LOOKING FORWARD
THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY
Robinson College
Reunion Weekend

26th September 2009

At this year’s reunion dinner, Robinson will be celebrating 30 years since it became an undergraduate college. The dinner will be open to those who matriculated in 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, and 1999. There will be a wine tasting and the usual Pegasus brunch to which all Pegasus Society members will be invited (regardless of matriculation year). The weekend also coincides with the 800th anniversary weekend of the University, which will incorporate events all around the city.

Robinson listed as 5th in the top 50 most inspiring buildings in Britain

“From St Pancras to Stonehenge, Lloyd’s of London to Hadrian’s Wall, Telegraph architecture critic Ellis Woodman picks the structures that define the nation.

Colleges tend to adhere to one of two types - the classic quad or the campus of freestanding buildings - but Robinson is neither. A single brick building, it has a castle-like presence in its suburban setting. The skill with which the architects have imposed a sense of hierarchy on an extraordinary variety of spaces lies at the root of its success.” - The Daily Telegraph, 19 Nov, 2008

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Editor: Mr Gregoire Hodder
Committee: Dr Stephen Trudgill, Dr Ros Love, Dr Judy Weiss, Ms Helen Cornish, Mrs Helen Winter and Mr Gregoire Hodder

Front cover photograph: Jamie Aspinall, winner of the photo competition prize 2008

Produced by The Print Network
http://www.theprintnetwork.co.uk/
Dr Mary Stewart is one of the founding fellows of Robinson College and has recently retired as a senior lecturer in German at the University of Cambridge. She has taught in the universities of both Munich and London (KCL) as well as Cambridge. Her principal research interests are twofold: German Naturalism, with regard to both drama and narrative writing, and post-1945 narrative writing, particularly modern Swiss authors and Uwe Johnson.

Sitting in my study in No 5 Adams Road, with the sun streaming in from a frosty garden beyond the bay window, it is easy to feel nostalgic in a general way about the early days of Robinson, for this room then formed the main part of our joint Common Room.
What is much harder is to situate memories more precisely, for 30 years is a long time and many images of people and events that lurk in my mind could just as easily belong to the period 1977-79, when our first graduate students joined us. However, here are a few rather random jottings triggered by arriving at the start of 2009, with to me quite amazing speed, given how new and tentative our venture once seemed.

The dominating memory is actually that of our shared space. There was something rather wonderful about functioning together as a unified community, undergraduates, graduates and Fellows alike: we all used this room, and shared a dining room too in the really quite spacious 'Portakabin' which was attached to the back of the building. That, as well as our brand-new presence as a 'proper' college on the Cambridge scene, generated both a kind of historical consciousness and a freshness of attitude.

On the one hand we were rather like those small communities of scholars with whom the University itself long ago began, and on the other we were bringing something new and exciting to the established scene: a sense that we wanted in some way to be, could be, a different kind of institution, a more cohesive and united group of people working together for the common good. Certainly we spent a great deal of time discussing in various groups how the College might one day look and function! Some of our hopes have been fulfilled, I think: Robinson remains a friendly environment, relatively free of the 'that's how we've always done it' attitude; on the other hand our growth to a size beyond what was initially envisaged, and financial and other pressures, have inevitably meant a loss of some of that early cohesiveness – though it is wonderful to see how many staff have remained with us over the years, through all the changes.

Eating together as a community was always a pleasure, not least because of the infinitely varied and resourceful meals created in a very limited kitchen by Jean Fordham, who sadly died some years ago, and her assistant Doreen Fordham (no relation) who then stayed with us until her retirement and became one of the best creators of tempting desserts any of us has ever encountered! Meals were always noisy and lively; our first intake of undergraduates proved to be every bit as energetic and enterprising as we had hoped, and constantly

“Robinson remains a friendly environment, relatively free of the ‘that’s how we’ve always done it’ attitude”
IN MEMORY OF PETER BAKER-SMITH
1943 - 2008

Peter Baker-Smith died in the Michaelmas term after a brief illness, having worked in the College kitchens from 1980 to 2008. He was a well-known and popular figure amongst the staff and some of his colleagues remember him here:

“One of Peter’s gifts was that if you wanted to know anything in the news, he was your man. Any breaking news story or event, he would keep you updated.”

