



Johnian News

Issue 21

Lent Term 2007

A New Master for St John's College

The Fellows of St John's College have elected Professor Christopher M Dobson, FRS, FMedSci, John Humphrey Plummer Professor of Chemical and Structural Biology in the University, to serve as Master of the College from 1 October 2007, in succession to Professor Richard Perham.



Chris Dobson was an undergraduate in Oxford where he also gained his DPhil in 1976. After a spell as an Assistant Professor at Harvard he returned to Oxford as a Lecturer, becoming Professor of Chemistry in 1996 and Director of the Oxford Centre for Molecular Sciences in 1998. He moved to a Plummer Chair in Cambridge in 2001, also being elected to a Fellowship at St John's that year.

His research activities over the past thirty years have involved the application of the strategies and techniques of the physical sciences to address important problems in the biological and medical sciences. In particular he has studied the way in which the molecular components of living systems are able to self-assemble to generate biological activity.

Much of his work on this topic has been concerned with the question of how proteins fold to the intricate structures in which they function after they are synthesized in cells from the information encoded in DNA. Recently, however, he has focused particularly on the failure of proteins to fold properly, or to remain in their correctly folded states under normal physiological conditions. Such misfolding

events are increasingly recognized to be a common feature underlying disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and adult-onset diabetes.

His work has resulted in a new 'generic' theory for the origin of such diseases that is based on his demonstration that all proteins have an inherent tendency to misfold into thread-like aggregates of the type seen in the tissues of patients suffering from these diseases. This idea attributes these diseases to failures of the biological mechanisms that normally ensure that our proteins are correctly folded. Such failures can be the consequence of genetic mutations in familial diseases, or more generally as a result of increased risk factors, particularly in old age or obesity. These findings have not only led to a greater understanding of these increasingly common disorders but also to new strategies for their prevention and treatment.

Chris Dobson has been elected to Fellowships of the Royal Society, the Royal Society of Chemistry, and the Academy of Medical Sciences. Recognition of the importance of his research work has also come through numerous awards including the Stein and Moore Award of The Protein Society, the Davy Medal of the Royal Society, and honorary degrees in both science and medicine.

The Master-elect is no stranger to College life. As well as being involved in a wide range of activities in St John's in recent years, he has previously been a Fellow of three Oxford Colleges, holding there many of the major offices including Tutor and Dean. He said, 'I have enjoyed every minute of my time at St John's. I am deeply honoured to have been elected to serve as the next Master, and it will be a great pleasure to work even more closely with all our Fellows, staff and students in the coming years. In particular, my wife Mary and I are looking forward to meeting a very large number of other Johnians, scattered all over the world, and to celebrating with them the 500th Anniversary of our Foundation in 2011. ☺'



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Dr Danielle Turner (PhD 2005) won **Young Researcher of the Year** in *The Times Higher Awards* 2006. Her pioneering research into the brain-enhancing effects of the stimulant drug modafinil impressed the judges, who said that she demonstrated a good balance between research, ethics and public understanding. Her research showed that it is possible to improve the short-term memory of patients with schizophrenia using brain-boosting drugs. It was her ethical achievements in questioning the use of smart drugs in healthy people that gave Danielle the edge over other shortlisted candidates. ❀



Danielle at the award ceremony

St John's College has been awarded a £45,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a project called **Slave Trade Abolition in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk** (STACS) that will enable 120 students from six secondary schools in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk to explore the stories of two abolitionists with East Anglian connections: Olaudah Equiano and Thomas Clarkson. Both men were instrumental in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807: Equiano was the principal spokesman of Britain's black community and married a Soham woman in 1792; Clarkson, one of the leading campaigners against the slave trade and originally from Wisbech, studied at St John's from 1779 to 1784.

