Lest We Forget

The Master, Sir Richard Dearlove

Pembroke recently held its first event linked to the hundredth anniversary of the First World War – an outstanding lecture in our German lecture series, given by the newly-appointed German Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dr Mark Roth, on the theme of ‘Conflict and Culture 1914-2014’ and supported by a panel of eminent World War I historians, Professors Ned Lebow, Chris Clarke and David Reynolds.

The lecture and discussion was another small but significant academic contribution to the surge of publications, media events and seminars to mark the outbreak of the Great War. As Pembroke members should know, the College can claim a special place in this anniversary for no other reason than the number of dead recorded on its Great War Memorial in the Cloisters outside the entrance to the College Chapel. Though Pembroke was one of the larger colleges in 1914, the sheer number of dead is still shocking. When I was an undergraduate in Queens’ my historian Tutor sent me over to Pembroke to look at them. He described the Memorial as ‘the most moving in Cambridge’. A significant proportion of the matriculation years before and during World War I did not return home – the College membership of that period was more than decimated. The number of Pembroke students (called pensioners then) on the University War Lists in 1916 and 1917 was also high in relation to other colleges and there must have been a reason, unknown today, why more Pembroke men joined up. One can only speculate that there may have been stronger than usual peer pressure to do so, which possibly points towards something special about Pembroke even then.

No other historical event is memorialised in the College so emphatically and may never be again (the Second World War memorials are smaller and more modest). For those who did come home, and for those who came up to Pembroke immediately after the war, there must have been a type of collective trauma which, ‘lest we forget’, required a permanent expression. On Remembrance Sunday it can still briefly and powerfully reassert itself, but we should recognise nonetheless that it does take an annual ceremony to keep that message alive, particularly amongst the younger members of the College who for more than a generation now have no direct memory of family members who fought in the Great War; and I doubt that many Pembroke undergraduates really connect personally any more or less for granted that it was their duty and their fate. The Memorial’s longer-term message which possibly points towards something special about Pembroke even then.

I would venture the conclusion that Pembroke’s Great War Memorial has largely served its contemporary emotional purpose which lasted through a good part of the twentieth century. The Memorial therefore takes its dignified but still significant place in the College’s longer history. How we mark important anniversaries says a great deal about us as the events and people we remember, and how far removed we are now from the emotion and trauma which drove the raising of the Memorial. I would venture the conclusion that Pembroke’s Great War Memorial should understand its importance and shifting raison d’être.
Whither Italian Unity?

Richard Stockwell on the sixth Keith Sykes Italian Lecture

Thanks to the generous support of Keith Sykes (1965), Pembroke was honoured to welcome Professor Giuliano Amato to deliver a lecture on 2nd May 2013. Amato is a two-time former Prime Minister of Italy, who held office first from 1992-1993 as a member of the Italian Socialist Party, and secondly from 2000-2001 representing the Democrats of the Left. He has also served as a Minister of the Treasury, the Interior, Universities and Reform, and, subsequent to his visit to Pembroke, was appointed to the Constitutional Court of Italy by President Napolitano last September.

A distinguished and experienced figure in Italian politics, Amato was highly qualified to deliver a lecture entitled “150 years afterwards and beyond: what has remained of Italian Unity?” The lecture responded to the sympathy shown to the unification of Italy in recent times by British historians who commiserate with Italy for being a creative and hopeful, but ultimately divided and unsteady nation. Amato argued that Italy is ‘a bizarre nation, perhaps, but an accomplished one’, whose current political problems are symptomatic of a wider loss of confidence in democracy.

Amato recounted the traditional narrative of the unification of Italy with enthusiasm to match the exhibitions in every Risorgimento museum in Italy. He focused on the textbook protagonists of the Italian Risorgimento, each of whom has a street named after them in every Italian town: Cavour, Mazzini and Garibaldi. Amato emphasised that these three men were essential to the unification of Italy, despite their antagonisms. Cavour expanded the Kingdom of Sardinia across northern Italy by a mix of military and diplomatic means, maintaining a level of regal acceptability in the eyes of other European powers. Mazzini contributed fervent support for popular democracy and nationalist spirit, which created the conditions for the successful plebiscites in the smaller central states. And Garibaldi forced the issue with military flair, ensuring the south was not left out of the new Italy.

This route to unification was not unproblematic. There was no new constitution and no republic. The King of Sardinia even remained Vittorio Emanuele II as the first King of Italy. Critics, particularly of Cavour, claim that these imperfections created a continuous myth of another Italy, Sardinia even remained Vittorio Emanuele II as the first King of Italy. Amato argued that Italy is ‘a bizarre nation, perhaps, but an accomplished one’, whose current political problems are symptomatic of a wider loss of confidence in democracy.

Italy has matured as a nation-state. At the protest of socialists and the legislative action of moderate liberals, the introduction of social security at the beginning of the twentieth century created a genuine sense of national belonging. Later, the end of WWII and the beginning of the Cold War did not prevent serious agreement among the constituent assembly agreement on the clauses of the new constitution. The King of Italy. His strong democratic procedures were respected by the communists, who were absorbed into the system. Indeed, President Giorgio Napolitano is the only former communist to be at the head of a Western power, and was last year elected to a second term.

