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This left hand that holds the pen that writes
Though you will read it later ^{this now} though ^{you now} see
Across space time has set on a wild
next to the Venus of ^{on} ^{Bono} ^{vestance}
Thirty thousand years old



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Dow@Cam is intended to give an informative, light-hearted view of College related events and people.

Front cover:

© Arijana Misic-Burns: 'Hands and their ghosts'. The text reproduces the manuscript draft of Richard Burns' poem, 'This left hand of mine' (page 11).

page 6/7:

Illustrations by Caroline Jayne Church for *Hungry Hen* by Richard Waring (OUP, 2001), illustrations copyright © Caroline Jayne Church 2001, used by permission of Oxford University Press.



The Master's Voice

It is becoming increasingly clear that those of us engaged in academic teaching and research must recognise the need for 'know-how' to enhance learning and research skills. Know-how, of course, comes in many forms and includes, for example, the ability to communicate clearly and effectively about one's subject to a variety of audiences. Here at Downing, we recognise this as being of the utmost importance, not only during the period of undergraduate study, but on into life beyond. For this reason, we have for the past two years had educationalist and poet Richard Burns working with some of our students on writing and study skills. We have recently elected Richard as a Bye Fellow in recognition of this work, profiled on page 10.

Someone who has clearly mastered the art of such communication is historian and author David Stafford, who talks in his interview (page 14) about the need for history scholars to move beyond their specialist fields and to communicate with a wider audience. The popularity of his books has proved his talent for doing just that.

Another type of know-how that we are actively fostering amongst our students is business expertise. The Downing Enterprise scheme was recently set up with the invaluable assistance of several alumni who have generously given not only financial resources but also their time and expertise to mentor and support students with business aspirations. We are very pleased to be able to feature in this issue the winners of the first competition, the Cambridge Temperature Concepts team.

Musician Tom Bancroft, profiled on page 12, was a good few years too early for the competition, but might well have entered, given the opportunity. Tom has combined the skills gained from studying medicine with his talent for music to set up a company promoting his innovative music education programme.

In this year which sees the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first graduation of women from Downing, I am delighted that we are featuring someone from among the first cohort, Fiona Kenshole, Vice-President of Development Story Acquisition for Laika Film Studios.

Here in College, we have said farewell to Dave White, Fellow in Engineering, who has taken up a research professorship in Perth. Meanwhile, we're very pleased to welcome new Fellows: Jonathan Trevor, Fellow in Management Studies who is at the Judge Institute; Amy Milton a Research Fellow in Experimental Psychology and Franco Basso, Fellow in Classics. We have also recently elected two Honorary Fellows: Sir Brian Vickers the renowned renaissance scholar who was Fellow in English in the 1960s and Aitzaz Ahsan, distinguished lawyer and human rights campaigner who has just been released following four months of detention under the state of emergency in Pakistan.

Finally, I'm delighted to report that thanks to the wonderful generosity of many alumni, work on the restoration and decoration of the Hall is now well underway. It will be partly finished but usable in May, and opened in its fully restored state in January next year, when I hope many of you will return to lunch or dine in this beautiful building.



Measure of success

When the results of the first Downing Enterprise Competition were announced in May 2006, one of the three winners was Cambridge Temperature Concepts – a company founded by a group of Cambridge graduates, including Downing's Scott Mackie and Shamus Husheer (Hughes Hall). They talked to Dow@Cam about the competition and their winning idea.

Like so many good ideas, this one has an elegant simplicity: an unobtrusive device that automatically and reliably measures body temperature at regular intervals. It may not sound like a great leap forward, but the potential is enormous. First off, it can be used as an indicator of fertility. As anyone who has ever tried to use a kit from the chemists' will know, the products currently available are not noted for either usability or accuracy. By contrast, with Cambridge Temperature Concepts' DuoFertility system, all is ease and comfort: a coin-sized stick-on patch worn discreetly under the arm measures and records body temperature every 10 minutes. The

continuous measuring of skin temperature, especially through the night, affords a much more accurate and rapid determination of changes in body basal temperature, a good indicator of ovulation. To find out whether or not this is the moment, a compact hand-held gadget takes just 30 seconds to read out and analyse the temperature data.

Scott explains that the product will be launched in two stages: "The first will be constructed from off-the-shelf parts and will be quite big and bulky, but it will do the job. The next stage is to make it into a tiny chip that will cost us less to manufacture and can be sold at a lower price." 'Big and bulky',

however, turns out to be a relative term. Shamus pulls from his pocket a thinnish metal disc, smaller than a ten pence piece – and that's more or less it.

By the time these words are in print, Cambridge Temperature Concepts will be on the verge of fulfilling its first orders – barely three years since the winning concept was just a twinkle in the eye of its originator, Dr Shamus Husheer.

Fertile imagination

Coming from New Zealand with a first degree in Industrial Chemistry and a Master's in global warming research,



The CTC Team, from left to right: Oriane Chausiaux, Scott Mackie, Lydia Ferguson and Shamus Husheer

Shamus arrived in Cambridge to embark on a PhD that involved building specialised measuring instruments to go into nuclear reactors. Whilst waiting around for an experiment to complete in a particle accelerator somewhere in France, he chanced on a journal article about a new kind of battery that was small enough to be implanted. For some time, Shamus had been pondering the possibilities of developing better contraceptive devices based on accurate measurement of hormones, and the possibility of an implantable battery made an instant connection. A quick bit of research revealed that measuring temperature would be far more viable than trying to interact with the hormone system – and so the temperature measuring device was conceived.

Back in Cambridge, Shamus started chatting about his idea to friends and acquaintances, mainly, it appears, with sports teams in college bars. “It’s how the whole Cambridge serendipitous thing works,” says Shamus. “In a college, you get people from different disciplines blending together; you ask a question and you’re only ever two steps away from someone who knows. Of course, I wouldn’t want to give the impression that it’s all about alcohol, but it’s so much easier to have a quick chat about something over a beer.” Through this process, Shamus acquired a number of allies, including a medic, a paramedic studying biochemistry, a patent attorney and two women from his rowing team who just happened to be specialising in infertility.