The students will visit archives, local museums and other relevant sites, before putting together a play about slavery for their schools and local community groups. A range of learning materials will be provided to the schools, and participants will design a memorial to Clarkson as part of a presentation to local councillors and Fellows of the College. Duncan Dormor, Dean of St John's, and Chair of the STACS project commented: 'This is an exciting opportunity for school children to learn about two extraordinary individuals, a European and an African, who worked together as part of Britain's first mass human rights movement. This has been a neglected part of our local heritage.' ❀

*Stephen Teal is the **College's first Development Director**. He joins St John's after a successful career that has included similar posts at Lincoln College, Oxford, Westminster School and, most recently, Newcastle University.*

My first week at St John's coincided with some of the coldest weather in Cambridge for over a decade. As I shivered in a College flat, huddled against a radiator that spluttered up to the temperature of a long-deceased water-vole, I did begin to wonder if this augured well for my new job. My doubts were quickly dispelled by the



Stephen Teal

warmth of the welcome I received from Johnians and staff alike. I am still, I suppose, viewing the College through a 'fresher's' slightly awe-stricken eyes and am thoroughly enjoying the sensation. I hope that in the coming years even more Johnians will revisit the College and rediscover its glories for themselves.

It is very interesting to me that there are no 'Old Johnians' – only Johnians. I suspect this reflects the fact that there is a real sense of community, one that stretches well beyond the confines of these Courts. In the coming years, the Development Office (formerly known as the Johnian Office) hopes to spread the College's tendrils further afield than ever before, and far more often. There will be more events, more publications and greatly enhanced use of web-based technology to ensure that we do indeed 'remember often'.

The main task of the Development Office will be to help St John's raise the funds necessary to ensure that it remains a world-class College in a world-class University. Financial assistance for students, strengthening research, ensuring the future of the tutorial system and the sound stewardship of these wonderful buildings – these are some of the priority areas. We are consulting with a large number of Johnians to decide how to move forward with a fundraising campaign. As they say, 'watch this space'. ❀



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Andrew Nethsinga

We are pleased to announce that Andrew Nethsinga (BA 1990, MA 1994), FRCO, ARCM, has been appointed **Director of Music** and will take up his position on 1 September 2007. He succeeds Dr David Hill (BA 1979, MA 1983), FRCO, who will take over from

Stephen Cleobury as Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers at the end of the current season. Andrew held Organ Scholarships under Christopher Robinson at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, and George Guest while reading music at St John's College. Currently, Andrew is Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral, Artistic Director of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival and Musical Director of Gloucester Choral Society. His other posts have been at Wells and Truro Cathedrals. His engagements this year include a number of concerts with the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra as well as filming, recording and broadcasting with Gloucester Cathedral Choir.

Andrew writes: 'I have loved the unique sound and expressive style of the St John's Choir for twenty years, since I started as Organ Student. I will be privileged to inherit the remarkable Choir created by George Guest, Christopher Robinson and David Hill and to lead it through its next stage of development. Once one has been associated with the St John's Choir, the experience never leaves you. I look forward to meeting lots of Johnians at services and concerts over the coming years - and I hope that many of their sons will want to join the Choir as choristers and undergraduates!' ❀

St John' College: Excellence and Diversity, edited by David Morphet, has now been published and subscribers' copies sent out. For non-subscribers, copies are available for purchase from the Development Office at a cost of £45.00, plus postage and packing. ❀

Each year, the government declares one week in October as **National Construction Week**, when education and industry are encouraged to engage in activities for young people that make them aware of careers in the construction industry.

In the Cambridge region, it was an opportunity for **The Schools Project** (Director, Professor Harry Marsh, BA 1958, MA 1962, PhD 1963) to link with SETpoint Cambridge and the Construction Industry Training Board in organising a major event for local schools. St John's College provided the venue at The School of Pythagoras for five one-day courses during which time schools would construct five different bridges to cross the Bin Brook, a span of 3.8m. SETPoint Cambridge provided a team of young engineers from local civil engineering firms, research students and undergraduates from the University Engineering Department.