Italian politics nowadays is more divided than ever. Beppe Grillo’s anti-politics, populist and Euro-sceptic Five Star Movement won great support in the 2013 parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, the separatist Northern League are the largest party in Veneto following the 2010 regional elections, with polls suggesting two-thirds would support a split from Rome. Some explain such polarisation as a result of Italy’s lack of accomplishment as a nation. However, Amato argued that this is not an Italian phenomenon, but a Western one. Indeed, parallel situations exist around Europe, particularly in the UK. The UK’s first-past-the-post voting system is all that stands between the anti-politics, populist and Eurosceptic UK Independence Party and a Westminster breakthrough, with a strong performance predicted for UKIP in May’s European Parliament election under the proportional list system. Meanwhile, the Scottish National Party holds a majority in the Scottish Parliament, and has scheduled a referendum on independence for this September.

Amato’s argument that the political sentiment in Italy is not anti-Italy, but anti-politics, is a strong one. He further claimed that this is due to a decay of confidence in democracy. Until now, some blips aside, western democracies have appeared to be on a path to better things, with each successive generation truthfully promised that their wellbeing would surpass that of their parents. Amato did not seem optimistic that this will continue to be the case; instead, politicians need to manage the expectations of their citizens for the gloomier future. Amato offered this as an explanation for the growth of anti-politics and separatist parties: ‘In times of difficulty, we tend to lose the sense of a common future, and therefore the past prevails’. The future is the engine which keeps common identity alive, but the future is also at risk.

In light of this, Amato stated that ‘several changes are needed for democracies to survive: changes in the habits of political representatives, and changes in the interactions between them and their electorates’. He concluded on this note of vague, qualified optimism: change is necessary, but its required direction is uncertain.
Fifty Shades of Greying

Jane Moorman on the 2013 Pitt Seminar

For the last eight years the College has held the William Pitt Seminar and Dinner every October. The first was in 2006 to celebrate ten years of Pembroke’s Corporate Partnership, and was restricted to the College’s William Pitt Fellows. The speaker at that first event was David Cleevely, the renowned Cambridge entrepreneur, who spoke on the links between business and academia.

In many ways the William Pitt Seminar is very different from alumni events run by the College – the guest list is in no way restricted to alumni, matriculation year, subject, age or profession; all are welcome. The varied nature of the guest list – comprising senior academics, public figures, policy-makers, representatives from the College’s corporate partners, alumni, students and people who hear about it and ask to be invited – makes for lively conversation and excellent questions from the audience. Former chairmen and speakers have gone on to become good friends of the College, and to attend subsequent seminars as guests – which proved extremely useful last year when the Chair had to drop out on the day! A quick scan of the guest list showed that Mark Damazer, former controller of BBC Radio 4 and currently Master of St Peter’s College, Oxford, would be attending. He had previously chaired the event in 2011, and very graciously and expertly stepped in to rescue us.

The title of the 2013 seminar was ‘The Anxiety of Age’, and focused on technology, well-being, demographics, and stem-cell technology; how they affect and are affected by the ageing population. The aim was, we hoped, to give a positive view of the possible solutions to the problems that come when an increasingly large proportion of the population is over fifty.

After introductions by Sir Richard Dearlove and Mark Damazer, the audience welcomed the first speaker, Professor Kay-Tee Khaw from Cambridge’s School of Clinical Medicine. Kay-Tee spoke of the effects of the increasingly elderly population on the structures already in place relating to work, pensions, education, and healthcare. It is important to establish how we can improve ageing, in terms of physical and cognitive functions and social interactions. Research across the world shows that the health of a person in later life is not just a question of genetics; levels of education in earlier life can affect well-being in old age. Small changes, such as increased mobility and mental ability in senescence. By extending the healthy part of our lives to the greatest extent possible, we may live to be 100 without regretting it!

The second speaker was Professor Robin Franklin, a Pembroke Fellow as well as being Head of Translational Science at the Wellcome Trust-MRC Cambridge Stem Cell Institute. Robin spoke of his team’s research into the effects of ageing on the regenerative process in stem cells and the central nervous system, especially in relation to diseases such as Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, Huntington’s, and Multiple Sclerosis. Scientists have discovered that although stem cell regeneration becomes far less efficient as we age, it may well be possible in the future to use medical intervention in the form of drugs to reverse the effects of age on the process and this is becoming closer to achievement.

Robin’s talk was followed by Professor John Clarkson, from Cambridge’s Engineering Department. John and his colleagues have recently published a report on the problems of ageing and technology entitled Ageing, Adaption and Accessibility: Time for the Inclusive Revolution! It was produced in conjunction with the BT Group, one of Pembroke’s Corporate partners. John spoke of the need for designers to be aware of the problems associated with ageing – loss of mobility, dexterity, vision and hearing – and of the need for new products to be inclusive, using examples of good and bad design. He went on to show a design kit that he and his team have created which helps younger designers to experience the problems associated with ageing, for example gloves that mimic the effect of arthritis. Companies are beginning to use this kit and to make small but invaluable adjustments to their designs. The older members of the audience were left with a feeling of hope for their future years!

The final speaker was Dr Jonathan White, from the London School of Economics’ European Institute, who talked about the politics of ageing, intergenerational relations and conflict. He put forward the idea that ‘generationalism’ has replaced class as a cause of conflict in society. He questioned whether the stress on inter-generational politics (regarding healthcare, pensions, the shrinking working population, and the decline in fertility) actually masked any intra-generational issues, thereby closing down debates rather than opening them up.

