MICHAELMAS 2023





ROBINSON COLLEGE

An Origin Story: Saul Metzstein looks back on his father's legacy From Wills to Wheels: How Siôn Hudson found his passion My Robinson: Reflections from the Deputy Warden We Met at Robinson: Two alumni couples share their stories **Building for the Long Term:** John Sergeant looks to the future



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We are always delighted to hear from anyone who has a Robinson-related story to tell. If you would like to contribute an article to Bin Brook, please email: development-office@robinson.cam.ac.uk

Welcome



Bin Brook is a suitable one, coming a year after the Secretary of State listed the main building at Robinson for its special architectural or historic interest. The Grade II* listing

The theme of this

is a considerable honour, celebrating the career masterpiece of Isi Metzstein and Andy MacMillan. As Bin Brook readers know well, the very distinctive Robinson building starts with a tall corner gatehouse on Grange Road, once rather imposing but now softened by trees and shrubs. The gatehouse gives way to an animated brick streetscape at the heart of the College, which in turn shields a magnificent mature garden. The architects not only brought an uncompromising visual language to the new College; they also helped to shape Robinson's values and its personality. We can also thank them, I think, for the fact that we have such a thriving Architecture Tripos in College, expertly directed by Professor Ying Jin and before him by Mr John Sergeant. Many future leaders of the profession have studied at Robinson, perhaps drawn here by our very singular flourishing of Glasgow modernism.

But the listing is an onerous status too, adding cost and complexity to an already formidable repair and renovation programme. You will read elsewhere in this edition that we are having to put in place new defences against water penetration in every part of the main building, to install drains that work effectively, and to renovate student rooms as we go. It a gruelling, expensive and multi-year programme. But without it, the fabric of the College would rapidly deteriorate.



And our record of carefully adding to the built estate will, I hope, continue. Our most recent new building is the Chandrakala and Mansukhlal Shah Building, which houses Robinson's history. Before that, the Crausaz Wordsworth Building provided a well-appointed centre for our conferencing and events business. What are our most pressing space needs now? How might we optimise our students' experience, and the College's overall effectiveness? To what use would we put the next addition to the College's family of buildings, if there is to be one? And where would we place it? New buildings to one side, how do we improve the permeability and coherence of the overall College estate? How do we radically improve our sustainability?

These are questions we are exploring right now. Before long I hope we'll be able to share more developed thinking about Robinson's future with you, our alumni and friends. Meanwhile, enjoy this architectural *Bin Brook* and, as ever, please let us know what you think.

Richard

Sir Richard Heaton KCB Warden



FRONT COVER: Robinson College, 1980, by Peter Horrocks

NEWS in brief

ROBINSON COMMUNITY UNLOCKS OVER £200,000 OF HARDING CHALLENGE FUNDS

In 2019, thanks to a £100 million gift from David and Claudia Harding, the University of Cambridge launched the Harding Challenge. Designed to encourage new donors, the Challenge enabled all eligible gifts to Robinson to be matched, increasing the impact of each gift and supporting students with the greatest need.

We'd like to thank everyone who contributed over the five years of the Challenge, with 312 donations unlocking an amazing £214,603.50 of funding! Thanks to the scheme and your generosity, students in Robinson and across the University have received bursaries to enable them to participate fully in all the academic, social and extra-curricular experiences Cambridge has to offer.

	TOTAL UNLOCKED BY THE ROBINSON COMMUNITY	NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE GIFTS
YEAR 1	£49,951.72	74
YEAR 2	£90,212.25	125
YEAR 3	£29,927.03	83
YEAR 4	£44,512.50	30
GRAND TOTAL	£214,603.50	312

RCSA UPDATE

by Karolina (Kaz) Rawdanowicz, RCSA President

It's been another very busy run for the RCSA and our students at Robinson recently! I'm writing now at the halfway point in Michaelmas term where we're looking ahead to handing over our committee roles to new representatives whilst looking back at what we've done over the summer and in the first half of Michaelmas.

Over the summer, we ran our second Pegasus Scholars Widening Participation Programme with Dr Elizabeth Rawlinson-Mills. We welcomed eleven incoming Freshers at Robinson three weeks before their first move-in date to help them settle in during the one in-person week. This helped them to get to know each other and seven mentors from their subject areas, and enabled them to take part in supervisions expanding on their areas of interest within their field. Many valuable friendships were formed during this time, and I was honoured to be involved with this programme for the second year in a row as I really believe it makes a huge difference to students in settling in. Thank you so much to the supervisors and fellows that got involved and to our mentors: Alvira, Faith, Tom, Alex, Toby and Preesha! Alongside this, our Racial Equality Officers, Katiann Barros-Rocha and Maya Panasar, ran our Black and Minority Ethnic Residential with Arisa and Faith for Year 11 students looking to apply to Oxbridge. The mentorship on this residential, too, really allowed the students to see the realities of being a person of colour at Cambridge for themselves.



Robinson mentors (also pictured below) with this year's Pegasus Scholars



This gave them the confidence and tools to make a competitive application. Our July and September Open Days were also hugely successful and, as always, it was amazing to speak to prospective students and present Robinson as the welcoming and caring space it is.

Freshers Week, led by Louis De Neve, was a fantastically hectic time and led us straight into the equally hectic term! We've engaged students in quiz nights, live music performances and University Challenge trials;

RCSA UPDATE continued...

most recently we showed the Rugby World Cup Final followed by a live performance of original music led by Andras Droppa, supported by two Robinson Freshers! We've also been very lucky to host some amazing workshops led by external visitors: our Diversity and Anti-Racism Workshop for Freshers was led by Selena Scott, whose work is currently hanging in the Auditorium Foyer, and we welcomed back Joshua Obichere for our Black History Month Art Workshop and Exhibition. These incredibly engaging speakers are very valued in our College community, and we are excited to invite them to Robinson again. This year, we're particularly looking forward to increasing creativity at Robinson! The Brickhouse Theatre group will be showing 'Tusk Tusk' and 'Machinal' this term. Furthermore, the Robinson Art Festival will aim to engage not only Robinson students, but anyone wishing to get involved with the process and the exhibition. The theme is 'Movement' and we're looking for all works embracing this concept, in particular the idea of social movement and progress, which we believe embodies the spirit of the youngest college in Cambridge. We have high hopes for the incoming Robinson representatives to maintain the positive energy and engagement in college. It will definitely be an exciting year and many new projects are on their way!



Robinson students and Law Society co-presidents Molly Kemble (pictured far left) and Hanna Massood (pictured far right) pose with this year's panellists

LAW SOCIETY RECRUITMENT EVENING

On Monday 13 November, Robinson's Law Society held its annual Law Recruitment Evening at the Crausaz Wordsworth Building, which this year featured a panel discussion on "Global Developments in Technology and their Impact on the Legal Field".

Students from Robinson and across the University took part in the lively discussion, asking questions about some of the most pressing issues in the legal profession today, and then participated in some speed networking with the four firms present. Thanks go to the Society's co-presidents Hanna Massood and Molly Kemble (both Law, 2021) for their stellar organisation of the event, as well as the panellists Peter Lee from Simmons & Simmons, Andrew Williams and Mohammad AlZibdeh from Norton Rose Fullbright, Matthew White from Herbert Smith Freehills, and Olga Ladrowska from Slaughter and May for sharing their insights.

ROBINSON FELLOW WINS 'NOBEL PRIZE OF NEUROSURGERY'



Robinson College is delighted to announce that Professor Peter Hutchinson, Robinson Fellow and Director of Studies in Clinical Medicine, has been awarded the Vilhelm Magnus Medal from the Norwegian Neurosurgical Association, an award often described as the 'Nobel Prize of Neurosurgery.' Professor Hutchinson and his team – from the University of Cambridge's Department of Clinical Neurosciences – were awarded for their work on traumatic brain injury,

including studies addressing the concept of 'Rescuing the Injured Brain.' Professor Hutchinson was invited to Oslo in October to receive his medal and to deliver the prestigious Vilhelm Magnus Lecture.

MY ROBINSON

By Professor Anuj Dawar

Professor Anuj Dawar is Professor of Logic and Algorithms in the Department of Computer Science and Technology. He is Deputy Warden of Robinson College, where he has been a Fellow since 1999. He has served in a number of positions in the wider academic community, including five years as President of the European Association for Computer Science Logic.

