The Master’s message

This issue of Optima provides further evidence that the College is right in its assumption that its former students are likely to play a key role in helping Fitzwilliam successfully confront the challenges which lie ahead.

The response to the recent call to endow College prizes, for example, has been rapid and gratifying. Such donations liberate resources which can be directed to enhancing the experience of students at Fitzwilliam. At the same time, donors of named prizes are not only themselves recognised in perpetuity but also signal to today’s students the extent to which they benefit from the generosity of their predecessors. In the same way, Subject Funds allow the College to support essential academic activities and sustain the proud tradition of giving its students, regardless of background and financial means, the opportunity to benefit from the best of Cambridge.

The sheer size of the challenge of the future, however, remains the bigger picture. The taxpayer’s contribution to what is unique about Cambridge is in such inexorable decline that virtually all colleges (even the rich ones) are actively engaged in raising endowment funds to secure the collegiate experience on a permanent basis. We have decided to launch a major appeal for £20 million, formally in September 2008, but with current donations already counting towards the target. We do not expect to achieve this overnight! It will be a Campaign culminating in 2019, the 150th anniversary of the College’s original foundation. This is a great and exciting project with which everybody associated with Fitzwilliam will be involved and which can only succeed with their commitment to it.

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Subject Funds

Fitzwilliam admits students to read all the subjects currently on offer at Cambridge. Twenty-three are listed in the College prospectus, alphabetically from Anglo Saxon, Norse and Celtic to Theology and each has a College-based Director of Studies. Six have their own Subject Funds: Engineering, Geography, Land Economy, Law, Medicine, and Medieval and Modern Languages (MML). Each Fund has been set up at a different time and has a slightly different remit, but they have all been established as a result of the generosity of former students of the College. The money raised is invested and awards made, from the interest earned, to current students, to support them in preparation for Tripos or to help fund subject-related activities of a broader kind.

The longest running Subject Fund is the Cuthbert-Edwards Fund for Medicine while the most recent is Land Economy, launched in 2005.

The percentage of Members supporting their own subject varies with MML currently leading the field, with nearly fourteen percent of those Members who studied the subject giving to the Fund by 2006.

The value to our students is obvious. Almost every issue of Optima profiles a student happy to relate their adventures and who has benefited from donated funds. In the last issue (Optima XI) Wil Mossop (Law 2004) talked about the value of the Law Book Fund, saying “The Law Book Fund is an invaluable scheme which has enabled me to maintain a healthy level of study and a healthy bank balance while I have been at Fitzwilliam College”.

The first ever Land Economy grant has just been awarded to Neal Mehta and a report of his experience follows on page 3. Jessie White (MML 2006) recently spent two weeks of her Christmas vacation at an intensive French Language course in Bordeaux in preparation for her oral examinations, courtesy of the MML Fund. She said, “I’m so grateful for the money I received towards my course – I couldn’t have gone without the funding, as it was so expensive, but I’m really glad I did. It was such an amazing experience and I feel much more confident speaking French now. I think it’s a wonderful thing that Fitzwilliam offers MML travel grants like these.”

The Geographers, as you would imagine, travel all over the world aided by grants to help with their final year dissertation research. Henry Leivers (Geography 2004) spent his long vacation in India and says, “The grants I received, for which I am extremely grateful, made possible a unique, stimulating experience that has provided me with memories and skills that will stay with me for life”.

James Ronicle (Geography 2004) is shown interviewing people in Berlin to gather material for his final year project and says, “The travel grant helped me carry out research and have experiences that I would not have had the opportunity to do otherwise and for that I am eternally grateful.”

Mirae Shin (Medical Sciences 2004) spent time last summer helping at a local health centre in Uganda, helped by the Cuthbert-Edwards Fund and her experiences are documented on page 4.

These reports represent just the tip of the iceberg of those students who received financial help with travel for dissertation research, for vocational purposes or to attend courses necessary to their study, all because the College has been given the means to help them.

More Subject Funds are in the pipeline. Natural Sciences and Mathematics are being actively pursued. The Subject Funds take the pressure off College Travel Awards and represent a direct means by which you can put something back in your own field and see today’s students progress in the very subject which you enjoyed and gave you a foothold into your current profession.
First Land Economy Travel Grant awarded

In April 2005, Dr Derek Nicholls, Director of Studies in Land Economy, launched a Fund for Land Economy. One of its aims was to accrue funds for students to travel widely in association with their research. The first Land Economy grant was awarded to Neal Mehta (2004) for his expedition to South East Asia in September 2006 to look at aspects of post-tsunami recovery.

In December 2004, a series of devastating tsunamis, caused by the Sumatra-Andaman undersea earthquake killed tens of thousands of people and ruined the lives of millions, reduced homes to rubble, destroyed roads, fishing boats and caused some $10 billion of damage in barely 24 hours. Neal travelled to Malaysia and Thailand to assess the scale of the disaster and look at post-tsunami recovery for his dissertation research. He stayed at Phuket in Thailand, visiting Khao Lak, Krabi and the Phi Phi Islands and found the tourist industry slowly recovering with arrivals improving each season. He learned about the importance of both charity and personal donations and how they are aiding clearing, rebuilding and debris removal.

In Malaysia, he worked with people directly involved with the recovery process via contacts at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in Johor Bahru and was also able to talk to those involved with reconstruction in Banda Aceh in Indonesia. He also visited Kota Kuala Muda in Malaysia where the tsunami totally crippled the economy of the area which, up until then, had relied on fishing and paddy cultivation.

Now aware of the threat of tsunamis, many areas have instigated early warning systems and evacuation procedures and hold regular practice drills. Yellow evacuation signs were visible around every corner in Phuket as constant reminders of this. New houses have been built in many areas and in Kota Kuala Muda they are provided at 50% discount rate for disaster victims with more permanent houses being built and equipped all the time. Many of the contacts Neal established have promised to keep him up-to-date with the recovery process and the information will be used as the basis for his Final Year dissertation.

Neal says: “My summer spent in South East Asia was an amazing experience and I am extremely grateful to all the people that contributed to the funds, that gave me this exceptional opportunity to study tsunami impact and recovery.”

Countdown over!

For the Chinese, it is the year of the pig. For our oarsmen, past and present, it is the year of the new Boathouse! A contract has been placed with Marriott Construction, the company responsible for building Gatehouse Court and the auditorium. Work commenced in March 2007 while rowing continues from elsewhere. The Billygoats wished a fond farewell to the boathouse when demolition started.

Completion is scheduled for mid September in time for the Reunion row and the official opening of the new Boathouse will take place at 10.30 am on Saturday 22 September during the Reunion weekend when many Members return to Cambridge anyway.

