuit. I wish I had done history, or English, or politics, or philosophy. I don't believe it is the function of university to train people to practise in big firms. I had a great time, but it was an inglorious career. I got a respectable 2:1 and then did a Masters in international law, in which I got a first. I really loved international law as a subject of study. It resonated with the world I was interested in. It was about conflicts between states, it was about the issues of the day, it was about wars, it was about things that connected with my interests in a way that other aspects of law didn't.'

## **Deeply engaged in the political world**

I ask him whether he is politically motivated. 'I am deeply engaged in the political world and my approach to law is that it is part of the political process now and always. I grew up in an apolitical household that was basically Tory – my dad is a dentist, my mum ran an antiquarian bookshop. My grandfather was political – he was a socialist, and he was the member of the family one engaged with world events about.' But, as Philippe explains, his interest at that stage was often 'unarticulated'. 'I grew up in a household where one didn't talk about the past on my mother's side, or about what happened to my mother and her family. My mother is Jewish, born in Vienna in 1938, three months after the Anschluss, and was separated from her family for the entire duration of the war. She was shipped off to Paris, and I've recently discovered that she was saved by an evangelical Christian missionary, a remarkable woman called Elsie Tilney, whose story I have tracked down for the next book I'm doing. My mother was parked in a catholic home just outside Paris: so there was this great upheaval in the family that was never talked about when I was growing up – lots of people disappearing, dying.'

He was told that his mother often slept in a dog kennel, to avoid being detected by the Nazis. Her parents survived but many other members of her family were killed. 'Survivors in such circumstances often won't talk about what happened, for reasons I understand.'

### Remarkable connection

The subject fascinates him, and not purely for family reasons. 'I've got a year's sabbatical to do a new book and I've gone back to my grandfather's birthplace – it was then called Lemberg, but is now Lviv in the Ukraine. I have traced the story of his life and it has a remarkable connection with someone else. My mentor in my Master's year at Cambridge was Eli Lauterpacht. His father Hersch was born in 1897, just outside Lemberg, and later went to Vienna to study more law. He then came to the LSE where he became a professor, then later became Whewell Professor of International Law at Cambridge and the British judge at the International Courts of Justice. His book led to the European Convention of Human Rights. Eli's dad grew up 100 yards from my grandfather – we only discovered this last October.'

His experience with Lauterpacht jnr was immensely significant in his choice of specialism. 'I decided it had to be international law, but I embarked on this in an unorthodox way. I went to live

with a girlfriend in America while she was doing her PhD, and I hung out at Harvard as a visiting scholar. Out of the blue I then got a letter from Eli Lauterpacht to come and work with him at the Centre for International Law he was creating at Cambridge. My four years as a Research Fellow got me into that world.'

The connection with the Lauterpachts, after a gap of 70 years, nearly didn't happen. 'I had applied to, and failed to be taken on by, a large city law firm, who thought I was not up to it, so I went off in a different direction – it was a most fortunate rejection.'

His research work for Lauterpacht was on nationalisations by states, but while he was doing it, in 1986, the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl happened. 'I was doing some work for an American university, and they invited me to go to Washington to deliver a paper on the legal consequences of Chernobyl. That was subsequently turned into a book on cross-border pollution. I'd qualified as a barrister by then and I started getting instructions from NGOs, some of which were not so well known at that point – Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and so on – so my early practice was providing advice on cross-boundary environmental issues post-Chernobyl.'



'I'm interested in the environment but I didn't come to it out of some burning desire to do something about it. It was there, it happened, it raised important issues no-one else was addressing, so it became my niche. And then I wrote a book on international environmental law and that cemented my academic career.'

### Tony Blair's nemesis

Philippe is much better known today, however, as Tony Blair's nemesis, the lawyer whose book *Lawless World* determined that the former prime minister had not behaved entirely properly in regard to international law over the matter of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. He takes a realistic approach to these questions, raising no issue about the earlier invasion of Iraq in 1991, in response to Iraq's attack on Kuwait the previous summer. 'I thought it was fine. The UN resolution was clear, there was no legal issue. The invasion by Saddam was quite clearly wrong, and Kuwait was entirely within its rights to get rid of him, and to ask others to help. I had no problem with it. I had no legal problems with most of the conflicts Blair later engaged in.'

For example, he says that the expedition to Kosovo was 'at least arguable, if not more, because of an imminent humanitarian catastrophe in which many people were about to lose their lives. I do believe states have a right to intervene in those circumstances. Perhaps I have in my DNA a sense of how the world should be. I accept we can't save everyone all over the world, so it comes down to a question of when we do it and when we don't do it - I accept that.'