The pupils came from eight local primary schools, with typically 40-50 pupils per day, their aim for the week being to build the five bridges. The bridges pictured above, from left to right, were as follows: a replica of the Gateshead Millennium Bridge; a replica of The Lowry Bridge; a suspension bridge with chains forming the catenaries; a cable stayed bridge, similar to the Dartford Crossing; and The Squinty Bridge – the new bridge in Glasgow where the single arch crosses the bridge from left to right. Further information can be obtained from The Schools Project link, http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/admissions/outreach_access/schools_project, on the St John's College website. ❀



A Royal Role for St John's

St John's College took centre-stage in May last year to provide a stunning backdrop for the filming of The Golden Age, the long-awaited Working Title sequel to the 1998 blockbuster film Elizabeth, starring Cate Blanchett as Queen Elizabeth I.



Geoffrey Rush and Cate Blanchett

The Golden Age is set fifteen years on from the original film, *Elizabeth*. Cate Blanchett and Geoffrey Rush (who plays the Queen's advisor, Sir Francis Walsingham)

and, even more so, to see Cate at one point emerge from a lunch break clad in full Elizabethan makeup and a starkly contrasting casual attire



Belinda Peat and Sally Shepherd with Clive Owen

resume their former roles and are joined by British actor, Clive Owen, as Elizabeth's love interest, Sir Walter Raleigh. The film is set in the middle years of Elizabeth's reign and portrays her battle between a growing love for Sir Walter and the fierce desire to protect her reign and country, both of which are threatened by the Spanish King Phillip (played by Jordi Mollà) who is determined to restore England to Catholicism.

Filming at St John's began on Thursday 18 May in First Court, an appropriate setting considering that the foundress of St John's, Lady Margaret Beaufort, was the great grandmother of Elizabeth I. First Court, which was built largely between 1511 and 1520, was to double as Westminster's Whitehall Palace, the centre of Government and the Queen's main home during her reign between 1558 and 1603. Excited members of the public assembled on Trinity and St John's streets to view the arrival of actors dressed as Elizabethan and Spanish courtiers, and struggled to catch a glimpse of filming through the College railings adjacent to the Porter's Lodge. Within the College walls, privileged staff and students flocked to First Court to enjoy a bird's-eye view of Cate Blanchett, Clive Owen and Geoffrey Rush enact the famous 'cloak' scene in which Sir Walter Raleigh meets Elizabeth for the first time, surrounded by her royal entourage. According to legend, Sir Walter impresses Elizabeth by laying down his cloak over a muddy puddle for her to walk on, thus preventing her royal feet from becoming soiled.

From an onlooker's perspective, it was somewhat surreal to be standing amidst a filmset of famous actors

of jeans and t-shirt! Staff and students took advantage of the opportunity to mingle amongst the stars and two members of staff were lucky enough to be photographed with Clive Owen!

The following week, filming took place in St John's idyllic College gardens: through the Backs, along the River Cam and under the Bridge of Sighs. For filming purposes, the Cam doubled as the River Thames, which was London's main highway during Elizabeth's reign. The scene below depicts Elizabeth, Walsingham and her ladies travelling down the Thames on the Queen's royal barge. Despite recurring bouts of heavy and persistent rain, the crew struggled on and managed to complete filming, albeit a little behind schedule.



The Golden Age is being filmed at Shepperton Studios, and on further location at Ely, Westminster and Winchester Cathedrals, and is scheduled to be released in October 2007, when members of St John's College and residents of Cambridgeshire will be able to view their architectural heritage on the 'big screen'. ❀



Fishing for Facts

Dr Helen Scales (BA 1999, MA 2006) studied Natural Sciences at St John's, leaving in 2006 with a PhD in tropical marine conservation, which was fully supported by a College graduate scholarship. She is currently working for TRAFFIC International in Cambridge, an NGO specialising in the conservation issues surrounding international trade in endangered wildlife.