It was around this time that fellow New Zealander Scott entered the stage. Following a degree in mechanical engineering, and two years working on the design of medical devices, Scott was engaged in an MPhil in Technology Policy, based at



The DuoFertility reader is about the size of an iPod, and displays fertility status on demand



The CTC Team on winning the CUE Competition with the judging panel behind

Cambridge’s Judge Institute. He describes meeting Shamus at a New Zealand Society event: “Shamus asked what I was doing over here, and when I told him, he said, ‘Ah, you’re a medical device engineer – brilliant! Well, I have an idea ...’

Within this *ad hoc* team, the idea was pulled around and refined and then entered for a small competition held by Cambridge University Entrepreneurs. Scott describes how Shamus shamelessly began his pitch with the words: “Sex! It’s a good industry!” But what followed seemed to do the trick. Their win was a modest hundred pounds, but Shamus looks back on it as a significant moment: “Before that, it was basically a bunch of mates talking hot air, but the prize convinced everyone that this was something worth putting a bit of time and money into.”

Buoyed up by success, Shamus and friends decided to enter for the first Downing Enterprise competition. “Actually, it was all a bit of a mad rush,” says Scott, “because the deadline for the competition was the same as the one for the Cambridge University business plan competition. And Shamus being the mad inventor that he is had a couple of other ideas that he was entering as well.” (“Like ... six!” says Shamus.)

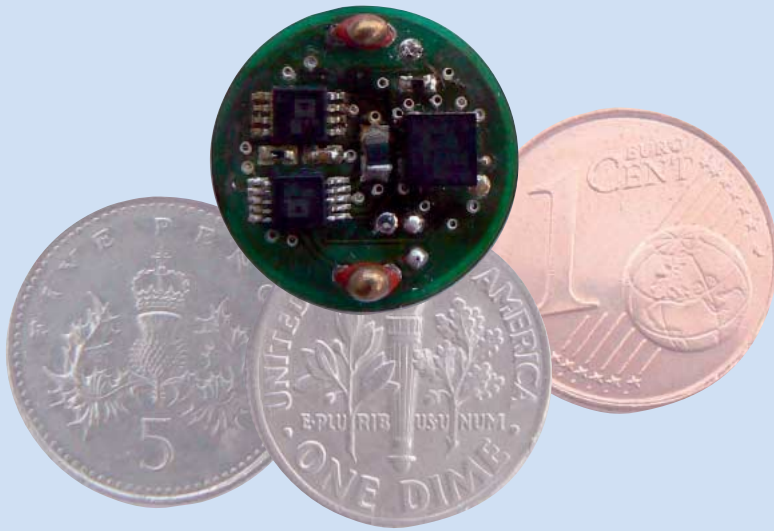
Pitching the patch

In the end, they missed the University competition deadline, but secured their place on the shortlist for Downing Enterprise. At this stage, the idea was

still based on an implantable device, but, as Scott observes, “‘Implantable anything’ does not make a great opening line”. However, development changed tack after a meeting with Andrew Prentice, Head of Fertility at Addenbrookes Hospital, who persuaded them that a stick-on device was going to be much more acceptable. This of course created a new challenge: how to get accurate data from a skin measurement. “It’s a bit of a difficult problem,” says Shamus, “but it’s solvable if you have a bright group of people thinking about it.”

So the team entered the finals of the Downing Enterprise competition with a business plan to develop and market a fertility monitoring device in the form of a patch. The final interview was gruelling, but, as Shamus explains, they had a winning card up their sleeve. “Just before the interview, we had been back to Andrew Prentice to show him our patch idea, and he pointed out that every patient in surgery has their temperature measured before, during and after the operation to look for things like signs of infection. It’s the most important vital sign, but at the moment it’s the worst measured. So if we could solve that with a patch like this, we’d have a huge market.”

With this deal-clinching disclosure, Cambridge Temperature Concepts came away with the maximum possible level of support. But there was still a long way to go. The team quickly discovered that when it comes to



The DuoFertility sensor contains a tiny electronic circuit the size of a 5p coin

wooing investors, seeing is believing. “The barrier to investment was that we were just a bunch of graduate students who hadn’t actually done anything other than put words on paper,” explains Shamus. “So a month later, we had the first prototype.”

Shoe box show

“It was two weekends’ work, the production line was in my bedroom and it was *literally* in a shoe box. I finished writing the control at about 3 o’clock on Saturday morning, then strapped it to myself and went to bed. The next morning, the skin temperature data was phenomenally good, with much less ‘noise’ than we’d

been expecting. When the rest of the team came round and saw it, they said, ‘That’s *it*?’ And the girls on the team said, ‘You want us to wear *what*?’”

The homespun bundle of circuitry was dubbed the ‘Ovutron 1000’. (“The most ridiculous name we could think of!”) But it gave them the hard evidence they needed, and things really started hotting up.

By June 2007, victory in the final of the Cambridge University business plan competition secured not only a further grant, but an office suite on the Cambridge Science Park. In this commanding position, Cambridge

Temperature Concepts were finally ready to do business with the queue of potential investors now at their door, and a consortium of Cambridge-based groups has provided the funding that will enable the company to complete the development and marketing of the first product. As Scott says, “If you wanted to run a research project to improve ovulation detection, it would take you a long time to get to the stage where you had a quarter of a million funding. But we’ve effectively raised that in investment.”

The DuoFertility ovulation detector is currently in testing, and the team are confident that it will go on sale later this year. Meanwhile, Scott has moved to Boston, where his girlfriend is doing her PhD and where he will be ideally placed to build interest in the US market. Shamus continues to generate ideas; he had no fewer than five other entries in last year’s University Business plan competition. He says that he has been told to stop entering business plan contests so as to concentrate fully on CTC. But you can’t help wondering if that’s just to give everyone else a chance.