We are keeping all our supporters up-to-date with progress and funds are very tight with less than 1% allowed in the overall budget of £584,000 for contingencies. Some supporters have already kindly rallied to the cause. If you always had in mind to donate to the Boathouse appeal, but never quite got around to it, here is your chance, your last chance, to add your name to the list of one hundred and fifty plus supporters.

Do it for Billy!
Mirae Shin, born in South Korea and brought up in England, is a third year medical student at Fitzwilliam. Last summer, she spent three and half weeks in Kabale, near the Rwandan border of Uganda working at the Rugarama Health Centre. The Mission Hospital is an important centre for malaria treatment and has a specialist unit for malnourished and premature babies (almost unique in Uganda). It was founded by the Church of Uganda and is supported additionally by a consortium of international churches.

Malaria is the biggest problem and is ubiquitous throughout the local community, partly due to poor education about the use of mosquito nets (far cheaper than anti-malarial drugs). The disease renders breadwinners unable to work, gives rise to severely underweight and premature babies, as well as being a major cause of infant mortality. Other prevalent diseases are tuberculosis, brucellosis and AIDS, although, interestingly, people are better informed about AIDS via awareness campaigns and World Health Organisation initiatives.

There is a global commitment to reduce malaria which causes the loss of over a million lives each year, mainly children under five. 90% of the cases occur in sub-Saharan Africa. The good news is that results from recent trials of a new malaria vaccine, RTS, S/AS02A, which attacks the plasmodium sporozoite as it is injected into the blood by the mosquito, is proving effective. The Microsoft entrepreneur, Bill Gates, via the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has given $250 million to accelerate the development of this promising drug. It is hoped that it will be licensed by 2010 and the vaccine, along with other new therapies and the bi-annual spraying of villages to kill the mosquito vector, are helping reduce this deadly disease.

Mirae’s day started at eight o’clock with Morning Prayer followed by a handover meeting between night and day staff and the assignment of ward rounds. As well as accompanying the doctors on rounds, she helped in the outpatient centre and, in the afternoon, assisted in the children’s centre. This ‘play house’ for young patients and visiting children was set up by two elective students the previous year and was equipped with donated toys. She also went to an outreach clinic in Ikamiro to help vaccinate babies against polio, tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus.

Families are large in Uganda with seven to ten children the norm but some have as many as twenty. 85% of the population are Christian so marriage is celebrated and by sixteen, girls may already have a couple of children. Infant mortality is high. Although treatment at the Health Centre is mainly free, 80% of the Ugandan population choose traditional healers. The reason being that for every one hundred and fifty Ugandans, there is a practicing medicine man but only one medical doctor for every twenty thousand. While treatment using herbal medicine can be effective, use of other ‘tools’ by witch doctors such as coins, shells, sticks and animal fur, can have disastrous effects.

Mirae recalls the admission of a five-month old baby with severe respiratory distress. The baby had been taken to a witch doctor for a mild cough. He had cut into the baby’s chest and pretended to pull a small shell from its throat. This had destroyed the tonsils on one side and led to severe swelling and throat infection. The cuts to the chest had also become infected. The baby was treated with glucocorticoids and antibiotics and survived. The hospital had dealt with many similar cases.

Mirae learned an amazing amount during her time in Kabale and it reinforced her aim to practice medicine in a third world country where the doctors operate without all the modern medical technology, relying on their clinical skills and the determination to make a difference with the limited resources available. Her trip was aided by a grant from the Cuthbert-Edwards Fund, funding from her church and her old school. She made up the difference with her own money, earned at May Balls by working as a waitress. She hopes to return to Kabale for her elective during her clinical training.
Remembering CAMRAG 1966

Robin Bell (Classics 1965) has kept the 19 November 1966 edition of the Cambridge Evening News (the CAMRAG 1966 edition) as he was Fitzwilliam’s organiser on the colleges’ committee that year and has shared some memories and great pictures of Fitz men’s involvement.

In 2006, it was forty years since the Cambridge University Poppy Day of former years transformed into Cambridge Rag. Previously, the students took part in stunts and organised activities on Poppy Day with the sole recipient of their collected donations being the British Legion Earl Haig Fund. This Fund had been founded by the British Legion in 1921 and named after Douglas, the first Earl Haig, a British Field Marshal and veteran of the Somme and Passchendaele campaigns, who devoted his life after the Great War to raising funds for the welfare of disabled ex-servicemen.

In 1961, Cambridge University Poppy Day raised the magnificent sum of £12,000 but totals then fell alarmingly with only £6,700 being raised in 1965. About a third of the Cambridge colleges had failed to support this appeal, feeling that a more diverse range of charities ought to benefit from their involvement. For the first time in 1966, the Rag Day organiser named three charities as recipients of funds raised: the Cambridge Society for Mentally Handicapped Children, the United Nations International Children’s Erasmus Fund and the Earl Haig Fund.

In 1961, the Rag moved away from its traditional Poppy Day date, the Saturday closest to Armistice Day in November. In one stunt, a barrier was organised at the lights at the Castle Hill/Chesterton Lane junction and Fitz men were portrayed as the ‘Fen Nationalist Home Rule Action Group’ with slogans to bring back Hereward the Wake. Motorists were ‘held up’ and charged half a crown (12.5 pence today but quite a tidy sum then) for a so-called ‘immunity sticker’.

In another, which appeared in the Evening News with the title, “Jane holds the whip hand”, willing Fitz slaves were ‘whipped’ around the streets with bare torsos in a chain gang before being clapped in the stocks in Market Square where flour and tomatoes were freely available. The whip hand was Jane Daish from New Hall while Robin has identified three of her slaves as Graham Nutter (Geography 1966), Konrad Kotowski (Medical Sciences 1965) and Jon Hann (MML 1965), all from Fitzwilliam. Can anyone identify the fourth slave?

The Fitzwilliam float in the Rag Parade depicted “Fitzwilliam the Conqueror”, 1966 being nine hundred years since the Battle of Hastings. The Fitz men were the Normans, clad in black polonecked jumpers overlaid with silver painted string vests and wearing cardboard helmets. The New Hall girls were the submissive Saxon maidens, wearing skins and paper flowers. Although coming a close second, the competition for the best float was won by a highly topical tableau entitled, “1066 and all that – or one in the eye for Harold”, with Harold Wilson (Labour Prime Minister 1964 – 1970) getting a Guinness bottle cork in the eye (rather than a 1066 arrow) from George Brown (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and with whom he did not always see eye to eye). Thetwo combatants had huge papier mâché heads, Harold sported a Gannex mackintosh with his trademark pipe clenched between his teeth and George sat astride a mega Guinness bottle. He was known to have a drink problem! These were the early days of political satire, many years before Spitting Image.