The question and answer session which rounded the afternoon off covered an interesting array of subjects, including epigenetics, Government policy, stress, euthanasia, inter-generational conflict, why we age, and whether there will still be ‘anxiety of age’ in fifty years’ time.

Recordings of the event can be found at http://vimeo.com/user12479538.

The 2014 seminar, ‘Nervous Energy – Will the Lights Stay On?’ will be held on Friday 17 October 2014. To find out more contact corporate@pem.cam.ac.uk.
Women as Patrons and Innovators: from Cambridge to Tibet and Back

Hildegard Diemberger

2014 marks the thirtieth anniversary of women being admitted to Pembroke College. This is remarkable if we think that the College was established in 1347 by a woman, Marie de Saint-Pol, Countess of Pembroke. When, in a small grocery-store facing Mt Everest, I had the telephone interview that eventually led me to join the College the remarkable women that played an important part in the foundation of Cambridge colleges were not at the front of my mind. I was on fieldwork in Tibet following in the footsteps of extraordinary Tibetan women who, like Lady Elizabeth de Clare or the Countess of Pembroke, had left an important mark on their civilization. The Tibetan women were Buddhist not Christian, but like the fourteenth-century female founders or patrons of Cambridge colleges they were operating in a society where political and religious life was dominated by men.

I had recently translated the biography of a fifteenth-century Tibetan princess, Chokyi Dronma, from Tibetan into English. The original text was a beautifully illuminated manuscript recently discovered among Buddhist scriptures that had survived the Cultural Revolution in Tibet. The elongated leaves enshrined the life of a remarkable woman as recorded by one of her followers. Written close to the events, the biography revealed a real life bursting out of the hagiographic mould, allowing a vivid glimpse into the Tibetan world of five hundred years ago.

For me the ancient narrative brought to life the beautiful but harsh Tibetan landscapes where Chokyi Dronma had her adventures, as it also did for the Tibetan friends and colleagues who had also started to search for her traces. Reading the text, we could imagine her riding on the plain between the glittering snows of mount Shisha Pangma and the turquoise waters of the Palkhu Lake or dwelling among the steep walls of Shekar castle. Here she fought against her family to be allowed to pursue her spiritual aspirations and become a Buddhist nun. Triumphant after a long struggle she became a spiritual leader in her own right. Recognised as the incarnation of the Buddhist deity Vajravarahi, she became the first of the Samding Dorje Phagmo reincarnation line that has continued in Tibet up to the present day.

Counting on her royal kinship and on her ability as a fundraiser, Chokyi Dronma was a great patron of the arts. Editing the teachings of her spiritual master Bodon g Chogle Namgyal (1376-1451), she supported the production of print fundraising, Chokyi Dronma was a great patron of the arts. Editing the teachings of her spiritual master Bodon g Chogle Namgyal (1376-1451), she supported the production of print editions when this technology was still in its infancy in Central Tibet. She was particularly dedicated to the education of nuns whom she taught how to read and engage in a wide range of activities. Together with the famous yogin Thangtong Gyalpo she supported the construction of iron-chain bridges and unique architectural masterpieces. She was also one of the rare examples of a fully ordained woman in the Tibetan Buddhist context.

Porong Pemo Choding, the monastery where she had taken her vows, saw a few decades later the arrival of another woman of high rank who was born in south-western Tibet, Kuntu Sangmo (1464-1549). Like Chokyi Dronma she had fought against the conventions of the society around her to pursue her aspirations. She would eventually become the consort of Tsangnyong Heruka, the great Buddhist master who compiled and carved the printing blocks for the Life and Songs of the famous Buddhist yogin Milarepa. Providing support and expertise, she substantially contributed to the version of the narrative that became a classic of Tibetan literature – now known worldwide.

When Chokyi Dronma was fighting her battle to be allowed to abandon worldly life, it was suggested that she should instead become a royal patron as a better way to fulfil her spiritual aspirations. This wasn’t enough for her. For many other women, however, becoming a patron was a rewarding and less problematic way of taking part in a variety of good Buddhist deeds, such as procuring materials necessary to construct religious objects. We often only know of these women’s contributions from just a brief mention of their names as sponsors at the end of documents. As in the case of the Countess of Pembroke, it is difficult to glean what motivated them and how they pursued their aspirations. What we have are fragments and traces that we need to tease out from sources that were not dedicated to them. Their legacy, however, lives on in the traditions and achievements to which they contributed as women in a man’s world.

One such document is a beautiful 1521 print of the Mani bka’ ‘bum, a text traditionally attributed to the seventh-century Tibetan emperor Songtsen Gampo, housed in the Cambridge University Library. This edition was sponsored by the grandchildren of Chokyi Dronma’s brother and produced by spiritual masters of her tradition. Finely illustrated, it was part of a collection of Buddhist texts that came to the Cambridge University Library in the aftermath of the controversial Francis Younghusband Mission to Tibet in 1903-4. Carried by mule over the Himalayas and shipped to the UK, some of these Buddhist scriptures arrived in Cambridge where they were catalogued by Charlotte Mary Ridding – a remarkable Girtonian working at the Cambridge University Library.