For more on Cambridge Temperature Concepts and the DuoFertility technology, see: www.temperatureconcepts.com www.duofertility.com

Downing Enterprise

Downing Enterprise was launched in 2005 with the aim of fostering a culture of enterprise at the College. It is open to students and recent alumni, who may enter as individuals or as a team. The competition is structured so that entrants go through a three-phase process which mirrors that of setting up a real business. At each stage, the successful entries receive not only an element of funding but also advice and support from people with substantial expertise in the world of enterprise and commerce.

Several Downing alumni have pledged their support for the scheme, and they, together with the Bursar and Fellows, form the board of judges.

The first competition began in October 2005, and in May 2006 the first three final winners emerged. Alongside Cambridge Temperature Concepts were:

Clinical Imaging: Daniel Jackson and Haidong Deng (both 2nd year mathematicians) received up to £5,600 to develop and market specialised imaging software with applications in histology.

Project Lungfish: Dan Reynolds, a postgraduate studying stem cells, was awarded up to £7,500 to develop an idea to improve the safety of underwater breathing apparatus.

Reviewing the competition’s first year, the Chairman of the Board, Luke Nunneley (1981, Law) said, “I have been very impressed by the quality of the entries and by all the hard work that was put into the preparation of proposals and business plans. It is clear that Downing has many enterprising and dynamic students at all levels and I look forward to meeting many more of them in future competitions.”

For further information on the scheme, see www.downingcambridge.com

 **downing enterprise**

Let me tell you a story

The phone rang at midnight. At the other end, an American voice – “Fiona Kenshole? I’m Howard S. Slusher, and I’m offering you a job in the movies.” Sounds like fiction. But this is the true story of Downing graduate, Fiona Kenshole, who recently landed what she describes as “the best job in the world”; finding books to develop into family feature films, for an American animation studio. But, as she told Dow@Cam, she got there by a slightly unusual route.

Fiona came up to Downing after seventh-term entrance. She was, by her own admission “not terribly well-behaved” in the sixth form, and consequently failed to make it into any university of any kind. But after a few months of working in a children’s bookshop and studying past Oxbridge entrance papers, she secured her place among the first cohort of women admitted to the College. She thinks the fact she had been one of the first girls at a boys’ boarding school probably stood her in good stead in the rather “hearty” man’s world in which she found herself.

Three years and an English degree later, Fiona’s first job was working as a journalist for *Publishing News*. This being the heady days of the 1980s, you might imagine that this was a world of glamorous publishing parties, where one rubbed shoulders with powerful publishers and famous authors every night of the week. And indeed it was just that. Of course, there was also the business of churning out articles and meeting deadlines by day. But, says Fiona, it was also “fantastically exciting”, and it made her realise that what she really wanted to do was work in children’s books. So she was delighted to get her first publishing job at A & C Black. “I used to sit at my desk every morning and sing because I was so happy,” she says.

Fiona cut her editorial teeth on photographic non-fiction. One title won

a Times Educational Book award, and on the strength of that success, Fiona was given the task of building up the company’s fiction list – from scratch. Recalling her days in the children’s bookshop, she was clear about what she wanted to do. She explains: “I’d see children of seven or eight come into the bookshop, and they’d pick up a book and they’d go [she mimes quickly opening, scanning and shutting a book] then put it down again. They were looking to see if it had enough pictures and if the type was big enough. It wasn’t that they couldn’t read the type, it was about feeling comfortable and confident – but the stories with the right type size tended to be called something like ‘*Thomas the Tractor*,’ and felt too young.” So Fiona set about creating a series of books with funny ‘cool’ stories, that children wouldn’t be embarrassed to be seen reading using highly visual text. And in a small, family-run firm in a pre-computing era (a world of manual typewriters, correction fluid and pots of glue) she found herself doing more or less every bit of the work – “from pasting-up the pages to chopping up the cheese at the launch party”.

The Jets series was enormously successful, and not only in sales terms, as Fiona explains: “After that, many educational publishers started doing books like the Jets, and they were analysed by academics, who came up with theories about them – apparently they’re ‘polysemic texts’. But I wasn’t

doing them for educational reasons; I was doing them because the stories were great.

Having established her creative credentials, Fiona was headhunted first by Collins, then by Hodder, where she built a team which planted Hodder Children’s Books firmly onto the list of top children’s publishers, taking them up to third place in five years from a starting position of fourteenth, achieved by a combination of commissioning new series, such as *Animal Ark*, and finding ways to revive existing ones – such as the Asterix books. “The books were much-loved, but sales had dropped over the years,” says Fiona. “So we took French lessons, then went over to France to meet M. Uderzo, the illustrator of Asterix, to persuade him to allow us to relaunch the books. The Eurostar had just opened, so we hired it, transformed it into the Asterix Express, and filled it with young fans. The passport checkers were dressed as Roman soldiers, wild boar sausages were sold, and the trip ended near Paris at the Asterix theme park”

Fiona then went on to lend her magic touch to Oxford Children’s Books where, as Publishing Director, she put a highly-respected children’s list back onto a secure commercial footing and pulled in some coveted Carnegie medals. “It was all about taking things that worked and making them profitable – and enjoying yourself at



Biography in brief



Fiona Kenshole read English at Downing (1980–83). After graduating, she joined *Publishing News*. She held a series of editorial posts with various children's publishers before becoming Director of Children's Publishing at Oxford University Press in 1997. In 2004, she became Director of International Scouting for Laika film studios, and is now Vice-President of Development Story Acquisition.

the same time. I've always found that if you make money for them, people leave you alone to do what you want," she says.

When, after seven years, Oxford decided to rein in its children's publishing division, Fiona took it philosophically. "Well, I'd had enough of corporate life," she says. "And I felt ready for a break."

It was the long hot summer of 2003. Fiona sat in her garden in the Oxfordshire countryside, reading, playing with friends' children and learning to play the saxophone. She was also thinking and planning. Setting up her own children's publishing company had been a long-cherished dream. Yet, to her own surprise, she found herself wondering if this was what she really wanted...

