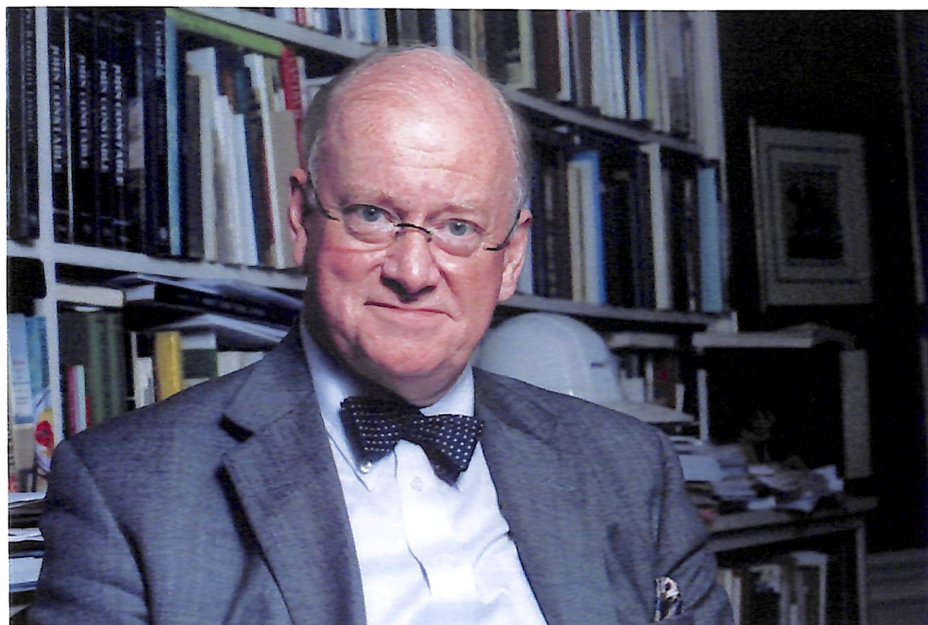




## Duncan Robinson – My First Impressions



Duncan Robinson

It would be difficult to exaggerate the warmth of the welcome my wife and I have experienced since the beginning of term; weeks during which the entire College settled into the familiar routine of another academic year, cheerfully punctuated by a series of time-honoured rituals including my own admission, and that of the new Fellows. As one myself, welcoming the freshers gave me particular pleasure, especially since I was able to draw their attention to the dramatic improvement in the College's tripos results last June; not an achievement for which I can claim credit any more than they can, but one that together we must strive to emulate. The third year results were particularly gratifying, with 80% of our candidates obtaining firsts and upper seconds and earning Magdalene 11th place in those notoriously misleading but often quoted league tables; the Senior Tutor gives more details overleaf.

This year's matriculands are more conscious than ever of the admissions process by which they have joined us. The doubts which have been cast upon standards in the marking of national examinations leaves none of us here in any doubt about the importance of

maintaining our own selection process, as one which weighs A levels in a balance of personal statements, school reports and above all interviews. My experience of admissions in my own subject, to several Colleges over the last four years, has convinced me that we must continue to make what are inevitably difficult decisions in the light of all the information available to us. Inevitably we are bound to disappoint large numbers of deserving candidates; something we can only justify by not making mistakes about the people we admit. And as my predecessor pointed out in his envoi in the last issue of *Magdalene Matters*, we need to strengthen our endowment to guarantee the academic freedoms we hold dear, based on quality first.

On the first Friday of full term I joined the new graduate student intake for dinner in Hall. I was impressed above all by their diversity in terms of background and interests. We are extremely fortunate to attract to our community such a wide range of people from all over the world who come to Cambridge because of its pre-eminence as a research university. It is perhaps the most significant development

which has taken place since my generation graduated and a handful of us aspired to the status of 'lonely scholars'. Today Magdalene is at the forefront of that transformation, with its Mandela Scholars from South Africa and many others, in advancing towards a new definition of collegiate membership in which the MCR participates on equal terms with the JCR and the SCR.

For those who are aware of my own background it will come as no surprise if I cite that correlation between tradition and the individual talent which was formulated by one of our former Honorary Fellows, the poet and literary critic T S Eliot. That surely is our strength, encouraged by the wisdom of experience to place our faith in the collegiate system, as the one which gives every opportunity to those who join us as undergraduates and graduates to realise their full potential, intellectually and socially.

In 2003 we will celebrate the tercentenary of an alumnus whose name is a household word: Samuel Pepys. The acquisition of his books and diaries at the beginning of the eighteenth century transformed the College's library into an internationally recognised biographical resource. Yet we languish among Cambridge libraries far less distinguished than ours in terms of access, documentation and staffing. In my first year I would like to signal, via Pepys, the need to endow this unique asset to enable it to function as one of the great research libraries of Cambridge. I would like to propose £1 million as an initial target. This will help us to live up to the responsibility Pepys invested in his College, and it will reinforce in a direct way the intellectual life at the heart of our community. What better contribution could we make in Pepys' year towards our long-range plan to grow the endowment to the level Magdalene deserves because Magdalene matters?