Some of these literary treasures will be going on display in Cambridge’s Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in the exhibition Buddha’s Word: The Life of Books in Tibet and Beyond (opening 27 May 2014) that maps the story of Buddha’s words, from palm leaves to paper to digital Dharma. The exhibits, some of which have never been shown before, give insight into a world of spiritual art while exploring the secrets of their materiality thanks to cutting-edge research supported by the University of Cambridge and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Some of these documents may never have been produced without the sponsorship of women who strived to find their own Buddhist identity many centuries ago.

BUDDHA’S WORD: THE LIFE OF BOOKS IN TIBET AND BEYOND will be on show in Cambridge University’s Museum of Archaeology from 28 May 2014 – 17 January 2005
I n September 1983, a letter pinned to the Sixth-Form notice-board of my all-girls school in Oxford caught my eye. Pembroke College, Cambridge had decided to go mixed. An Open Day was to be held. All interested girls welcome to attend. A day off school seemed like a no-brainer. A few of us signed up and a week or so later the gardens of Pembroke left an indelible impression, and three of us decided to apply.

When I showed up a year later to read Natural Sciences, I was unaware of the turmoil that had preceded our arrival. We were a select few; as far as I recall, only about twenty girls in an intake of a hundred undergraduates. It was unclear whether this was a random consequence of our A-Level offers, or a deliberate ploy not to scare the horses. Or rather, the third-years. The second-years had applied for Pembroke knowing that the next year would be mixed. Most of them were well-endowed, relatively well-adjusted to having women around. But a number of the third-years had sought refuge in Pembroke (or failing that Peterhouse or Magdalene) under the misapprehension that they could continue their peaceful boys-only existence nurtured through years of public schools. Not to mention a handful of the Fellows ... ah, the Fellows ... humour had it that the daughter of a Governing Body on whether to go mixed had been dominated by debate about whether there would be sufficient budget to install full-length mirrors in all the rooms.

I forget whether I had a full-length mirror in F6 Red Buildings. It was less important to me at the time than whether I could remember how to bid Gerber at 2am after a bottle of wine while still making it to a 9am Statistics lecture. It was a good thing Maths was an optional subject in NatSci 1A, and that we never played bridge for money. Those of you stronger at probability than I was – whether at 2am or 9am – will have worked out that the sex ratios were strictly in our favour. So speculation and gossip as to which intra-staircase couplings were occurring, or might occur, was rife, particularly amongst those males who were unlikely ever to be party to them. The pairings of those first months – real and imagined – were diligently recorded in the Junior Parlour Comments Book, often in the style of a Clerihew by the descendants of Ted Hughes, most of whom, peculiarly, were Mathematicians and Engineers rather than English Literature students. In the course of these scribblings, a number of us – or maybe it was just me – acquired the nickname Slaps. I suppose that having spent a year at the Dragon School where girls were called Hags (pl. Haggis), I meekly accepted the explanation that Slapper was a Northern engineer’s term of endearment.

Thirty years later, trained to the hilt in diversity and anti-harassment, I wince at my 18-year-old self. Still, those same engineers leaped to defend my honour when I was being heckled as the only woman amongst the eight students lined up before Bamber Gascoigne in a ‘Pembroke Cambridge vs Catz Oxford’ University Challenge match (we lost). So I was willing to tolerate them as irritating big brothers. They in turn elected me to be Pembroke’s first female Junior Parlour president, despite my previous failure to fulfil my manifesto promise as Ents Rep on the Committee to track down a legendary ‘spesh’ pinball machine. I discovered years later what might have helped the first year of women survive Pembroke in 1984. In 1966, the Chinese birth-rate apparently dipped as parents avoided the risk of having a girl child being born a Fire Horse, making her a stubborn, resilient leader with good communication skills and potentially unwedgable. That said, the fact that about half of my intake had taken a gap year and were therefore probably Wood Snakes undermines my theory.

At any rate, surviving Pembroke’s male environment helped me during my diplomatic career to deal with military dictatorships like the Burmese State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). About twenty years later, I was having a rare one-to-one lunch with a Burmese minister. He was a retired Brigadier-General, somewhat more educated and relaxed than his peers who were terrified to be seen with a foreigner, let alone one who could speak Burmese and might therefore trick them into giving away a state secret. It was at a time when the US and UK vied for public enemy No 1 with the Burmese junta, due to our outspoken views on Burma’s human rights record and the opposition leaders we mingled with. He let slip that he and his military colleagues speculated that the US and the UK both sent woman as heads of their embassies ‘so that we can’t be horrible to you’. Since the SLORC had a track record of putting offensive cartoons about Aung San Suu Kyi and her British husband, I could guess what the less refined ones might hanker to do. I thought back to Pembroke, and the evening in the JP that I had discovered an ode in the Comments Book in which my maiden (sic) surname had been imaginatively rhymed with ‘nob in soon’. I drew myself up to my full height (my American colleague at the time was over six foot even before the Afro haircut and spike heeels, so there was actually no risk of a Burmese dictatorships like the Burmese State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). About twenty years later, I was having a rare one-to-one lunch with a Burmese minister. He was a retired Brigadier-General, somewhat more educated and relaxed than his peers who were terrified to be seen with a foreigner, let alone one who could speak Burmese and might therefore trick them into giving away a state secret. It was at a time when the US and UK vied for public enemy No 1 with the Burmese junta, due to our outspoken views on Burma’s human rights record and the opposition leaders we mingled with. He let slip that he and his military colleagues speculated that the US and the UK both sent woman as heads of their embassies ‘so that we can’t be horrible to you’. Since the SLORC had a track record of putting offensive cartoons about Aung San Suu Kyi and her British husband, I could guess what the less refined ones might hanker to do. I thought back to Pembroke, and the evening in the JP that I had discovered an ode in the Comments Book in which my maiden (sic) surname had been imaginatively rhymed with ‘nob in soon’. I drew myself up to my full height (my American colleague at the time was over six foot even before the Afro haircut and spike heeels, so there was actually no risk of a Burmese
It was only when I was studying Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* for A-Level that I realised my being female could be a problematic thing. In the course of discussing the novel, my English teacher launched into a passionate reflection on ‘feminism’ and the suffragettes and how, despite what I (in my blissful ignorance) thought, we hadn’t always had it ‘so easy’! I’d never really thought about this before; I studied with boys, I competed with boys, I hung out with boys. Why would it matter that I’m a girl? I really couldn’t understand it, and part of me still doesn’t. I just couldn’t get my head around why being a female might make me inferior, or weak, or not as open to the same opportunities as boys. I’d never come up against oppression and I’d always been the top of my class. I was pushed by my school and family, and I always thought my brain was more valuable than my body, or my sex. But when I discussed with my Head of Sixth Form the possibility of applying to Cambridge my idealism came crumbling down. An Oxford man, notoriously always adorned in tweed, he told me of the Oxbridge stereotype – that is, the posh white male – that stood in the way of my academic glory. Coming from a school where only one other person had ever gone to Oxbridge, I became worried that this old-fashioned institution, with its spiralling turrets and hidden gateways, would lock me out of its court yards because I was female.