“He had an array of impressions which would have the Catering staff roaring with laughter, in particular Tommy Cooper and Clint Eastwood, and even his old boss, Bob Wicket, was in Peter’s repertoire.”

We will all miss him.
Guy Fuller recently became the Head Gardener of Robinson College after working here for almost 30 years. We talk to him and find out about the history and future of the gardens.

So you are the Head Gardener now!

I never expected to be in this position. I was quite happy being deputy head, but I’m enjoying it. I applied to work here when my apprenticeship finished at one of the other colleges; I didn’t get the job, but was invited back later. They had kept my name on file and I had an interview in the Fitzwilliam Museum, of all places, because I was working at Pembroke and the new Head Gardener designate, Desmond O’Grady, was at the Botanics, so it was a middle place to meet. Des started in October ‘82 and I came at the end of the month. The college looked very, very different. It was a big shock actually, coming from one of the older colleges, where obviously all the plants and everything are set up, to this place where there was hardly anything. To be truthful, it was a bit bleak because at the time it was so new.

So there wasn’t much of a garden there?

Not as such: the initial layout was there, some of the borders were there and there were some plantings, but up until then a lot of the work had been getting areas cleared and sorted, like the big lawns, under Des’s predecessor, David Brown, the first Head Gardener. Des had to take it on from there. I worked for a number of people over the years and he is the most knowledgeable gardener I have ever worked for. Everything was done by hand, in the early ‘80s, we didn’t have a tractor and trailer like now, the most we had was a hand driven rotovator on wheels. We marked all the borders out, lifted all the grass by hand and all the borders were single dug with farmyard manure in each trench.

Builders are notorious for burying all their rubbish and when we did the big sloping border by the dining hall, we actually uncovered two of the rails which the main crane for the building had run on. Des had been here while the college was being constructed, so when I said “We found a rail in the border” he calmly commented “ahh, that will be the crane rail probably that used to run on the inside of the College”.

I have noticed that the Garden has a nice balance of the wilderness and the ordered.

That is the ‘Dutch Ecosystem’, on which this garden was originally modeled: neat and tidy near the College and, as you go further out, having wilder areas. I like wild areas as long as they are a maintained wild area, if that makes sense? We have just planted 6,000 bulbs outside the front of the College, along all the lawn edges there. That will give it a slightly more wild effect. We are
doing it partly because we took 12 trees out and we felt we needed to create interest. Some of the trees were only planted to make the front look nice for when the Queen came to open the College, and were supposed to have been removed some time afterwards, and 25 years down the line they were choking out the other trees, and the light levels within the College offices were very poor.

**Have you any major plans for your time as Head Gardener?**

There are lots of ideas. I am working for the moment on an idea for the lake bank. It is very, very overgrown, and the shrubs are very old so it would be nice to take all that out and go back to one of the original ideas of having a grassy bank down to the lake, making it more of a sitting area. It would allow people to sit there and we could have a memorial bench looking out over the lake. It is not going to be an easy job as the access is so difficult, and you would have to bring in quite a lot of soil to build it up.

**What would you say you enjoy most about these Gardens?**

Personally, I think it is their peacefulness: it is hard work, but because we are just outside of Cambridge, so to speak, it is very peaceful, and there is so much wildlife in the garden, the birds, the water life. I have seen kingfishers, water voles, and fresh water-mussels in the lake and stream, as well as deer, grass snakes, and pheasants around the lawns and shrubs. I would also say the people I work with as well. Paul, Ginny and I have worked together since 1990; they definitely help to make the gardens a nice place. There is a lot of me in this garden. As I said when I first got here there was nothing and now it’s a mature garden, with its plants, its borders, and I hope to add to that. Whether I will improve it or not, I am not sure, but there will be changes because all gardens keep evolving. Some of the plantings now are very old, 25 to 30 years old, and reaching the end of their life. They will need taking out and replanting, which will be my ideas, with those of the team and Garden Committee and I am sure when I have gone another Head Gardener will come in and say “Good grief, why did he plant that, what was he thinking of?!”