### No threat

But the events of 2003 were different. 'There was no threat of anything in 2003. Saddam was just a nasty piece of work. He had run out of energy. The real horrors had been carried out in 1988-89 - but he was our friend then, standing up against the Iranians. There were horrors going on in 2003, but nothing to justify the claim that something new and imminent was happening that we had to prevent. I read all the materials we were given and I just didn't believe it.'

So is Tony Blair a war criminal?

'I think the war was unlawful. He was one of the principal persons who prosecuted it. The crime of aggression established at Nuremberg is not well established in international law, and it is debatable how and when an unlawful war gives rise to individual criminal responsibility.'



'I'm attracted by the argument put forward by Elizabeth Wilmshurst, the government legal adviser who resigned. In her rather magnificent letter of resignation - a truly stupendous document - she said she was not prepared to stay on in the circumstances in which the use of force was being utilised in circumstances that gave rise to the crime of aggression.'

'The fatal mistake Blair made was to give too much to Bush too early, so he didn't have any effective leverage. I've seen a lot of documents I shouldn't have seen, they make clear that Blair made his decision in the autumn of 2002, that he was with Bush. So the whole UN thing was a sham. I have more respect for Bush, in a sense, who said straight out that he had no respect for the UN, than for Blair going through this charade.' Philippe thought the process was, as well as illegal, 'fundamentally dishonest, and I really object to that.'

But should Blair be tried?

'I believe in the rule of law. If an individual is associated with an unlawful act then he should face the consequences, whoever he is. That applies to Blair on Iraq, and to Bush on water boarding. But I'm not starry-eyed about international



law. Sir John Baker, who was Professor of English Legal History at Cambridge, and whom I respect hugely – would often remind me that the law evolves over centuries. And the law is changing. We have an international criminal court and people are hauled up before it. For the moment they are people like Saif Gaddafi, from less powerful countries – but I think we're a long way off getting the guys from the big countries.'

Although he considers the process to have been dishonest, he stops short of accusing Blair of mendacity. 'As a barrister I prefer to be very careful. I have never said that Blair lied, or that Blair was dishonest, because I can't say that. I am limited by my rules of professional conduct. He's also a member of the bar. But I believe the evidence shows he misled parliament, he misled the cabinet, and he misled the public. Other people will call that lying, other people will call that dishonest.'

#### **Code of ethics**

'I've never said the former attorney general [Lord Goldsmith QC] was leaned on. As a member of the bar we have a code of ethics that rightly calls for respect for our fellow barristers. What I would say is that the evidence shows that he totally changed his mind in the last ten days before the war. There was no new fact and no new legal argument that justified that change of mind; reasonable observers conclude there must have been a political cause.'

'He would have done better to have resigned. If he had, Britain would not have gone to war, because Blair needed an opinion made public by his attorney supporting the war.'

#### **Turning point**

Philippe sees the event as the turning point in Blair's political career. 'He never recovered from that. The loss of credibility was complete. What really matters is the loss of trust. We should all care about that. It's not a party political matter. It's important that when heads of government, heads of intelligence services, heads of police services tell us something, we have to be able to believe them. It's cancerous when the trust starts to go. The most important thing Chilcot [the official inquiry into the Iraq war] can do is restore trust. It's not for his inquiry to say whether the war was legal or illegal, it has no authority to do that. He has to restore trust. The best way to do that is by setting out the facts – and the facts are devastating.'

I wonder, though, whether his faith in the United Nations was affected by its failure to control Saddam in the 1990s and its inability to enforce the many resolutions passed against him after 1991, which gave America its excuse for action in 2003. 'Countries cannot rely on the United Nations for their security. But then we are not required to do so. If a state believes it is under attack, or fears imminent attack, it is entitled to use force to protect itself. It doesn't have to wait for a UN resolution. Iraq never got close to that. The UN's



no more than the sum of its members. If the five permanent members of the Security Council don't want something to happen, it won't happen. It's in the power of five nations to sort it out. If they choose not to, it's their responsibility.'

He reminds me of a more positive approach by the UN on another, more conspicuous occasion. 'I was in New York on September 11 2001. I was teaching at NYU, half a mile from the World Trade Center. I saw the whole thing. It was a deeply shocking and scary day. The next day the UN unanimously adopted the resolution to support the US's right to defend itself.' Referring to one of the outcomes of that resolution, he observes that 'Afghanistan has gone wrong for different reasons.'

#### **Geo-political reality**

Philippe is still at a loss to understand why everyone became so heated about Saddam. 'He wasn't a major threat in the region. None of the countries around Iraq wanted Iraq to be attacked. Iraq under Saddam – and this is not an attractive argument, but it's a geo-political reality – was a counterbalance to Iran. And with that gone, many of the countries around now fear Iran will expand, and that has a malign effect.' The person who predicted all this, he points out, was another Corpus man, Sir Harold Walker, a former ambassador who told a House of Commons select committee with alarming accuracy what the consequences would be if Saddam were removed.

