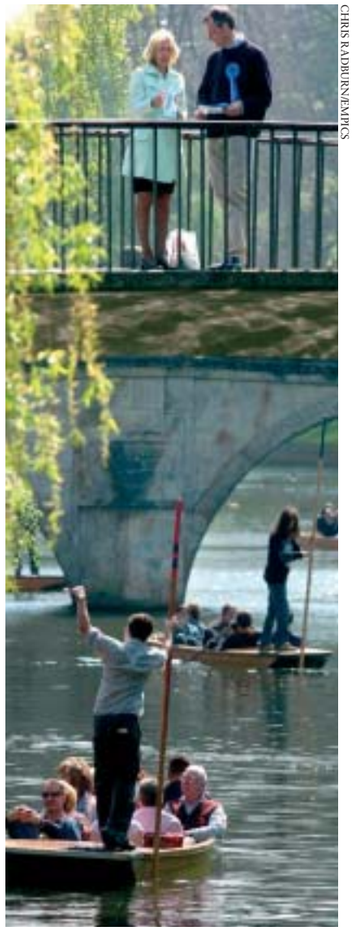
University plays central role in politics of the nation



CHRIS RADBURN/EMPICS

At the General Election in May over ten per cent of those elected were educated at Cambridge, a proportion that has now remained steady over three parliaments. Almost twice as many alumni won for the Conservatives (38) as for Labour (21), with a rising number of Liberal Democrats (8) and the much admired Independent, Richard Taylor, the MP for Wyre Forest, bringing up the rear.

Dr Taylor was one of seven Clare alumni elected, alongside Michael Wills and Geoffrey Robinson for Labour, and Peter Lilley, Tim Loughton and Robert Key for the Conservatives. Fellow of Clare David Howarth, a law lecturer in the Department of Land Economy, became the new Liberal Decocrat MP for Cambridge, putting an end to the thirteen-year reign of Labour's Anne Campbell (Newnham 1959) by 19,152 votes to 14,813. The well-liked Mrs Campbell attributed her defeat to intense local opposition to increased student tuition fees and the invasion of Iraq.

The Cambridge election proved to be a family affair in which Mr Howarth also saw off the Conservatives' Ian Lyon (Trinity 1982), seen left canvassing on Garret Hostel Bridge, and a colourful Green candidate, Martin Lucas-Smith (King's 1997), whose undergraduate career improbably combined student union politics with singing counter-tenor in King's Choir. After the declaration at 5.16am, right, the less-than-bitter rivals managed a handshake to acknowledge Mr Howarth becoming the first Liberal MP for Cambridge in almost a century.

Behind Clare, which heads *CAM*'s informal college league of MPs, come Emmanuel and Fitzwilliam with five members each, and Corpus, Downing, Magdalene, Selwyn and Trinity with four. Caius, Christ's, Jesus, King's, Newnham and Sidney Sussex each contributed three.

The fabled Cambridge mafia fell apart very publicly six weeks before the election at Arundel when Conservative Party deputy-chairman Howard Flight (Magdalene 1966) paid the price for

IMIMAGES.CO.UK

loose talk by having his political career brutally terminated by party leader Michael Howard (Peterhouse 1959). His only consolation, he said, was that Nick Herbert, the candidate ultimately elected in his stead, 'is a member of the same Cambridge college as me – Magdalene'.

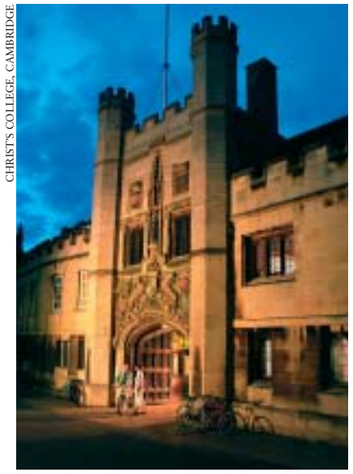
Almost a third of Howard's shadow cabinet are now alumni, including party chairman Francis Maude (Corpus 1972), and Oliver Letwin (Trinity 1975). Vince Cable (Fitzwilliam 1962) and David Laws (King's 1984) are the LibDem's economic heavyweights, while the party president is Simon Hughes (Selwyn 1970). In the Cabinet itself, Charles Clarke (King's 1969) is Home Secretary, Patricia Hewitt (Newnham 1967) Health Secretary, Geoff Hoon (Jesus 1973) Leader of the House, and Lord Falconer of Thoroton (Queens' 1970) Secretary for Constitutional Affairs.