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**New Sculptures**

Three new artworks have been added to the College courts and gardens in the summer and autumn of 2008.

**Sailing into the future (opposite)**

“Sailing into the future” by Philip de Konig stands alongside the lake on the edge of Thorneycreek lawn.

**Conversing figures (opposite)**

Across the Bin Brook, “Conversing Figures” by Christophe Gordon-Brown nestles in the centre of the gardens, so tantalising glimpses of the two marble figures appear and disappear along different vistas as one strolls across Bin Brook bridge and around the gardens.

**Finback (opposite and above)**

The most recent addition, the bronze patina sculpture, “Finback” by Ben Barrell, has been installed in Front Court and is a stunning focal point for visitors arriving in College.
Rebecca Kane graduated from Robinson College in 1997 with a BA in history and the practical experience of running the College’s May Ball. I was the May Ball committee’s secretary and the Vice President in the following year. I took the little knowledge I had built up of managing budgets and dealing with people and built a career out of it. Now, aged 33, I am the managing director of Alexandra Palace (photo of the theatre above) with a remit to restore one of London’s most iconic venues to its former glory.

I will always be grateful for the start that Robinson gave me. My first job after graduating was with English Heritage. In my two and half years there we re-opened Down House - the home of Charles Darwin - and re-launched Eltham Palace.

We also forged ahead with a new
business venture for English Heritage that caused a bit of controversy at the time. At Chiswick House we launched a hospitality service where people could eat and drink in a room full of priceless artefacts. The curators took some persuading, but we got there in the end. I’m proud that the business, launched in 1998, now has a turnover of £1m a year.

By 2008 I was hungry for a new start and in December I took charge of Alexandra Palace, aka “Ally Pally”. It is some challenge. You may know it for music gigs or the recent PDC World Darts Championship which was staged there. Yes, I even got to meet Phil “The Power” Taylor. But I believe Ally Pally has so much more potential.

Ally Pally has suffered two fires, the first just 16 days after opening in 1873. It has also suffered huge financial losses and has rarely been profitable in its 136 year history. It is my job to change that. The heyday for the Palace was during the First World War when film shows in the theatre and roller skating brought in the crowds. In the 1930s a wing was leased to the BBC and the studios from which the first public television service was transmitted still exist.

Now, with over 40 per cent of the building derelict, it still hosts large-scale exhibitions, conferences, banquets and live music. We have an international-sized ice rink, the Phoenix pub and 196 acres of parkland which include a boating lake and sports facilities.

But change and investment are necessary to make turn Alexandra Palace into a 21st century venue. JB Priestley once called it “The Monster of Muswell Hill” and he wasn’t joking. Not only do my team need to restore it, but we need to make it sustainable. I’m confident that with the right management team and support from the trustees and Haringey council we can effect huge change.

After two months, I’ve been impressed by the commitment and passion of the team here, overwhelmed by the scale of the task ahead and bowled over by the place itself. It has so much potential. First up, I have to ensure the company is fit for purpose and we can navigate the economic challenges of 2009. Then we need to kickstart the fundraising strategy and get more of Ally Pally up and running.

My dream is to re-open the 2,000-seater Victorian theatre with a programme of live music, comedy, plays and perhaps even cinema. The stage is awe-inspiring. It rivals that of the Drury Lane theatre with so many of the original fittings as well. In fact, so little has changed that on my first day no-one could find the light switch for the theatre. Bringing Ally Pally out of the darkness is going to be fun and, I believe, very rewarding.

