

pieces

Christ's College Newsletter



Issue 11 Easter Term 2008



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It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of our re-launched *Pieces* magazine. We hope you like the new design, and enjoy hearing some of the latest news from College.

There is certainly a great deal to report. This year, of course, marks 400 years since the birth of alumnus John Milton and we are celebrating his remarkable life and work with a varied programme of events. Our Milton themed Lady Margaret lectures have been a great success, with crowds stretching down Mill Lane to hear Professor Quentin Skinner launch the series.

There are still plenty of celebrations to look forward to, and you can find out more about them (and listen to podcasts of the lectures) on the website: www.christs.cam.ac.uk/milton400. In particular, we look forward to welcoming alumni and guests to a special performance of Milton's *Comus* in the Fellows' Garden and Hall later in June; turn to page 8 for an interview with director Annilese Miskimmon and designer Lachlan Goudie.

As well as celebrating an important figure in history, Christ's has been looking to the future this year, with building work taking place across College to refurbish the New Court building, build the new Yusuf Hamied theatre and renovate the kitchens. On page 14 you can see pictures of the kitchen staff in their new home, along with a snapshot of catering staff from back in the 1970s – a trip down memory lane!

It isn't just the face of the College that is changing – we now have a new website too. The site, designed with help from Cambridge New Media, can now be viewed at www.christs.cam.ac.uk

This year also marks 30 years since the first female students were admitted to Christ's, and this important milestone sees us looking both forwards and back; celebrating the achievements of women and Christ's and looking to the future with our current undergraduates. On page 6 Helen Mort compares the life of female student in the 1980s with College life today. The issue also features an interview with womens' officer Hannah Walker-Gore, and the story of alumna Helen Atkins, who left her job in the City to volunteer at The Poppy Project – a charity helping women trafficked into prostitution in Britain.

We do hope you enjoy the issue and look forward to welcoming you back into the College this summer. If you can spare the time, please do fill in the alumni survey included with this issue – we would be very interested to hear what you think of some of the recent changes at Christ's.

Professor Frank Kelly, FRS

Pilkington Prize

Dr Gavin Alexander, Fellow in English, has been awarded a 2008 Pilkington Teaching Prize by the Trustees of The Cambridge Foundation in recognition of excellence in teaching at the University. Dr Alexander has co-ordinated our Milton celebrations this year.



Fellowship in International Trade and Commerce

The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Commercial Education Trust has generously agreed to fund a Fellowship in International Trade and Commerce at Christ's, for which the College is very grateful. Christ's College is looking forward to working with the Trust to encourage and promote an active dialogue between academics to promote closer working links and to identify trends and events which are having, or are expected to have, a significant effect on business and commerce. It is hoped that the Fellowship will also promote discussion and the promulgation of ideas aimed at providing a practical benefit to the wider business and commercial community. The holder of the Fellowship is Dr Julia Shvets.

New Website

With the help of Cambridge New Media, the Christ's College website has had an extensive makeover to include more pictures, more news stories and to make it easier for different users to access the pages that interest them. The new site was recently launched and can be viewed at www.christs.cam.ac.uk

Christ's Medical Alumni Association

Medical alumni and those involved in related disciplines are invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the Christ's Medical Alumni Association on Saturday 6 September 2008. The event will kick off in the afternoon with a series of talks and debates on issues of topical interest and will be followed by a blacktie dinner in Hall to which partners are welcome. Coffee in the Master's Lodge will bring proceedings to a close on Sunday morning. Please contact the Alumni Office for further details or to register an interest in attending: tel 01223 334937 or email: alumni@christs.cam.ac.uk

Back to School for Milton Enthusiasts

To celebrate John Milton's ties with Christ's, and the remarkable collection of his work that we have in the Old Library, an exhibition of texts and illustrations has been opened to the public every Thursday afternoon in the Old Library. As well as attracting general interest, the exhibition has been used as an educational resource for local schools. Dr Dan Wakelin reports on two recent workshops.

In the past few months the College has received two visits from students in Year 12 and year 13 at schools in East Anglia who came to learn more about the poet and political thinker John Milton. On Friday 18 April, Year 12 students from Samuel Ward Arts and Technology College, Haverhill, Suffolk, came to view the exhibition and tour the college and to have one-hour 'supervisions'.

On Thursday 24 April, there was a visit by Year 13 students from Hinchbrook School, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, who are studying *Paradise Lost* books IX and X for A2 examinations. They also viewed the

Poetic Legacy

John Milton may be the most famous of our poetic alumni, but his legacy is in safe hands; Matt Kirkham (m. 1984) recently won the Rupert and Eithne Strong Poetry Prize for the best first collection published in Ireland. Matt read Economics at Christ's and his book, *The Lost Museums*, is published by Lagan press. Matt (pictured below with his family) is not unique amongst our alumni in his way with words – Joseph Gale Burns (m. 1972) is another contemporary writer who has enjoyed success in magazines since leaving Christ's, and he now co-hosts 'The Shuffle': a monthly reading series at The Poetry Café, London.

Matt Kirkham's collection is available through the Lagan Press website: www.lagan-press.org.uk. Below, he shares one of his recent poems.



On Her Nearly Losing Her Grandmother's Watch

"Of all the kingdoms
she could have inherited,
a shackle round the wrist,"
said the man on the door;

"a shackle round the wrist
with a broken clasp,"
and we watched class oh-seven
shimmer and shimmy

in Arabian heat
where no twin clockfaces,
manacles, watchstraps
hug the heart of the year

and sand keeps falling
through the glass, through its waist.
The man on the door
pulled the broken-clasped watch

from his left breast pocket.
"Time!" he called. "Time,
of all the kingdoms!"

exhibition and then had 'supervisions' in pairs led, this time, by the second- and third-year English students at Christ's College. Everybody involved enjoyed sharing their passion for a great writer with the wider community.

The Old Library exhibition is open every Thursday from now until December, 2pm-4.45pm, and for group visits at other times by appointment. For details of this and other events to celebrate Milton's four-hundredth anniversary, see www.christs.cam.ac.uk/milton400/index.htm

Two Artists



Issam in his studio.

Issam Kourbaj

In an artistic career that has taken him from Azerbaijan to Mexico, Issam Kourbaj now finds himself appointed the first ever Artist in Residence and Bye-Fellow at Christ's College.