The Channel 4 film on the imaginary trial of Tony Blair was based on Philippe's book about the events, and he was one of those consulted by Robert Harris for his novel – subsequently filmed – *The Ghost* in which Blair appears in a thinly-disguised fictional form. 'I am told Blair was really irritated by Robert's book,' says Philippe, without too much trace of concern.

#### **An object lesson**

Those events have, he feels, changed the way Britain now does things. The nature of British intervention in Libya was an object lesson in what will happen post-Blair. Cameron and Clegg, he says, 'bent over backwards to ensure all was done properly in legal and diplomatic contexts. They (the government) can't be criticised for the manner in which they went about doing it.'

Matrix Chambers, which Philippe co-founded, is renowned for its members' work in the field of human rights law, and he is one of those sitting on the Commission investigating a possible United Kingdom Bill of Rights. I ask him whether he is concerned about the frivolous use of this law – designed after the Second World War to help prevent another genocide of the sort in which his mother's family had been victims. When we spoke, there had been public disquiet about serious criminals serving long prison sentences using the law to demand conjugal visits from their spouses.



'It's an important question. It's one I'm facing now in my capacity as a member of the Commission, and I and other colleagues are looking at this with an open mind. The news reports that we are all at each other's throats and tearing each other apart could not be further from the truth.'

#### **Basic rights**

He says the fundamental question is 'what are the basic rights and who has them?' The next most important is 'what are the delivery mechanisms?' He is no unequivocal advocate of the status quo in the present European Court of Human Rights. 'I think there is a question about it, and I think you may be surprised at the similarity of opinion between left and right on the function of an international court.'

'I believe its function is limited. I sit as an international judge in arbitration disputes, and I treat my arbitral function as a limited one. It's not for me to impose on states, most of which have elected governments, my view on what's right or wrong. It's my job only to interpret and apply the law. I'm in favour of a limited international jurisdiction which does not legislate, does not trample over other cultural perspectives, unless they cross a line – the question is where's the line?'

He talks about the question of prisoners voting. 'I don't have strongly held views on that question, and I'm entertained that it has become such a combustible issue.' Doesn't he take note, though, of the anger of many members of the public, who feel that going to prison should entail losing the right to vote?

'I hear opinions at Arsenal football matches. I sit in the cheap seats – if there are such things at the Emirates – next to plumbers and electricians, and I talk to others from diverse backgrounds, and we talk about prisoners voting.'

#### **Blanket rule**

'If you're held for three days on some minor offence and there happens to be an election on one of those days, you can't vote. But if you commit a serious crime and serve four-and-half years, and there doesn't happen to be an election while you're inside, then you do vote. That's barking, and the people I talk to at the Emirates say it's ridiculous to have a blanket rule in that way. Certain individuals lose certain civil and political rights – that's accepted – but to have a blanket rule?'

'One size fits all doesn't work. But why is the ECHR dealing with these minutiae? I feel an international court should be dealing



## You may be surprised at the similarity of opinion between left and right on the function of an international court

with things that are of pan-European significance and cross a certain threshold, as the US Supreme Court does. Everything else should be for national courts. The ECHR should have a limited function and should operate on a basis of subsidiarity, and not dealing with tens of thousands of cases. That issue must be focused on.'

### **Passionate beliefs**

However, the values the ECHR upholds are important to him. He cites one of the concluding remarks in a famous telegram sent back to Washington by the legendary American diplomat George Kennan in 1947 about the Soviet Union: 'The greatest threat is that we shall become like those who seek to destroy us.' Philippe adds: 'I have a passionate belief that European human rights, which the British basically drafted, reflect a commonsensical, decent approach.' He points out there are countries within the court's jurisdiction that 'bang people up in order to deny them their civil and political rights – but it then gets difficult to object if we're denying prisoners the vote for entirely different reasons, and we demand an exemption. We do need a European court that can come down like a ton of bricks on those who abuse civil and political rights in a

serious manner.' He also admits to having 'a lot of problems with the European arrest warrant. And the extradition arrangement between the US and the UK is lopsided. That was done on a piece of paper by David Blunkett as part of the cosyng up to the United States at the time, and it is wrong and needs urgent attention.'

Philippe is married to an American lawyer, and has three children. He sees them more than one might expect. 'I work intensely during the year, but I take lots of holidays with my family, and work at home a lot.' His wife works for the Family Rights Group, providing advice to parents and grandparents who get caught up in child abuse issues. So far, none of the children is heading for the bar.

Before he takes me off for a very congenial lunch at the Middle Temple, where he is a bencher, I ask him what the future might hold. Does he want to become a judge, whether here or in an international court? Or would he see himself expanding his academic interests into a chair elsewhere?

'Don't think so', he replies. 'But I'd love to run the BBC World Service, a great British gem.' And why ever not?