The newspaper bore a Rag Day message of support from Lord (RAB) Butler, the recently appointed Master of Trinity, urging the public to support this charity event when “high spirits on the occasion are translated into generosity and thoughtfulness in result”. Other stunts ranged from a table tennis marathon, a ‘yard of ale’ drunk with milk, human draughts, fire eating, pushing a bath from London to Cambridge and dressing-up as the Bash Street Kids and St Trinian’s girls. Rag Day started with breakfast and continuous activity followed with barbecues, plays, treasure hunts, fireworks, parties and balls.

The first CAMRAG collected £13,400 making an all time record. The Rag Committee and college organisers were entertained to dinner in the Guildhall at which representatives of all the charities attended. The old enthusiasm of the past had returned. Some forty years on, CAMRAG goes from strength to strength, raising £64,583 in 2005/06, distributed to no fewer than sixty-three charities.
Furthering understanding of Roman Britain

Professor Martin Millett is Laurence Professor in Classical Archaeology in the Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge and a Professorial Fellow of Fitzwilliam College since 2001. Last year, he was elected as the Martha Sharp Joukowsky Lecturer for the Archeological Institute of America and gave a series of lectures at thirteen venues across the United States. He also hosted a reception in Washington DC for Fitzwilliam Members in the US in March 2007. He has recently been elected a Fellow of the British Academy and talks about his recent fieldwork.

As a Professor of Archaeology working in a university I am often asked whether I still do fieldwork. This question goes to the heart of being an archaeologist – exploring the evidence of the past at first hand defines my subject and remains its key interest. But what does archaeological fieldwork involve today? This can be best understood by reflecting on some of my involvement last summer.

Classical Archaeology encompasses the Greek and Roman worlds but my research is focused on Roman Empire, particularly Italy and Western Europe. I began as a schoolboy excavating in Britain and I remain convinced that sites near home provide the best training for students who learn archaeological techniques in a familiar environment on sites that provide a wide variety of experience. I also believe the best way to learn is on a research project, not in the artificial environment of a special training dig. Over the years I have dug on a number of sites in East Yorkshire, as a landscape research project whilst training a large number of students.

During the 1990s work focused on the edge of lowlands of the Vale of York. Two books on this are now published and a third is in preparation. But for the last three summers we have moved high up on the chalk Wolds inland from Bridlington in one of the most remote areas of the Roman world. Finds by a farmer brought us to the area, and we have so far completed a geophysical survey and excavated a couple of trenches to establish the nature of the site. Initially there were signs that it might have been a temple but our work has now revealed a farming site with a complex evolution from the Late Bronze Age through to the Middle Ages. This year we were there for a month with about 10 students digging an area where we had located a stone building in 2005.

Remarkably for such an intensively farmed area the thin topsoil overlay a raft of building rubble disturbed only by a few plough scars. The only warm and dry days of our season were taken up with cleaning the plough soil from the rubble and exposing it for planning (now done with a digital camera). This laborious cleaning revealed several walls from the building which turned out to be about 20m long by 5m wide. Most of the walls had however been dug out to recover the building stone (probably in the late Middle Ages) so our next task – and the main one of the season – was to carefully trace these “robber trenches” to reveal the plan of the building. This tedious, skilled, yet heavy work involved removing soil and rubble and was made more difficult because of the prolonged torrential rain! Nevertheless, we were able to recover the outline plan of the building – essentially a large hall with a veranda along one side – as well as details indicating how it had been developed through time. In the last few days of the dig we were also able to sample the interior and some of the middens around it. Despite its modest pretensions, one end of the hall was partitioned off and had walls richly decorated with painted plaster. We plan to return to excavate this fully next year with the help of specialist conservators.

The middens also showed good evidence for the diet and eating habits of the inhabitants with beautifully preserved organic material. In addition to the animal bones which are obvious to the naked eye, seeds can be preserved through being burnt and can be recovered by mixing the earth with water and collecting the organic materials that floats off. More unusually, the excavation also produced evidence for a rich seafood diet not only the ubiquitous oyster shells but numerous whelks, mussels and a few fish bones.

Despite the wet and anguish, I returned from Yorkshire knowing that we have a site that can make a key contribution to the understanding of Roman Britain – and the students had really enjoyed the site!
Katherine wins Japanese Speech Contest

Final year Oriental Studies student, Katherine Wilde (2003) gave a ten-minute presentation in Japanese about her ideas for the Reform of the Education System in Japan, followed by five minutes of questioning before a panel of four judges. The annual speech contest was organised by the Japan Foundation Language Centre and the British Association for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language. A prior telephone interview had whittled the initial field of over sixty university students studying Japanese, down to eleven finalists who competed in two categories for the prize at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. She won a return flight to Japan, a rail pass and a thousand pounds to use when there.

Katherine is one of only three students studying Oriental Languages at Fitzwilliam having been interested in the country since she first visited Japan as a ten year old. She started learning Japanese aged fifteen and has been back to Japan a number of times, including spending her Year Abroad studying at Tohoku University with a scholarship from the Japanese Government. She graduates this year and has applied to the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme to work as a Councillor for International Relations.

More prizes for Fitzwilliam

Our thanks go to those Members who came forward as a result of the request to endow College prizes in Optima XI. Ron Higginbottom (1947) has endowed a prize in memory of Pat, his late wife. Rus Newton (1983) has set up a prize fund for science students who combine academic excellence with significant contributions to College life while Heather Butcher (SPS 1986) has funded a prize to encourage SPS students. Doug Webb (1979) along with Graham Love (1972) have endowed science and engineering prizes on behalf of their company, QinetiQ and a group of Modern Linguists (the 1964 Nine) will honour Ray Kelly, Life Fellow of the College, with a prize in his name. Bob Low (1967) has galvanised friends and contemporaries and is coordinating raising funds to endow a prize to commemorate the late Nick Clarke (1967), the well-known broadcaster and journalist. If anyone is interested in contributing to the Nick Clarke prize fund, please do get in touch (sc266@cam.ac.uk).

Matched Giving

The Prime Minister recently announced a new initiative whereby two hundred million pounds will be injected into the HE sector over three years to incentivise fundraising. It will benefit English universities with a cap on individual institutions likely to be set at two million. The aim is that government money will match donated funds from individuals to make an impact on the giving culture. Although welcomed, this amount, shared between the whole of Cambridge University and its constituent thirty-one colleges will not be great.