Issam has been working in the Christ's College Visual Arts Centre for a decade, but was only given a permanent appointment this year. Born in Syria, he studied in Damascus, Leningrad and London, and was taught by Fateh Moudarres, one of the most influential Syrian painters of the 20th Century and a co-exhibitor with Picasso. Issam's exhibition '+/-' (1999) paid tribute to his former teacher.

From his studio overlooking King Street, Issam now concentrates on projects involving light and optics, including a fascinating 'camera obscura' set up with the aid of a bicycle wheel. He first became interested in this area when, in his studio attic, he discovered a knothole in a boarded-up window, which projected a live image of the street outside onto the ceiling. Camera obscura formed the theme of an Open Studio exhibit in 2004, relying solely on light-sources, lenses and mirrors.

Issam's recent exhibitions have included (to name but a few): 'Lines of Enquiry' (2006) – a collaborative venture at Kettle's Yard featuring work by geologists, zoologists, historians, philosophers and many others as well as artists – and 'is/am' (2000); a project that included some of the early creative work of his three year old son, Mourad.

The British Museum recently acquired some of Issam's work, 'Sound Palimpsest', and it will be exhibited later this year in London. www.issamkourbaj.co.uk



'Peak' by Phillip King, 2007.

Phillip King

Sculptor Phillip King (m. 1954) took his exhibition, *Living With Colour*, to the Bernard Jacobsen Gallery in London this Spring.

King was born in Tunisia in 1934, and studied languages at Christ's before working with Anthony Caro at St Martin's School of Art. After leaving St Martin's, he became an assistant to Henry Moore. In 1962, he began to move away from using conventional materials and towards experimenting with unusual ones, and became one of the first artists in the world to make a sculpture out of fibreglass. His work has always centred around the idea that it is possible for a piece of art to represent nature without resembling nature and many of his most famous pieces deal directly with that theme.

Phillip King was Professor of Sculpture at the Royal College of Art, London from 1980 to 1990, and was made Professor Emeritus in 1990. Elected President of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1994, he retired in 2004 to focus on his sculpture full-time – *Living With Colour* was his first exhibition since that retirement.

The exhibition used furniture as well as sculpture, creating a playful display of objects that are both part of the world of art and the world of the functional; an interesting contribution to a debate King had with Russian artist Naum Gabo about the function and utility of works of art. Gabo always argued that if a shoemaker made a very beautiful pair of shoes he was an artist, whereas King maintained that the distinguishing feature of most art, and especially sculpture, lay in its uselessness. *Living With Colour* offered fresh perspectives on that debate.

Barra to Berneray by bike...and back again!

Cycling is the *modus operandi* for Cambridge students, but the flat fens are a far cry from the Highlands of Scotland... intrepid brothers Robin (m. 1962) and Andrew (m. 1958) Kerr weren't deterred and completed an epic bike ride that took them over five days.

Robin and Andrew biked from Barra to Berneray, in early April this year, only 57 years after they first sighted the Outer Hebrides (no hanging about, then!). Barra is a day's rail and sea journey from Edinburgh. Day two was a tour of Barra and Vatersay to sample their stunning beaches (too early for swims). Day three was a long flog through South Uist, Benbecula and North Uist. Four was a tour of beautiful Berneray and ferry to Skye, followed by Day five's ride back to a railhead at Kyle. Next year, Robin's vowed they'll do the rest (Harris and Lewis), joints permitting!



Andrew Kerr next to a traditional Black House in North Uist.



Robin peering from a Broch (tomb), also in North Uist.



Dr Yusuf and Farida Hamied.

The Yusuf Hamied Theatre

The College is very grateful to Dr Yusuf Hamied (1954) for his further generous donation to cover the costs of the new theatre. We are all looking forward to the completion of the Yusuf Hamied Theatre, which will be equipped to the highest standard for concerts, lectures, film, plays etc. There were a few surprises for the team as they worked on the theatre: at one point, instead of drilling through 0.2 metres of concrete (as expected from the 1960s plans) the builders found 1.4 metres of solid tough concrete facing them! Despite the challenges, work is well underway and we look forward to its completion towards the end of the year. The theatre development will be profiled in full in the next issue of *Pieces*.



'What this means to me'

Alex Cullen joined the Development Office in January this year as our new Development Officer and one of her first jobs was to talk to students who have been granted bursaries about what the support has meant to them. Here, she presents some of their stories.

Each year dozens of students from Christ's College receive funding from bursaries endowed by College benefactors. Feedback from this year's beneficiaries has shown that the support received by students has helped them through a multitude of different financial strains.

Bursaries have enabled College's adventurous, ambitious students to travel and gain invaluable life and work experience in the long vacations, and sportsmen and women to pay for essential equipment, taking Christ's teams to success. For the many others, the support they have received has helped alleviate some of the stress of the financial burden faced by most students. In turn, support has helped prevent these everyday stresses from spoiling their time in Cambridge, allowing them to focus on and enjoy their studies more fully.

The financial support would of course not be possible without the great generosity of the College's benefactors. Here, some of the beneficiaries share their experiences and express their thanks for the generosity and kindness of the benefactors of all generations who make this funding possible.

"Being an international student with no relatives in the UK, I am expected to be financially independent with a source of financial aid that is based overseas. The isolation from the financial source may sometimes be stressful and the Studentship allows me to set my mind at ease."

Haihan Tan

"I received a College Travel Award for my trip to China where I spent 6 weeks in Shenzhen running English summer camps for students there. It was a unique opportunity to experience different cultures close-up – I say cultures because not only did I gain a special insight into the beliefs and mindsets of the modern Chinese, but juxtaposed against this background, I was also better able to understand the similarities and differences between myself and my British teammates. The chance to interact with underprivileged Chinese students was also one I greatly treasure and the whole trip was an experience I'll never forget. I frequently spend my holidays working full-time, thus, to be able to spend last summer

on an overseas project of my choice, yet less burdened by financial concerns, was made possible only by Christ's College Travel Awards and the generosity of the College's benefactors. Thank you!"

Sarah Ho

"The financial support provided by the Old Member's Sporting Fund has allowed me to purchase Cambridge University Water Polo training kit which was essential for the Varsity Match. I have also paid for numerous trips to participate in away fixtures. It has allowed me the opportunity to represent the University and to integrate with other students from other colleges and to build up friendships with team members. Many thanks."