Despite his terror tactics, I signed up for the CUSU Shadowing Scheme in 2011 and was assigned to Pembroke. Needless to say, my teacher’s stories of misogynistic dons were rapidly revealed to be utterly untrue. From those three days, I knew that Pembroke was going to be where I studied. It just felt so homely, so welcoming. Two years later, I arrived as a keen fresher with big dreams and sweaty palms. In the matriculation photo I was flanked by females who made up roughly half of the intake – although this never crossed my mind at the time. In fact, up until recently I was completely unaware of the College’s long history of not admitting women. Although I am the College’s Women’s Officer, I was oblivious to the struggle that the early women here faced. That is because in my time at Pembroke I have never felt at a disadvantage because of my gender. I’ve been privileged to be alongside a student body of open-minded, unprejudiced individuals who, I hope, typify this modern day and age. And the Fellows, who I had imagined to be outdated fossils thanks to my Head of Sixth Form, were just as welcoming. After reading Vicky’s account of being one of the first female undergraduates in the College, I can’t help but feel a surge of pride at how dramatically times have moved on!

Indeed, the fact that I hadn’t even thought about sex-based admissions statistics, or Pembroke’s relatively-recent admission of women, perhaps shows my ignorance – or rather, that being a woman is no longer a ‘big thing’ in the College. That is perhaps belied, though, by the fact that the position of Women’s Officer still exists. The role is unique as it extends to the welfare side of things, as well as liaising with those advancing the CUSU Women’s Campaign, which is a far more political, and wide-reaching venture. The Campaign, for example, engages with University-wide issues of sexual harassment and academic discrimination, as well as national concerns such as equal pay. There has been a lot of backlash against the Campaign, especially this year, with many colleges voting to remove the political aspect of their Women’s Officer role. Thankfully, Pembroke has chosen not go down that route.

The College is a fantastic place to be a feminist; I can’t explain why, but the fact that I have had the support, for example, to set up the feminist discussion group ‘SolidariTEA’ (which enjoys a great turnout) is testament to the welcoming environment that characterises Pembroke. I’ll be very sad to hang up my Women’s Officer robes this term, but I feel happy in the knowledge that there is a very promising bunch of women to fill my place and to advance the work that my predecessors and I have undertaken. I couldn’t have asked for a better environment to study and live in. On returning home this summer to see my old English teacher, I thanked her for opening my eyes to the struggles women faced and still do face, because without her I wouldn’t have been able to recognize just how lucky I am.

**Back to the Future**

Charlotte Chorley (2012) writes of how things have changed for women in the College

Charlotte Chorley is a second-year English Literature student in the College. She was the Junior Parlour’s Women’s Officer in 2013-14 and is still active in both the CUSU Women’s Campaign and Pembroke-based ‘feminist’ activities.
On Remembrance Day each year at 10:55am students from across the College gather in the War Memorial Cloister for the Remembrance Day ceremonies. We are usually around 100 people and there is a strong sense of serious attention. The traditional words are said by the Master and the Dean. A wreath is laid, usually by a student who is also a serving officer. The Last Post and Reveille are sounded.

The Memorial was built to commemorate 309 men from Pembroke college. The highest mortality rate was the intake of 1912, from which 34 men died. The intake of 1913 lost 32. The Memorial was extended to commemorate 141 men from the College who died in the Second World War.

The First War Memorial was paid for by subscription. From the 1924 printed appeal for funds that was sent out by the College one can get a sense of the discussions that surrounded the Memorial's design, and the intentions of the College in creating it. Ten years after the war the tone is calm and serious. The desire is for ‘a dignified record of brave men: not obtrusive, but plain to see by all who pass by’.