I joined Robinson College in the late twentieth century (September 1999 to be precise). Over the years I have served in many roles in the College. I have been a Director of Studies in Computer Science and supervised scores of students. I have served several years as a tutor. I was acting Dean for a year and I am now the Deputy Warden, a post to which I was elected in 2021. During the year before I took up this latest post, I chaired the search committee that helped elect the new Warden. This was a great learning experience in which I feel I got to know the College better than I had before. In the twenty-four years I've been with the College there must have been a point when I stopped being the newcomer who always had to ask how things worked around here, but I can't quite put my finger on when that happened. I do know that I now often find myself being the voice of experience in the room – the person people turn to in order to ask how things used to be done.

I moved to Cambridge from Swansea in January 1999 to take up a post as a University Lecturer. I was new to Cambridge and had no prior College affiliation. Sometime during my first few months here, I was asked by Alan Mycroft if I would be interested in substituting for him as Director of Studies at Robinson while he went on sabbatical leave for a year. He also suggested I take on some supervision work for the College in order to get to know the students first. I remember, even in those first few supervisions, being captivated by the enthusiasm of the students for the subject. Alan invited me to lunch in College (this was definitely the right way to get me interested) and introduced me to Martin Brett, then the Senior Tutor. Martin brought up the prospect of becoming a Fellow of the College and I was happy to take up the offer. I knew of Robinson as a warm, welcoming College which came with some Cambridge traditions, but used them to create a sense of community rather than of exclusion. To someone like me, coming to Cambridge from the outside, Robinson seemed just right, and so it has proved to be.

My work is in the area of theoretical computer science. In terms of academic discipline and methodology it is work of a mathematical character. I like to describe this by saying that I prove theorems rather than write programs. One of my main interests is the study of



computational complexity. In this study, we aim to construct a mathematical explanation of why some algorithmic problems are inherently more difficult (in the sense of requiring much more computational resources) than others. We know of many computational problems for which there seems to be no efficient algorithm we can code other than exhaustively trying all possibilities. But we have no proof that a more efficient algorithm isn't possible and it seems we need to understand the mathematical structure of such problems much better.

Questions like these have been the subject of intense research for fifty years now. My own take is to try and study them using methods from mathematical logic: the formal study of reasoning. I was recently awarded a major grant for a five-year project investigating the use of mathematical methods that describe symmetry in the study of computational complexity. The grant was initially offered by the European Research Council but because of political delays in the UK joining the Horizon programme after Brexit, the project is now being funded by UKRI and I'm very pleased and excited to be able to take this work forward.

My research work mostly takes place in the Department of Computer Science and Technology, on the West Cambridge site, where I lead a group of doctoral and post-doctoral researchers. I also collaborate with other research groups in Europe and elsewhere. During my time in Cambridge, I have spent extended sabbatical periods in France, Germany and the United States. At the same time, Robinson College has also played a central role in my academic life and has, in many ways, been my home. It was literally home for a few years, as I lived in a flat in the main College building when I first joined. I have taught generations of computer science students who studied at the College. The intellectual stimulation that comes from being a part of the interdisciplinary community of scholars that make up Robinson is a vital part of my working life – and, from the start of my journey all those years ago, Robinson also remains an integral part of the rest of my life.

→ FOCUS ON ARCHITECTURE



GUEST INTRODUCTION PIERRE WASSENAAR

Pierre Wassenaar (Architecture, 1988) is Chair of Stride Treglown Architects, an award-winning "B Corporation" which tries to put people at the heart of the design process. He has lived and worked in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain and Japan, although he is now proud to call Wales his home. He is a committed advocate of the business benefits of good briefing and design, and has researched and written extensively in this area. He has been a board member of the RIBA and is a past president of the Royal Society of Architects in Wales.

This summer I dragged my unwilling teenage children round a series of European fortifications. They suffered the wonders of Wales' castles at Caernarfon, Beaumaris, Llansteffan and Laugharne. The culmination of our trip was the exquisite Castelvecchio in Verona, Italy, whispered back to life by the late Italian architect Carlo Scarpa, the unparalleled darling of staff and students in the University's architecture faculty at Scroope Terrace.

Within the crumbling walls of these fortresses, I marvelled at how so many souls once dwelt there, and at the sheer energy of the social and political rituals that swirled within. I'm not sure if Isi Metzstein and Andy MacMillan conceived of Robinson as a castle, but all the elements are there: the moat, the portcullis, the drawbridge, the gatehouse. And above all, the vitality of the inner life. A hard edge, a statement of intent. Inside, a haven and a riot of complexity and ambiguity. Robinson's peculiarly hard surfaces and relentlessly modern interior decoration provided, paradoxically, the ideal cocoon in which we young pups could grow and explore.

Just as the simple structure and rules of chess puts no boundaries on the richness of games, architecture doesn't need to overthink how people might use it. It's just a backdrop to unlimited imagination. It often needs only a few deft moves to create the setting for whole lives. Isi and Andy did it with a deceptively simple pair of walls: one to the city, the other a softer and terraced border to a secret garden. For me and my generation, the space between those two walls was the stage set for our gambolling young lives: Half-remembered dreams of chanting "Grants not Loans" in the forecourt, under the pitying gaze of John Piper's glass window; belting out mock skiffle tunes with our band Skunk in Malcolm Trotter's bar; sepia dawn photographs of May Ball survivors draped over the bridges in the elegiac gardens; putting on performances of Cabaret in the auditorium; tentative discos in the party room; quiet tutorials with John Sergeant who is still here as an Emeritus professor; first memories of Rebecca, my wife and the mother of those reluctant teenagers...

This issue of *Bin Brook*, with its celebration of architecture, explores how the College shoulders its twin roles as a repository for memory and a canvas for new imagination. In his piece, John Sergeant reminds us of this layering of passing years and how, in battling the weather, the building carries its "successful struggle with time" in its very entrails. Saul Metzstein talks of how his father's brilliant use of enclosure and section was prefigured in his earlier projects of the 50s. Again, time woven into physical fabric.

As you will see from the pieces that follow, all of us who were once here, or indeed remain here, feel woven in some way into that fabric.

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BUILDING FOR THE LONG TERM BY JOHN SERGEANT

John Sergeant, Emeritus Fellow: Architect, first College DoS for Architecture, Department UL 1980-2003, M1 rowing coach and former smallholder. Published New York and London. Projects in UK and Spain (Browns restaurant heated by diners and kitchens). Does responsive (non-autonomous) architecture.

There's a page toward the beginning of Pugin's *True Principles* (1841) which attracts little attention nowadays, especially among student architects. It is a drawing in Augustus Welby Northmore's own hand of mouldings on a Gothic building. What, you might ask, are they? They are those modulations of the stone which run horizontally round old buildings and importantly over openings. They are there to capture or shed rainwater, so that it does not stain the building or drip on you when you walk through a door. Why should this be of interest in the 21st century, and to members of Robinson College?

One answer known well to Fellows and staff is a multi-year plan to redress problems with the design of our 45-year-old building. To the tune of £1 million a year. It leaks, and the source of each point of "ingress" is difficult to find. Water enters through cracks in the tiled paving, or elsewhere, and runs along until it finds a fault in the waterproof membrane beneath; the drip you see may be nowhere near its source. The bugbear of the last century was aerial walkways and paved areas pretending to be solid ground: I think of my own teachers' Harvey Court for Caius College on West Road. Among many architects, issues like weathering command less attention than the intellectual basis of their design. There is a view in commercial circles that buildings are merely equipment to be amortised over 40 years: you tear them down and start again. This would certainly run against the mindset of Cambridge colleges which take the long view and invest in higher quality construction than the public sector. Many will have noted the principal cause of the RAACS, 'bubbled' concrete failures in Britain's schools: they were built with a cost-cutting mandate. There is a much more serious principle at stake here than one of cost versus quality. The media are indignant about the carbon footprint of aviation, 3% of the whole, and say little about the 'built environment,' 45%. Every building has an upfront carbon content, its materials and their processing from source, component manufacturing, transport, mining and quarrying, known as embodied energy. With careful design carbon released from heating, lighting and cooling is becoming an ever less proportion of the whole. As designers become cleverer, embodied carbon will become the problem. Such a problem that we may have to do without new buildings for 50 years or so, in order to avoid the climate tipping points we are warned about. We may have to reconcile ourselves to repair and re-use; building anew would be reserved for acute regional or national need. Can we imagine India, China and Africa agreeing to this?