Nicholas McLoughlin

"Being awarded the Sir Ian McFarlane scholarship made me realise that I had taken the right decision when I applied for a degree at Cambridge University. Before coming to England, I had spent a stressful and exhausting year in one of the French post-baccalauréat 'classes préparatoires', an elitist and selective alternative to university. That year had drained my interest in the study of literature. When I arrived in Cambridge, however, I immediately felt at ease with the way we were asked to tackle literature, with a much freer, more creative and sensitive method than the one I had always used. I started realising that I loved writing essays, which was a whole new experience to me. I also found out that the more I was enjoying my studies, the more successful I was in them. This notion of pleasure is, I think, the most important discovery I made in my first year at Cambridge. Thus, above all, the scholarship

I was awarded constituted the acknowledgement that this new approach to literature was the right one for me. I would therefore like to express my sincere gratitude to the benefactors who support us. They should know that their invaluable financial help is also welcomed, symbolically, as the recognition of our personal ways of studying."

Clémentine Beauvais

"Without The Monica Kornberg Sporting Awards, playing College and University sport would be much more difficult and I cannot

imagine University life without them. Sport plays an incredibly important role in a young student's life, offering them the opportunity to meet a variety of people and forget the stresses of a Cambridge degree for a few hours. Moreover, it also plays a huge part in the development of skills crucial to the real world, which are difficult to obtain in any other capacity within the University; leadership, time management and ambition to name but a few. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the benefactors of this award for making all this possible – thank you!"

Jamie Brown

"I was the very fortunate beneficiary of the GRN Minchin Travel Fund in summer 2007. I had chosen to conduct research for my Geography dissertation in Iceland, and greatly benefited from this grant which covered much of the costs necessary to reach my field site which was located on the largest ice cap in Iceland. The money from this grant enabled me to visit somewhere I would have never have been able to go by my own means, and whilst in Iceland learnt much that also complemented other parts of my course as well as my dissertation. I was able to experience a fantastic country which really encouraged my continued enthusiasm for my subject!"

Alison Roe

"I was the very grateful recipient of the Sir Hans Kornberg Travel Prize in 2007. With this support, I was able to study epigenetics in New York. This was a relatively new, exciting and fascinating area in which to have my first real experience of scientific research, and I was able to learn so much from the world-leading scientists with whom I worked. I enjoyed the experience so much that I have since decided to pursue a PhD, and will be attending Rockefeller University this September, following in the footsteps of several former Christ's students who have begun very successful research careers. I hope to remain in science thereafter, and make a career for myself in biological research."

John Xue

Christ's College owes its existence to Foundress Lady Margaret Beaufort, who established the College in 1505. But, in common with the rest of Cambridge, women were not admitted to Christ's for centuries and it was only in 1978 that the first female students arrived in College.

Girls Allowed

This year marks three decades since that momentous occasion, and Christ's will be celebrating the anniversary with a dinner on July 18th. But how much has changed since the first women came to study in Cambridge? *Pieces* compares the experiences of Alex Whitfield (m. 1988), a speaker at the July dinner, and current undergraduate Emily Brown...



Alex Whitfield read Engineering at Christ's in 1988, just a decade after the first women were admitted.

How difficult was it to balance a social life and studies when you were at Christ's?

We worked hard and played hard. I studied engineering and we had a packed timetable including Saturday morning lectures. Many mornings, I was at the river for 6:30am rowing and then in lectures for 9am. At least the hefty lecture programme meant that I took in a lot of information between 9 and 5 leaving the evenings free for more light hearted activities. Christ's did try to discourage too much socialising in the evenings as the buttery closed at 8:30 and the late night bar didn't open until 9:30. We would usually hang out in someone's room for an hour or so.

What were your rooms like?

I was lucky enough to be in College all three years which was great. On reflection, I think the strangest aspect was my third year at the very top of V staircase. There was no bathroom in V and so I had to go down four flights of stairs and across 3rd court into W to have a shower or a bath. A bit like camping really! A friend tried to rig up a bell system so they didn't have to walk up all the stairs just to discover I was out.

What was it like to go to formal hall?

We wore our gowns to formal hall and paid just a couple of pounds for an excellent meal. My most abiding memory is the potato eating competitions. There was a fierce battle, mostly between the guys to see who could empty the potato dish first.

How did you spend your summer holidays?

As part of the engineering course we were expected to spend some of the summer working in an engineering company. I spent one summer in Racine, Wisconsin, USA working in a valve manufacturing company on the great lakes, and then travelling on Greyhound buses round the North East of the US and eastern Canada. I met up with a friend from Christ's and as I remember I nearly didn't get home because I had no money left for the bus to the airport!

What was the most enjoyable thing you did in your time as a student?

So many good things! Boat club dinners; May Balls; a skiing trip when 13 of us had never skied before; the bed race; Rag blind dates; competing in Union debating competitions; punting out for lunch; playing with the children from the women's refuge; Tatties; supervisions sometimes held in coffee shops.

Probably the times I remember with the most affection were the late nights with two or three friends sat in someone's room (often mine) putting the world to rights over copious cups of tea and biscuits!

What did you go on to do after leaving?

The year I left I taught in a school in Lesotho, Southern Africa. This was arranged by Link Africa which had been set up as a charity by students from Christ's. I came back to the UK to work for Esso at the oil refinery at Fawley, a job I had been offered before I left for Africa. I loved my time at Esso, moving out of technical engineering and into operational management. Two years ago I left to join the NHS in a scheme designed to bring commercial management skills into the health service and am currently managing 750 staff and a £35M budget at Basingstoke Hospital.

What do you think will have changed the most for current undergraduates?

We communicated with each other by leaving scrappy notes in our pigeon holes in the Porters' Lodge. No-one had mobile phones and there would usually be a queue outside the phone box at the weekend with people ringing home.

I spent a frantic night typing up my final year engineering project on one of the few computers available in the computer room. I was kept company by a theology student writing a dissertation on food allegories in the New Testament. Computers were in very short supply.



Emily Brown, star of this issue's cover, matriculated in 2006 and is reading Natural Sciences here at Christ's.

How difficult do you find it to balance all your different activities in College?