What role does the Memorial play in the contemporary life of the College? In one sense, and perhaps far more here than in many places, the relationship can be one of imaginative identification. College is not so much changed: names are still entered in the matriculation books; Fellows teach and students study; we eat in the same Hall and worship in the same Chapel. Imaginative identification can, up to a point, give us a deeper sense of the reality of the war dead. Those men really quite like our current Fellows sat in their rooms, or in Chapel, and reflected when they heard of the deaths of former students – students who had been promising, witty, clever, serious, or chaotic, or beautiful or funny or wise.

It does not take much of a stretch for us to make that imaginative transition. For each George, or Albert, or Edward on the memorial we can quite easily imagine a Harry, an Alex, an Olly. And I think that we should do so. It is a Memorial. Part of our relationship with the war dead is a relationship of anamnesis. We make present by remembering, and the vividness of remembrance that is available in this place should not be neglected or evaded.

The arrival of the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War is a challenge to remember rightly. 1914–18 was an unfolding tragedy. Corporal Fielding-Johnson may have been our first casualty (see Ian Westerman’s article opposite), but the impact of the war on the College was spread over four years and beyond. Pembroke shall commemorate partly by making available some of the intensely moving letters sent by parents to the College in something close to the time and sequence in which they arrived hundred years ago. We shall commemorate on Remembrance Day the names particularly associated with 1914. We also hope to gather intergenerational memories from Fellows, students and staff, of the stories they have been told of their families.

The students who attend the Remembrance Day ceremonies are overwhelmingly likely to think of the First World War through the lens of the War Poets. Glory is not on their minds. The ceremonies in the cloister are followed by a Requiem in the Chapel. Many, sometimes most, of those in the cloister come into the Chapel. Attendance is generally highest when war and British casualties are most strongly present in daily news. There are complex feelings and perceptions on this occasion but I sense most strongly two things: the desire not to forget, and the desire not to let such mass conflict happen again.
The Dean, James Gardom, writes: The War Memorial in Pembroke only records the year of matriculation, the name, and military unit of each member. Behind this intentionally austere record lie hundreds of individual stories. We are fortunate that Ian Westerman has researched one of these stories to give us a sense of how much lies behind every one of these names. Ian chose a Signals Officer because that was his own role in the Army. By chance, the officer he researched turned out to be one of the very first Cambridge casualties of the Great War. What follows is Ian’s account.

28050 Corporal Henry Good Fielding-Johnson, Royal Engineers (Divisional Signals) matriculated in Cambridge’s Senate House on 21 October 1913 and was a member of Pembroke College. He was only in residence for three terms: Michaelmas 1913, and Lent and Easter 1914. While at Pembroke he started to read Mechanical Sciences and lived at 28 Trumpington Street. His Tutor’s notes record that he intended to row, but there is no further record of this. He was just 20 years old when he was killed in France on the 24th of August 1914 (only the second day that the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was in action), and he was a Corporal Motorcycle Dispatcher Rider with the 5th Division Royal Engineers Signal Company at the time. This presents a number of curious anomalies which, although there can be many feasible explanations for them, makes the situation unusual.

Since Henry appears to have been at Cambridge for the whole of the first year of his degree and would have finished his studies in June/July 1914, it is not unreasonable to assume that in response to the declaration of war in August he left the University full of patriotism and rushed off to enlist. However, if this were the case then it is hard to see how he could have been trained and posted to a regular unit in time to be in action in France just three weeks later. Also, it would have been remarkable progress for him, bright though he undoubtedly was, to have been so rapidly promoted to Corporal, although there is a possibility that if he joined bringing his own motorcycle then he may have been made a JNCO more rapidly. Even so, given the short period of time available to him it would seem more likely that he joined the army sometime earlier. It is possible that he joined the Territorial Army while a first-year undergraduate. However, the unit that he went to France with was a regular one and was based in Carlow in Ireland! Alternatively, he could have had previous regular service and been recalled as a reservist when war broke out, but that seems unlikely given his age and background – and again, why with a unit based in Ireland? Unfortunately, his Service Record, which would have cleared up most of these anomalies, is not held at the National Archive at Kew, most likely being part of the 60% or so of records that were unfortunately destroyed in the Blitz in 1940.

Whatever route Henry took to get there, we can be reasonably certain that he mobilised with his unit in Ireland in the second week of August 1914 and then travelled out to Le Havre, via Dublin, aboard the SS Archmedes on the 16th/17th. We know this, as the 5th Divisional Signal Company War Diary records that by 12th August the war establishment of twelve motorcyclists, with their machines, had mobilised and were undergoing musketry training in Carlow. The Company entrained for Dublin on 15th and arrived in Le Havre at about 5pm on the 17th. There they were accommodated in ‘M’ shed of the Magasin General and rested until being required to parade at the railway station on the 19th. From Le Havre they went by train to Landrecies and were billeted in a barracks there. Over the next four days they were constantly on the move and having to establish communications from the Divisional HQ both to their brigades and to GHQ II Corps – the motorcycle dispatch riders being used for the latter task. The BEF had its first contact with the enemy on 21st August, although this was mainly light skirmishing, the conflict proper not beginning until the following day. On the morning of the 23rd the 5th Divisional HQ was in Dour and the Signal Company had established itself at the railway station, wherever possible making using of the permanent telegraph system that was in place as they also had operators at the stations at Hamin and Boussu. The remainder of communications were sent by dispatch rider. The following day the Company sent two men to Patoûrages railway station to establish communications there for the 15th Brigade. The War Diary records that the men remained there, despite the village being under heavy fire, until forced to withdraw when the station itself began to take hits. A few lines later the War Diary reads: ‘One motorcyclist (Cpl Fielding-Johnson) went out from DOUR with a dispatch, and has not since been heard of by me’. It is very unusual to find any reference to an individual below officer rank in a War Diary, especially during such a frenetic stage of a battle, but to find such an explicit and poignant description of how a specific junior NCO went missing in action is extraordinary. It is only to be expected that we would have no knowledge of precisely what happened to ‘Cpl Fielding-Johnson’ (it may be that he had an accident or was caught up in the action that was happening), but what is unusual is that his body was never found. The Cambridge University Review of 28th August 1914 does have an entry that states he was concussed and in a Paris hospital, but this seems very unlikely to be correct as the official War Graves Commission has him officially listed as ‘missing’ and his name is recorded on a memorial for those with no known grave. Sadly, the true facts behind his death will probably always remain a mystery.
New Rosenthal Art Library