## Monastic Adventures 2011:

# Visits to monasteries on Mount Athos and to the Abbey of Bec-Hellouin

by The Revd James Buxton, Dean of Chapel

DURING THE EASTER VACATION, I ACCOMPANIED DR KRESS, PROFESSORS IBBETSON AND MORGAN, AND MY GREEK FRIEND GEORGE PAITAZOGLU, TO MOUNT ATHOS. I THINK IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE FIRST CORPUS FELLOWS' PILGRIMAGE FOR RATHER A LONG TIME.

Mount Athos (the 'Holy Mountain') crowns the most easterly of three peninsulas which extend into the Aegean, south-east of Salonika. This unique corner of Greece defies easy description. The mountain itself and the surrounding woods, coasts, ravines and hills are absolutely beautiful. Culturally and spiritually Mount Athos is an astonishing survival. It is a semi-autonomous, all male monastic state, populated by monks who live in diverse dwellings, ranging from tiny hermitages hidden away in clefts and mountain sides, to fully evolved monasteries like great fortresses, which often perch close to the sea shore, or high up above on the precipitous flanks of the Holy Mountain. Mount Athos is the spiritual heartland of Orthodoxy, so there are monasteries representing the Churches of Greece, Serbia, Russia, Romania, and Bulgaria and there are monks hailing from many other nations besides.

The famous oddity of Mount Athos is that the peninsular is entirely closed to women, who may only gaze upon it from tourist boats keeping a safe distance. The ban extends to female domestic animals, though cats are an exception to this rule. The cats make the most of it, by putting on terrific displays of amorousness (with one another I mean), which must be the cause of some vexation to the celibate creatures of the Holy Mountain. A great deal could be said about this of course. The easiest explanation for the ban on females, is simply the force of tradition. Since the earliest times of monastic habitation 1,000 years ago, the whole peninsular was seen as a monastic enclosure. The monks themselves however, are prone to saying that the exclusion is because the Holy Mountain is the garden of the Mother of God, and the monks are there, just as her gardeners, to tend it.

Having picked up our papers, which have to be arranged long in advance, we travelled by ferry (as everyone has to do – there is no access by land to the peninsular) to the first port on the west side of the peninsular, and then by minibus over high wooded ridges to the Serbian monastery of Hilandar where we stayed for one night. Soon after our arrival we enjoyed rather a good meal taken in silence with the community in the refectory. It consisted of a kind of mushroom stroganoff with rice, salad, bread and olives. It being Lent, it was the only meal during our stay at Hilandar. Fortunately Dr Kress had brought an enormous supply of biscuits, nuts and crisps in his rucksack, for which we were all very grateful on more than one occasion, though I must say we did generally have excellent food in the monasteries, consisting mostly of local produce cooked in a Mediterranean style. The monks are generally vegetarian, though fish is eaten on special occasions, and crustaceans (which are not considered to be either fish or meat), are also often on the menu. Later on in the day at Hilandar we were given an excellent tour by a delightful young Serbian monk, who showed us a number of frescoed chapels in parts of the monastery not usually seen by visitors.

The following day, rising early, we took separate paths through thick woods, wilderness and the stony sea shore to the monastery of Vatopedi, a vast medieval city-like complex, which has seen a great revival under its dynamic and controversial abbot, and now includes many young monks. We also stayed at the monastery of Koutloumousiou (pictured overleaf, top right) and visited the famous monastery of Iviron. In each place we had the opportunity to view wonderful frescoes and a variety of treasures including miraculous icons, and large collections of relics in elaborate vessels. The latter are often laid out for veneration



One of the small monastic houses at the Skete of St Anne.

by the faithful on a trestle table after the evening service and before dinner. Relics include skulls, bones, and other items associated with saints and martyrs of the Holy Mountain and of the wider church.

After our third night, the other Fellows returned to Salonika whilst my friend George and I continued on to the wilder southern end of the peninsular, staying first at the Grand Lavra (the prime Monastery of Athos), then, for Orthodox Palm Sunday, at the tiny monastery of St George at Kerasia on the remote southern flank of the Holy Mountain. This monastery has a particular ministry to young men from Salonika who often come to this remote place at the weekend. I was very impressed to see how the monks incorporated them into the worship, passing books to them in the flickering candlelight, indicating where to begin reading or chanting. One of the visitors had an astoundingly beautiful singing voice. It was deeply moving to hear and see such earnest love and devotion in this obscure and hidden place.