Another way of matching funds to which we would like to draw Members’ attention is companies matching their employees’ gifts under their ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ or equivalent programmes. Many large companies support employees’ charitable giving by subscribing to payroll giving schemes such as Give-as-you-earn (GAYE) whereby charitable donations to chosen charities are deducted from the gross salary before tax is deducted thus encouraging staff to make a regular commitment to charity. Abbey National plc is one such company. Others additionally offer a ‘matched giving scheme’, operating in different ways, according to the company. Some, such as ASDA, involve release of employees as volunteers on local projects and others (O2 and the Stagecoach Group) choose specific charities and encourage mass giving, involving both employer and employees’ gifts. Some, and these are the important ones for us, as a gesture of support for their people, will match gifts that are given to charities of their employees’ choice, including Higher Education establishments.

This can be of great benefit. Here’s an example: a Member who worked for Nexen Petroleum UK Ltd gave £1,500 to the Boathouse Appeal. We were then able to reclaim the tax on the gift, boosting it to £1,923. Nexen then matched the gift (another £1,500) making his gift worth £5,423. Great! The original donation is increased by 128%. There is better yet. Some employers such as the Royal Bank of Scotland operate a double matched payroll-giving scheme. John Goulardis (1974) chooses to support the College by a monthly donation of £10; Coutts & Co double that amount and we receive £30. His gift is increased by 200%.

Fantastic!

So, here’s what you can do to help. If you are thinking of giving to the College and you are in paid employment, please check first if your company supports any of the above schemes as your gift can be significantly increased. And if the company you work for does not, why not? If you find your company operates (or can persuade your company to operate) Matched Giving, please let us know (e-mail: sc266@cam.ac.uk) so we can compile a full list and publish it.
Keeping it in the family

Dr Mike Marriott (1971) studied for a PhD at Fitzwilliam, supervised by David Kerridge, Director of Studies for Natural Sciences, and after a long career in pharmaceutical research now acts as an independent consultant to biotech companies in Europe and the US. He also had two sons. 25 years later, his eldest son, Caedmon (NatSci 1996) followed him to Fitz, overlapping with his younger son, Declan (1998) who also studied Natural Sciences. What was it about Fitzwilliam that attracted them? The Marriott family talk about their experiences and what it means to be part of the wider Fitz family.

Mike’s reasons for choosing Fitzwilliam were three-fold: the newness and modernity of the College, the ability to supplement his meagre research grant with income from supervisions and the fact that he was newly married and his wife, Kathy, was offered a PhD place next door at New Hall. David Kerridge, a then family friend, gave Caedmon a personal tour during which he formed an early impression of the inclusive nature, friendliness and down-to earth nature of the College. So his decision was an easy one. Declan visited his brother here and enjoyed the company of Caedmon’s friends and liked his life-style; he couldn’t wait to join him.

Mike remembers, “The College was much smaller at the time. The Grove could not even be glimpsed over the high wooden fence that bordered the garden. The MCR was at the bottom of the stairs that lead up to the library and very comfortably furnished. I liked organising things and became Secretary of the MCR Committee, then President and was responsible for organising the twice-termly MCR dinners with the help of the Steward, a certain Brian Johnson. He was very kind in helping me combine the choice of food and wine, even taking me on a tour of the College cellars. All part of one’s education, of course! The early 70s were still an era of student unrest, following the Paris riots of 1968 and Fitzwilliam was not immune, although ‘revolution’ was slow to take hold. A few, extremely articulate undergraduates felt the student body should have some say in how the college was run and so, in 1973, the ‘General Purposes Committee’ was formed from members of the JCR, MCR and SCR. We did debate some meaty issues, like the admission of women but mainly we talked about the price of dining in, the state of the laundry and students returning late at night. It made one realise how lucky we all were to be members of Fitz.”

Caedmon recalls, “First impressions proved to be correct and I enjoyed four great years at Fitz. The strong feeling of camaraderie was obvious in the various College sports teams whether involving myself in rowing and hockey or the annual College pilgrimage down Grange Road to support another Cuppers Football Final. I learnt to row and cox at Fitz and eventually became Captain of Boats in my final year. The friendships formed in sharing both the hard work and the resultant success lasted for a long time and is still evidenced by the generations of rowers at Boat Club dinners and the great role played by the Billygoats Society.”

Declan followed, “In addition to my sporting endeavours, (Declan was in the men’s 1st VIII, coxed the ladies, was prop in the rugby team as well as playing hockey and cricket), I also thought it would be good to get into a bit of politics like my Dad and became Treasurer of the JMA and Ball Committees at the same time as Brian Johnson was Master (the dream team had been reformed). This allowed me to get a great insight into the workings of college and also some of the important decisions that needed to be made with respect to the new buildings. This experience proved a great grounding for my current career as a banker.”

Mike is proud of his sons’ achievements both at College and afterwards. First, Caedmon “After leaving Fitz I crossed to the Dark-Side (Oxford) to do a PhD in Earth Sciences but can safely confirm that Cambridge really is the best and that maroon and grey cannot be painted over. I’ve eventually succumbed to the lure of the City and now work for a large hedge fund. I am lucky enough to still meet up with close friends from Fitz.” Then Declan, who now works in the Financial Markets Division of Lloyds TSB, “As yet there hasn’t really been a life post-Fitz as many of my close friends live near me in London. I’m sure as we get older we will all move to different parts of the globe, but I am confident that we will still stay in touch and some of our offspring may even follow us to Fitz.”
Do they look like archetypal army material? Not a bit! Mel danced in the Addenbrooke’s Christmas pantomime. Lizzy was Vice President of the Fitzwilliam Ball Committee and plays water polo for the College. Marianne is a Siren, a choral scholar and Captain of the Ultimate Frisbee team. Like all Fitzwilliam students they are multi-tasking, multi-talented and work incredibly hard. But they are happy to spend a wet night in a trench in the company of frogs, pull a Landrover up a cliff or spend five hours cleaning a gun.

Lizzy joined up while at school through the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and was given £3,000 in the sixth form and £1,000/year while at University. Mel’s father was in the RAF and she was used to Forces personnel so went before the Selection Board pre-University and came to Fitz on an army bursary. She is a year ahead of the others and is now a commissioned Officer in the Medical Corps with the rank of Second Lieutenant and has signed up for eight years in the army. Her clinical years are funded at £13,000/year to help her through Medical School. Marianne, still at the other end of the scale, gets £34/day and £100/weekend for training which certainly helps pay the rent.

But it isn’t just about money. All are amazingly enthusiastic about what the army has to offer. They talk of total escape, physical endurance, a release from the everyday, enduring friendships, being out-of-doors, camaraderie and discipline.