It was midnight when the phone rang. An American voice at the other end – "Fiona Kenshole? I'm Howard S. Slusher. I work for Nike and I'm offering you a job in the movies." Convinced this was a crank call, Fiona politely said 'thanks, but no thanks'. But a couple of weeks later, curiosity got the better of her and she rang Nike HQ. "And it turned out," she says, "that Nike's CEO had bought a film studio. And in their very Nike way, they had sat down and said, 'What's wrong with family entertainment? No good stories. Who has good stories? British children's books. OK. We'll have some of those.' So they'd gone round talking to agents and publishers, and my name had come up."

Six weeks later, Fiona had flown to the west coast of America, and was sitting in the offices of Nike, with Phil Knight, the founder of Nike; award-winning film director Henry Selick; and Mr Slusher, who signs up major sports stars for Nike. Unsure of what she could tell them, she did what she knew best. Armed with a selection of her recent books, she took one out, and started to read them *Hungry Hen*...

Working for the Laika film studio, Fiona's job has been to find children's books that will make really good animated movies, and the studio's first full-length feature – an animated ghost story based on Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* – is due to be released next year. Fiona

finds stories all over the world, from *Here Be Monsters*, a Monty Pythonesque fantasy by Alan Snow; *Toad Rage* – a road trip with toads, by a best-selling Australian writer; and *The Wall and the Wing*, set in a parallel New York, where everyone can fly. She spends much of her time sitting in the Cotswolds reading children's books, punctuated by bouts of frenetic activity travelling to LA and New York to meet agents and take pitches from screenwriters and talking to animation directors. "You spend time with the directors, trying to learn their tastes, so you can find something which will really excite them," she says.

This has led to more involvement in the evolution of the story from book to screenplay, and Fiona is now getting back to what she is most happy doing – working with writers and artists. She has recently moved to Portland, Oregon, to head up story acquisition for Laika's feature development.

For Fiona, it seems like a natural transition. "People ask how I know whether a book is publishable or not. But when I read something that works, I just have this picture in my head of what it will look like. It's been a steep learning curve, because I'm really a book person, rather than a film person. But there is a lot of overlap. In lots of ways it's like the stuff I was doing with the Jets series. In the end, it all comes back to storytelling."



Development Office

Planning for the future

Following the tremendous success of the Hall fundraising campaign and the Bicentenary Campaign which preceded it, the College has now started thinking about ways of strengthening the College's financial foundations for the long term. The size of a College's endowment determines how secure it feels about its future. The Bicentenary Campaign achieved some success in adding to Downing's endowment which is now worth £33m, of which £19m is invested in securities and the rest in property. However, we now need a much stronger focus on this aspect of the College's fundraising.

Downing's main sources of income are from academic fees, student residences and catering, donations

and conferences. Expenditure substantially exceeds income from these sources and part of this deficit is covered by the return on endowment which provided 23% of the College's £7.47m annual income in 2006-07. So it is a very significant part of the College's funding. However, providing the entire shortfall we would need an endowment of about £47m, giving an annual income of around £2.4m, and probably more, to provide a cushion against major unforeseen costs.

For this reason we are now planning a major fundraising campaign over the next 6 years to raise £20m in endowment. We are consulting a range of alumni about these plans and seeking their views and ideas. We are

thinking about the ways in which this investment could be most effectively used. We plan formally to launch the campaign in October 2009, during the University's 800th anniversary year and we aim to reach our target by September 2013.

We know that, like the Hall fundraising campaign, we will need many donations at all levels to make this a reality. 700 donors gave over £1.1m for the Hall and the vast majority of those gave £1000 or less demonstrating the value of large numbers of people participating together in a major collective effort. We hope that this success can be repeated on a much larger scale over the next few years.

Restoration of the Hall

Work on the Hall is well under way. The chandeliers were taken down and auctioned at Sotheby's in London on 6 March 2008. Described as "impressive Regency style bronze chandeliers", the three items each sold for £8,000 bought by a single individual.

The floor has been stripped out and the ceiling removed. An unexpected marble cornice was discovered over the east door and also an old bell on the roof dating from 1826, which would have been rung for dinner. The plan is to restore it so that it can be rung again in the future.

Further details of the entablature have been uncovered which has proved to be much richer and more interesting than originally anticipated.



Howard Theatre

Construction of the Howard Theatre, generously funded by a £7.2m donation from the Howard Foundation, has started. Ground source heating rods have been installed under the West Lodge garden and a huge hole has been dug for the foundations.

The Conference Office has already begun work on a marketing plan for the 176-seat tiered theatre, which is due for completion by January 2010, and the College has started planning the inaugural events, about which more later.



Announcement of deaths

The College was greatly saddened to learn of the recent sudden deaths of two old members who were both greatly involved in the College.

Gerald Leslie Laufer (1965; 1947–2007) read Natural Sciences at Downing and then joined the Civil Service, spending much of his career in the Department of the Environment until his retirement in 1997. He was very active in local community regeneration organisations around the Lea Valley and is greatly missed by all who worked with him. He was a regular attender at College events and came to the City Group reception on 5 December 2007 shortly before he died, aged 60.

Nicholas John Richens (1979; 1940–2008) died suddenly at his home on 21 February 2008, aged 47. He was the 1979 Year Representative and a committed supporter of the College. He read Law and became a solicitor specialising in educational and ecclesiastical law. He most recently organised a reunion of his year group at the College on 30 June 2007 and was a regular contributor to Magenta News. His final entry appears in this edition.

Both Gerald and Nick were members of the 1749 Society and we are very grateful to both for the legacies that they have left to the College.

The Downing Association Newsletter will as usual carry obituaries of Old Members.