As a natural scientist a lot of my time is taken up with lectures, practicals and supervisions. However, with good time management, it's definitely possible to fit in a lot of other College and University activities. In my first year I rowed, which was a great experience, especially competing in Bumps and the Women's Eights Head of the River Race on the Thames. This year I run with the cross country club and in the first term I competed in the Varsity Match at Oxford; it was a very exciting day and had a great atmosphere. I also play college hockey. In addition to sport, I am an assistant editor for the University student run 'Science in Society' review, 'The Triple Helix'. To add to all that, I'm also involved in the College creation of a website about Charles Darwin in celebration of the 200th anniversary of his birth. College and University life offer a huge range of activities and as long as everything is well planned it's possible to pack a lot in!

What are the rooms like at Christ's today?

In my first year I lived in Third Court in Y and the rooms there are really big – bigger than my room at home, which was nice a surprise! I lived on a corridor with 12 other girls, which was great fun, and we shared a bathroom and a kitchen at one end of the corridor.

This year I am living out of College in Anastasia House, due to refurbishments that are happening in College. The rooms are much smaller but I love living there...we have a proper kitchen so there's scope for more adventurous cooking.

What is formal hall like for students today?

Going to formal hall for the first time for my Matriculation dinner was a very mystical experience! With the dark panelling and the pictures of the famous alumni, while you're standing there dressed in your gown listening to the grace being read in Latin, you can't help but think about the history of the College and all the people who have sat there before you. On a day to day basis, formal hall is really popular and it's great to go there to celebrate a birthday or have a

swap with another College society. It's a chance to relax, chat and catch up with friends. Also, it's always popular with visiting parents!

What do you do in the long holidays?

I enjoy travelling and so I tend to go away quite a bit during the holiday. It's also lovely just to have some time at home and to see friends and family. Unfortunately it's also necessary to work to earn some money! Last summer I worked at a Chinese Summer School at my old school, I went away to Wales with my family and I went to Romania for the third time to work with special needs orphans out there. I also did my Mountain Leader training course at Plas y Brenin in Snowdonia and completed my first triathlon! This summer I am spending 8 weeks doing a laboratory placement in the Pathology Department – I'm really looking forward to it and it will be nice to spend some time in Cambridge with a slightly less hectic timetable! Afterwards I'm going away with my family, doing a first aid course which is necessary for my Mountain Leader training and going walking in the Lake District.

What do you enjoy most about College life?

I love the atmosphere and friendliness of College life; it's great having a home like this within the larger University and being able to come back at the end of the day and sit and have a chat with friends. I also enjoy the huge range of activities it allows so many people to take part in – for example, I really enjoy hockey but wouldn't have the time or ability to play it at University level so being able to continue it at the more relaxed College level is great.

What do you hope to do after graduating?

A tricky question – I wish I knew the answer! I am considering doing a PhD, but I'm not quite sure if research is for me – I'll see how it goes in the summer. I'm also thinking about applying for Graduate Medicine as I really enjoy science but feel I want to work with people, in a career where I am able to have a positive role in other's lives. We will see!

Tyler Henry Hung gets current Christ's College Women's Officer talking about her role supporting students at Christ's.



"I'm there for any woman who wants to talk about anything," Hannah tells me, and I wonder whether she gets a lot of people knocking on her door. "Most people have a big group of friends and supportive networks of their own. That's great, because not needing to see a Women's Officer is a positive thing, but it's still an important safety net." But, I ask her, couldn't this be seen as potentially patronising to women?

"Like saying they need propping up? No, the more ports of call students have, the better." Hannah pointed out that women remain a minority in many Cambridge Colleges, so the role of the Women's Office is certainly not overrated: "We had training spread over two days. People from the counselling service; rape crisis centre and police talk to us about matters like women's safety, dealing with disclosure of rape, charities for women, and raising awareness of domestic violence."

It isn't just collegiate issues that Hannah regularly handles either. I am ashamed to admit I had never heard of the Women's Union, but. Hannah elaborates: "Every week, the CUSU Women's Officer – who does this as her full-time job! – and the Women's Officers from every college meet up. We discuss CUSU issues and more specific issues; for example, lately we're working on guidance for tutors when a student discloses a sexual assault or rape."

How much difference do organisations like The Womens' Union make? Hannah is positive: "there's now a Working Group, made up of Fellows and other staff, and one of the things we're looking into is women's performance in exams. This was something no one was really interested in until recently. I feel that our views are being taken onboard and people are doing positive things about it."

Hannah's mother was a "real 70's feminist", who was involved in gender-related politics, and amongst her heroines Hannah cites Frida Kahlo, a Mexican painter who continued to pursue her dreams even after being involved in a horrifying bus accident that broke her spinal column, her pelvis, as well as leaving eleven fractures in her right leg. As our conversation draws to a close, I really get the sense that 30 years since Christ's first started taking in female students, the role of supporting women at Christ's is in good hands.



Production Designer Lachlan Goudie and
Director Annilese Miskimmon.

Midsummer Magic: Staging *Comus* at Christ's

This summer sees the Fellows' Garden at Christ's transformed from a place of sunbathing, revision and contemplation into the stage for a magical production of John Milton's masque, *Comus*.

Comus – a masque written by Milton in defence of chastity – was last staged in Cambridge in 1908, when poet Rupert Brooke was part of the cast. A hundred years later, Christ's Amateur Dramatic Society have teamed up with the University Marlowe Society to perform Milton's compelling masque in the gardens.

The production will feature Milton's original *Comus*, performed by Christ's students, and will be followed by a new dialogical masque, written by poet John Kinsella in honour of the Milton quatercentenary. Kinsella, a fellow of Churchill College and author of acclaimed poetry collection 'Shades of the Sublime and Beautiful', has long been inspired by Milton's work and his masque is a contemporary take on the themes of greed and abstinence explored in the original.

In fitting style, two Christ's Alumni have been involved with staging Milton's original masque. Director Annilese Miskimmon (m. 1992) was born in Belfast and read English Literature at

Christ's, then Arts Management at London City University. A staff producer at Welsh National Opera from 1996 until 2001, she has also worked with English National Opera and extensively with the BBC Orchestras and Proms, and at Glyndebourne. Her opera directing career to date has taken her to San Francisco, Bologna, Toronto, Paris, Oslo and Frankfurt. She has worked with many of the world's leading conductors including Rattle, Gardiner, Elder, Jurovski, McGegan, and Mackerras.