Diving in the translucent waters of the South China Sea, hundreds of miles from land, I quickly realised that my bulky underwater camera offered me useful protection from the unwanted attention of a 200-kilogram rutting male Napoleon wrasse. These giant and usually gentle fish are not the most fearsome creatures in the oceans but with rows of peg-like teeth for crushing sea urchins I could have got a nasty bite. I just had to make it clear that I wasn't an intruding male wrasse trying to sneak into the harem of spawning females.



Fishing village in northern Borneo

A PhD invariably brings with it a host of new experiences that fit neatly into the 'transferable skills' section of a CV. Mine was no exception. I spent three and a half years studying the lucrative trade in live coral reef fish, which took me to the waters of Borneo and beyond in search of rare fish and the fishermen who catch them. From my new ability to eat a plate of slimy sea cucumbers without gagging to perfecting my negotiating skills with Chinese triad gang leaders, my PhD furnished me with some adventures. And at the same time I did some interesting research. The live reef fish trade is a growing global phenomenon, currently worth a billion US dollars a year with increasing demand from luxury restaurants across Asia. Removing large predatory fish, like the Napoleon wrasse, may upset the delicate balance of coral reefs. And to make matters worse, the weapon of choice is cyanide which not only temporarily stuns the targeted fish but also poisons the rest of the reef.

To help understand the impact of the trade at a local



Leopard grouper in holding cage

level I visited traders in Borneo and discovered just how quickly the trade depletes fish stocks: within a single decade the supply of many species plummeted. I also investigated the global development of the trade. Studying imports statistics from Hong Kong – the main centre for the trade – I caught a glimpse of the unsustainable 'boom-and-bust' nature of the industry. In countries that supply the trade, from Indonesia to Micronesia, the same pattern repeatedly emerged of fisheries that rapidly expanded but were not sustainable for more than a few years.



Young Napoleon wrasse in tank

Possibly the most privileged part of my PhD was joining an expedition to the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea to study a rare untouched population of Napoleon wrasse; this is one of only a handful of places in the world where their spectacular breeding behaviour has been seen. At new moon, dozens of these fish congregate to spawn and I was there with my video camera trying to identify individuals from the intricate patterns of scribbles on their faces so that back in Cambridge I could work out how often each fish spawns. Napoleon wrasse are top of the live reef fish price list. A plate of their rubbery lips, an unlikely delicacy, is worth hundreds of dollars. And sadly, there are so few of these magnificent creatures left in the world that my experiences of being hassled by a giant wrasse feel very special indeed. 🌸



A First Class Cup of Tea

St John's alumnus Will Cartwright-Hignett (BA 2005) is the owner of Cambridge's newest tea house, First Class Teas. Enthusiastic and passionate about his venture, Will is on a mission to persuade the tea drinkers of Cambridge that there is more to tea than an English Breakfast with milk and two sugars.

Will Cartwright-Hignett doesn't dare count how many cups of tea he drinks in a day, but with over one hundred varieties available in his new teashop in Cambridge, he certainly has plenty of choice. From traditional black teas, to zingy fruit infusions and from healthy green tea blends to exotic rooibos, a visit to First Class Teas is an adventure in itself. Curious customers are treated to a personal service by Will at the counter as he aims to find the perfect tea for them. The wide variety of drinks is complemented by a tempting range of cakes and biscuits that visitors can enjoy in the cosy seating area downstairs while they take their time over their pot of tea.



Creating the perfect brew: Will at work in First Class Teas

Despite feeling some pressure 'to get a proper job' on leaving university, Will had known since 2002 that owning his own business was his dream. Always a tea lover, as a student he noticed 'lots of places to drink coffee, but a distinct lack of anywhere serving quality cups of tea'. The idea of owning a tea shop stuck and he was determined to give it a go. Will is delighted that he has managed to transform his hobby into a viable career. His success must at least in part be down to his confident and uncompromising philosophy that 'nothing is difficult in business; it's either possible or impossible'.

for their support. He has many fond memories of his time at the College, and claims that his involvement in extra-curricular activities was an invaluable preparation for the world of business. Organising Jazz@John's events and promoting the society within the University was experience in building up a business, while managing the Gentlemen of St John's gave him, in his own words, 'plenty of practice at trying to keep everybody happy!'.