### People – Academic Success

Readers may recall that in his valedictory message in the last edition of *Magdalene Matters*, Sir John Gurdon remarked on the College's efforts to improve its standing in the academic league tables. The Senior Tutor, Mark Billinge, was thus very pleased to be able to report that this year the College enjoyed its best examination results of the modern era. Taking all of the results into account, the College was placed 15th out of 24 Colleges in the (so-called) Baxter Academic League Tables. This represented a rise of seven places in comparison to the 2001 performance. Perhaps even more significantly, the graduating cohort ("finalists") achieved 11th place in the "Norrington" Tables – the familiar tables published in the national press – a rise of 11 places. Happily, this outstanding achievement was matched by the First Year: a very good portent for the future. In achieving this remarkable rise, 66% of our undergraduates achieved a 2.1 or better; a figure which rose to 80% amongst the graduating group. Particularly successful results were recorded in the sciences – Engineering (3rd best in the University) and Natural Sciences (5th best) – whilst a substantial number of subjects recorded distinct improvement in comparison with their performance over the last five years. *Magdalene Matters* offers congratulations to all those examined in 2002 and, as Mark Billinge has remarked, they have set a challenging target for the 2003 cohort.



Graduating class of 2002

### Bricks & Mortar – 'O' Block



Building refurbishment work at 'O' Block in Benson Court

It is not just the College's ancient buildings that require care and attention. 'O' Block in Benson Court, which was built in the late 1950s, has recently undergone a major refurbishment programme and now offers some of the best accommodation in College. En-suite facilities have been fitted in all rooms, the windows have been double-glazed and high-grade new furniture has been installed. The result is 16 hotel quality rooms (including 2

sets). The Domus Bursar, Guy Sayle, told *Magdalene Matters* that the rooms, as well as providing excellent accommodation for Magdalene students, would also give a significant boost to the College's aim of attracting high value conference business. At £200,000, refurbishment of this standard represents a considerable investment, but is vital if the College is to compete successfully in both the student and conference accommodation stakes.

# Fellowship Matters: The President Reports

## FAREWELLS

The Fellowship has had two sad losses this year, in the deaths of two of its Octogenarians:

- **Ralph Bennett** served a record sixty-four years as a fellow, and, having begun his career as a medieval church historian, finished it by publishing a remarkable series of books on the strategic value of the information derived at Bletchley Park (by himself among others) from the German Enigma codes. Ralph Bennett's memorial service will be held in the College Chapel on Saturday November 23rd at 2.30 pm.
- **John Stevens**, the leading authority on the relationship between words and music in medieval and Tudor England, was a gifted musician as well as a literary scholar, and succeeded C S Lewis and Jack Bennett in the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature. His life was celebrated in a memorable concert in Kettle's Yard on Saturday October 6th, where the performers included the wonderful Emma Kirkby and Catherine Bott, as well as many of his family and friends.

## DEPARTURES

- **Peter Grubb**, our star botanist, retired after forty-two years as Fellow, Director of Studies, Tutor, President and Acting Master. He and Anne of course remain in Cambridge, and we look forward to their continuing company.
- **David Clary** has been appointed Head of the Mathematical and Physical Science Division at Oxford University, and consequently resigned his Fellow-Commonership as of 30th September. We congratulate him on this important appointment, and we will miss him.

## ARRIVALS

Our newest arrivals are this year's research Fellows:

- **Amanda Power**, an Australian who works on medieval intellectual

history, and whose hobbies include bush-walking, for which there is probably not much scope in Cambridge.

- **Matthew Fayers**, an algebraist who plays tiddlywinks to international standard!

## HONOURS & AWARDS

Meanwhile, the Fellowship has gone on quietly clocking up honours:

- **The President** was amazed to be awarded the 2002 Hawthornden Prize for literature, for his book *The Voices of Morebath: reformation and rebellion in an English Village*. This is Britain's oldest literary prize, and previous winners include Robert Graves, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Ted Hughes and Alan Bennett, though it is occasionally also given to historians.
- **Peter Grubb** has been elected an Honorary Fellow of the British Ecological Society.
- **John Field** has been made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa for his work on diamonds, and has received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Cranfield.
- **Peter Reynolds** has been awarded a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship to enable him to continue his collaborative research at the Pasteur Institute.
- **Robin Spence** has been elected to a four-year term as President of the European Association for Earthquake Engineering, and was the East Asian Institute's Li Ka Shing Distinguished Visiting Lecturer to China.
- **Bill Cornish** has become Chairman of the Law Section of the British Academy.
- **Chris Greenwood** has been appointed CMG in the Birthday Honours list for services to International Law.
- **Thierry Alboussière** has been awarded the annual Edmund Brun Prize in Mechanics by the French Academy of Sciences.

## CAMPAIGN NEWS

£7,383,905

has been given or pledged to the Magdalene Campaign by 30 September 2002.