Discipline, what’s this? Students who welcome discipline? “There’s a well defined hierarchy, you know where you are”, says Marianne, “and it is important, after all you may be working with live ammunition”. All train with the Officer Training Corps (OTC) while at College on Tuesday evenings along with students from Anglia Ruskin University. Every other weekend, they go on exercises at Stanford military training area (Stanta) near Thetford, joined additionally by students from the University of East Anglia. In their first year they are tested on gun handling and have written exams to gain the First Military Training Qualification (MTQ1), followed by MTQ2 in the second year. By then, they have been assigned to Wings; Mel is in the Infantry and Marianne and Lizzy are part of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

All attend Annual Camp for two weeks in the summer (£600!), held last year at Sennybridge, part of the Army Training Estate Wales, in the Brecon Beacons National Park. While there, their lives are filled with stag duties, beasting, bashers and barrack — not only a different world, there’s a different language too! Adventurous training follows and they choose which activities they wish to sign up for. There are tremendous opportunities, all paid for by the army. Marianne had two weeks white water kayaking in France followed by a week of water sports in Devon. Lizzy went skiing in Austria and sailing in the Baltic last year and this year she chose diving in the Red Sea.

So, if University life isn’t fulfilling enough, they also have the army. Marianne admits to being torn between two separate lives. There’s College life with all its opportunities and then there’s the army side with its friendships generated by team building exercises and training, as well as all the social functions; curry nights and cocktail parties and a prestigious annual dinner with eminent speakers. There’s that fashionable army kit, of which they are given two sets of everything including gore-tex coats, berets, boots and ration packs. There are skills they would not otherwise acquire — how to handle guns, how to cope in war zone situations and survival skills. And afterwards? Mel talks of going to work in a field hospital in a conflict zone. The army needs specialists. It is certainly going the right way to acquire them. Lizzy, Marianne and Mel are all committed, enthusiastic and excited about what they are doing. Their future is rosy and their time here, very full.
Global Change and Deserts

Professor Nick Lancaster (Geography 1968) did both his first degree and PhD at Fitzwilliam, collecting several College prizes along the way. He is now the world’s foremost expert on sand dunes and the Executive Director of the Centre for Arid Lands Environment Management in Nevada, US. As a regular supporter of the College, and with global warming constantly making headlines, he writes a topical report about how global climate change will further damage the fragile ecosystem of the world’s drier areas.

Arid or dry lands, characterized by low and variable rainfall, comprise forty percent of the world’s land surface and are now home to a third of the world’s population. Climate change and variability, population growth, and increasing urbanization, as well as environmental degradation (desertification) affect the scarce land and water resources and fragile ecosystems of these regions. Many of the world’s fastest growing urban areas lie in drylands, including Las Vegas, Phoenix, Mexico City, Beijing, Karachi, Dubai, Santiago, and Tehran. Arid lands are especially vulnerable to changes in the physical environments because of their dependence on scarce water resources.

Global climate change will likely increase in magnitude and its effects on the environment over the next century will contribute to environmental stress in drylands in patterns and ways that are not well understood. Current research is attempting to understand such patterns based on studies of past environments, records of historical droughts, and models of current and future climate trends. Understanding of past climate and sea level conditions in arid regions can point to the range of conditions likely to be experienced in the future, as well as providing a background against which to view current and future changes.

Climate observations show that changes in seasonal and annual temperature, precipitation, snowmelt and runoff, groundwater recharge, and evapotranspiration are occurring now and are likely to continue in the future. In turn, these changes will impact the availability and timing of surface water runoff, storage capability of reservoirs, groundwater recharge, energy use, tourism, agriculture, land management, air quality, fire frequency and magnitude, and biodiversity and invasive species. Many areas are already experiencing significant increases in temperature and a reduction in rainfall over the past two decades, manifested as extended periods of regional droughts, such as those occurring in Australia since 2002; and in Afghanistan from 1998 to 2005. These trends are likely to lead to decreases in the amount of water available for human populations, agriculture, and ecosystems, as well as increased energy use for air conditioning in urban centers.

Sea level change has the potential to affect many desert cities on low-lying coasts. These include Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the Arabian Gulf, Nouakchott in Mauritania, and Walvis Bay in Namibia. Melting of ice caps in high latitudes, combined with thermal expansion of the world’s oceans as a result of global warming have increased sea levels globally by 0.1–0.25m in the last 100 years. Recent studies indicate a rise of 1.75 mm per year since 1950. If these trends continue, sea level will rise by about 0.30 m in the next century, leading to increased flooding of coastal salt flats (sebkhas) and a rise in water tables near the coast, so creating enhanced problems of salt corrosion of concrete structures, incursion of saline groundwater, and reduced drainage in coastal urban areas. An indication of the areas likely to be affected can be gained by mapping the extent of marine conditions experienced during the mid-Holocene rise in sea level, some 4000 years ago.

The effects of future global climate change on drylands varies from one desert region to another. Studies of past environmental changes in these regions can point to the areas vulnerable to future changes, as well as the magnitude of changes in the recent past. Climate models indicate that all deserts will experience a rise in temperature. The projected temperature increase varies regionally from 1 to 7°C, with an average of 3.8°C. Climate model projections differ considerably in the projected changes in rainfall, especially for desert margins, such as the Sahel region of Africa. Some deserts, including the Gobi and Kalahari, may experience increased rainfall, many others, for example the Sahara, Australian, and the Arabian deserts are projected to become even drier. Many studies suggest that climatic variability will increase, likely leading to periods of extended drought (mega droughts) lasting for decades or more. In any case, the effect of increased temperatures will be to increase evaporation and evapotranspiration, leading to enhanced aridity in many regions. Decreased effectiveness of rainfall will lead to less recharge of groundwater and reduced runoff, further stressing the water resources of many regions. Lower effective precipitation will stress vegetation cover, resulting in remobilization of previously vegetation-stabilized sand dunes, in areas like the Kalahari of southern Africa, the High Plains of the US Interior, the southern Sahara, and Australia.

In many desert margin areas, traditional pastoral societies will be devastated by such changes, leading to increased migration to urban areas.
College music – ups and Downes

Music is central to life at Fitzwilliam and Dr Michael Downes, the College’s new Music Director, has the job of coordinating the many different strands of activity while also initiating new projects. He has a varied background with two Cambridge degrees (a BA in English and an MPhil in Musicology from King’s) and a doctorate from Sussex on the music and ideas of Debussy; since finishing that, he has worked in musical roles including conductor, lecturer, administrator, writer and editor. He feels his non-musical first degree helps him empathise with students who enjoy music while studying other disciplines, and since Fitz only takes two Music students each year, this is an important quality. The scope of musical activity at College is highly diverse, ranging from swing bands to chapel choirs and from a capella groups to intercollegiate orchestras. Of course, many groups already run very successfully under student direction so Michael’s role here is simply to offer support and advice where needed, but he is also seeking to develop new activity in several different areas.