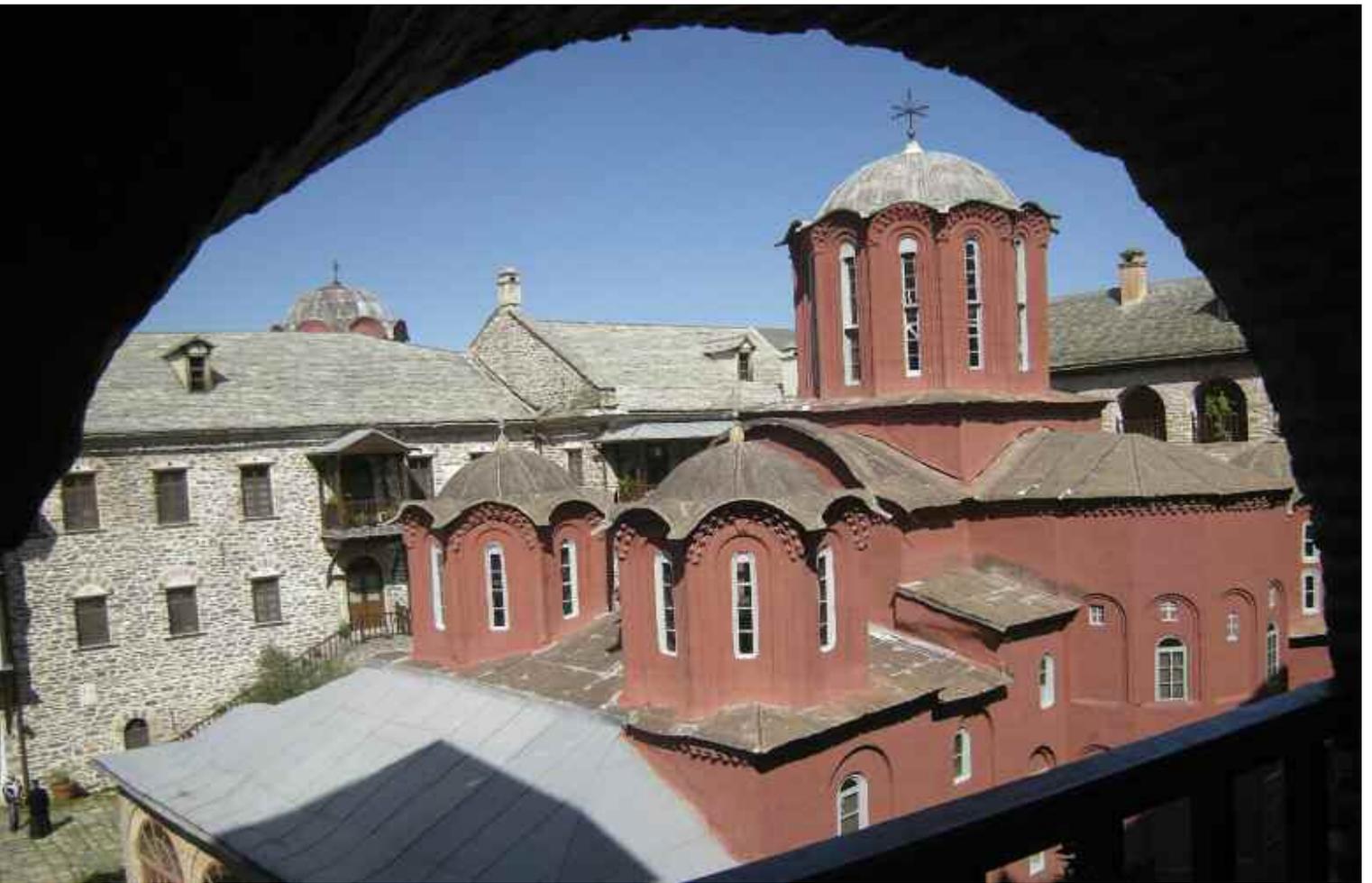
I was up rather late (5.30 am) for the Palm Sunday liturgy, attracting some disapproving looks from the monks, but was still in time to get an olive sprig, representing a palm! After the service we had delicious freshly fried fish, with bread baked in the monastery's own oven, which is fuelled by dried out vine-branches.

After another walk along lovely paths through woodland, we spent our final night at the Skete of St Anne.

The lengthy night services - when the churches are lit by a very few points of flame illuminating the faces of the saints in the sacred icons - have a curious intensity. The monastery churches are in almost total darkness during the night offices, and though all the monks are present (more than a hundred in the larger monasteries) the services are led by a handful of the monks, the chant moving from side to side of the church. A monk goes 'on patrol' every fifteen minutes or so, and gives a friendly prod to any his brothers who seem to be snoozing in the shadows. The atmosphere is extremely powerful, and one is very aware of the sheer persistence of Christian devotion that has played out in these places for so many centuries. This was one of many points of contact I noticed between the monasteries and collegiate life. Not just the centuries old stream of worship and prayer: The 'grammar' of Christendom is so evident in both places. Abbots and masters sit in the same place in church, and colleges and monasteries share a similar architectural and social shape. Both are preoccupied with praying, eating, wearing unusual gowns and adhering to a wide range of rules and norms which are not obvious to outsiders. The hospitality of the monasteries towards strangers is rightly legendary. There is no means of paying and one is put up, fed, watered (and often 'wined!') and given a bed without any questions being asked.