Contributions totalling £3,760,041 have been received from 1,144 members of the College, i.e. 20% of the total membership.

### LONG-TERM TARGET

£20 million

## A New Savoy Opera?

Terry Hawes (1950) has produced, through his music company AMP, a CD recording of a forgotten operetta, 'His Excellency' by W.S. Gilbert, which was a failure on its initial production in 1894.

The music was not by Sullivan, who had fallen out with Gilbert over the artistic merits (or otherwise) of an attractive American soprano, but by the unknown Osmond Carr. The whole story behind the writing of both the original and new versions is told in the leaflet that accompanies the CD, and the leaflet also gives the complete lyrics, which many consider among Gilbert's best.

Hawes has set these to music of his own in Sullivan's style and the score, performed by soloists, chorus and orchestral players recently graduated from the Royal Academy of Music, has convinced many dyed-in-the-wool Savoyards.

If you want to know more, contact: [www.hisexcellency.co.uk](http://www.hisexcellency.co.uk) or write to:

His Excellency Productions  
Summit House  
40 Highgate West Hill  
London  
N6 6LS

TEL: 0208 347 7777  
FAX: 0208 341 0365

## EVENTS

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

#### \*29 March 2003

The Magdalene Association Dinner and AGM will be held in College on Saturday, 29 March. The speaker at this occasion will be John Simpson.

#### 3 May 2003

A Reunion Lunch will be held in College on Saturday, 3 May for members who matriculated up to and including 1945, and their guests. Contact the President's Secretary for information.

(TEL: 01223 332144).

#### \*3 July 2003

The Magdalene Association will hold a lunch in College on Thursday, 3 July for members and their guests. The programme for the day will include a display of the College silver, an organ recital and the Pepys Library will be open for members to visit.

#### \*20 July 2003

The Magdalene Association will hold a Garden Party for members. Families are very welcome and the afternoon will include activities for children.

#### 26 and 27 September 2003

Reunion Dinners will be held in the

College on these dates. The Friday dinner will be for those who matriculated between 1961–1963; and the Saturday dinner for those who matriculated between 1964–1966. Formal invitations will be issued by the College in May.

#### \*24 October 2003

A reception at the House of Lords, to be hosted by Lord Ezra, will be held on Friday, 24 October for members of the College and their guests.

\*Golf Day at St George's Golf Club, Weybridge. Date to be confirmed.

\*Tour of the Wallace Collection. To be confirmed.

\*Please contact Miles Broadbent, Chairman, or Wendy Meharg, Secretary (wendymeharg@hotmail.com), for further details of any of the events listed above. Invitation cards will be available in the New Year.

The Magdalene Association is not a fund-raising organisation, and the sole purpose of all the events is to put Members in touch with each other and with the College in a social setting.

### New York Dinner

Magdalene College held its eleventh annual New York Dinner on Friday, 1 November 2002 at the Union Club. 38 members and their guests attended and a champagne reception, followed by dinner was enjoyed by all. Our US members were very pleased to welcome the new Master, Mr Duncan Robinson and the College was also represented by Mr Andrew Thompson (Senior Bursar) and Dr Mark Billingie (Senior Tutor).

### The Wyverns' Reception

The Wyvern Trustees held a Reception at the Fleming Collection on Tuesday, 29 October 2002 for members (1965–95) living in and around the London area. There was a fantastic response to the invitation and the event quickly became fully subscribed. On the evening, over 200 members and their guests, spanning four decades, enjoyed a sociable evening at the Collection over a glass of champagne! The event was also attended by the new Master, Mr Duncan Robinson and his wife, Lisa who were very pleased to meet so many Magdalene members.

Please look out for more Wyverns events in the future.

### How you can help Magdalene College

Like most Colleges, Magdalene depends on the generosity of our Alumni for a whole range of support activity. Old members form a living bridge between the College's past and future. Our Alumni are thus at the heart of our fund-raising activity and the College remains immensely grateful to all those who have made gifts and pledges to our continuing campaign to increase the permanent endowment of the College. Help can be given in a number of ways, including:

- Individual Gift Aid Donations
- Corporate Gift Aid
- Gifts of Shares and Securities
- Legacies

For further information, contact:  
Andrew Thompson  
Senior Bursar & Development Director

TEL: +44(0)1223 332162  
EMAIL: art26@cam.ac.uk

## DEVELOPMENT NEWS



MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

### www.magdalenecambridge.com

In April this year the Development Office introduced a completely new website for Alumni. The site has been very well received by our members and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have sent us their congratulations, and for the constructive comments also offered. We have taken time to collate your views and a second phase of the site is currently underway, as we aim to incorporate many of the ways in which you have suggested we can make the site even more user-friendly. You should look

out for improved member searching and functionality on the site in the coming month. We are most encouraged by so many members having registered on the site, but the search function only works at its best when as many members as possible have signed up! If you did not receive your username and password in April, or you have mislaid your details then please do not hesitate to contact Emily Foreman.

TEL: 01223 332104 OR  
EMAIL: evf20@cam.ac.uk