Fellow English graduate Lachlan Goudie (m. 1995) is the production's designer. Lachlan returned to Christ's after graduation to take up the Levy-Plumb Visual Arts Studentship, which saw him embark upon a two month trip to Rajasthan. As an artist he now exhibits in Edinburgh, New York and London. His work has won prizes at the Royal Glasgow Institute and the Royal Scottish Academy and is regularly shown at the Royal Portrait Society exhibition at the Mall Galleries.

Here, Production Designer Lachlan Goudie and Director Annilese Miskimmon talk to Helen Mort about revisiting Cambridge and the challenges of adapting Milton's work for a modern audience.

How does it feel to return to work in Christ's after so many years?

LG: It feels very strange. I had a year as an artist in residence at Christ's in between graduating and leaving, and it was a lovely year because I was removed from the academic environment that I remembered being tough. Those memories are still there when I come back now, and it's weird to be here without the familiar pressure.

AM: You feel that there are ghosts of your younger self walking round, and everything is different – the gigantic John Lewis and the new buildings around Cambridge. The place feels like a kind of return or refuge...

LG: It's seductive, the idea that the same people, the same tutors are still walking around, it makes you feel as if you haven't grown up yet!

What was the experience of working with current undergraduates like?

AM: It's fabulous. I do quite a lot of work with students at the beginning of their professional careers, and this is slightly different because you've got engineers in the cast, and English grads, all kinds of different people.

LG: I find it amazing that the students have fitted so much in around their studies; I know how hard that was when we were here. When you leave, your life simplifies, because you find one track that you're going down and you don't have to squeeze it in between appointments and tutorials and library visits.

How do you think their experience of the arts in College differs from the kind of experiences you had?

LG: It's great to see how the visual art studios here at Christ's have developed. I think that in Cambridge the arts are embraced in one way, but in another they are sometimes seen as a distraction and they aren't always supported a hundred percent by the University, it isn't always accepted that art is part of an academic environment.

AM: I believe that art is about life as much as life's about art. I think what these students are doing is enabling themselves in all areas of their lives, even if not all of them will go on to follow it professionally. There are some

of the cast who are in this to challenge themselves, who haven't dealt with this kind of verse text before, and they've taken it home and they're loving it... I wish art in general was viewed more holistically, as something relevant and useful, as a tool for life.

Comus was last staged at Christ's in 1908.

Why does Milton's masque continue to be relevant to a modern audience, and how well do you think the themes suit a modern setting?

AM: Themes in drama are always relevant in some way, because people remain very much the same! *Comus* is about a young woman who is in danger of being corrupted, and who uses her wit, intelligence andchutzpah to defeat the reason behind the vice-led argument, and I think she's a very modern heroine even though the constant repetition of the idea of prized virginity is something that is very different for us today. At its core, *Comus* is about the tension between being a rational, intelligent human being and knowing how to have a good time; it's about how intellect can persuade you either way, and about whether there is a choice to be made at all... I think that's an idea that remains relevant today.

LG: For me, the whole idea of masque and disguise and flamboyant costumes is a kind of escapism – the masque genre invites that escapism. Masks can be a literal form of disguise and escape; in Milton's writing the characters are transformed into other beasts, and they indulge in a Dionysian world of excess, and I think the idea of being able to escape through drama and enjoy yourself is as relevant as ever.

AM: The night before the show, the May Balls are on in Cambridge, and I find that very apt considering the themes of *Comus*; these students have been cooped up doing exams, and suddenly it all lets rip... It's a really funny, witty piece and it was written to entertain as well as to deliver its message.

What have been the biggest challenges in terms of staging and design for you both in trying to adapt a version of *Comus* that can be put on both outdoors and in a Hall?

LG: We're trying to do something that's quite two-dimensional and simple in terms of set, almost very naïve.

AM: Having two settings makes things difficult in one way, but it also releases you from the kind of constraints you'd have putting something like this on in a traditional theatre. I think it will be magical in the garden, and then when it goes to Hall, it will be in exactly the kind of space it was originally written for. Both are exciting.

Lachlan, what is it that makes *Comus* a visually engaging and inviting piece of drama?

LG: We've tried to keep things quite simple, but at the same time *Comus* is rich with metaphors – suns and moons and harvests – which would allow an alternative, ornate production if you had a limitless budget! The language gives you a whole orgy of material to work from.

What do you think the audience should take away from *Comus* at Christ's?

LG: I'd like them to be able to escape for the period of time that they're here. It's about fairytale, about sitting in the gardens on a summer's evening with torches alight and allowing yourself to be transported.

AM: I'd like them to come away thinking that Milton had a really good sense of humour!



Annilese helps cast members Ed, Ned and Jenni get to grips with Milton.

Comus takes place in the Fellows' Garden at Christ's on the 19th, 20th and 21st of June and in Hall on the 22nd and 24th. Tickets cost £15 full price (£8 student concessions) and are available via the Alumni Office, tel: 01223 334937.



Changing Lives

Helen Atkins (m. 1996) read Law at Christ's. After graduating, she went on to work as a financial analyst, a similar career path to many of her contemporaries. But in 2002, Helen made a decision that would change her life.

Helen gave up her successful City job to pursue a career in 'something useful.' Having run the Good Gifts Catalogue at the Charities Advisory Trust, in 2006 she began working at the POPPY Project: an organisation set up in 2003 to provide support and housing for women who have been trafficked into prostitution in Britain. To date, the project has helped over 1,000 women from over 70 different countries, spanning five continents. This is Helen's story.

'I was adopted into a white family (I am half-Jamaican) and was brought up in a lively and happy home. I can't imagine what my life would have been like had I not been adopted, but instead kept in an environment where I was the unwanted product of a one-night stand. My mum and dad have devoted their lives to helping other people, not only as parents, but also through medicine. They decided to take me on board, and my sister, who is half-Zimbabwean, as well as two biological sons, and gave us all a loving and privileged upbringing. I got the opportunity to pursue lots of hobbies and interests, whilst benefitting from an excellent education, starting with local state schools to "keep me grounded" before reaching Cambridge.... After all that, it seemed a bit selfish to just go and make lots of money for myself.