One of his biggest aspirations is to bring opera to Fitzwilliam by forming a chamber opera group to perform baroque, classical and twentieth-century works supported by a small orchestra. This will be a new opportunity for students not just at Fitzwilliam but also throughout Cambridge, and the auditorium will offer the ideal venue for this enterprise. Michael also wishes to encourage contemporary music and has been working with Fergus MacLeod, a first-year Music undergraduate, to form Ensemble CB3, a group of talented student composers and performers from Fitzwilliam and the neighbouring colleges. Fergus says, “Michael and I met at Matriculation dinner and within a couple of minutes discovered we both thought there was far too little modern music in Cambridge, so we decided to solve the problem, and Ensemble CB3 was born! He is fantastic in the amount of support, interest, expertise and time he gives in whatever he gets involved with. There can’t be many people who can conduct Schoenberg’s First Chamber Symphony and move house at the same time!”

CB3’s inaugural concert took place in February to great acclaim, featuring new student compositions alongside works by Schoenberg and Britten. David Atherton OBE (Music 1962), an eminent conductor and founder of the London Sinfonietta, has kindly agreed to be the new ensemble’s Patron.

Alongside his work with College-based groups, Michael would like to see wider use of the College’s stunning auditorium both by visiting musicians and students, and hopes that the regular presence of professional musicians in College will stimulate new student activity. He has begun this process by establishing the Fitzwilliam Chamber Series, a sequence of eight Sunday-evening concerts by professional musicians presenting a diverse and innovative repertoire. Thanks to the support of Hewitsons Solicitors in Cambridge, the series has been widely publicised and has helped further to raise the profile of Fitzwilliam music. The auditorium is also attracting interest from other professional groups:

- for example, in May, singers from the English Touring Opera performed a programme of Lieder accompanied by Gary Cooper at the start of their week of performances at Cambridge Arts Theatre.
- The professional group who visit the College most frequently are, of course, the Fitzwilliam String Quartet, and developing the important relationship with the FSQ is another of Michael’s priorities. The quartet, originally founded in 1968 by two Fitzwilliam undergraduates and one apiece from King’s and St John’s, has since performed all over the world. Their termly visits offer students the great experience of learning from and performing with leading professional musicians and Fitzwilliam is tremendously lucky to have this resource.

Michael’s final ambition is to further develop links with the broader community within the University and beyond, building on the work done by Peter Tregear and others. There is already close cooperation with neighbouring colleges, New Hall, Girton, Magdalene and Churchill, through the Orchestra on the Hill and now CB3. Michael would like to build on these associations while also encouraging local schools and youth music groups to participate in the musical opportunities offered by Fitzwilliam. With the support of those Fellows who are anxious to see music grow at Fitz and a talented group of students who wish to extend their musical abilities, his plans have every chance of succeeding.

None of this, however, comes without cost. To set up a College-based chamber opera group here is an ideal place to do it, will need funding. The Chapel choir are very impressive and have cut their first CD but they should be heard more widely and would like to tour overseas. Are there alumni, living abroad who would be prepared to host them? If the auditorium is fully to achieve its potential as a venue for high-quality concerts, the Steinway piano needs to be either overhauled or replaced, which is obviously a costly proposition.
In Optima XI, Ken Olisa (1971) wrote about his “Fitz moment” and called upon other Members to recall theirs. Tom Poole (Economics and Law 1959) wrote, “Fitzwilliam was the gateway to a very different world with a lifetime of rich experience that it has been my privilege to enjoy”. This may be true of many of our alumni but Tom is different. It was his “Fitz moment”. He has been blind since the age of twelve and was the first totally blind person to have been admitted.

At the age of five, with poor sight, Tom was ejected from his local infants’ school, a teacher having put his inability to read the blackboard down to laziness. He attended Birmingham Royal Institution for the Blind, the only special school his parents could find, but his break came when he was offered a term’s trial at the Royal National College for the Blind and learned more in four terms than he had in the previous eight years. He went on to train as a shorthand typist, with Braille shorthand and touch typing and says, “I believed that being able to take dictation at speed and being able to write for sighted people to read, could be the key to anything I might want to do... and more than anything else I wanted to have the benefit of a university education.”

He became a Home Teacher for the Blind, using evening classes to acquire ‘O’ and then three ‘A’ levels and in September 1958 was invited for interview at Fitzwilliam House. “To arrive at the imposing Georgian doorway of Fitzwilliam House was for me equivalent of presenting myself at the Golden Gates with the Acting Censor, the late WW (Bill) Williams at the head of the interviewing table, as St Peter. His only concern was that I would be able to cope with lighting the gas ring and fire in my room. My confident assurance (on what seemed to me a trivial matter after all I had been through to be sitting there) was accepted.” Dr Ray Kelly (now Life Fellow of Fitzwilliam) who was also present, recalls Bill being concerned that Tom would miss his return train and asked the time of his colleagues. Tom was the first to respond, reading his Braille watch before the others could glance at their analogue ones. The successful interview resulted in Tom being offered a place for the following year, conditional only on his satisfying the University entrance requirements in Latin.

He acquired a Braille copy of ‘The Triennium’ and studied it in every spare waking moment, reciting conjugations and declensions at bus stops and railway platforms in order to commit them firmly to memory and achieve a satisfactory grade. He came up in 1959 and lodged with Len Brooker, the University Boxing Coach and his wife, Edie. He had been here only a few days when Dr Walter Grave intercepted him walking straight past the front of Fitzwilliam House to direct him in, but was told, “I know, I am on my way to Pembroke”. His father had the forethought to take a sheet of plywood from an old tea chest, cut long strips of Braille paper with the street and college names on them and glue them onto the board to illustrate the layout of the city. Tom had committed this to memory and was able to find his way around without difficulty.

He took his exams in a separate room with extra time allowed for the invigilator to dictate the questions which Tom entered on the Braille machine. The answers were then typed using a standard manual typewriter. On one occasion Ray Kelly was invigilating and noticed Tom’s fingers had strayed from the home keys resulting in a page of gobbledegook. It needed only a reminder of the last line of the previous page for Tom to repeat the page verbatim, yet correctly typed, again illustrating the formidable power of his memory.