Ancient meets modern at Mount Athos: Albanian male drivers and a monk on their mobile phones at the quay of St Anne.



### Bec-Hellouin in Normandy

As many Old Members know, a regular fixture in the College calendar over the past 30 or 40 years has been a retreat at the abbey of Bec-Hellouin in Normandy. Once again this year – in early August – a group of us travelled to Bec. A memorable aspect of the journey this time was that one of our group (an American graduate student) had forgotten his passport. This fact only emerged once we were literally about to get into the Euro-Tunnel. We pressed on regardless, and managed to sail past the ‘Border Force’ staff without attracting any attention. Fortunately we got the passport couriered to the abbey before returning to England, thus avoiding a repeat performance at Calais (which would have been doomed to failure as checks are much stricter Calais to Folkstone). I suspect this will be my only attempt at people-trafficking! We had a very enjoyable time at Bec, attending services in the austere though grand monastic chapel, silent meals in the refectory and going for walks in the surrounding countryside. Our visit this time coincided with the community’s Patronal Festival, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 15th.

For many years now, the Corpus visitors have been warmly welcomed by a long standing member of the community, Frère Raphael. This year he showed us round two newly restored

buildings: The great fourteenth century bell-tower (pictured below), with its magnificent peel of new bells, and the seventeenth century abbatial palace which has been beautifully restored so that it can be used as the monastery shop and conference centre. We also visited ‘Les Caves du Paradis’, which are entered via an opening hidden by a copse, in a sloping field just beside the abbey. ‘Les Caves’ are an astonishing network of tunnels, with wide arched bays to either side, which were built as a cool-store for monastery produce in the fourteenth century.





Some of this year's visitors with Frère Raphael.



Entering the refectory on the Feast of the Assumption.

Over recent years, the Corpus visitors have also become great friends with some of the sisters at the nearby convent of St Françoise, and one of our group stayed with them this year. The sisters, including the Mother Superior, are always keen to know how the College generally and the Chapel in particular are getting on, and always remember to ask about previous visitors. This community of nuns is closely linked to the abbey and the brothers and sisters sing very beautifully together at the principal services on Sundays and Holy days. The 'Bec-Liturgy' is in fact renowned for this and can also be experienced at Abu Ghosh, their daughter community in the Holy Land.

This year one of our party was a newly ordained deacon, Tom Sander, who was an MPhil student at Corpus in 2010-2011, whilst being resident at Westcott House. He is now serving his Title at Felmersham in the Diocese of St Albans. Tom and I were invited to join the monastic community in

the choir, and each day one of us read the gospel in English during the Mass. We both found it very moving to be involved in the worshipping life of Bec in this way.

These diverse communities, east and west, continue to be a marvellous witness to Christian faith, and a sign of the capacity of the gospel to inspire and shape communities in every age. They have faithfully brought right into the present many insights from our medieval forbears about how to live in tune with God, and in love and compassion for one's neighbours. Monastic life continues to stand as a radical witness in our ever more materialistic culture. The monastic movement has certainly not had its day, and will continue to inspire us and future generations. I have also returned from these trips reflecting on the shared roots we have as a College, with these monasteries. The finger-print of Christendom remains upon us, and that is a very precious gift indeed!



# Leckhampton's 50th Anniversary

IN LOOKING BACK ON AN OCCASION THERE IS USUALLY A MOMENT THAT STANDS OUT; THIS TIME, THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF LECKHAMPTON ENCAPSULATED SO MANY MOMENTS IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO PICK JUST ONE.



The glorious weather, the food, the cake competition by the graduate students, the marvellous cupcakes with David Ibbetson's face on, children on the bouncy castle, large lads having their faces painted, Fred (the Henry Moore sculpture) wearing a straw hat and pink balloons, the superb jazz band, the sight and sounds of generations of guests discovering and rediscovering the delights of the garden – or the moment when an Old Member and former Fellow, Dr Jack Gordon and his wife Diana offered to pay for the roof terrace on the new building; all of these form a kaleidoscope of pictures of the day.

The party, held on a hot July 3rd, was to celebrate Leckhampton's coming of age (for as we all know, 50 is just that), and to launch a fairly low-key but urgent appeal for support for the first new building there since the George Thomson Building was erected in 1963. This new accommodation block will provide badly needed rooms and flats for graduate students, bringing more of them onto campus and into the community of Leckhampton. Most of the cost will be met by the College from the sale of a few

houses on the outskirts of town that no longer meet our needs, but there is still a shortfall of about £800,000.