Pugin's title continues... *Of Pointed or Christian Architecture.* Its relevance for today derives from Ruskin moving its message from a narrow Gothic Revivalism to an ethical plane. Beauty comes from solid materials and the expression of the means of construction. Ultimately, we are moved in the presence of durability, and design which embraces the long-term effect of weather; we enjoy patina and sense the successful struggle with time. So, I mourn for my profession for causing so many years of patient remedial work to Robinson College and I am glad that the present solution to the buried drainpipes will become more handsome.

→ FOCUS ON ARCHITECTURE



ROBINSON COLLEGE: AN ORIGIN STORY BY SAUL METZSTEIN

Saul Metzstein (Architecture, 1989) is an award-winning film and television director. His latest project, a TV-adaptation of Mick Herron's *Slow Horses: Real Tigers*, starring Gary Oldman and Kristin Scott Thomas, arrived on Apple TV+ this December.

I learned to draw on the back of yellowing A0-sized dyeline prints, that had the same crooked L-shaped graphic on the backside – an agglomeration of chamfered boxes of various sizes, forming a vaguely phallic totality. It was only years later that I understood that the backside of the paper (obviously the frontside!) was the plan of a building: Robinson College.

As a child, I knew my father, Isi, was an architect. I can't entirely remember the moment I discovered what an architect actually did. I do remember other architects coming to the house; the cigar smoke emanating from the living room, as the architects, fuelled by Macallan whisky, argued into the night about exotic-sounding things such as Le Corbusier, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the stepped-section.

I didn't actually know any of the buildings my father had designed, other than a small copper-clad British Airways (formerly BOAC) office building on Buchanan Street, one of Glasgow's main shopping thoroughfares (I'd sometimes pass by while

on a toy-buying mission to the local John Menzies store). I don't think it was a lack of curiosity that stopped me from enquiring about the strange runes on the back of my drawing paper. If anything, it was the comfort of familiarity – all my drawing paper had strange runes on the back, why wouldn't they?

Sometime in 1979 my family visited the newly-completed Robinson College (my strongest recollection is of the book-less library). That was the only time I remember my father actively presenting us with his work; almost all his designs were executed in the late 1950s/mid-1960s – before me, my brother, Mark (Natural Sciences - Physical, 1987) and my sister, Ruth, were born – and when my father was in his early 30s (an abnormally young age for an architect to be so prolific).

Growing up, I was always interested in design – in cars, aircraft carriers, Star Wars spaceships. That led me, naturally – even obviously – to architecture. So, at some point, I took it upon myself to discover the other buildings my father, and his



The Lawns, University of Hull

partner, Andy MacMillan, had designed. Two schemes in particular, St Peter's Seminary in Cardross and The Lawns Halls of Residence in Hull (both of which were designed in the late-1950s), are embryonic versions of Robinson College. Like Robinson, they are formed by building around the edge of the site, enclosing and creating exterior spaces with a deliberate urbanising intention (the idea of Perimeter Theory was coined at Cambridge University after these buildings were realised, and my father, with more than a degree of mockery, said that he enjoyed being told after the event that he'd followed a theoretical concept).

St Peter's also prefigured Robinson as a radical exercise in the use of a deep section – the small cells (the student rooms) bridging over the larger public spaces (the dining hall and auditorium) – and employing the aforementioned 'stepped section' (ah, that's what it means!), the massing of the accommodation intrinsic to Robinson's design.

BOAC Offices, Glasgow

Mark, Isi and Saul Metzstein

Like Robinson College, both St Peter's and The Lawns are 'listed' buildings, denoting their cultural, architectural and historical significance, with the intention of protecting the integrity of the buildings from their current owners. Unfortunately, St Peter's has long been neglected – it was surplus to requirements almost as soon as it was built – and The Lawns was recently abandoned by Hull University when it decided to concentrate its activities on one central site. Both are worth exploring (while you can), if, like me, you're interested in Robinson's architecture.

The famous epitaph of Christopher Wren (Oxford, 1650!), *Si monumentum requiris circumspice* ("If you seek his monument, look around") works, to varying degrees of grandeur/humility, for all architects. In Robinson I see a rich collegiate environment, as well as a modest monument.



ROBINSON: THE ARCHITECT'S COLLEGE

BY ISAAC SIMMONDS-DOUGLAS

Robinson's Architecture students are rare but precious people, often (as I was) the sole undergraduate admitted in their year; the frequently mysterious characters wandering the brick labyrinth in search of scrap cardboard. But behind our Womble-esque tendencies and frivolous ArcSoc Parties hide some of the most creative and interesting characters within our Robinson community. No other college can come close to claiming a similar level of ownership over the word 'Architectural'. As such, the sheer joy of spending three years specifically building a toolkit and vocabulary to express my adoration and attachment to our College was simply a delight.

Whilst no single reason can be solely attributed to the pure delight of studying Architecture at Robinson, I believe substantial dues must be paid

to Professor Ying Jin and the Warden, Sir Richard Heaton. Through their combined love and passion for creativity and artistry it is almost impossible not to be left inspired. Architecture within Robinson stands alone as a small but critical patron of the Arts and their necessity within higher education. As a country we stand at a crossroads when it comes to the legitimacy of the Arts as an academic pursuit, with their value consistently undermined by even the highest establishments. It is no secret that our institutions are being placed into the unfortunate and consistent position of shutting down Art/Architecture degree programmes and faculties at a concerning rate. Throughout the years even our own Cambridge Architecture department has faced the possibility of closure multiple times. In such uncertain and volatile times there has never been more of a need for the Arts within our



Images from the Architecture department's annual exhibition



Isaac Simmonds-Douglas (Architecture, 2020) is a RIBA award winning architectural designer. Since graduating valedictorian, they were elected to the role of tutor at the annual European Architectural assembly held in Sheffield this year. Working within the field of Architecture, and specifically regarding diversity within the Arts, Isaac has been invited to lecture at many of the UK's top institutions including Oxford, Cambridge, Central Saint Martins and The Architectural Academy.

society and communities, and I hope that the future of the University will come to reflect this.

As a student, I was truly blessed to have studied within such a nurturing and creative environment that both Sir Richard and Professor Jin have fought to foster within the Robinson community. From our artists in residence, to the crucial grants and funding from the likes of the Isi Metzstein fund and André Fu, studying Architecture is made viable in a manner it simply would not be otherwise. No other course requires such a heavy material and technological cost, and without the generosity of these funds such study would be impossible. Come Lent term, Robinson is looking to put on its first Art Festival, and I hope that the event allows all our current and past students an opportunity to

embrace the benefits of the Arts and their importance to the College. With these sentiments in mind, I am beyond grateful to be working with the RCSA President Karolina Rawdanowicz towards this event.

These days, I have swapped those dear red bricks of Robinson and Cambridge for the ubiquitous Headington stone of Oxford and Reuben College. Whilst my time at our closest university rival has only just begun, I often return to dear Robbo for the sheer pleasure of the Robinson architectural family that I am so very proud to be part of. Robinson is truly unlike any other college in the UK: one distinct building, a vision of what an educational structure and community could be. I implore the college to push their core belief and foundation in the Arts as we step increasingly closer to its 50th anniversary.

-> FOCUS ON ARCHITECTURE AN ALUMNI INTERVIEW: JO BACON

Although Jo Bacon (Architecture, 1980) and Simon Gathercole (Architecture, 1991) never crossed paths at Robinson, both are now successful architects and Partners at the same London-based practice, Allies and Morrison. Jo and Simon took a moment to reflect on their careers and how their studies at Robinson led them to where they are now.



Q: Were there any pivotal experiences or decisions that shaped your career journey from Robinson College to your current roles at Allies and Morrison?

Jo: In 1980 we were the first inhabitants of the new building. That first year there were four architects – the largest number from any college in the Architecture Faculty and that was a vote of confidence in us and in the subject. Our cohort was a small but extraordinary group of undergraduates committed to forging a reputation for the College. We were forming new teams, whether in sports or the arts and as a group we were not to be daunted by being from the 'new place'. There was a strong 'can do' attitude and I took this with me when I joined the fledgling practice of Allies and Morrison, not long after.

Simon: Soon after leaving Robinson I worked in New York and came to a point where I had to decide whether to continue in the US or return to London. That was shortly before 9/11 and I chose London. The next key decision for me was leaving Foster and Partners, which had been a great learning experience, to join the team at Allies and Morrison, who had a different way of looking at the city and the role of architecture.

Q: How did you both come to work at the same firm?

Jo: After my post graduate Diploma, studying under Bob Allies, I went to work for Troughton McAslan, but when, a year or so later, I saw Allies and Morrison's first job advertisement I updated my CV and cycled over to their offices, sometime close to midnight, so that my application could be first

through the door. We were four, including Bob Allies and Graham Morrison, in 1987 when I started. We are now over 300 people and we have always enjoyed employing talented people who want to work with us – Simon was one of those!