The shopfront at Peas Hill

First Class Teas, located on Peas Hill just off Market Square, opened before Christmas to considerable success. Although it has a broad clientele, his shop has proved very popular with the student population and Will is particularly grateful to loyal St John's students



For more information, or to place an order, visit: www.firstclassteas.com. ☺



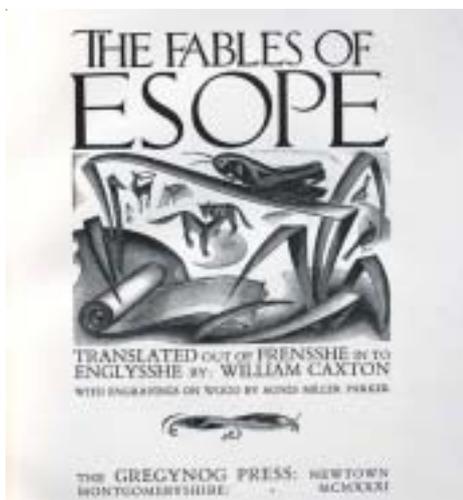
The Guy Lee Collection

This summer the College Library will be holding an exhibition about Guy Lee (BA 1940, MA 1945) and his collection of printed material, which came to the Library as a bequest after his death in July 2005.

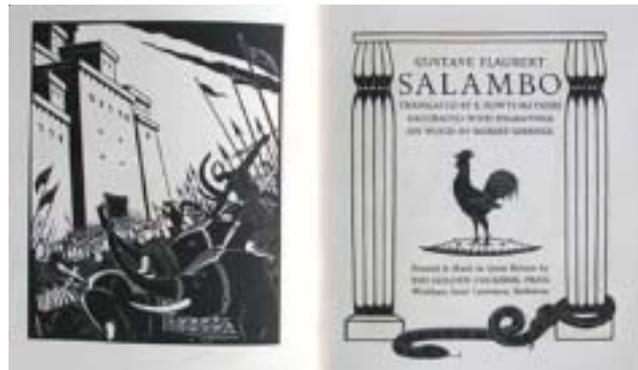


Guy Lee in 1960

The Lee Collection mainly consists of twentieth-century poetry. It contains famous works, notably a first edition of T S Eliot's *The Wasteland*, and some beautiful illustrated material from the private presses, such as a finely engraved copy of *The Fables of Esope* printed at The Gregynog Press in 1931. Perhaps its greatest charm, though, is its wide range, and coverage of more obscure or ephemeral material, pamphlets and self-publications. The collection also includes some early printed classics, notably the Aldine editions of Cicero and Propertius.



Arthur Guy Lee (1918-2005) was a leading classicist of his generation in Britain. He translated the Latin poetry of love, and generations of classicists will be familiar with his editions of Ovid, Catullus, Horace and others. Many Johnians will remember him as a much loved and admired member of the College, where he studied Classics, completing a BA in 1940 and an MA in 1945, and where he remained as Fellow, Tutor, and Lecturer. He was also the Librarian at St John's from 1961 until 1984.



Title page from Salambo by Gustave Flaubert, printed at the Golden Cockerel Press, 1931

Guy Lee was passionate about poetry, modern as well as ancient. Whilst still an undergraduate he won prizes for his own compositions, and in 1954 he was awarded Top Prize in the Certamen Vaticanum for a Latin poem on 'An Ascent by Spacecraft to the Moon'. The collection of books left to St John's College Library stands as a memorial to his 'profound love and understanding of poetry', noted by his friend John Crook (*The Eagle* 2006). It is also a valuable resource for anyone interested in twentieth-century poets. The Library has, as far as possible, maintained it as a discrete, borrowable collection, and it will hopefully be as well appreciated in the future as it manifestly was during Guy Lee's lifetime.