Because of my Caribbean roots, I've always had an interest in slavery and human rights. When I was 25, I discovered that I'd been put up for adoption at the age of fifteen months because of the colour of my skin – I was too pale! As a result, issues surrounding race, ethnicity and equality became even more relevant.

The moment I became suddenly and acutely aware of the problem of human trafficking was in 2004, running an Amnesty stall at an independent cinema in East London to tie in with a human rights double bill. The films screened were *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Lilya 4-Ever*, a film by Swedish director Lukas Moodysson, which tells the story of a Russian teenage girl who is trafficked into prostitution. *Lilya* is a stunning film, but profoundly harrowing. I came out feeling depressed but bizarrely uplifted, because I knew I'd found my vocation. I remember, as a teenager, reading the technology section in the newspaper, and noticing a word I hadn't seen before. It accompanied a top ten list of the nation's most popular websites of the week, in parentheses it read, "excluding prurient content." Having discovered the meaning of prurient, my interest in the sex industry was sparked. Even in those early days of the internet, no genuine top ten – or top million for that matter – would be able to list anything other than pornographic websites. As I progressed into adulthood, I became increasingly intrigued as to why the sex industry was persistently ignored in current affairs, when it formed such a significant part of society, not to mention GDP. It was routinely swept under the carpet or glamorised far beyond recognisable representation. There seemed to be an absence of mainstream analytical debate about the realities of commercial sexual exploitation, whether through lack of interest or lack of appreciation. With recent growing awareness about sex trafficking, news coverage and discussion has grown exponentially, but now the notion that there is a 'good' and 'bad' side to the sex industry is prevalent. Push-pull factors, such as poverty and migration play a huge role, put simply however, demand for commercial sex acts fuels sex trafficking.

When I started at the POPPY Project, I was straight in at the deep end... The more I understood about what's really going on behind closed doors, the more complicated it became.... Demand for prostitution is rising – the number of UK men buying sex has doubled in the space of a decade. There is a cultural shift towards the normalisation of sexual exploitation, facilitated by globalisation and modern technology, such as multi-media networks and low-cost air travel. The rise of the internet means that men who buy sex don't have to skulk around street corners and be branded as kerb-crawlers, they can select and order a woman on the internet from their living room, pay online and usher her into their home within 20 minutes, quicker than a take-away. But repeatedly, statistics across the globe show that the majority of women in prostitution are exploited and abused on a regular basis. For example, around seventy percent of survivors of prostitution suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder in the same category as war veterans or victims of state-organised torture.

Instead of responding to this pandemic on a basic human level, we're now in a position where an estimated 80 percent of fifteen to seventeen year olds are exposed to hardcore pornography on a regular basis, whether intentionally or accidentally via pop-ups or from friends. These days, most 12 year olds now possess mobile phones, and for many children now, their very first notion of sex is extreme pornography, reinforced by countless images, before their first kiss. We have no idea how this unprecedented ubiquity will influence sexual attitudes, motivations and behaviours in the future... but perhaps it is not leading to the ideal of happy, healthy sex lives for all.

At the POPPY Project, each service user has their own key support worker, and they can receive support twenty-four hours a day. Throughout the night until the morning someone is on call to help in emergency situations and take new referrals, which come in from all angles – police, immigration, NGOs, health and social services, individuals and occasionally, self-referral. It requires a lot of patience and sleepless nights, but it's the only way to do it.... One of the most important things for the women we work with is supported housing, as it is essential that they feel safe, secure and unthreatened. Once the most pressing things have been addressed, such as emergency healthcare, appropriate accommodation, language interpretation and urgent police matters, the next stage includes long-term risk and needs assessments, leading to safety plans. Asylum or voluntary return home can take a long time and possibly induce secondary trauma; it is a constant battle to try to maintain a stable environment. When the time is right, counselling and therapy is available, as well as language and yoga classes, for example. When the recovery process is established, service users can access bespoke training, education and, hopefully one day, mainstream employment in their chosen field.

Good news is quite rare. It might come in the form of a lengthy sentence for a trafficker; convicted on the basis of a service user's incredibly brave testimony, or a great job offer. One of the women has just clinched a book deal, another – who I'd never seen smile before – recently gave birth. Since she had the baby, she's beaming from ear to ear every time we see her, and that's really uplifting. Ex-service users drop in to catch up, and their kids (who in some cases were conceived through rape during their trafficking situation) run around the office, without a care in the world, borrowing paper and pens to play with. It's always encouraging to see that, and remember that life continues... Being a survivor of sex trafficking is a life sentence, but even such unimaginable trauma can be overcome in many ways – we help to empower these amazing, resilient women to embrace a brighter future.'

Vice Master Martin Johnson reflects on his experience of working with Parliament to offer advice on the Draft Human Tissue and Embryo Bill

Advising Parliament



In May 2007, the Department of Health (DoH) published the Draft Human Tissue and Embryo Bill – rated by experienced parliamentarians as a very complex piece of legislation, but granted only 8 weeks for scrutiny! A Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Committee of the Lords and Commons was hurriedly convened, chaired by Phil Willis (Liberal Democrat MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough), with members including Robert Winston (IVF guru and TV star), Ruth Deech (family lawyer and former chair of the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority), and Lord Mackay (Lord Chancellor at the time the 1990 Human Fertilisation & Embryology Act was passed). I was invited to be the special scientific adviser to this scrutiny committee. Fortunately, I was sufficiently familiar with the medical and legal language having been a Member of the HFEA between 1993–1999. Despite this and a career spent working with embryos, the task was challenging, and gave me some interesting, and at times disturbing, insights into how our parliamentary democracy works.

Scrutiny committees are there to ensure that badly drafted or poorly thought through legislation does not get onto the statute books. To this end the Committee took oral and written evidence from a variety of experts. However, the Parliamentary notion of what constituted evidence seems to differ significantly from the standards we would apply academically! Essentially, any statement made to the Committee was accorded validity as evidence, even if it was clear that the person making the statement was way off-beam or the statement itself was highly challengeable. The Committee's final report is full of such "evidential quotes". However, to be fair, this approach to evidence was, I think, intended to give 'balance' to the differing viewpoints on some of the more contentious issues raised by the Bill.