Contact
Rebecca Kane, 0208 365 4343, rebecca.kane@alexandrapalace.com

“My dream is to re-open the 2,000-seater Victorian theatre with a programme of live music, comedy, plays and perhaps even cinema.”
Since leaving College in 2006, having studied Engineering, Graham Johnson has joined a company called Astrium which is a major contractor in the space industry. Astrium is the largest space company in Europe and the third largest in the world, employing some 11,000 people in four countries. Their customers include the European Space Agency, telecommunications providers, the UK MOD and occasionally NASA or other national space agencies.

Graham writes: A lot of our work centers around the development of satellites and interplanetary probes. From telecommunication satellites which broadcast Sky TV, to observation satellites which monitor the Earth for weather forecasting and climate change, to navigation systems like Galileo (a European version of GPS) and to scientific probes sent to explore asteroids, comets, other planets, or even the Sun, the company is capable of taking on almost any mission.

But Astrium is also a major stakeholder in Arianespace – the company which produces the Ariane 5 launcher – and we recently developed the Automated Transfer
The ExoMars lander will deliver the rover to a specific location using an inflatable braking device or parachute system.

Astrium employs a wide range of engineers and scientists. The space industry, like no other that I have ever worked in, attracts people who have a real passion for what they are doing and consequently that having that passion and inspiration for what you do in life is really important.

The work is varied and always challenging – spacecraft have to survive an immensely powerful launch and then operate in a harsh environment where, amongst other things, the temperature swings from +150° to -150° and there’s no chance for maintenance.

Astrium recruits around 30-40 graduates every year, and is continuing to do so this year in spite of the financial crisis which fortunately doesn’t seem to have much of an effect on the space industry. As a graduate you can choose to either enter a department directly or go on a rotational scheme where you move department every 6 months for the first two years. Because Astrium is European company it’s relatively easy to spend time abroad if you want – I’m currently spending 6 months in Toulouse which has been a great experience, and my previous work has involved several trips to Paris and Munich.

If you’d like to know anything more about the company, or in particular the employment opportunities, feel free to contact me at graham.johnson@astrium.eads.net or grahamjohnson@cantab.net.
Dr Chris Warner originally joined the College in 2001 as Director of Studies in Mathematics and quickly came to appreciate the care and dedication that goes into the admissions process. When the opportunity to become Admissions Tutor came up it seemed the perfect role for him.

Chris writes: I enjoy working with my colleagues to select those of our applicants who we believe show the greatest academic potential and commitment to their studies and who will add intellectually and socially to the Robinson community. I also enjoy the many opportunities to interact with potential applicants, their parents and their teachers.

We welcome about one thousand five hundred visitors to Admissions events in Robinson each year. The most high profile of the College-based events are the Open Days in July when the whole College works hard to welcome prospective applicants and their parents and teachers. Directors of Studies run subject-related information sessions, I run a parents’ question and answer session and our students show the visitors around the College and its gardens.
All our visitors get a chance to enjoy a College lunch in the Hall.

The Admissions team also works to raise awareness in schools of the special qualities that make Robinson the extraordinary Cambridge College that it is. Each year I go out to visit schools, meet pupils, their parents, and teachers and to contribute to school-based Higher Education and Oxbridge events. Pupils, parents and teachers really appreciate the opportunity to ask a “real” admissions tutor questions about Cambridge (and Oxford) and are always keen to find out exactly what we look for in a Personal Statement and a School reference. There are still many myths around about Cambridge interviews and school visits are an opportunity to refute the most preposterous – no, we will not throw a rugby ball at you to see if you can catch it – and to describe how to prepare for a Cambridge interview.

This year the programme of raising awareness in schools has been stepped up by the forming of a team of six Admissions Advisers. Admissions Advisers are experienced members or Fellows of the College with knowledge of College admissions. Together we have a pool of expert subject knowledge of many Cambridge University courses. The Advisers have already visited a range of schools from inner city comprehensives to sixth form colleges to grammars to independents. As more and more schools have become Specialist schools, the subject-specific knowledge that the Advisers bring has been particularly well received.