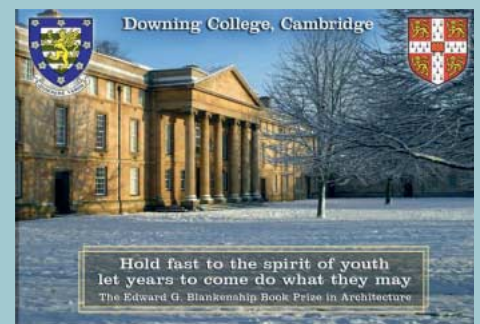
Edward G. Blankenship Scholarship and Book Prize in Architecture

Gary Blankenship (1968) has endowed a scholarship and book prize in Architecture at Downing College in recognition of the subject he studied at the College and the career that he now follows. Already a generous supporter of the College, Mr Blankenship's scholarship and prize will be given to Downing architecture students performing with distinction in the subject and will comprise a book token, a cash scholarship and the gift of a beautifully illustrated book on Santiago Calatrava, the renowned Spanish architect, sculptor and engineer who is currently designing the new train station at the site of the World Trade Center in New York.

Each book will carry a specially designed bookplate featuring a photo of the College and words that were originally inscribed in a carved overmantle in the main lounge at Gary's former dorm, John Jay Hall, at Columbia.

Stephen Fleet Memorial Plaque

In February the College unveiled a memorial plaque in the Chapel to Dr Stephen Fleet (1936–2006) who was College Bursar (1974–83), University Registry (1983–1997), and Master (2001–2003). Family members gathered for a service and the plaque was unveiled by his widow, Alice Fleet, and the Master in front of Fellows and guests.



A trivial pursuit?

In 2007, Downing became the first Cambridge College to appoint a Bye-Fellow in Study Skills. Poet and educationalist Richard Burns talked to Debbie Pullinger about his art, and why his work at Downing is both excitingly innovative and firmly rooted in tradition.

Writing skills and study skills? Hearing that these subjects are being taught at a Cambridge College might raise a few eyebrows. Richard Burns explains: “Sometimes brilliant students don’t do themselves justice in their chosen fields, mainly because nobody has ever taught them *how* to write, *how* to study. Left to their own devices, such students can lose out, especially at a time when access to university is widening. Those who do come along can discover untapped areas of ability. They often surprise themselves.”

But doesn’t the whole idea smack of ‘remedial teaching’? “Not really,” says Richard. “The word ‘remedial’ implies faults, defects, hence the need for ‘correction’ or ‘cure’. Expectation of failure is almost built in. By supporting study skills, Downing has been gradually replacing this kind of mindset with one that’s more explorative, enquiring, outgoing. The emphasis is on enhancement, expansion, extension. We’re no longer assuming the privilege of quality: instead we’re advocating the desirability of diversity. And we’re extending the work from undergraduates to graduate students, whose needs have often been neglected in the past.”

Is this approach new? “Yes and no,” Richard continues. “In the Middle Ages, universities taught what was called the *trivium*, which consisted of rhetoric, grammar and logic. These were an integral part of a university education. In a sense, that’s what I’m teaching. So, if you like, I’m dealing with trivial pursuits.”

In one sense this is perfectly true: ‘trivial’ has its roots in *trivium* (from the Latin: ‘three ways’) and at one time referred to this basic part of the



curriculum. But Richard’s presentation of these matters is thoroughly up-to-date. “These are communication skills,” he says, “They’re learnable, acquirable, transferable, and they enhance performance across the board. So if a student does sport, I might say, ‘Supposing I were a tennis trainer. I might ask, well, what about a bit of top spin? And you might say, well I’m not very good at top spin, and I’d say, hold the ball like this, toss it up like this, hold your racquet like this, and the result will be top spin.’”

Richard explains that, like the tennis coach, he too begins with the detail: “I start off by looking at things like sentence formation, connectedness, syntax, punctuation. The effect of paying attention to small details is that ability, performance and confidence increase over the whole range.”

He then moves on to wider, conceptual issues such as non-linear thinking, planning, and the transition from research to writing, using his own well-researched, innovative approaches. But beyond all these techniques lies an even more exciting goal: “Clarity is the first thing we work towards – all those solid qualities like relevance, absence of ambiguity, consistency of argument and logic – but then there’s another element one can teach, and that’s to do with quality of mind. When I talk to my students about this, I suggest the quality that’s wanted in a First, for example, is one of *delight* – of the reader participating in a perfectly executed intellectual dance, in all its grace and elegance. That goes across all subjects, and if one can help students to see that they have that ability in language, you’re going to get people absolutely shining.”



Richard developed his very distinctive approach to working with students when he was appointed by the Royal Literary Fund as the RLF Fellow at Newnham College. Drawing on his wide-ranging experience in education, he gave sessions to individual undergraduates who simply wanted help with writing essays. He has since taken this work into several other Cambridge colleges, but, as he says, Downing is the first to support and recognise its importance through a Bye-Fellowship. Richard has been giving supervisions and seminars at the College for over two years, and already the evidence shows that it's making a difference. As well as an observable increase in general confidence and motivation ("you see them starting to come in with bright faces"), there are clear cases of improved performance. One student, for example, who got a 2:2 at the end of his first year, is now getting Firsts in his third-year essays.

Describing this work, Richard says, "If I have a mission, it's to bring attentiveness to language into the field of study, as a topic to be articulated and focused on, whatever the student's specialism." It is, perhaps, this quality of attentiveness which lies at the heart of Richard's success, a quality that comes out of his life as a poet. "I'm a poet first and foremost," he says. "Everything else revolves around that."

To say that Richard lives and breathes poetry is barely a figure of speech.

Listening to him talk, you notice that his words have a graceful, rhythmic quality, rich in repeated pattern. He describes how he goes about the work of writing: "An idea comes to me or a theme obsesses me or a set of impressions overtakes me, and I know I've got to write about that. It may be something small, but increasingly these days it's a big theme. And I will write into that theme, and out of that theme, and write that theme out, until it's exhausted." The most consuming themes can emerge from the smallest of incidents. Richard was standing outside a war museum in Serbia when a butterfly landed on his hand. In that moment began a twenty-year exploration that culminated in the publication of a collection of poems entitled *The Blue Butterfly*.

So poetry is shaped by deep personal experience, but also by the mundane demands of everyday living. Richard says that in term-time he tends to write in the evenings and weekends, usually shorter pieces; longer work has to be done in vacations. "You grab your time when you can."