Simon: Bob was a critic at the Department of Architecture and he said some nice things about one of my projects – so that helped! Jo was also a very supportive mentor when I was studying for my professional qualifications. By the mid-2000s Allies and Morrison had developed a really strong reputation for urban design as well as architecture, which matched my interests. So, when I saw a job advertised, I thought I would give it a go.

Q: How do you believe your time at Robinson prepared you for the challenges and demands of working in the field of architecture?

Simon: It is easy to get very caught up in architecture as a student and a professional. The collegiate experience at Robinson encouraged a wider intellectual and creative outlook. It also provided settings for that – the College bar for the conversations and the party room for our band to play in! As architects we serve the wider society, we should be outward-looking.

Jo: Robinson had shown great faith in selecting me and I was struck by how the College tutors encouraged and nurtured us. This foundation of exemplary mentoring and knowledge sharing changed my life and I try to carry that forward into our architectural practice.

AND SIMON GATHERCOLE



Jo Bacon is an Architect and Managing Partner of Allies and Morrison. Jo's projects in Cambridge include the Faculty of English, Institute of Criminology and the Rosalind Franklin Building at Newnham College. She has recently completed 100 Bishopsgate, an office tower in the City of London. Jo is an RIBA Board member and a champion for women in architecture.

Simon Gathercole is an Architect, urban planner and Partner at Allies and Morrison. His projects include the London 2012 Olympic Legacy Plan, the Msheireb district in Doha and the ongoing regeneration of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Jeddah and AlUla. Simon is married to Louise Parry Gathercole (Archaeology and Anthropology, 1991).

Q: What advice do you have for current Robinson students aspiring to pursue a career in architecture? Is there anything you wish you had known when you were students?

Jo: Firstly, draw, draw, draw and keep up that skill so you can communicate ideas anywhere, at any time – all you need is a pencil. Cambridge taught us to enquire, draw, reflect, review and do that all again until the work is good. Secondly, always work for people whose work or approach inspires you.

Simon: Try different things. Different scales of project and scales of architectural practice. There are many different pathways within architecture and plenty of scope for overlaps with other disciplines. The architect can be at the centre of pulling it all together.

Q: Architecture is a multifaceted field. Could you describe the specific areas or projects within architecture that you find most compelling and fulfilling, and why?

Simon: I am drawn to projects with a civic dimension. Working at the scale of regeneration and urban design I can engage with communities and clients at the level of neighbourhoods, streets and public spaces, exploring the character of places, as well as the buildings within them. It is highly place-specific, so there is always lots to learn as well as expertise to bring to the process. It's encouraging that there is a growing global interest in these kinds of projects.

Jo: I suspect that my colleagues might report that I like getting things done and getting things built. Delivering complex, collaborative projects, in the UK and internationally, has been my focus over the last 35 plus years at Allies and Morrison. Working with well organised, diverse and motivated teams towards achieving excellence in design is a very rewarding experience.

Q: Do you have any thoughts on Robinson's very distinct (and in some ways, problematic) architecture, now that you have made your careers in the field?

Simon: Robinson is so distinctive amongst the Colleges and I loved that as student. It is heroic yet humane and makes space for wonderful gardens. It is a town in miniature, as all good colleges should be. But unlike a town it is also a 'megastructure', so problems with its parts – the building fabric, or its spaces, necessarily become challenges for the whole.

Jo: The College and my career in architecture are both 43 years in the making. Robinson is recognised as a work of modern heritage and is now a Listed Building, but that should not preclude future review and adaptation, if it is based on a respect for the original ideals. I desperately wanted greener, less windy places within the College walls when I was a student. Given the architects that Robinson has nurtured over the years, including Stirling Prize winners, perhaps there is scope to develop great ideas for the future.



Investigating brick damage in 19th-century buildings

Inside the Delft University of Technology's (TU Delft) architecture faculty

Visiting slums in Buenos Aires

→ FOCUS ON ARCHITECTURE

THE MANY DIRECTIONS OF AN ARCHITECTURAL DEGREE

BY ISABEL MATHERS



Isabel Mathers (Architecture, 2017) graduated from the BA (Hons) Architecture programme at Robinson College with first-class honours in 2020. After graduating she worked for two years as an Architectural Assistant at Haworth Tompkins, working on theatre design and cultural buildings, with a focus on Post-Occupancy Evaluation. In 2022, she moved to the Netherlands to start the MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences course at the Delft University of Technology.

When choosing to study architecture, I expected to finish my undergraduate degree with a clear career path: becoming 'An Architect'. Since beginning my studies, however, I have gained an understanding of the open-ended versatility of an architectural degree. Beyond the hundreds of specialisms within architecture itself, my degree at Cambridge also revealed the numerous applications of an architectural approach. Through the inspiring studio tutorials and history and theory lectures, I unexpectantly gained a passion for issues ranging from gated communities and enclaves in Cairo, to surveillance networks, to post-landfill landscape schemes.

After graduating from Cambridge in 2020, I chose to continue my architectural training at the Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) in the Netherlands, due to the freedom that the course provides. Rather than studying within a group of 30 (as at Cambridge), there are more than 400 architectural master's students in my year at TU Delft, and to accommodate these numbers there are never-ending elective and design studio choices. I have begun to truly explore the potential directions of an architectural career: in just one semester, my studies ranged from Masonry Damage in 18th-century Dutch buildings, to Argentinian slum redevelopment, to Entrepreneurship in the Built Environment, and a paper on Disneyfication in Tropical Hotel Architecture.

This freedom continues in the thesis year, where courses range from the design of flood-resilient housing projects in Bangladesh, to library design in Stockholm, and even the 'Explore Lab', a programme in which you construct your own research agenda so long as you can find a mentor. My studio uses the city of Madrid as a 'laboratory' to examine global interdisciplinary urban issues. I have taken this opportunity to build upon the interests that I developed in my final year at Cambridge: enclave urbanism (networks of socio-culturally distinct gated neighbourhoods within cities). Since transferring this fascination to Madrid, I have begun to investigate the phenomenon of the 'Melting Pot' in the capital's ethnic enclaves, with a particular focus on bottom-up occupant-led adaptations of buildings in these locations. By learning from the ways that immigrants have modified these buildings to make them their homes, I hope to revert traditional forms of knowledge exchange between architect and end-user, and question conventional concepts of a building being 'complete' once the architect has handed it over to the inhabitant.

These diverse research subjects display the breadth of an architectural education. As an 18-year-old Robinson fresher, I expected years of in-depth analysis of Greek temples, but instead I have been able to explore issues ranging from migration politics to the degradation of sandstone, all using the toolkit of an architect. I will be forever grateful for the passion and enthusiasm of the many excellent teaching staff at Cambridge faculty, who laid the foundations for my interests in all these topics. The lectures that I attended on Trumpington Street were so formative that I continue to rely upon my Cambridge notes for sources of inspiration, and can credit the professors for the lens through which I view the world of architecture today.

FOCUS ON ARCHITECTURE THE DOMESTIC BURSAR: MY JOURNEY WITH OUR RED-BRICK CASTLE

BY NICK MILNE



Nick Milne joined Robinson in October 2003 having had a successful career in the hotel industry, culminating in general management of a large conference country house hotel. He was initially appointed as Conference and Catering Manager at Robinson and in 2011 was promoted to College Steward, adding management of the Housekeeping Department to his role. In 2016, he assumed the domestic services brief and was elected to the Fellowship as Domestic Bursar in 2019.

When I joined Robinson as Conference and Catering Manager in 2003, one of the first things I did was close the bar at lunchtime! I was dismayed to find that we opened every morning and pretty much the only customers were a couple of housekeeping guys playing pool on their lunch break while sharing a Coke! Looking back, it's amazing that this is my first memory of an area in the centre of the College that is now pretty much the hub of Robinson's social activity. What is also true is that the changes that have seen the Red Brick Café Bar become an integral part of our social scene are some of the most fundamental in our almost 50-year history, especially when compared to some features that seem to have been frozen in time: the old telephone booths on the G staircase, the Hi-Fi Room, the Darkroom, to name but a few. Of course, there have been other changes, most notably the staircase refurbishment, which began in 2010. What a great step forward this has been: the specification has been developed and improved with each project, and now over 70% of our rooms are completed to a contemporary, comfortable standard, fit for students of the 21st century.