Once it is built, the new block will be cost and energy efficient, unlike the outlying Victorian houses it replaces. It will no doubt merge quickly into the fabric of the place, situated as it is at right angles to the old house, on the rim of the sports field and softened by trees and planting.

The enthusiasm of the MCR and current students for this project is encouraging; the MCR Committee were spectacular in their support for the party and its mission. They served the Pimms, painted the faces, organised the games and baked the cakes for the competition. And above all they mingled and chatted to Old Members in between an unceasing flow of clearing up. Jazz band Threeway (Steve Lodder, Old Member Ben Crosland and Steve Waterman) played brilliantly and added a terrific swing to the day and we are immensely grateful to them for donating their time and talents.



# Leckhampton's



Corpus Association committee member Lucy Drew (m1989) provided endless support before and during the day, and her daughter, Stephanie, provided a beautiful recital of flute repertoire.

It was especially good to see Christine McCrum and David Dewhirst enjoying themselves so much; both remember the founding of Leckhampton well and played key roles in its development. We were also delighted to welcome Old Members from as far away as Australia, Dubai and the USA

as well as Europe and all over the UK. By the end of the party many had renewed acquaintances and friendships, and Leckhampton was a little closer to its new building, complete with roof terrace.

If you would like to become a Founder Member of the new building, you can do so by donating a minimum of £250. Your name will be recorded in the Book of Benefactors which will be kept in the library. Please contact the Development Office for details.

# 50th Anniversary





# The Playroom

by Mark McCrum (m1977)



NOW THAT THE CORPUS PLAYROOM HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY REFURBISHED, WITH SMART DRESSING ROOMS AND A NEW BOX OFFICE, ALL UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ADC, IT'S STRANGE TO RECALL THE PRECARIOUS WAY THE PLACE CAME INTO BEING.

It was January 1979. I was in my second year at Corpus reading English, an eager would-be playwright. My only problem: there was nowhere in Cambridge to put on new writing. If you wanted to stage a play you had written, you had to produce it yourself. This meant raising funds to hire a venue, which might be as much as – whisper it – fifty pounds and then persuading the relevant Powers-That-Be that an original work, rather than a punk rock version of *Hamlet* or a searing new presentation of *Danton's Death* was the thing to do.

I was living in a tiny back room in undergraduate lodgings at 8a King's Parade. Our landlady was the golden-haired Mrs Ringe, who would signal her disapproval of any of her six charges by cutting the weekly sponge cake she baked for

us into five pieces. My view was out onto the scruffy back yard of the Eagle, the dons' car park and, beyond that, the back wall of the empty space at 11 St Edward's Passage. Though owned by Corpus, this had been the Girton Waiting Room, a place where the exclusively female Girtonians could refresh themselves (and in some cases their make-up) after the long bicycle ride into town. Now, with Wolfson Court up and running, this pit-stop had become defunct.

I managed to get a front door key from the porters and check the building out. The walls were battered and peeling, there was plaster dust and litter all over the bare boards of the floor, and the main room was an odd L-shape, not ideal for a theatre, let alone the fashionable and groundbreaking 'studio' I had in mind.



But it was empty, and central, and a substantial space. I got talking to another apprentice playwright, Caroline Oulton, herself a Girtonian. She was equally enthused. Over cups of thin Nescafe in front of the glowing gas fire at 8a we hatched a plan. She would gee up the University and creative-writing side of things and I would tackle the Corpus authorities.

Fortunately our senior tutor at the time, the twinkly Dr Richard Bainbridge, was a keen dramaturge. Famed for his performance as Rattie in a May Week production of *Toad of Toad Hall* he ruled the roost in both Fletcher Players and Gravediggers. Unfortunately, I had made the cardinal error of not casting him as Prospero in my Freshers' Production of *The Tempest*. A coolness had followed. I only realised how serious a mistake I'd made when I received my room allocation for the second year.



The other key figure to be talked round was the bursar of the day, Dr Alec Clark-Kennedy, a handsome ex-naval man with a sharp line in blue blazers and a complexion that spoke eloquently of his keenness for sport, rowing in particular. He was often to be found lunching in Shades, the trendy wine bar that then occupied the space at 1, King's Parade. I would lurk on the corner, ready to beard him as he emerged. His catchphrase 'Leave it to me!', which he cried as he strode off in the opposite direction, was one I learnt not to take too seriously. It was clear that the new lavatory we needed before St Edward's Passage was legally functional was not high on his agenda.

I persisted. After much discussion, the idea of an experiment was born. The loo was fixed and Caroline and I were allowed one term's 'season' of plays at St Edward's Passage. After that, the project would be reviewed.

A team of friends moved in with stepladders and rollers. In a single weekend the horrid institutional green of the walls was repainted with a theatrical black. The Fletcher Players' ever-competent technical team swung into action and had soon erected a raked stage and lights on scaffolding. A programme was printed. The opening night would feature a talented undergraduate from King's called Simon McBurney in a play by Caroline together with a parody of Pinter's plays I had written entitled *No Man's Land*.