For, the fact is that a poet cannot live by writing poetry alone; Philip Larkin was a librarian and T. S. Eliot a banker. The reason, says Richard, is that "nobody quite knows where to put the poet in our society or how to enable the poet to live. It just hasn't been worked out." Happily, however, in the case of Richard Burns, something seems to have been worked out to

great effect. There's a synergy between his work as a poet and his work as a teacher. Both in private and in public, he is an ambassador for attentiveness.

Biography in brief

Richard Burns read English at Pembroke (1961) and has been involved in teaching at every level, from undergraduates and graduate students to teacher training, and from primary schoolchildren to senior citizens. His unusually versatile career spans teaching literature, creative writing, EFL, methodology and, most recently, academic writing and study skills. A keen traveller and linguist, he has lived in Greece, Italy, the UK, the USA and former Yugoslavia.

In the 1970s he was Senior Lecturer in English at CCAT (now Anglia Ruskin University). In 1975 he founded the renowned International Cambridge Poetry Festival, which ran until 1985. He has been a visiting professor in the USA and a university lecturer in Serbia. Earlier this year, he was poet-in-residence at the international symposium on Dante, Eliot and the European tradition, in Florence.

Richard has received many literary awards and has published more than twenty books, including *The Blue Butterfly* (Salt, 2006) and *In a Time of Drought* (Shoestring, 2005).

This left hand of mine

*This left hand of mine now packing this page with script
and this right hand steadying the same page's edge
together reach out to your hands that hold and turn
the same copy in another time entirely your own
or click or flick an icon to resurrect its appearance
which curiously means that exceedingly far
across time and space and despite our mortalities
you and I join hands through poetry in a kind
of peace and harmony that is unshakeable and this
is a bond and a pledge and a gift*

This poem comes from *Manual*, a work-in-progress exploring the theme of 'hands'. More of Richard Burns' poems, along with information about his work, can be found at:

www.richardburns.eu

Creativity, and all that jazz

In recent months the government has put music and creativity firmly onto the curriculum, and schools are being urged to get singing. For non-specialist teachers, the prospect can seem daunting, but, says Downing medic Tom Bancroft, it doesn't have to be.



In a primary classroom, small groups of young children eagerly await instructions. As one child points to each group, shouts of "Apple!" "Banana!" "Carrot" ring out in turn. By the end of the session, the whole class is singing away – "Bip bop, diddly bop, diddly bop. Shweee! Shweee!" – thoroughly enjoying their improvised scat.

The ABC creative music method, devised by Tom Bancroft and twin

brother Phil, is changing the way music is taught in Scottish schools and producing some spectacular results. Explaining their philosophy, Tom says, "It's interesting to see how 'creativity' is bandied around in education. It's linked with positive words like 'empowerment', 'engagement' and 'active learning', but when you give people an opportunity to be creative, they can feel stressed, panicked and put on the spot. So it's all about

breaking the creative process down into achievable steps, and providing activities where children feel they are safe and having fun.

Improvisation

"For example, if you stand someone in the middle of a circle and tell them that every time they take a step, everyone else will go 'Boop', you'll get them doing this incredible, unselfconscious, free-form dancing. It's beautiful. Yet if I said to that person, 'Will you come and dance?', they'd say, 'No way!' The difference is, everyone's focus is on the sound dimension."

But it's not only children that need safety and fun; it's just as vital for their teachers. That's why ABC music's main mission is to give non-specialist teachers the techniques and the confidence to do music with their classes. So when Tom leaves the class at the end of the session, the fun and creativity doesn't. He believes that lots of teachers have been put off music by bad experience and fear of being exposed and looking foolish. But, says Tom, it doesn't have to be that way: "We have a lot of teachers walking into our training days, saying, 'I'm not musical. I'm absolutely terrified,' and we send them away clutching the ring binder saying, 'This is great, I can do it!'"

Tom's distinctive approach to music education undoubtedly comes out of his experience as an accomplished jazz musician. Described in the *Guardian* as "one of the leading lights of the Scottish jazz scene", Tom leads



his own big band, Orchestro Interrupto, as well as composing, teaching drums and playing in a jazz trio. He recalls that it was during his time at Downing that he started to become serious about music. “The first tunes I ever wrote for a band was on a piano in the room next to the chapel,” he says. But in the middle of a degree in medicine, Tom was at that moment on a rather different career path.

After qualifying as a doctor, he spent several years juggling music and medicine. “In many ways,” he says, “it was an ideal mix. When I didn’t have any music projects on, I could just get on a train and go off to a job in Truro or the Shetland Isles and do locum work for a couple of weeks.” Eventually, following a high-profile tour of the UK with his big band, Tom decided to go for funding to make a CD. He approached the Arts Council, who persuaded him that setting up a recording company to work with other jazz artists would be a far more interesting venture. So armed with a business plan and a large grant, he set up his own record label. He ran the company for seven years and enjoyed the challenge, but gradually frustration set in – partly from the never-ending battle with under-resourcing, but mostly from the lack of creative outlet.

Innovation

Tom describes how he reached a turning point: “I’d been asked to sit on a panel to judge the Creative Scotland Awards, and someone said ‘you shouldn’t be on the panel, you should be entering it’. It burnt a hole in my

brain, but I left it until the night before the deadline. Then at one in the morning I said to myself, are you someone who sits on the panel or someone who goes in for the thing? It doesn’t matter if you don’t win, it’s just about being yourself. You have to stay this side of this line. It was a kind of late-night madness, but a defining moment.” He finished his proposal at five in the morning, then went to catch a train.

Winning the prestigious Creative Scotland Award enabled Tom to set up a composing studio and return to his first love – playing jazz. His band tour in 2004 was a huge success, receiving a 5-star review in the *Guardian*. The following year, he launched *Kidsamonium* – described as ‘a fun, magical musical event that lets kids see the exciting power and freedom of jazz and improvised music up close in a format that they can digest’. The show caused quite a stir at the BBC Jazz Awards in 2007 and they came away with the Award for Innovation.