In those days, I wasn't directly responsible for the upkeep of the building, but as an operator within it I remember talking about how important it was for us to look after our "customers". At the Freshers' welcome, the Bursar used to mention to the students that they would benefit from making friends with their Bedder, because that relationship would be a valuable constant during their time in residence. There has always been a dichotomy between the College being a temporary home for the students, and a space with facilities used for other purposes. Getting access to rooms to clean them, managing and completing the almost 4000 maintenance requests each year and juggling the building's commercial and term-time uses: all of this takes goodwill, understanding and logistical management. I think on the whole we strike the right balance, providing a caring and committed place alongside having "the Rules" that are essential in any large community to ensure the common good.

Development plans have abounded over my tenure as Domestic Bursar with a perennial debate between what we would like to do and what we must do. With five staircases still to be refurbished — many with bathrooms in a pretty parlous state — plans are afoot, but have been held back by water ingress issues and, ironically, our Grade II* listed status. We are in the process of finalising our Conservation Management Plan (CMP), which is a celebration of that status, and especially the iconic spaces like the Chapel and the Library.

In the CMP we have sought to set out a strategy for the ongoing protection and improvement of the building, as well as setting out aspirations for how it can be developed to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's students. To date, we have always been mindful of our architectural and design heritage and as a result, structures, fixtures and fittings and design have always been faithfully maintained alongside the need to modernise. With the next refurbishment planned for the summer of 2024, we've had an interesting debate in preparing the planning application. Who knew how much scrutiny there would be of elements that we had previously, almost unconsciously, always replaced on a likefor-like basis, our mind's eye on maintaining historical integrity? The style of door handles, power sockets with USB ports at desk height, suspended ceilings to accommodate and conceal cable runs; not to mention our desire to move away from the orange kitchen cupboard doors of the 1970s. Time will tell whether our plans to replace baths with walk-in showers (in keeping with modern trends and water saving) will be accepted or thrown out as too far removed from our 20th-century roots!

And the water ingress truly is a real and present danger. While the issues often go unnoticed by the majority, we know that the concrete and steel structure is being affected and so the programme (disruptive as it is) is forging ahead, bit by bit. I think our proudest achievement so far is that parts of the lower ground floor catering areas, which have experienced dripping water for most of Robinson's history, are now apparently dry! Hallelujah! On the other hand, breaking open structures and surfaces makes for weak spots, and so our lovely Red Brick Café Bar has recently been experiencing its very own water feature. Step by patient step, I have no doubt that the building will be sounder, more stable and, most importantly, drier at the end of these repairs.

For all the trials and tribulations of operating in and working with others to maintain and develop this extraordinary building, I shall miss it. When the College was first built, there were various descriptions ascribed, one of which was "the car park". I thought that was unkind, and much prefer the notion of "the castle". I accept that Robinson's red brick edifice can be divisive. I once had a conference guest describe Robinson as a hard, chocolate covered-cracknel sweet with a lovely soft caramel centre. Personally, I love cracknel and caramel, just as I love the red-brick castle.



FROM WILLS TO WHEELS BY SIÔN HUDSON

Siôn Hudson (Law, 2003) lives in Cambridge with Brian Sloan (a Robinson Fellow, and also Law, 2003) and his red Aga. He makes videos about cars on YouTube as 'Morsels and Motors'.

When I tell people I love classic cars I'm often asked what cars I own, and when I reveal they're not Jaguars, Aston Martins or MGs, I usually see faces drop. Think classic cars, think exotic sports cars, yes? Well certainly for many people this is indeed the case: being able to enjoy a car they could only have dreamed of when they were younger is an exciting way of connecting to the past.

But I think of classic cars differently: more of a social and visual history, and as memory triggers. What car did your grandparents take you in for that picnic next to the lake? It was more likely to be in a 1979 Cortina than a Triumph Spitfire. Perhaps your dad drove a Volvo 240 estate. You might have gone to the leisure centre with your friends from school in a Metro, or an early 90's Fiesta could well have been your first car. These were not just cars, but gateways to experiences. The smell of the 80's plastics in the hot sun, the sound of the doors clanging, the feel of the interior door handle as you sit in the back and study it because there's literally nothing else to do in a traffic jam can take you right back to a memory: a specific time and place in your life in which this little tin box was a constant companion.

There's also the 'street furniture' aspect: 30 years ago, our towns and cities were full of Cavaliers, Sierras, Montegos, Peugeot 205s and Nissan Bluebirds. In the

same way as cooking equipment, clothes, music, books and politics define a time period, so do the cars that populate our streets. Growing up in 1990s Britain, these are the memories of my childhood, and those of a whole generation – there is currently a huge surge in retro nostalgia from that period, particularly in fashion.

Cars can also give a glimpse into social history of the 70s-90s. Look, for example, at the phenomenon of the trim level, of which Ford were masters – your car was literally badged on the back with a name that revealed your social status. In marketing terms, of course, it was a clever way of upselling: yes, you could buy an Escort 'Popular' for £8,000, but then (the thinking would go) everyone would know you couldn't afford luxuries like a sunroof or wheel covers or metallic paint which you would get in the 'L'. Salesmen knew exactly how to appeal to status-conscious Brits to get us into a 'Ghia' so we could comfortably compete with the Joneses.

I'm proud to own the most ordinary of cars: for example, I have a base model Ford Fiesta from 1989, which doesn't even have a passenger door mirror or a parcel shelf. But it was cheerful and faithful transport for one Epsom family for over 20 years: I bet they used the car to make lots of memories, and I now make my own with it. My 1983 Metro recently came runner-up at the Festival of the Unexceptional, a national car show run by Hagerty Insurance celebrating the ordinary of the motoring world, with the judges being bowled over by how I had painstakingly sourced all the correct blank panels to return the car back to standard specification after the original owner had added bits and pieces to it over the years. I even deleted the rear wiper and headrests.

I can hear you laugh and tut about how I've made the car less safe and usable, but obviously, I don't drive the Metro every day. Remember though, people certainly did in the 80s and 90s, and basic cars like these were perfectly normal. It's amazing how much more we have come to expect of our cars in the last 40 years!

It's certainly unusual for a Robinson Law graduate to move to restoring old cars and making videos about them, but sometimes you have to pause and think of your life and what brings you the most pleasure and satisfaction. My professional career involved sorting out complex deceased estates, and along the way I came to understand the fragility and transience of life. I was never that comfortable in the competitive world of law, and when the opportunity came, I was lucky enough to be able to take a different path. I would never be where I am in my life if it wasn't for Robinson, and for that I am truly grateful.





Peggy Umney, 1969, Courtesv of Tom Baker

LEAVING A LEGACY: FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PEGGY UMNEY

With thanks to Judith Brown and Peter Milloy for their research into and work on this article

Since 1990, the Umney Theatre has been a key component of Robinson's internal architecture, hosting everything from student seminars and staff meetings, to lectures by visiting academics and Robinson's own Fellowship. And as the name "Umney Theatre" has been absorbed into Robinson's collective consciousness, so too has the woman who gave her name to the Theatre – Peggy Umney – and her estate to Robinson become an indelible part of the College and its history.

Peggy Umney was Sir David Robinson's long-serving personal assistant, working alongside Robinson's founder and benefactor since the age of fifteen. Peggy, born in Bedford in 1927, devoted the whole of her working life to Sir David Robinson's business and philanthropic causes. In our Archive we have the address she gave at the Memorial Service for Sir David Robinson, held in the College Chapel on Saturday 7 March 1987. Her words show the profound impact he had on her life, during the 45 years she knew him.

When remembering the early days, Peggy talked of "the privilege of being beside him during the years when his business was being built, sharing with him the successes and the frustrations... He worked hard and long hours taking few holidays and then only a day or two at a time." When Peggy died in December 1988, at the age of 61, she left almost her total estate to the College, money from which was used to build the Umney Theatre. A portion of Peggy's estate remained in trust with a life interest to her sister, who passed away recently, and Peggy Umney's entire legacy gift to Robinson has now been received. The words shared by Robinson's Chaplain in 1989, at Peggy's Memorial Service, are equally true now as they were then: "We remember her love and concern for our College, and her constant help and service to the founder of the College; and we recognize that the College was built because of her judicious advice."