Cambridge University as a whole works hard to promote Access to Higher Education via the Local Area Link initiative. Robinson College’s contribution has been with the Wandsworth Local Area for a number of years and from this year we will also be linked with Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire. Student members of the Robinson College Students Association arranged a College visit from Wandsworth schools last spring. We funded a coach to bring a group of high performing pupils to Robinson. Our visitors were most impressed and after admissions talks, a college tour and lunch, a number of them commented that they would consider applying to Cambridge.

We are always happy to welcome prospective students and their families to Robinson. If you would like to visit, please contact Amy Webber on apply@robinson.cam.ac.uk.

Dr Chris Warner is the Admissions Tutor at Robinson and a College Teaching Officer in Mathematics.

Robinson May Ball Committee 2009 are proud to present this year’s May Ball theme as ‘Phantasmagoria; Reflections On Reality’. We would also like to draw your attention to the unique publicity opportunity sponsoring the May Ball could offer your firm. Our publicity reaches over ten thousand Cambridge undergraduates, graduates and fellows and so working with us could really help increase the visibility of your firm amongst the student body. The Ball could not go ahead without the generosity of our sponsors, so if you are willing to support us, we would be delighted to invite you to attend the Ball as guests of the Committee. Please email Hannah Rignell at sales2009@robinsonmayball.co.uk for tickets and further information about sponsorship opportunities. We hope to see you at the Ball!
Revd Dr Philip Plyming (1992) writes: After some protracted admin, I have now been awarded my PhD from Edinburgh. Title: Transforming News: A Theological and Critical Analysis of Contemporary News Handling in the Light of the Apostle Paul’s Corinthian Hardship Narratives. Relief all round, and very thankful for my time at Robinson in 2006 when a large chunk of the writing up was done.

Victoria Jenkins (2004) and Russ Tannahill (2005) would like to announce the birth of Isabella Grace Tannahill, who was born on Friday 18th July 2008 at St Mary’s Hospital, Paddington.

Kenneth Thomson (1994) and Narelle Pascoe were married on 20th September 2008. Many ex-Binsonites attended including Nik Holgate who was an usher, Isabel Garrood (née Stow), Anna Jones (née Parker), Catherine Sherry (née Shields), Juliette Nebel (née Coffey), Paul Kent, Steve Carroll, Ian Western, Tim Sandford, Chris Fryer, Zena Palgrave, Ed Collinge (all 1994), Lucy Noel, Ellie Topham, Vicky Howard (all 1995), and Dan Bromilow (1992). Ken and Narelle now live in Caterham, Surrey.

Rachael Minton (1999) married James Gooding on 26 July 2008 at Blythburgh Church, Suffolk, with a reception at nearby St Peter’s Hall. Her bridesmaids were all ex-Robinson - Jacqui Ward, Olivia Thornton and Madelaine Savage; Katriona Gaskill, (all 1999) gave a reading. Other Robinson alumni attended the wedding.

Gregoire Hodder, an alumnus of Homerton, recently joined the Development Office as Alumni Relations and Telephone Campaign Co-ordinator after working with Rux Burton Associates.

Mark Pritchard (2001) married Suzanne Jones in Birmingham, their home city, on Saturday 4th October 2008. Matthias Ammon, Jill Drury, Matthew Ironside, Jonathan Stokes, David Szwer, Phillip Tipton and Gem Wheeler (all 2001) were in attendance, along with many other friends from the happy couple’s time at Cambridge.

Catherine Leather (1999) and Mark Lowrie (Clare, 1998) were married on 23rd August 2008 in Louth, Lincolnshire. The day was celebrated in a marquee back at the family home with several Robinsonians including Lisa Colbear (née Marley, 1999) who was bridesmaid, many fellow vets and their dogs!

Announcements

Robinson was excited to have Robert Webb (1992) return to College as part of the filming that he was doing with Wall to Wall Television, with which he is currently producing a landmark new series on poetry for BBC2.

David Yirrell, Porter, has been a blood donor for the last 34 years and on Tuesday 25th November 2008 gave his 75th donation of blood, achieving the Emerald Award and lapel badge.