In respect of one major plank of the Bill, there was clear and almost unanimous criticism. The Government had, a year or so previously, announced that in order to save money it was going to combine two regulatory bodies into one: the HFEA and the more recently created Human Tissue Authority were to become the Regulatory Authority for Tissues and Embryos. The regulatory and intellectual arguments for such a merger were thin indeed, and the evidence that a merger would be very damaging convinced overwhelmingly. It was the one area in which the committee did challenge the Minister, civil servants and Chief Medical Officer

effectively. The final report roundly criticised the DoH, which meekly dropped the whole merger proposal in its revised Bill released in November 2007 and still going through Parliament.

Another area of contention was the proposed legislation regulating the formation and use for research purposes only of mixed animal:human embryos. Paradoxically, the draft Bill was highly conservative in its proposals, and the committee became increasingly more radical in its approach. Again, the revised Bill incorporated the Committee's view, and the Government then backed this more radical approach to the hilt, and incurred the wrath of the Roman Catholic Bishops for doing so, as well as putting its own Catholic MPs on the spot! At the time of writing, the Lords have backed this more radical approach, but the Commons still have to consider it.

In a third area of contention, the DoH ended up ahead of the committee! The requirement of clinics to 'take account of the need of any child conceived by IVF for a father' had been inserted into the 1990 HFE Act at the last moment in a compromise between those who felt that IVF treatment should only be offered to married couples and those who felt that common law couples, single women and lesbian couples should not be automatically barred from treatment. The Government, given its record on human rights and non-discrimination, was determined to abandon what had become an essentially meaningless and unenforceable legal clause. Initially, the committee went along with this approach, but at the last moment one member argued that, although treatment should not be restricted to married couples, it was important to send a strong signal to men as a whole that their paternal role was not being devalued. This cosmetic change is still being resisted by Government and argued over in the Commons. Whether the law is a place for symbolic tokenism is doubtful – but we will see what parliament thinks.

Overall, it was a stimulating and informative task to be working so intimately and influentially on an important piece of legislation!

www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/humantissue.cfm

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_079127

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Legislation/Actsandbills/DH_080210



Paolo on his way to victory in the 2007 Varsity cross country at Wimbledon.

Run, study, run, study

Paolo Natali (m. 2004) studied History as a postgraduate student at Christ's, but his true passion is for athletics. Representing Cambridge University Hare and Hounds, Paolo brought the light blues home to victory in two consecutive Varsity matches, in 2006 and 2007. He also ran for Cambridge on the track, producing superb wins in the 3000m steeplechase. Here, he talks to Helen Mort about training, ambition and the sweet taste of success...

You've won the Varsity cross country match for the last two years now. Which victory was sweetest?

I like to think it was Cambridge that won really, I was just the first man home. The victories had two very different meanings – the first, in 2006, was the first time I was part of a winning team in a Varsity match, so you can imagine how magical it was. The second victory didn't have this element of novelty: there was pressure, I was trying to give something that I was not sure I was able to give.

What is the most memorable race you've ever run?

You must always believe that the most memorable race will be the next one. It is the race you are preparing for; the one you dream about, the one in which you hope to get a glimpse of some kind of perfection – the transformation of feet into wings.

I have a very sweet memory of so many races, like Varsity matches, personal bests and so forth. I could list so many pictures that have stayed with me: the back of a white Oxford vest as I overtook twice in the same race, surrounded by a roaring Cambridge crowd. The home straight in a Swiss stadium in June, Vivaldi's *Spring* in the background. Hearing the whistle of the wind along the back straight of a Cardiff stadium.

But perhaps sweetest of all was the first time I ran for my country, back in my junior days. I was at an international meet in France, and it also happened to be my birthday. The first thing I did after the race was to phone my former PE teacher – the one who had convinced me to turn up at that first cross-country race. So I called him up and thanked him, saying: "Today's my birthday, and I just ran for Italy; this is the best birthday present that anyone has ever given me!"

Instead of replying with something romantic, he told me "Well, now you'll have to live up to that standard, it's going to be hard; good luck!" And he was right, in fact my international status didn't last long. Such is life: when you're on top of something, you always think there's more to come, but life is more like a rollercoaster than a stairway. I started travelling the world as an international student, and my sports life stagnated for a while until I settled down in Cambridge.

How did you manage to fit training in around studying for a PhD at Christ's?

The showers in the College library play a major role here... basically you wake up and go for a run, then study, then go for another run, then study, then go to the gym, and if you have some spare time you can even go out, or sleep. It looks a bit crazy, but people get used to the strangest lifestyles... and I can assure you, I didn't exactly end up being the most unsociable person in town!

Who or what inspires you most as an athlete?

For me, life is about the search for its own meaning. Whatever one thinks about the fact that we may or may not have a soul, it is self-evident that we have a body. Hence, awareness and control over one's own body is a very legitimate part of that search for meaning. The ancient Greeks knew that, but then for some reason different civilizations have misunderstood the idea: by denying the importance of material life, as most philosophy did until very recent times. It is understandable that, after centuries of this mess, nowadays we struggle to find an equilibrium, in which one's knowledge of the body may assist one's knowledge of the soul or at least develop a culture in which the daring go beyond perceived limits. Athletes get to know their own sensations really well, they get to understand the relationship between body and soul. Unfortunately I can quote a number of sports people who don't get the balance right and end up becoming selfish materialists. Luckily, on the other hand I can also quote a host of athletes from all sports, backgrounds and beliefs, who tackle their physical challenges in the way I described earlier, as a research tool. Isn't this perspective inspiring?

What are your plans for life after Cambridge?

Ah, that's a tricky one. Is there life after Cambridge?? If so, I will continue to run and I will continue to consider the pursuit of knowledge as an important part of my life. I will still toast to the Queen and keep a great memory of my crazy Cambridge days. I will paddle my own canoe, head towards uncharted waters, and see what I find there.

What's hot in student sport?

By Tyler Hung

Football



Christ's had a fantastic season in football. Well done to Simon Bartle and the rest of the team for winning Cuppers. They destroyed Girton in the final by winning 6–2. The Master, Frank Kelly, said of their victory: "Christ's football team have won the final more often than any other Cambridge College, and we are immensely proud of them".