Leaving a legacy to Robinson, as Peggy Umney did, is one of the most powerful ways in which you can be part of the College's future. A bequest to Robinson will help secure for future generations the excellent facilities and opportunities that were enjoyed by those who studied here in earlier years. Legacy gifts can be designated to a specific fund or area of work at Robinson, or gifts received toward our unrestricted fund means money can be directed to areas of greatest need. All those who have promised a gift to Robinson in their Will become members of the Crausaz Wordsworth Society, which hosts events for its members, enabling us to meet and personally thank those who plan to support Robinson in this way.

If you would like to leave a Legacy to Robinson, or would like to know more, please contact the Director of Development at development-office@robinson.cam.ac.uk

NEWS: FELLOWS/SENIOR MEMBERS/BYE-FELLOWS

Professor Carlos Caldas, Robinson Fellow and Professor of Cancer

Medicine at the University, received the prestigious Léopold Griffuel Prize, awarded by the Fondation Arc for Cancer Research, recognising his work in genomics, circulating tumour DNA and molecular tissue imaging. Created in 1970, the Fondation Arc's Léopold Griffuel Prize is Europe's largest cancer research award, and Professor Caldas and his research team were cited by the Prize Jury Chair as "having the creativity and ability to explore new avenues by thinking outside the box, and the strong ambition to translate research outcomes into patient benefits."

Professor Murray Evans, Robinson Bye Fellow since 1986, is pleased to announce the publication of his book *Coleridge's Sublime Later Prose and Recent Theory: Kristeva, Adorno, Rancière* (Palgrave Macmillan 2023). The book focuses on Coleridge's deployment of the sublime, a major aesthetic category of the Romantic period, discovered in the vast, indefiniteness of nature and barely articulable aspects of art and literary texts. Dialogue between Coleridge and these modern theorists opens new avenues for understanding each author better, as well as for appreciating the abiding importance of the sublime for modernity.



The Institute of Physics has awarded the prestigious Rosalind Franklin Medal and Prize to **Professor Clemens Kaminski, Robinson Fellow in Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology.** Professor Kaminski received the medal and prize in recognition of his outstanding work in developing optical methods to

Photo by Phil Mynott

probe molecular mechanisms in biological systems. According to the Institute of Physics: "His methods have led to ground-breaking discoveries in the study of protein misfolding diseases, in virus research, and in the study of organelle–organelle interactions in living cells."

Professor Anthony Milton, Robinson Senior Member, has published a chapter in *Thermal Physiology: A Worldwide History*. Professor Milton notes that this is probably his last contribution to science – his first research paper was published in 1959.

Warwick Morris, Honorary Fellow, was awarded an OBE in the King's Birthday Honours List published on 17 June 2023 for "services to UK relations with Vietnam and the Republic of Korea." Warwick was a diplomat for nearly 40 years, prior to his retirement in 2008. He was Britain's Ambassador to Vietnam from 2000-2003, and to the Republic of Korea from 2003-2008. In 2013, Warwick co-founded the Vietnam-UK Network, run by volunteers, to encourage greater awareness in the UK of the strengthening relationship between Britain and Vietnam and their respective governments, and to promote the growing opportunities being created for business, education and other links.

Honorary Fellow Professor Lord Martin Rees (Lord Rees of Ludlow, OM Kt HONFREng FRS) was announced by the Royal Society as the recipient of the 2023 Copley Medal, believed to be the oldest scientific award in the world. The Copley Medal recognises sustained and outstanding achievements in any field of science and was first awarded in 1731, and previous recipients include Charles Darwin and Albert Einstein. As an author or co-author of over 500 research papers and 11 books, and former Astronomer Royal, Professor Lord Rees' contributions have furthered our understanding in areas including galaxy formation, cosmic jets and black holes, as well as more speculative aspects of cosmology: whether we live in a multiverse and the prospect of detecting extraterrestrial life.

Professor Maristella Vampa, Robinson Bye Fellow, will receive this year's Georg Forster Research Award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Professor Vampa is an Argentine sociologist, and since 2010 has been a university professor of sociology, holding the highest-ranking professorship in the Argentine system, at the prestigious Universidad Nacional de la Plata (Buenos Aires).



Robinson Fellow Professor Alison Young has been appointed a Law Commissioner. The Law Commission is a statutory body charged with keeping the law in England and Wales under review and recommending reform where that is needed. Alison will be the Commissioner responsible for public law and the law in Wales in particular. She succeeds Nicholas Paines KC. Alison will take up her five-year appointment in March

2024. During her service, Alison will be taking leave from her Faculty post, but will remain the Sir David Williams Professor of Public Law, and her Class A Fellowship at Robinson will be unaffected.

NEWS: ALUMANI

1981

Joe Saxton (Natural Sciences – Biological, 1981) was awarded an OBE for services to the Charitable Sector in the King's Birthday Honours. Joe is the founder of nfpSynergy, a market research agency in the not-for-profit-sector, and has worked with more than 200 charitable organisations, often as chair or trustee.

1986



Liam Graham (Natural Sciences – Physical, 1986) released his first book, *Molecular Storms: The Physics of Stars, Cells and the Origin of Life.* Of the book, Liam says: "In popular science, quantum physics and cosmology get all the coverage. Thermodynamics, the third pillar of modern physics, the poor cousin, conjures up little more than images of steam engines. My book aims to redress the balance."

1989

In October, **Peter Chilvers (Computer Science, 1989)** accompanied British musician Brian Eno on his first-ever solo tour, with shows in Venice, Berlin, Paris and Utrecht, and finishing at London's Royal Festival Hall on 30 October 2023.

1992

Sarah MacDonald (Music, 1992) has been announced as the new President Elect of the Royal College of Organists, taking office from July 2024. Sarah, who is a Fellow and Director of Music at Selwyn College, is also now the University Organist, the first woman to hold the historic university ceremonial role which dates back to 1670.



The Very Revd Dr Philip Plyming (MML, 1992) has published a new book, *Being Real: The Apostle Paul's Hardship Narratives and The Stories We Tell Today*. The book is, as Philip says, "an accessible version of my PhD research, which was only made possible by the German I studied while at Robinson, and by some study leave which I spent as a guest of the SCR."

1999



James "Jimbo" Turner (Land Economy, 1999) has achieved a lifelong ambition of posing for a photograph with a giant cheque. He was delighted to receive a £500 donation on behalf of the 1st Kirkby Lonsdale Scout group where he is a Beaver Scout leader. The money, supplied by local charity the 3R foundation, will be spent on new tents for the group. Jimbo says,

"I've wanted to pose with a giant cheque for as long as I can remember. I've always thought they were really cool". Jimbo, his wife Kate (not pictured) and his son Joseph, 8, have lived in Cumbria for the last six years. They have a working cocker spaniel named Gene.

2002

Daniel Bray (Engineering, 2002) was awarded a Certificate of Commendation by the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Dame Angela McLean, for Excellence in Science and Engineering. Daniel received this commendation for helping to develop novel technology that contributes towards UK Defence & Security maintaining its operational advantage. The work represents a life-saving defensive capability expected to be deployed by Front Line Commands, since it's aligned to emerging threats that could intensify and evolve in the future epoch. Its capability reduces both the risk of collateral damage and operating costs, and provides increased defensive flexibility to operators.

2003

Adam Carter (Geography, 2003), writes: "My partner, Nicolas, and I, would like to announce the birth of our two daughters, Elise and Margot,



to the College community. After many years of following different routes to have children as a same sex male couple, we found success in Colombia. On 15 August and 17 August our daughters were born in Bogotá with the help of surrogate mums who we are forever thankful to. Colombia has a legislature that allows same sex couples to have genetically-similar children and the people in the country have been incredibly welcoming and understanding. We are all too aware how difficult it is to have children as a gay man and we would be happy for other couples or any individuals wishing to start a family to contact us for advice and support."

2008



Abigail Dean (English, 2008) writes: "On leaving Robinson, I pursued a legal career, working at two firms in the City. When I left private practice and joined Google as an in-house lawyer, I started to write fiction. It had been a long, secret dream, and I didn't expect much to come of it - other than the satisfaction of finishing a novel! But in 2019, the rights to publish my debut novel went to auction.

GIRL A was picked up by HarperCollins in the UK and Penguin Random House in the US. It was published in 2021, and was a Sunday Times and New York Times bestseller; a TV adaptation is in the works. My second novel, *DAY ONE*, is coming out in March 2024, and examines the conspiracies and mistruths that arise following an attack in a small Lake District community." Abigail is currently working on her third novel.