Betrayed The following week there would be a play called Latin by a tall, rather donnish chess-player from Queens' called Stephen Fry; and so on...

Our debut was a success. Both arms of the L-shape were packed. The fact that the laughter of the two sections wasn't entirely in sync didn't seem to matter. Oliver Letwin (his ambitions then set on being a don at Trinity rather than a Tory minister) gave us a rave notice in the Cambridge Review. Stop Press were equally enthusiastic, though kindly pointing out that there had been nobody on the door to collect the ticket money.

We were on our way. At the end of the term Dr Bainbridge judged the experiment a success. The Playroom was something the Fletcher Players could be proud of, he told us. I made sure I cast him as one of the leads (Aunt Spiker, no less) in that year's May Week production of James and The Giant Peach. The following year I got the room I wanted and the Playroom became a fixture. I never dreamed it would still be going thirty-two years later.



# Max Upton

## President of the Fletcher Players

I applied to study at Cambridge because of the University's enviable and unparalleled reputation for drama; I applied to Corpus Christi due to its ownership of the truly wonderful Corpus Playroom. I could never have guessed that I would be joining at such an important time in the history of this delightful venue.

Within a year of my attendance, the Playroom has gone through a mighty metamorphosis. Before the refurbishment works, wandering into the backstage areas presented one with a minefield of wrappers, splinters, damp, and things which were so decomposed so as to render them unidentifiable. Indeed, one had to possess a strong constitution to prop-hunt in its swamp-like basement. With truly terrifying toilets for the cast and no conveniences at all for the audience, the Playroom, whilst being unarguably endearing due to its facility-related foibles, was not the most cleanly of places...

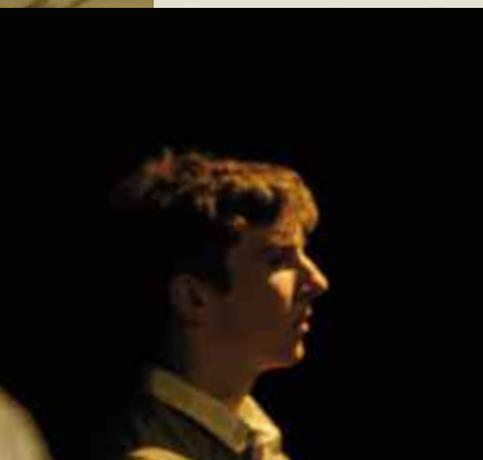
Of course, however, it has not captivated students for so long because of its backstage failings – it has perpetually drawn in audiences due to its uniquely intimate stage and also its character. The Playroom has such a stupendous reputation due to its eternally-welcoming attitude to new student writing. Indeed, over half of this Micheldas term's shows have been penned by our own. At the risk of sounding too sappy, it represents to anyone in Cambridge who wants to put on a play, whether they wrote it or not, the opportunity to do just that.

Obviously, therefore, the refurbishment works have left the stage itself relatively alone and the atmosphere and attitudes of the Playroom will never change. It will

forever be the first port of call for young student writers and will always be at the disposal of the Cambridge University dramatic community. What these works have done, however, is make the place more pleasant to use. Jaws are continually dropping when people wander round the Playroom's sparkling corridors – it truly is unidentifiable. A foyer and ticket office has transformed the space into a professional-looking venue. An underground dressing room and rehearsal space has given actors actual opportunities to apply make-up and rest between scenes, whereas previously they had to crowd round the mirrors in the afore-mentioned nightmarish toilets and perch hazardously on the dilapidated green room sofa.

Furthermore, the venue is now being treated to vastly-improved publicity due to its new management by the ADC. The shows of both the Corpus Playroom and the ADC Theatre are now in one combined programme and we now have a workable system for online booking. Whilst the artistic management of the Playroom will always be organised by the Fletcher Players, the extremely generous help given to the theatre by the ADC will hopefully introduce this glorious space to those who may not have been aware of it before.

In short, what is happening at the Playroom marks the biggest pooling of resources in the history of Cambridge drama and it is impacting wonderfully upon an already gloriously vibrant theatrical scene. The space would always have had a special place in the hearts and minds of Cambridge students regardless of how much it sparkled or how nice it smelt. What these crucial works will ensure, however, is that the future of the Playroom will not be brought into question, and that it will continue to host the imaginations and aspirations of generations of students to come. Plus those new toilets really are amazing.





Development and Communications Office,  
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge CB2 1RH  
Tel: 01223 339731 Fax: 01223 337014  
Email: [development@corpus.cam.ac.uk](mailto:development@corpus.cam.ac.uk)  
[www.corpus.cam.ac.uk](http://www.corpus.cam.ac.uk)