It was whilst still running the record label that Tom and Phil first realised that some ideas they had been developing about teaching creativity and improvisation to adults could have real potential for working with children. “When we started we didn’t really know anything about education or the education sector,” says Tom. “But we knew that we had something original in what we were teaching and we knew that it worked. So we raised a bunch of investment and spent about 18 months getting our ideas into a sellable form.”

Thanks to the Scottish government’s Youth Music initiative, ABC’s programme was taken up and funded by local authorities, and is now in operation over 600 Scottish primary schools. With a product range covering Foundation stage through to top primary, the company is set to expand and, Tom hopes, move beyond the border. “At the moment we’re very dependent on face-to-face contact, but we’re looking into ways of scaling it up. We’re looking at the possibility of online training through ‘webinars’, for instance.”

Intuition

So Tom is now thoroughly reimmersed in creative projects, but, he says, the medicine is far from wasted. “The reflective, intuitive problem-solving scientific way of thinking is definitely useful. Teaching music can be quite diagnostic: someone calls you in and says I’ve got this problem and you watch them play and you say, ‘Ah, it’s the left hand.’ It’s about having a set of theories you can bring into play, but then combining them with observation and intuition.”

Really, it all comes back to improvisation. As Tom says, “It’s a very quintessential task, improvising. It’s being in the moment, making decisions, using stored and learned behaviours all at the same time. A very full use of the conscious and unconscious brain.”

Biography in brief



Tom Bancroft read medicine at Downing with a year out studying composition and arranging at McGill University in Montreal. After qualifying as a doctor in 1992 he worked as a locum and musician until 1998, when he set up his first company, the Caber Music record label.

He won a prestigious Creative Scotland Award in 2004 and the BBC Jazz Award for Innovation in 2007.

He is married to the singer, Gina Rae, and they have two children.

www.tombancroft.com
www.applebananacarrot.com

Secret publication

Judging by the glut of publications and television programmes on the subject, history has never been so popular. David Stafford, historian and author of several highly acclaimed books, reflects on telling the story of the past to a wider audience.

David Stafford could be said to be wielding an unfair advantage. With titles such as *Secret Agent* and *Spies Beneath Berlin* and their tales of secret operations and resistance fighters, his books have a certain ‘Boy’s Own’ appeal. But David believes there’s more to it than that. “I think it has something to do with the fact that those people who were involved will soon be gone, and we have to honour them,” he says. “It’s

also, I think, something to do with the end of the cold war. It unleashed a lot of conflict that had been held down – in the former Yugoslavia, for example – and people said, what’s going on here? And that immediately takes us back to what went on during the Second World War. Of course, we are the generation that has never had to go to war, so there’s also a sort of yearning for qualities of heroism and courage, and perhaps for a sense of

the needs of the community being greater than the desires of the individual – although whether that was real or imagined, I’m not quite sure.”

Whatever the reasons, since the anniversary of the D-Day landings in 2004, the Second World War has been the focus of continual media attention. *Ten Days to D-Day*, David’s book covering events leading up to the crucial campaign, attracted not only numerous readers and admiring critics, but also eager TV producers who turned it into a three-part docudrama for Channel 4. The book’s success may well be due to the innovative way in which David told the story through the interwoven narratives of ten real people – some based on interviews, some on diaries and letters. David says that, for him, this relationship between the stories of individuals and national-scale events is a vital one: “I suppose that over the course of my historical writing career I’ve become more and more aware that you can’t make sense of the big events without explaining what it meant to people at the sharp end. My absolute ambition is to combine the two, and to use the experience of individuals to illuminate the bigger picture.”

Ever since studying at Downing, David has been reluctant to write only for fellow scholars. “It seems to me there’s some sort of obligation to talk to the broader public,” he says. “I passionately believe that history’s important – and if it’s important, then readers out there have to see *why* it’s important. It’s pointless, I think, to write a book that’s read by ten other people. So I like to think that I write for ‘the person in the street’, but with the

Biography in brief

1963	BA, History, Downing College
1968	PhD, History, London School of Economics.
1967–8	Diplomat at the Foreign Office
1970–84	Professor at the University of Victoria in British Columbia
1985–1992	Director at the Canadian Institute of International Affairs
1992–1999	University of Edinburgh (various posts)
1999–2007	Project Director, Centre for the Study of the Two World Wars, University of Edinburgh

David has written numerous books on World War Two and intelligence, most recently *Secret Agent* (BBC, 2000), *Ten Days to D-Day* (Little, Brown, 2003) and *Endgame 1945* (Little, Brown, 2007), and contributes articles to the international press. His official history of the Special Operations Executive in Italy is due to be published in 2010.

When not working on his latest publication, David indulges his passion for painting, which he says is an ideal antidote, or perhaps complement, to writing: “I find it incredibly relaxing because it’s a medium that takes you away from the world of words completely. And the other thing about painting is that you have to be prepared to fail dramatically. Which I think is a good lesson for writing.”





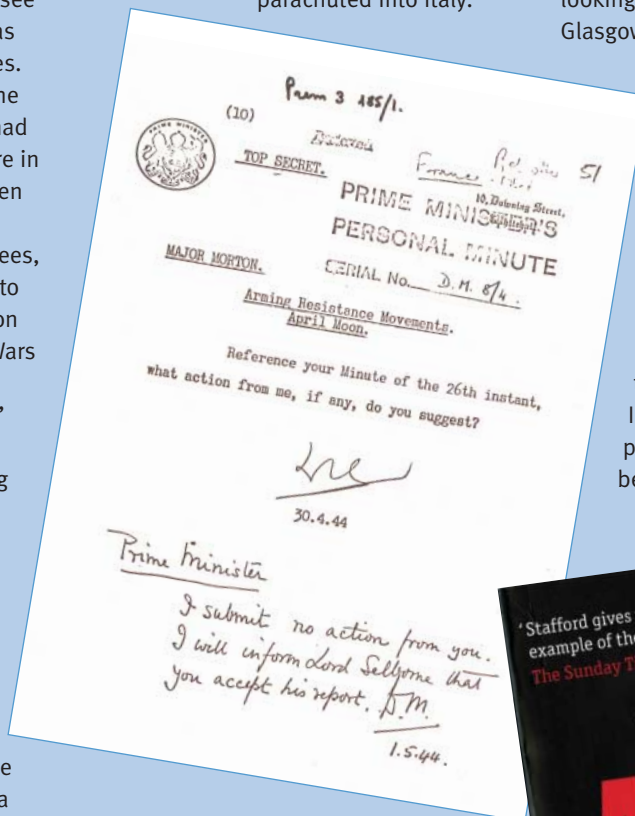
scholarship that would be expected of me in an academic book.”