Earlier this year, **Dr Yudan Ren (PhD in Pathology, 2008)** was awarded the first Royal Society-sponsored Daphne Jackson Fellowship at the University of Cambridge. Daphne Jackson Fellowships offer professionals the opportunity to return to research following a career break of two years or more when taken for family, caring or health reasons. Yudan

was a Senior Member at Robinson from 2011-2015. During her PhD, she was awarded the Medical Research Council Career Development Fellowship (MRC CDF) to work at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB). The MRC CDF at LMB ended during her maternity leave. Without the support of her former LMB group, she took a journey of 4 years, 10 months during the COVID-19 pandemic, and successfully returned to work on her new project about viral congenital diseases. She currently works with a team composed of Professor Amanda Sferruzzi-Perri, Professor Kathy Niakan and Professor Andrew Firth (Department of Physiology, Development and Neuroscience; Department of Pathology, Cambridge).

2010



Photo by Amy Sanders

Alice Udale-Smith and Henryk Brzyski

(both Natural Sciences, 2010) were married in June at St Thomas à Becket Church in Bath. Alice and Henryk met in their first year at Robinson, accidentally following in the footsteps of Alice's parents, Andrew Udale-Smith (Mathematics, 1982) and Mary Udale-Smith (Natural Sciences, 1982), who also met while Robinson undergraduates many years earlier!

2011



On 30 September 2023, **Kizzie Barnard** (née Burkett) (Geography, 2011) married Elliot Barnard at Barnack Church where she grew up, followed by a reception at Irnham Hall. Emily Fernandes (Geography, 2011), Rebecca Oldham (MML, 2011), Katie Robinson (MML, 2011) and Daisy McGlashan (Archaeology and Anthropology, 2011) were bridesmaids, with many other Robinson alumni in attendance.

Photo by Bailey Lonsdale

2012

After completing his PhD at Robinson, **Dr Jyh-Miin Lin (PhD in Radiology, 2012)** held several short-term research positions. He was elevated to an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) senior member position, and presented papers at the IEEE International Conference on Electrical, Control and Instrumentation Engineering in 2021, the IEEE International Conference on Smart Instrumentation, Measurement and Applications in 2022, and the IEEE Biomedical Engineering International Conference (BMEiCon) in 2022. This year, he presented his latest paper, "A recursive deconvolutional kernel for ECG", at the IEEE BMEiCon, held in Tokyo, Japan. Jyh-Miin is also supporting the annual influenza vaccination program and community health in northern Taiwan.

2019

Anna Trofimtchouk (MPhil in Conservation Leadership, 2019) and Aaron Fritzler (Master of Law, 2019) are delighted to announce the arrival of their daughter Agata Rimma Fritzler, born 7 January 2023. Read more about Anna and Aaron's story on page 25.

2021

Rana Hajirasouli (MSt Sustainability Leadership, 2021), founder of



The Surpluss, won this year's London Business School MENA Startup Competition, a few weeks after presenting at the One Young World Summit 2023 in Belfast. The Surpluss is the world's first B2B platform for industrial asset exchange, and, as Rana says,

"was created as an answer to the climate change challenges that businesses face. Winning this competition in the Year of Sustainability resonates our purpose louder. This distinguished award will greatly improve our recognition across the UAE and MENA region, helping us to attract new and exciting opportunities, and deepen the strength of our network."

NEWS: ALUMANI EVENTS



ANNUAL RECEPTION IN LONDON WEDNESDAY 5 JULY 2023

Thank you to all the alumni who came along to Robinson's Annual Reception, held this year at No. 11 Cavendish Square in London. It was a lively evening of drinks, snacks and good conversation - always an enjoyable opportunity for the Warden, Fellows and other members of the College to catch up with alumni living and working in London, made all the better by the warm summer evening.



RETURNING TO ROBINSON – SEPTEMBER REUNION SATURDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Hall was full on Saturday 23 September as we hosted Robinson's largest ever Reunion Dinner! It was a great pleasure to welcome our alumni and their guests back to the College, especially those celebrating their matriculation years. Over drinks in the CWB, and then dinner in Hall, alumni had a chance to catch up with friends and reconnect with Robinson, with the evening continuing on late into the night in the Red Brick Café Bar . Thank you to everyone who joined us for the Reunion, and we hope to see you again at our next alumni event! The March Reunion, held on Saturday 23 March 2024, will celebrate those who matriculated in 1978, 1979, 1988, 1989, 1998, 1999, 2008 and 2009, and is open to all alumni.

CAMBRIDGE MEDTECH FOUNDATION X ROBINSON MEDVET SOCIETY NETWORKING EVENT TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2023

Robinson hosted a networking event for students involved in Cambridge's MedTech Foundation and Robinson's MedVet Society this October in the CWB. After a series of speakers, including Robinson alumni Dr Victor Chua (Medicine, 1989) and Mike Hayball (Natural Sciences - Physical, 1985), guests had an opportunity to chat and network over drinks and canapés. Our sincere thanks to Victor and Mansfield Advisors for sponsoring the evening.



ENTREPRENEURS' EVENING IN LONDON WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2023

It was fantastic to welcome Robinson alumni and students to the inaugural event of the Robinson Entrepreneurs' Network, held at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London in November. The evening began with an interview between two of Robinson's leading alumni entrepreneurs, Demetrios Zoppos (Economics, 1990), co-founder of Onefinestay and now Executive Chairman of Klevio, and Chris Morton (Physical Natural Sciences, 2000), co-founder of Lyst, the leading fashion app in the US and Europe. Chris and Demetrios had a fascinating and wide-ranging discussion, followed by a lively Q&A session, drinks, canapés and networking. Thank you to everyone who attended!



Photos by SpotyPhoto





WE MET AT ROBINSON JENNIFER AND RICHARD'S STORY

Jennifer Burkinshaw (née Walsh) (English, 1984) and Richard Burkinshaw (Production Engineering, 1984)

"Would you undo it all?" I ask my husband, sitting in the alumni guest room on R staircase. By 'it' I mean everything that's happened – so far – since stumbling across each other during our very first term at Robinson almost forty years ago. Two sons, both of whom also studied at Cambridge, though for some inexplicable reason both eschewed Robinson and its ensuites! Our sons have turned out to be a handy blend of us both: Thomas Robinson Burkinshaw (we think he was the first all-Robinson baby, who spent his first nine months here, in utero), and Oliver, who studied Natural Sciences at Caius. Both are still keen and varied readers. Two grandsons, Dylan and Andy, the younger of whom, Andy, who is spending his first week at Robinson at just three months old, whilst his mum completes the residential part of her Master's in Sustainability.

Richard and I found each other at a staircase tea party he'd organised during Freshers' Week. Me lingering to help wash up seems to have been some kind of... recommendation. Hm! Though opposites in many ways, Richard being an engineer and I initially a classicist then English student, we must have found enough in common – we tried and failed to go a day without seeing each other, but it was all too easy to scoot along a walkway to each other's room to... talk Plato's Theory of Forms!

Naturally, we shared friends both from in and out of college, several of whom we are still in touch with.

Richard went on to work in manufacturing engineering in the food industry; I as a teacher of Classics, English and Drama. We were lucky enough to enjoy our boys' teenage years in Paris and the Alps, whilst Richard worked for Kellogg's French office and I taught English at the British School of Paris. Now based in West Yorkshire (so not much change there!), we are 'retired' to follow even more interesting pursuits, including for me, finally becoming an author: my debut Young Adult novel, *Igloo*, was published in November 2022. My second, *Happiness Seeker* should be published in Autumn 2023.

Whilst helping with Andy at College during this glorious March week, with bursts of Robinson blues and yellows across verdant lawns, and magnolia and corkscrew willow trees just coming into leaf, the Piper window jewelled in Easter colours, Richard and I are reminded yet again how fortunate we were to spend four years of our young lives in such a truly inspiring setting, with no responsibilities other than to enjoy ourselves. Oh, and study. Richard, by the way, says he's still quite glad we met. Me? I'd just say, be aware of all that can follow when you offer to wash up!



Jennifer and Richard collecting their MA degrees, in 1990



Richard and grandson Andy enjoying their visit to Robinson, in 2023

WE MET AT ROBINSON ANNA AND AARON'S STORY

Anna Trofimtchouk (MPhil in Conservation Leadership, 2019) and Aaron Fritzler (Master of Law, 2019)



Anna, Aaron and Agata take a picture on Robinson Street



Agata Rimma Fritzler, born 7 January 2023

Aaron and I met at the Robinson matriculation dinner in October 2019. That was a magical experience and I remember David Yates, Robinson's then Warden, giving an introductory Dumbledore-esque speech saying (and I am fortunate enough to be quoting due to my having recorded it) "...you might even find your lifetime partner here." We both looked around at our respective potential candidates, but neither believed that such a prediction would be about us.