He followed his Law degree with the LLB course and afterwards, practised at the Chancery Bar, being the first blind person to do so. Eventually, other interests took precedence, restoring properties, bringing up two daughters and jointly founding and running Cambridge Pianola Company. He also burned his fingers when Lloyds foundered and was awarded the MBE for ‘Services to the Blind in Cambridgeshire’. He says of Fitzwilliam, “It has a long established tradition of offering places to those who may not otherwise have been able to benefit from what Cambridge is uniquely able to offer and has never felt constrained to accept only stereotypes that have emerged through a particular educational process or background. Had this ethos not existed in 1958, my life would have been very different. Having knocked on many doors that were not open to me, Fitzwilliam’s welcoming portal was the gateway to a very different world with a lifetime of rich experience that it has been my privilege to enjoy. Thank you, Fitzwilliam and all those associated with our proud and unique College!”
If the cat Fitz

Sam – the bequeathed College cat
Sam’s owner, John W Skillington (History 1926) sadly died last year, aged 98. He was a retired schoolmaster and a former President of the Fitzwilliam Society, 1979–1980. He spent his last few years in a nursing home in Peterborough and left the residue of his estate to Fitzwilliam College. He also expressed a wish, in his Will, that the College would take care of his cat for the remainder of his days, or failing this, that a good home would be found for him. As it was, Sam was already living with his neighbour and had become part of the family. They asked to keep him as he was no youngster and they felt it unfair to re-home him.

Jack – the adopted fictional College cat
The Reverend Alan Cliff (Theology 1958) created the character of ‘Jack the Station Cat’ in his series of children books with the most recent being published in 2006. Alan was featured in Optima II after he generously agreed to donate half the royalties from ‘Jack the Station Cat and the Space Aliens’ to the Fitzwilliam College Appeal and money has been received regularly for the last five years. The College Librarian, Marion McLeod, holds copies of all the books in the “Jack the Station Cat” series and is an inaugural member of the “Jack the Station Cat Appreciation Society”.

Alan lives in Rhyl and two of the nine books about Jack have been translated into Welsh with another one due out this summer. The Reverend Alan Cliff created Jack – the adopted fictional College cat

Sprocket – the last College cat
Sprocket appears in two books: College Cats of Oxford and Cambridge (Richard Surman) and Cambridge Cats (Tony Jedrej). He adopted Fitzwilliam College and lived here happily for ten years before eventually being killed on Huntingdon Road and was laid to rest in the Rose Garden by The Grove. His daily routine consisted of breakfast at 7.30 am with the Maintenance Department, a quick tour of the College with the odd nap in a student room, before a prompt appointment at noon for lunch in the servery, accompanied by a lot of noise if it wasn’t punctual. His afternoons were spent on a chair in the JCR before seeking a warmer for Dave Holton as he went about his duties. In return, he was fed, cared for and appreciated, with his needs (food and occasional medical care) being covered by his College friends.

We are grateful to all the above for their kindness to the College: Sam and his owner for the generous bequest, Jack and his creator for the book royalties and Sprocket, for enhancing the College with his presence.

Give sport a chance

...said Peter Phillips (1966) in Optima XI. And to prove it is still strong at Fitzwilliam:

Alex Hedges (Computer Science 2005) won the men’s individual gold in the twentieth annual varsity gymnastics competition in February with the Cambridge men winning the competition.

Eleanor Goodfield (Law 2004) and Claire Hansell (NatSci 2004) were both selected for the Women’s Lightweight Blue Boat and raced at Henley in July.

Fitz football team won Cuppers last year and although didn’t do so well this year, had the team strengthened by the inclusion of Brendan Threlfall (History 2004) who was named ‘man of the match’ in last year’s varsity match and was in the winning squad again for the 2007 match at Loftus Road.

Finally, Sprocket – the last college cat
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We are grateful to all the above for their kindness to the College: Sam and his owner for the generous bequest, Jack and his creator for the book royalties and Sprocket, for enhancing the College with his presence.
A visitor to one of Cambridge’s older colleges asked the gardener how he managed to create such lush and verdant lawns. The gardener replied, “You cut it and roll it and cut it and roll it. You do that for two hundred years and there you are”. That story evokes the essence of the evolution of the typical Cambridge college, an organic growth over many centuries. At the golden celebration of my matriculation, the wonder of Fitzwilliam is that it has achieved the status of a fully fledged Cambridge college, complete with a superb range of buildings, verdant lawns and gardens that can compete with the best in Cambridge, within those fifty years since I was an undergraduate.

Michaelmas term 1956 was more noted for Anthony Eden’s Blair-like adventure in the Suez Canal than for my arrival in Cambridge to read history but the two events did nearly coincide. Fitzwilliam House was then in the old house opposite the Fitzwilliam museum. After a rather sheltered non-conformist and grammar school upbringing during the Second World War and its immediate aftermath, Fitzwilliam offered me many ‘firsts’. Dining in Hall was never a great culinary experience but it did give me my first taste of pheasant and fresh pineapple (not at the same meal). But what a difference from the splendid Commemoration Feast that I enjoyed in College in April 2006! (There are perks from remembering the College in your Will).

Being non-collegiate meant that all the undergraduates lived in digs scattered around Cambridge under a monstrous regiment of Cambridge landladies. My companion in the first year was that well-known ‘over-sixties’ oarsman, Richard Salmon (1954). I remember that the wall in Richard’s room was just long enough to allow the display of the oar proudly won in the triumphs of the Fitzwilliam 1st VIII. There was no point in me taking up rowing; the wall in my room was too small for an oar.

Fitzwilliam House did its best to give us a feel for life in a ‘proper’ Cambridge college even though there was a faint air of us being second-class citizens. Crammed together behind the 18th century exterior were dining hall, JCR, tutors’ rooms and Chapel, with the library bursting out on Fitzwilliam Street. Things that I didn’t know about until much later were going on behind the scenes but I did experience the first stirrings of the move towards collegiate status and when I returned to take my MA, I found that new buildings had miraculously appeared on the Huntingdon Road site. Along one side of Tree Court were some strange objects which Norman Walters told me were racks for the wine cellar; traditional Cambridge was obviously in mind!

Since then I have returned to Fitzwilliam many times, particularly in the eighties when my daughter, Jenny, was reading English and I have seen the achievement of collegiate status and the remarkable growth of the College buildings and the transformation of the grounds. Most especially, I find the Chapel a wonderful addition to the architectural quality of the College. As a keen gardener I have been delighted to see the change of policy that allowed so much care and attention to be lavished on the college gardens. The fame of the gardens spread to my home just outside Bedford where our village Gardeners Association had a talk from the Fitzwilliam Head Gardener illustrating the birth and growth of the gardens.