Rowing



Congratulations to Christ's W1 and M2, who both won blades in Lent Bumps. Christ's Women Captain, Eddie Surtees is ecstatic with her crew's solid performance and says the success is "well deserved". This year was tough for them having lost the experienced third-year rowers from last year, but one intensive September camp and countless training sessions later, who would have been able to tell?

Beagles brave the wind and rain



The newly-formed Christ's College Beagles battled through a northerly gale and miles of mud to complete the 2nd Turing Trail Relay on Sunday 16th March. The team finished 47th over the challenging course, which runs along the river between Cambridge and Ely. The Beagles were (in running order): Nick Gay, Helen Mort, Chris Abell, Hayley Stephen, Brenda Bradley and David Norman. The team manager and driver was Alan Winter.

There are rumours that the Beagles may don their running shoes again for the famous Chariots of Fire relay in September... Trinity College are known to have a strong team, so competition would be fierce this year!

Mad Mann looking for sponsors



It's a tough journey that can take up to 18 hours ...but the prospect of a day in the freezing waves isn't enough to put Michael Mann (m. 2001) off his channel swim attempt! Michael and his friends will swim the English Channel this September to raise money for two children's charities: Richardhouse Children's Hospice in London, and an education project for underprivileged children in Nepal.

A nervous Michael says: "The water is absolutely freezing. To make it more fun, the channel swimming association has decided that it only counts if you wear Speedos. And they do not give me any special consideration for being significantly skinnier than David Walliams."

To sponsor Michael in his attempt, or to follow the team's training, visit the blog at: www.swimteam2008.blogspot.com. We'll be reporting on the swim in the next issue of Pieces.

What's cooking?

Each issue, we take you down memory lane with a picture from the past... This issue: Christ's kitchen staff in the early 1970s, sent in by Helen Balkwill-Clark

Helen says: 'this is a picture that my husband Roy and I unearthed from our loft, and it brought back some fond memories. My grandfather, Ted Darling, is second left and he worked as a storeman and waiter at Christ's for many years. On his suggestion, I too waitressed in Christ's in the late 1970s, and I became friends with many of the students – it was at one of their parties, years later, that I met Roy, who I remembered vaguely from my time in College. We are now happily married!

Many students from the '70s will remember the staff in the photo well because they used to spend a lot of time in the Buttery, where they would often joke with Tony the barman. The bar staff were Spanish, and every time a drink was ordered they would respond with 'que', rather like Manuel in Fawlty Towers!

The kitchens in the '70s weren't short of characters. Helen recalled barman Tony's unfathomable trade in Buttery tickets, and Mrs French on the tills: "everything she charged for ALWAYS amounted to '45'". Not to mention Gary the sauce chef:

"Gary was a sauce chef with a punky hairstyle. One time, he was asked to act as a ringer in a footie game against Jesus, and told to 'keep a low profile' so as not to be marked out. He went out on to the pitch and immediately started a fight."

And fights weren't always confined to the football field: "Lea was a waitress in the servery and during RAG week she was the victim of a terrible stunt: she was bombarded with custard pies! It turned out a student whose advances she had rejected had paid to have this done to her. It was all very shocking at the time...!"

Times have changed; fast forward to 2008 and Christ's College kitchen staff have been using temporary facilities for the past 7 months so that the kitchens could undergo an extensive refurbishment programme. The white sheds in Second Court had become a



Back row (left to right): Tom Goodman (Veg Chef), Ted Darling (Storeman), John Bolton (Catering Manager), Tony Vilasuvo (Barman). Front row (left to right): Steve Risley (Pastry Chef), Alfonse (Chef) and unknown barman.



Pictured (left to right): kitchen staff Adam, Sebastian, Bryan Cooke (Pastry Chef) and Tim Oughton (Sous Chef) in the new kitchens.

familiar sight to many, but the refurbishment was completed in March this year and the kitchens moved into their new home.

Steward's Clerk Chris Austin said of the temporary catering offices: "I used to check the temperature most mornings when I arrived – the coldest it ever reached was 2 degrees!" No wonder Secretary Beth Blakeman wore her coat for 6 months. But the sheds had their perks, as Chris explains: "The antique safe we have in the Steward's Office is solid

iron. Its mass is such that with low overnight temperatures it turned into a splendid fridge, perfect for cooling some Prosecco on my 40th birthday!"

The photograph above shows staff in the brand new kitchens, with not a custard pie or punk hairstyle in sight.

If you have an interesting photograph from your time at Christ's that you would like to send to Pieces, please contact Helen Mort in the Alumni Office.

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e-mail: campaign@christs.cam.ac.uk

Saturday 21st June 2008

Garden Party and Buffet Lunch

(for alumni who matriculated in years up to and including 1947, 1952, 1953 and 1954 and one guest)

19th – 24th June 2008

Milton's *Comus*

As part of our celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of Milton's birth, there will be a special production of his masque *Comus* performed together with an anti masque newly written by John Kinsella. Performances take place in the Fellows' Garden on 19th, 20th, 21st June and in Hall on 22nd and 24th June.

Tickets available from the Alumni Office – 01223 334937

Saturday 28th June 2008

College Association Dinner

(open to all alumni)

To request an application form, please contact the Steward's Office on 01223 334962

Saturday 12th July 2008

Family Day

(open to all alumni).

An afternoon of entertainment in the Fellows' Garden for children and adults, including bouncy castle, face painting, pirate show and award winning childrens' author Tony Mitton. High tea will be served. Tickets available from the Alumni Office.

Friday 18th July 2008

Anniversary Celebration – Women in Christ's

Dinner in Hall – fully booked

Saturday 6th September 2008

Christ's Medical Alumni Association

Inaugural meeting open to all in the profession from Christ's at clinical student level upwards. Contact the Alumni Office for more details.

Saturday 13th September 2008

Reunion Dinner

(for alumni who matriculated in 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995)

Friday 26th – Sunday 28th September 2008

University Alumni Weekend

(open to all alumni)

Further details available from the University Development Office

Saturday 27th September 2008

Friends of the Old Library Autumn Event

A talk on 'Milton in the Old Library' followed by a chance to explore the exhibition. For more details on how to join Friends of the Old Library, please contact Helen Mort in the Alumni Office – hm317@cam.ac.uk

Saturday 27th September 2008

Reunion Dinner

(for alumni who matriculated in 1984, 1985, 1988 and 1989)

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