Combining scholarship and popular book writing is not a new endeavour. As David points out, the great historians of the nineteenth century all wrote for the general public. Which brings us neatly to the question of how writers of history are influenced by events in their own times. David was especially aware of this while writing his latest book, *Endgame 1945*. “It was published in 2007 but begun just after the invasion of Iraq,” he explains. “Reading about the war in the press and seeing it on television began to echo with my book, and I began to see similarities with Germany in 1945, as well as several important differences. So I think what was happening in the real world outside these windows had an effect, because there’s a lot more in the book than there would have been otherwise about the aftermath of fighting, about law and order, refugees, and how difficult it is to put an end to war.” The link was not explicit, but on the first page, the point is made, “Wars do not end when the fighting stops. And victory does not deliver peace.”

For his next book, David is returning to the subject of his particular academic interest, the Special Operations Executive (SOE). An acknowledged authority on World War Two secret operations and exploits behind enemy lines, he has been appointed by the Cabinet Office to write the official history of the SOE in Italy. He is currently trawling the archives – a colossal task, but somewhat easier than the research for his 1980 book on the SOE in Europe. At that time, the relevant documents were simply not in the public domain, and files sent to the Public Record Office from the Cabinet Office and other departments were screened for sensitive material. David describes how his previous experience as a diplomat helped with the seemingly impossible task of gleaning information: “They’d employed ‘weeder’ to go through the incoming files with a mandate to remove SOE material, but they hadn’t done a very good job and an awful lot had come through. This was where my experience in the diplomatic service helped because I knew how to work

my way through the files. You have to know how to read between the lines to know what a document is really doing and who it is really aimed at. You can never take these things at face value.”

With the sea change in access to information over recent years, all the SOE documents have been released and there is now plenty of archive source material. Nevertheless, David considers that the personal narratives should again play a vital part in the story. As well as drawing on personal diaries and memoirs, he is busy interviewing some of the people who were involved, such as those who parachuted into Italy.



The interviews, he says, can be extraordinary: “You meet these most ordinary-looking people and then you find that they’ve done these incredibly unordinary and brave things. But that generation is very modest. They’ll say things like, ‘... but I wasn’t the only one’ or ‘... there were other people involved’. They don’t want to push themselves forward.”

This will be an official history, appointed by the Prime Minister, no less. Nevertheless, as agreed with the Cabinet Office, the story is to be told in a style “accessible to the general public”. And after that? David is not short of ideas and says he spends a lot of time generating potential projects. He once

spent a whole summer developing what he thought was a fantastic proposal, only to have his publisher give it a summary dismissal. “That’s the rough-and-tumble world of publishing these days,” he observes, philosophically. “You have to be market sensitive. Is it ‘dumbing down’? Absolutely not. It’s reaching out.”

A form of outreach that the successful author cannot avoid these days is the book festival platform. But David says he very much enjoys these events, not least “because you get to meet readers, and it’s a good reminder of who I’m writing for.” He’s particularly looking forward to the forthcoming Glasgow festival, Aye Write!, where he is appearing with Paddy

Ashdown. David explains that Lord Ashdown’s latest book, *Swords and Ploughshares*, is based on his experience as High Commissioner in Bosnia. “It’s very much about peacemaking and what happens after the fighting ends; it shares a lot of themes with my *Endgame*. So I’m the historian; he’s the practitioner – I think it’s going to be an interesting chat.”



Above left: A photocopy of a typical wartime secret document of the kind that David Stafford uses as source material for his books. This one is from Churchill.

Football reunion



1907–08 DCAFC – League Champions

On Saturday 20th September 2008, Downing College Association Football Club is holding a reunion; it is hoped that old members who have represented the College at football over the years will join us for what we hope will be a most enjoyable day and an annual event. A tour of the new Wembley Stadium will be followed by a return to Downing and an exhibition of memorabilia from the club's long history as one of the oldest association football clubs in the world, before concluding with dinner in the Hall.

For more information, contact James Brown, jrb62@cam.ac.uk



2007–08 DCAFC – League Champions – The current Downing team are celebrating the league 2 championship and a welcome return to Division 1.

Saturday 26 April 2008

Segreants' Dinner

Friday 9 May 2008

London Griffin Dinner
at The Oxford and Cambridge Club

Tuesday 13 May 2008 6–8pm

Cambridge Reception

Guest speaker – Dr David Pratt,
Archivist and Fellow in History

Saturday 14 June 2008 12noon–2pm

Donors' Garden Party

Saturday 5 July 2008

Event for years 1980–85 to Celebrate
the Graduation of the first
Downing female undergraduates

Tuesday 8 July 2008 6–8pm

Downing City Group Event
Guest speaker Dr Jan Hruska
(1976, Computer Science)
co-founder of Sophos, a world leader in
IT security and control

Saturday 26 July 2008 12noon–2pm

1749 Society Reception

Saturday 13 September 2008

1964 Reunion Dinner

Saturday 27 September 2008

Alumni Day and Association Dinner

Tuesday 4 November 2008 6.30–9pm

London Alumni Reception
RAC Club, 89 Pall Mall, SW1Y 5HS

Friday 28 November 2008 TBC

Paris Reception

December 2008 TBC

Downing City Group

*Please note that the information above may be
subject to change.*

For further details on any of the events listed, or
to find out what else is happening throughout the
year, please visit the Development Office website
www.downingcambridge.com or contact Sara
Brinkley in the Development Office on 01223 334850
or email sjb244@cam.ac.uk