Polly Blakesley, Fellow in Art History

On 3 December 2013, the Rosenthal Art Library opened in Pembroke College Library in a ceremony befitting the éclat of its generous donor, Tom Rosenthal (1935-2014). A student of History and English at Pembroke, where his father was a fellow in Oriental studies, Tom went on to become a publisher of great distinction, his many achievements including the astonishingly beautiful and successful edition of the Book of Kells that Thames and Hudson first published in 1974. His great love, though, was modern British art, on which Tom wrote with great wit and insight in a host of articles and reviews, as well as distinguished books on painters such as L. S. Lowry and Paula Rego.

These twin passions of Tom’s career – books and modern art – find lasting legacy in the astonishing library that he amassed over many decades. Rich in first editions in various languages, the library of some 1,700 volumes has been described as the strongest Cambridge college libraries for art historical studies, Tom went on to become a publisher of great distinction, his many achievements including the responsibilities of the Bursar. At the time this was Bill Hutton, excellent in his main role but understandably not looking for more work and expenditure. However, I approached him and, surprisingly, he listened and looked and then agreed that I should see what might be done. This was in the mid-1960s.

I knew little about the restoration of paintings, but the curators of the Fitzwilliam Museum readily gave advice. They recommended a youngish restorer, John Bull, trained and employed by the Tate Gallery and at the time setting up on his own. He was an ideal choice, and for him the not infrequent discovery of bread rolls and other comestibles lodged behind canvases was probably a useful new experience. The aim was to remove the glass, ensure that the canvas or panel substrates were sound, that the often multiple layers of dirt and discoloured varnish were removed, and that lost paint was replaced where possible, but without striving for museum-standard perfection. Working first on the portraits in the Hall, and then the Master’s Lodge and elsewhere in the College, over a period from 1966-1977, Bull was responsible for putting much of the collection into its present respectable shape.

Some of the frames also needed repair or replacement and on that score we were directed to Arnold Wiggins & Son, Frame-makers to the Queen and Queen Mother and the National Gallery. Mr Wiggins himself visited the College in July 1966 and gave a detailed running commentary on every frame as we walked around. This seemingly remained in his memory until his death in 1980, as did every antique frame in his gigantic store-rooms, which I would be invited to see when a repair or re-framing was contemplated.

Pembroke’s portraits include drawings, and these also often needed attention. Here the bulk of work was done by Doreen Lewisohn, trained partly in Vienna and highly competent. Working from her small house in London she was short of space and I remember once seeing her washing drawings in an old bath in the tiny front garden, while a Wordsworth manuscript lay drying on the hat-stand in the hall. Drawings are in general not as highly regarded as oil paintings, and I brought to life several lurking in unexpected places. The William Blake sketch of Friar Bacon and the Poet Thomas Gray I found in an envelope on the dustey floor of the then-Library basement.

My only notable contribution was to discover that the artist responsible for the very fine portrait of Christopher Smart, previously unknown, was Thomas Hudson. My role was to organize and record. I kept notes systematically, with a file for each portrait. With the addition of a short biography of each subject, these notes rather readily became Pembroke Portraits. To my relief it has been well received by the National Portrait Gallery.

Revealing Pembroke’s Portraits

A.V. Grimstone (1952)

The Martlet editor’s invitation to write something about Pembroke Portraits inevitably brought to mind how I came to be involved with the portraits. I was a biologist at the time, running one of the early electron microscopes in Cambridge. Before that, as an undergraduate and then a research student, the portraits had seemed no more than a constituent of the rather sombre character of the Hall. Becoming a Research Fellow (in 1958) allowed closer examination and revealed that most of the portraits were dirty, further obscured by grimy glass and if lit, lit badly. Could something be done?

In those days there was no Fellow with responsibility for the portraits. By default the portraits, like the buildings and most of the contents of the College, were one of the responsibilities of the Bursar. At the time this was Bill Hutton, excellent in his main role but understandably not looking for more work and expenditure. However, I approached him and, surprisingly, he listened and looked and then agreed that I should see what might be done. This was in the mid-1960s.