I gather that some alumni look back with nostalgia to the old Fitzwilliam House when it was ‘Billy’ rather than ‘Fitz’– and they were good days. It does seem to me, though, that the wide range of buildings and the beautiful gardens on the Huntingdon Road site provide a much more worthy setting for the educational experience that Cambridge offers. I was proud to celebrate the golden anniversary of my matriculation in Fitzwilliam College.
Letters section

A Member was so pleased to renew contact with his contemporaries recently, he wrote:

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“I was delighted to receive an e-mail out of the blue from you last week advising me that two of my old friends from my time at Fitzwilliam – some 38 years ago! – were trying to track me down. I responded enthusiastically and immediately. Lo and behold, just two hours later, I received an e-mail from one of them in Moscow. Another hour later, I received a telephone call from the other who, by sheer good fortune, also lives on the east coast of the US, where I now reside. He and his wife (who I also remember!) are flying down from Boston to visit me and my wife in Florida at the end of February. I know that you have also kindly written to a couple of others on my behalf. I do hope that they will follow up too.

Why do I write to you? Firstly, to extend my sincerest appreciation to you for putting me back in touch, not just with two special friends, but also, potentially a whole bunch of others with whom I also lost contact. I reckon about 7 or 8 at the last count! I have already been in touch with a third friend. Secondly, I want to send out the message to other graduates who may wish to find old friends again, that the service you provide is extremely friendly and efficient. IT WORKS!

We are all in our 50s now and, certainly for me, the opportunity to catch up on the news of so many old colleagues and friends after all these years will be a real joy. I know there will be a number of very happy reunions ahead and I intend to do a much better job of maintaining these important friendships in future. Let me advise you by way of this open letter that I will be only too pleased to connect with any fellow Fitzwilliam colleague who may be interested to track me down! There will always be a welcome here in Central Florida for anyone who gets fed up with the English weather and feels like enjoying temperatures in the 70s at the beginning of February!

Once again, my thanks and appreciation for following up these leads.”

David Stacey (Modern Languages 1969)

Advertising in Optima

This is a new venture. Our guidelines are based on those of Cambridge University publications:

* The cost is £15 for a single insertion.
* There is a limit of 70 words/advertisement.
* Only Members may advertise.
* The College accepts no responsibility for the advertisements or their content.

Apartments to let

South France; self catering apartments for rent year round in wine growers, rustic, 15/16 century, house in medieval village of Montagnac, Languedoc, 30 minutes east Montpellier, 20 minutes to Mediterranean. “PICASSO”, 2 bedrooms, 1 bath, sleeps 4 to 6 from £350/week; “BASQUIAT”, studio with shower and kitchen, sleeps 2 from £235/week. Including all conveniences, utilities, terrace, 4 car garage, washer, dryer, all linens and a bottle of wine included! E-mail for details: malcolmjohnson@shaw.ca (Fitz 1963–68)

New competition

To celebrate building the new Boathouse (see page 3), the competition in Optima XII is to answer to the following question:

**How many bricks does Marriott Construction expect to use in the new Fitzwilliam Boathouse?**

The Quantity Surveyor (Special Projects Division) from Marriotts has provided the answer and the person whose number is nearest to the correct one will win a case of wine (Château St Jacques d’Albas Minervois 2002), donated by Boathouse supporter and former oarsman, Graham Nutter (1966).

Answers to be sent in by 31 July 2007 to Dr Sarah Coppendale at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge CB3 0DG along with your name, telephone number, e-mail and mailing address.

‘Word search’ competition winner

The winner of the competition to see how many words of 3 letters or more could be made from the phrase ‘FITZWILLIAM COLLEGE’ was won by Peter Cowley (Computer Science 1974) with an amazing 538 verified words. Peter lives locally and in February helped at the Science and Technology workshop of the Fitz Careers Event where students had the opportunity to question Members about different careers. He is also director of the Cambridge Computer Lab Ring, an association which fosters the Cambridge community in computing.

Peter and Alison will be coming into College to dine during the Easter Term.
Life after Fitz

Over 200 of you are Career Contacts, which is a super response in the short time that the Career Network scheme has been running.

However, this figure represents less than 3% of Fitz Members. There are so many of you out there who could provide valuable insights into the professional world and give Fitz students the best possible start to their careers.

To find out more and to register, take a look at the Fitz website (www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/alumni) and click on Career Network.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Career Contacts who took part in our inaugural Careers Event in February. The students were enormously grateful for the chance to speak directly to our volunteers, and it proved a very valuable experience for them all. The volunteers were very generous in giving their time to support the current crop of Fitzbillies.

Thank you!

Birthday Celebrations

The Master enjoyed a memorable evening at the New York Harvard Club in February, where he was joined by 50 guests for his New York birthday dinner. A terrific time was had by all, and everyone enjoyed a piece of the birthday cake you can see above!

We must extend a big Thank You to David Meachin (1965) for enabling us to book the Harvard Club for this special occasion.

Overseas Chapters

We have a number of events involving our Overseas Chapters over the next year, including those below.

Hong Kong – Sharon Poh is organising a hiking trip as well as a drinks evening in Lan Kwai Fong. Malaysia – Nicky Padfield will be in Kuala Lumpur in August and she will be hosting a reception. Singapore – David Cardwell is travelling to Southeast Asia in the autumn and will host a drinks evening in Singapore. Southern California – Michael Kezirian and Terry Smith are arranging a visit to the Getty Villa in Malibu followed by lunch.

Reunion highlights

• The Master and College President are giving lectures as part of the University Alumni Weekend programme. Their subjects are Manet and Wittgenstein respectively.

• The long awaited Boathouse Opening Ceremony will take place on Saturday 22nd at 10.30am.

• Chris Pratt, College Bursar and Fitz Society President, will give a talk on the College’s future.

• Words & Music return for their third Reunion performance. This time they will present “Cambridge Eccentrics on the Go”.

• Four Past v Present matches need players and support. Get in touch if you’d like to dust off your boots.

• The Saturday Night Formal Dinner is expected to be full to capacity. The Friday Night Informal Dinner provides a wonderful alternative and is followed by a choral concert in the auditorium.

The College has received a number of copies of the Cambridge 800th Anniversary Campaign report, 2005–2006 for dissemination to our Members. The Campaign was publicly launched in September 2005 in Cambridge followed by other events worldwide and has a goal of £1 billion by 2012. The Memorandum of Understanding between the colleges and the university state that any gift to either college or university counts towards the total raised.

If you would like a copy of the report, please contact Sarah on 01223 332075 or e-mail sc266@cam.ac.uk.