Dr Anuj Dawar (Fellow 1999) and Elizabeth Klaar are delighted to announce the arrival of their daughter, Tarika, born on Tuesday, 20th January at 18.06 GMT, weighing 3.12 kg (6lb 14ozs).

Michael (1991) and Nadia Fleischer had a boy on July 16 2008 in Los Angeles, CA. Harrison Shay and his big brother Benson are both in the picture above.

Oliver Irons and Sarah Stocks (both 1998) were married on 27 September 2008 at All Saints Church in Barwick-in-Elmet, Yorkshire. They were joined by many Robinson alumni including best man Tom Saffell, ushers Dave Mortimer and Will James, and bridesmaids Sarah Crack and Rhian Deakin (all 1998).


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Andy Tucker (1998), now working in the Cambridge Geography Department, presented a paper on "Conceptualising the ideological power and ideological difficulties that emerge through political links between race and sexuality" at the Annual Conference of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers in London in August 2008. Andy’s book "Queer Visibilities: Space, Identity and Interaction in Cape Town", published through the Royal Geographical Society’s series at Wiley-Blackwell was on display at the conference. At the same conference, Jacob Levy (2003), now a Cambridge Geography postgraduate presented a paper on "White gay identity and the legacy of apartheid in Cape Town: race and the politics of disunity in post-apartheid SA"
ROBINSON WOMEN FC UNDEFEATED

It has been an exciting term for us as we have managed to win all of our games and secure a place in the Cuppers semi finals. Our team is made up of both enthusiastic and talented players, who play every match with spirit and this has been reflected in our results. We are also proud to have several Blues players in the team, including the captain. Hopefully, we will be able to continue this impressive form next term in both the league and Cuppers competition.

Results:

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Christ's 2</td>
<td>Win 3-0</td>
<td>League</td>
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<td>Corpus Christi</td>
<td>Win 17-1</td>
<td>Cuppers</td>
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<td>1 Nov</td>
<td>Fitzwilliam 2</td>
<td>Win 2-0(forfeit)</td>
<td>League</td>
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<td>15 Nov</td>
<td>Peterhouse</td>
<td>Win 9-0</td>
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<td>29 Nov</td>
<td>Jesus 2</td>
<td>Win 14-0</td>
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MEN'S FOOTBALL HAS A SOLID START

The league began promisingly as we beat Downing II 3-2 at home in a scrappy, hard-fought game. We followed this with a convincing 4-1 victory after conceding early on away to Emmanuel II. The following week was the first round of Cuppers, and we were drawn away to John's, near the top of the 1st division, three leagues above us. Unfortunately we made an early exit from the cup in a game which was a lot closer than the rather unflattering 3-0 score line would tell. Back to the league, we faced Trinity II away on a difficult pitch, which saw us concede in the dying seconds to lose 2-1. Our next game against Long Road II was played with a squad weakened by injuries. We started well and took the lead, but ended up losing 4-2 despite looking the better team for much of the second half. This leaves us in 5th spot of the 4th division at the Christmas break, with two wins and two losses. Having played most of our tougher competition, and with a game in hand over most of the other teams, hopes of promotion are still high as we look towards the second half of the season.

ROBINSON RUNNING RIOT

The Robinson team showed their increased strength in comparison to previous years with the men's team finishing top of Division II, fifth overall, and the women's team managing ninth, despite not having a full team. On top of this were impressive first appearances from Lowri Richards, who won the women's Fresher category, and Will Mackay who finished second out of the Fresher men.

The strong performance by the men's team continued throughout the season with consistently good performances from Will Mackay, Aidan Brown, Jim Arnold and Henry Carruthers. November's Varsity matches saw Aidan Brown produce another solid run for the IIs, while Jim Arnold and Phil Kynaston helped the Cambridge IVths to victory over Oxford. Most notable however, was Will Mackay's well deserved blue for his valiant performance in the Varsity match proper at Wimbledon Common, which completed his impressive debut season.