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To Beef or Not to Beef, That is Equestrian: the Misuse of Science in the Media

Bella Plumptre (2010)

In France it's a delicacy. In Slovenia it's fast food. Yet the British aftermath of the horsemeat scandal shows we think differently. We regard horses as pets, not food. Yet the interesting point about the recent discovery of horsemeat in burgers, bolognese sauce and lasagnes isn't about why Brits reacted as though we were boiling Black Beauty down into glue. It's about how the scandal was reported, of 'horse DNA' being discovered in burgers, rather than the more accessible imagery of fillies found in the factory. This is a prime example of the media using science to their advantage, sensationalising stories by focusing on the alien concept of genetics. In this short essay I'll discuss other examples of manipulation of science in journalism and advertising; how they hide or highlight parts of products to increase sales to a somewhat scientifically illiterate public, and why the science behind them is often wrong.

Back to 'My Lidl Pony' 2013, there are two major issues: ingredient listing by companies, and reporting of genetics by journalists. In the case of the horse meat scandal, unlisted ingredients caused outrage. Horses don't exactly cannon into blenders by mistake. However, many commonly listed ingredients are cryptically swathed in science to mask their presence. Silicon dioxide is the chemical name for sand, used to make glass, cement, and ready meals (like the ill-fated horse lasagnes) as an anti-caking agent. Castoreum is extracted from beaver anal glands, and is used as flavouring in strawberry ice cream. Additionally, L-cysteine is an amino acid (the building block of proteins) added to baked goods to make dough more pliable. This is extracted from human hair – an interesting cannibalistic twist to a standard sandwich. To many of us, this would be much more disturbing to discover than the wrong kind of meat being used in our burgers. Yet in these examples, there is no government outrage; manufacturers are being totally honest about what goes into their products. These chemicals are far from their origins, and I am not advocating that these ingredients should be omitted. Rather, I am pointing out that even when undesirable ingredients caused outrage, horses don't exactly cannon into blenders by mistake. Horses don't exactly cannon into blenders by mistake.

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Squaring the Pembroke Circle

Matthew Mellor, Director of Development

Cambridge has committed to increase its intake of graduate students by 2% per annum for the foreseeably future. The result will be a broadening of the international profile of the University, which is determined to ensure that it is at the forefront of attracting the top postgraduates to pursue its Masters, doctoral and other such courses.

Cynics say that this is about money. However, the fundamental principle behind increasing the number of graduate students is that they will strengthen the research profile of Cambridge so that Research Councils and other funders will be encouraged to support the kind of work that will help Cambridge continue to have an important impact on people’s lives. It is about that far more than it is about the fees that the prospective students will pay. In fact, there is now a potential crisis for UK postgraduates, who have paid much greater undergraduate tuition fees than most were prepared for, and therefore face very serious debt if they wish to continue their studies as Masters or doctoral students. Their choice may well be between not doing such a degree (increasingly a disadvantage in the current employment climate) or going abroad where there is often better funding provision for graduates. That is certainly true in the US, and is increasingly so in other countries, too. There is clearly a risk to the economic future of the UK if the brightest and best students leave the country. So, yes, Cambridge’s plans for increased graduate intake is more important than generating money for the University.

More graduates will inevitably mean more international students. Cambridge is in a marvellous position – if it is able to call on the support of alumni as well as other interested people and institutions – to remain a magnet for UK and international students at both graduate and undergraduate level. The particular part that Pembroke Members can play is to help us meet this challenge, either by supporting our initiatives to increase funding for undergraduate and graduate students in the form of bursaries and scholarships, or by pointing us to organisations (companies, trusts, foundations) that can help.

The College is pleased to have been able recently to secure two important benefactions; one from California to support Persian Studies in Pembroke, and the other from Malaysia to support a University Lectureship in Asian Politics, based in the College. Everywhere the Master, my colleagues and I go, we have a warm welcome from well-wishing Members, and it is gratifying to be able to share experiences of the College with them. We invariably find that the affection for Pembroke is not diminished by distance, and indeed can be enhanced by it.

To support that good will, the College is pleased, and grateful, to be able to call on alumni volunteers worldwide, in many different locations. On the College’s website (www.pem.cam.ac.uk/?p=261), and in the annual Pembroke Gazette, Members can find the contact details of their local representatives. We are actively looking to increase the number of events for Member across the world, but by necessity we will need to rely on the goodwill and contacts of local Members. The Development Office is therefore looking to increase the number and geographical spread of its local representatives. If you think you might be able help, do please contact us.

Somewhat in keeping with the international theme, the College is delighted to announce the launch of the Pembroke College Circle. This society has been established to ensure that the thousands of people who are not Members of the College per se but who are perhaps related to Pembroke men and women, or took its summer courses, can be in better and more regular touch with the place. More information can be found on the College’s website, and the New York launch event took place on Saturday, 12th April at the Yale Club. There will be a Cambridge launch in Pembroke on Saturday 27th September (during the University’s Alumni Festival), and dates will shortly be confirmed for events in California and Japan.

When listening to recent discussions in the Fellowship about the election of our next Master, I have been struck by the importance many Fellows have placed on the College’s international profile. In my view, this is one of the most interesting qualities of the place, and Pembroke certainly is reputed in the University to be more engaged internationally with corporate and institutional partners, student courses, and other activities, than other colleges. Pembroke reaches out, and distinguished and interesting people visit it to impart their insight and experience.

The international (dare I say ‘global’?) character of Pembroke today reflects the world we live in. Rather than isolate itself from that world, the College embraces these changes and seeks to pilot them judiciously and generously. While it remains respectful of its great traditions, it is also very much a 21st-century College.