The exhibition will run from 1 July to 30 September 2007 in the Library's Exhibition Area. For more information, please contact the Library on (01223) 338662, or email library@joh.cam.ac.uk. ☸



Dates for your Diary and Information

Henley Royal Regatta takes place from Wednesday 4 to Sunday 8 July this year. As usual, John Durack (BA 1970, MA 1974) will be generously providing a picnic lunch each day (except for Sunday) for members of the LMBC in the Cricket Club Car Park. We would like to encourage Club members to attend on the Friday for a 'Club Day' and for the opportunity to meet the President of the LMBC, Professor Richard Perham. If you have any Stewards' Enclosure badges that you do not intend to use for this, or another, day please send them to Catherine Twilley, Senior Treasurer, LMBC, St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TP, so that we can provide entry to current students and recent graduates. ☼

This year's **Johnian Society Golf Competition** takes place on Friday 27 July at the Gog Magog Golf Club, Cambridge. Members of the Society are welcome to join in the competition and associated activities. Details can be obtained from John Loosley (email: john@loosleyj.freemove.co.uk). ☼

The **Johnian Dinner** for those who matriculated up to and including 1947, and in 1974, 1975, and 1976, takes place on 30 June 2007. Invitations were sent out in January. ☼

The **Johnian Open Weekend** will take place from Friday 6 to Sunday 8 July 2007. Invitations were sent in February to those who matriculated in the years 1961-1966, 1977-1979, and 1985-1987, and to all US and Canadian Johnnians. Any overseas Johnnians who expect to be in the UK at this time are also welcome and should contact the Development Office for an information pack before the end of May. ☼

The **Celebration of the Lady Margaret Boat Club** will take place on Saturday 8 September 2007. There will be an opportunity to get back into a boat, followed by Dinner in Hall. All members of the LMBC, past and present, are welcome, and invitations will be sent out in the early summer. ☼

Regional Events 2007

Two regional events are planned for the remainder of the year. A reunion dinner will take place on 8 June in Lewes, Sussex, for Johnnians living in the South East area, and on 18 September the biennial Oxford reunion will be held at Wadham College, by kind permission of Sir Neil Chalmers (PhD 1968). Invitations for both events will be sent out soon and further details will be on the website: <http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/johnian/events/>. ☼

The University Alumni Weekend takes place from Friday 21 to Sunday 23 September 2007. Detailed information can be found on the University Development Office's website at www.foundation.cam.ac.uk/weekend.php. The College is holding a dinner for Johnnians and their guests on the Saturday night and a drinks party



Tours of the Old Library of St John's are organised by the University as part of the Weekend

on the Sunday. Bookings for the College events should be made through the College Development Office, while bookings for the weekend as a whole should be made through the University Development Office. ☼

The **Johnian Society AGM & dinner** will take place on Saturday 15 December when Lord Rowe-Beddoe (BA 1961, MA 1965), President of the Society, will give the address. We are also delighted to announce that Professor Sir David King (Fellow 1988-1995), the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, will be giving the 18th **Johnian Society Lecture** on the afternoon of 15 December. ☼

Thank you to all those Johnnians who completed the **Johnian Society questionnaire** towards the end of last year. The Committee has started to look at the responses to help determine the future direction of the Society. Further details are available at www.joh.cam.ac.uk/johnian/johnian_society/. ☼

*** Please note that your copy of The Eagle 2007 may arrive a little later than usual owing to the relocation of the Development Office this summer. We apologise for any inconvenience caused by this.**

Development Office Contact Details

Telephone: +44 (0)1223 338700
Fax: +44 (0)1223 338727
Email: development@joh.cam.ac.uk
www.joh.cam.ac.uk