Aaron and I had a quintessentially Robinson College romance. As Aaron says, his rapidly developing infatuation and my bewildering interest blossomed into love over meals at the Garden Restaurant. Our first kiss was at Sylvester Road. We first danced together at a Robinson Bop.

The first time Aaron and I went out, just the two of us, was to a discussion titled "Intersectionality and Climate Change". Aaron, a white man from an oil-producing region of Canada, found the lecture fascinating. It was Aaron's willingness to engage earnestly with new, and at times challenging, ideas that increased my interest in him. Only in Cambridge would I expect this to have been such a fruitful first outing.

Our romance took a surprising turn when the COVID-19 pandemic started closing the world down in 2020. Aaron was the first of the Robinson graduate students to get COVID, resulting in the lockdown of his building. Yet just as Robinson set the path for our romance to start, so it laid out the means by which it could continue. While other Colleges were closing their residences and sending their students home, Robinson promised that they would keep their doors open as long the students needed. Aaron and I were lucky to wind up on the same floor in our building and therefore be classified as a single household. We were able to navigate through some of the most uncertain times of COVID together in the safety of Robinson. It's hard to say what would have happened to our relationship had Aaron been forced to return to Canada and I to Belarus. I am grateful that Robinson ensured we never needed to.

After completing our programs at Cambridge, Aaron and I spent some time in Belarus, despite the mass protests that were then unfolding. Aaron was able to meet my parents. In a couple of months, I came to Canada to meet his. We had a small COVID wedding with only family attending in March 2021.

We live in Canada now. Aaron is practicing law. I work in environmental policy for the government. In January 2023, we welcomed our beautiful baby girl, Agata, into the world. By chance, we bought a house on Robinson Street. I hope living at Robinson Street brings us the same good luck as living in Robinson College did.

WELCOME /FAREWELL NEW MEMBERS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

Professor Katy Cubitt is Robinson's Visiting Baxandall Fellow. Katy studied Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic and History at Cambridge, before working as a research assistant for the English Place-Name Society and completing an MA in Germanic Philology at University College, London. She came back to Cambridge for a PhD on Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c. 650-c. 850 which was published as a book in 1995 by Leicester University Press. Her research focuses on the early medieval world, especially the church in pre-Conquest England and her latest book, *Sin and Society in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England* will be published by CUP in 2024/5.

Dr Philip Murray joins Robinson as a Fellow in Law. Philip's research is in English public law, with a particular focus on administrative law (judicial review). His doctoral research, for which he was awarded the University of Cambridge's Yorke Prize, was on the development of the judicial review process in the nineteenth century. His research has been cited widely, including by the High Court of Australia and in the UK government's independent review of administrative law. More broadly, Philip is interested in legal history, Roman law, and the civil law tradition.

Dr Olga Petri was elected to a Class B Fellowship in Geography in June 2023. Olga is a Leverhulme/Isaac Newton Trust Early Career Research Fellow at the Department of Geography and became Robinson's Director of Studies in Geography earlier this year. Her research has focused on late Imperial St. Petersburg, which offers an opportunity to explore largely untapped archival evidence carrying the street-level impress of an idiosyncratic, internally conflicted and ultimately overwritten urban modernity.

Dr Alberto Roselló-Díez received his BSc/MSc degrees in biochemistry and molecular biology from the University of Zaragoza, Spain. He then completed his PhD in 2011 in Molecular Biology (Autonomous University of Madrid) at the Spanish National Centre for Cardiovascular Research (Madrid, Spain), in the group of Dr Miguel Torres. During his postdoc at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (New York, USA) with Dr Alex Joyner (2012-2018), he pioneered mouse genetic models of unilateral perturbations of limb growth to study the repair of developmental defects, finding that cell-non autonomous responses play a key role in this repair. In June 2023 he joined the University of Cambridge as Associate Professor in Developmental Genetics, with a joint appointment between the Department of Physiology, Development and Neuroscience, and the Department of Genetics. A new line of work at Cambridge will use inter-species chimeras to study if/how the patterning, tempo and size of the limb are affected by the embryonic environment of a different species.

Dr Claire Wilkinson is a Fellow in English and her research focuses on the development of the early modern economy. She is particularly interested in literary responses to financial crises, and is currently finishing a monograph on writing and the 1720 South Sea Bubble. Her recent publications include a 2023 chapter on the Bubble Act ('Pamphlet Poetry and the South Sea Bubble', in *The Bubble Act: New Perspectives from Passage to Repeal and Beyond*, ed. by Helen Paul and D'Maris Coffman (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2023)). Forthcoming in 2024 are 'Jonathan Swift and Economics', in Jonathan Swift in Context, ed. by Pat Rogers and Joseph Hone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), and 'On Bubbles and Bubbling: The Idea of the South Sea Bubble', in Explorations in the Digital History of Ideas, ed. by Pete de Bolla (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024).

Dr Oliver Wilson-Nunn is Robinson's new Isaac Newton Foundation Junior Research Fellow. Oliver recently completed a PhD in Latin American Studies, for which his dissertation was on "Modernity, Popular Culture, and Incarceration in Argentine Cinema." His research interests include cultural representations of crime and criminal justice; documentary, popular, and silent film in Latin America; the relationship between law and the humanities; popular culture in the Southern Cone; cultural and critical theories of modernity, space, emotion, and affect.

OBITUARIES AND TRIBUTES

DR ANN KAMINSKI (1958 – 2023)



Dr Ann Kaminski (PhD in Agricultural Botany, 1980) passed away on 31 October 2023, after a short illness. Ann graduated from the University of Glasgow in 1980 with a degree in Agricultural Botany, after which she completed her PhD at Robinson, studying plant physiology and photosynthesis. Her first research post was in the (then) Department of Microbiology at the University of Birmingham.

She returned to Cambridge in 1987 to take up a research position in the Department of Biochemistry, working on mechanisms of viral protein synthesis. In 2006, she joined the Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute as Head of Scientific Administration, which includes responsibility for the graduate programme in the Institute.

She joined St Edmund's College at the University of Cambridge as a Teaching Fellow in 2000 and was a Tutor for 5 years. Catherine Arnold, the Master of St Edmund's College, remembered Ann "for her sharp mind, willingness to help others and her passion for supporting scientists around the world, particularly in Africa."

NICOLE WEINER (1973 – 2023)



Nicole (Architecture, 1993) died of cancer on 9 May 2023. Her friends penned the following tribute:

"Nicole, our beloved friend of 30 years, passed away at the Royal Marsden Hospital in May. She leaves behind family including her adored children, husband and parents. Her funeral was attended by many contemporaries from Cambridge.

Nicole held high expectations of her medicines. Combined with her determined spirit,

they kept her well for several years. In fact, Nicole had high expectations of most things. When she was sold a non-existent phone line via the Robinson room ballot, she went to the Bursar demanding an immediate connection. Or just a year ago, when the chain restaurant we'd chosen had run out of basic ingredients, she directed our young waiter to the nearest corner store. Her time studying architecture at Scroope Terrace, and next at UCL, produced other varied experiences; beautiful sketch-books and a dissertation on the Turner prize-winning House were especially notable works. After practising with some of London's top architects, she and husband David Appleton soon started making a name for themselves with their own Islington-based firm.

With the impatient organisational traits of many a big sister, Nicole was kind, generous and very funny, disarmingly honest about how she felt, and an empathetic listener. Long before anyone talked about wellbeing, she knew a good life depended on culture and community. Whether on King's Parade or Upper Street, she wouldn't take more than a few steps without greeting somebody: a friend from choir, a tennis partner, someone from her book group. At the very centre of this world was David, whom Nicole met at Cambridge and married in 2002. Together they worked hard to create a home filled with warmth and laughter, animals and guests, and of most obvious influence to the children, art and music.

Life is cruel when a wonderful mother and someone so loved is taken away at 49. We honour Nicole in our own small ways every day."

Keeping in touch

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If you think we may not have your current contact details and you would like to update these, please get in touch to keep in touch: www.robinson.cam.ac.uk/alumni/keep-in-touch

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Dates for the diary

13/01/2024 Graduands' Lunch

31/01/2024

Pegasus Society AGM (online)

03/03/2024

Commemoration of Benefactors' Service and Supper

23/03/2024

Reunion Dinner (Matriculation Years 1978, 1979, 1988, 1989, 1998, 1999, 2008 and 2009, and open to all other years), Robinson College



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