MICHAEL DERRINGER

Peaty. *The natural landscape of the Fens, with its still, brackish pools, reeds, sedge, dog daisies and willow scrub is recreated in a new £72,000 Fen Display at the University Botanic Garden. Open daily 10–6. Admission £3. Children free*

MCC COLLECTION

Bat and pad. *Published to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the first recorded University match in 1754, Giles Phillips'* On Fenner's Sward. A History of Cambridge University Cricket Club *(Tempus, £25) will reward anyone with the slightest interest in sport. Leased initially from a cricket-mad cigar merchant called Francis Fenner for £60 a year in 1848, Fenner's has been the home of Cambridge cricket ever since. Fenner stands far left in this lithograph of Town and University players from 1847*



CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

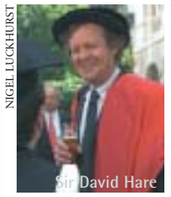
Towering achievement. *To celebrate its 500th anniversary, Christ's has produced an excellent college history. Edited by David Reynolds,* Christ's. A Cambridge College Over Five Centuries *is published by Macmillan at £25*

CHRIS RADBURN/EMPICS

En fête. *Accompanied by the Chancellor, the Queen visited Cambridge on 8 June to open the Fitzwilliam Museum's new courtyard extension and the award-winning Centre for Mathematical Sciences on Clarkson Road*

New appointments

At the traditional ceremony in June, the Chancellor, the Duke of Edinburgh, admitted six distinguished men and women to honorary degrees: Baroness Hale of Richmond, the first woman to become a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary; chemist Professor Carl Djerassi, the father of the birth-control pill; former UN Under-Secretary-General Sir Brian Urquhart; author Louis Cha, whose Chinese martial arts novels have sold over 300m copies; writer and broadcaster Professor David Crystal, author of *The Cambridge Encylopedia of Language*; and radical playwright and actor Sir David Hare.



NIGEL LUCKHURST

Sir David Hare

At Harvard University, historian of political thought Quentin Skinner, the Regius Professor of Modern History, has become an honorary Doctor of Laws.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Quentin Skinner

Sir David Wallace, currently Vice-Chancellor of Loughborough University, becomes director of the Newton Institute in October 2006, on the retirement of Sir John Kingman.

Six members of the University have been elected Fellows of the Royal Society: organic chemist Ian Paterson (Jesus); applied mathematician Anthony Pearson (BP Institute); neuroscientist Trevor Robbins (Downing); biostatistician David Speigelhalter (Institute of Public Health); developmental geneticist Daniel St Johnston (Gurdon Institute); and computer scientist Luca Cardelli (Microsoft Research/Girton).

MICHAEL DERRINGER

Arise Sir Jack. *The protean anthropologist and historian Jack Goody, still keeping younger scholars on their toes in his eighties, was knighted to universal pleasure in the Queen's birthday honours. A fellow of St John's since 1961, Professor Goody had his eyes opened to distant cultures during war service in the Middle East and to anthropology by three years spent in prisoner-of-war camps. His main interests are the history of the family and marriage, literacy, and the culture of food and flowers*

From the Editor

There was once a time when student contrarians used memorably to sport T-shirts that declared 'You can send me to college, but you cannot make me think'. These days the problem is rather different. Plenty of Cambridge students think in overdrive, but if they are British and want to pursue research, it's becoming harder and harder to get sent to college. And the situation looks set to get worse.

Three Cambridge years will soon cost undergraduates over £20,000 in tuition fees and living expenses – proportionately more for four-year courses like engineering (let alone the six years required for medicine). And that assumes a hairshirt existence: no pubs, no clubs and no trips abroad.

The University has conjured up an admirable new bursary scheme that from 2006 will support the less-well-off (though this needs a massive injection of endowment funds to nourish it in the long term). But most students will graduate in future with multiple debts, to the Student Loan Company, banks and finance houses.

That is not simply a pressure to avoid poorly paid public-service jobs such as teaching. It's also a reason for rejecting research and getting out and earning (especially if you reckon to have children further down the road). Overseas students wanting to do a PhD can apply to one of several Cambridge trusts which currently help support over 2,000 students. Some scientists can find a billet in a research group that will see them through financially. And the richer colleges still spend generously to attract the truly brilliant, whatever their subject or country of origin.

But that still lets a great deal of research talent go to waste, in the humanities and social sciences above all. Grants are few, and many British employers remain so indifferent to research that self-funding is rarely sensible financially. We all benefit from universities. But without better research support, where will tomorrow's academics come from? ■

Fen life revisited

The fascinating Cambridge and County Folk Museum on Castle Hill reopened its doors in April after refurbishment and rebuilding backed by the Heritage Lottery Fund. So if you're planning a trip to the city this summer, do set aside a couple of hours to discover the social history and folklore of the other Cambridge.

CAMBRIDGE AND COUNTY FOLK MUSEUM

Founded by local people in 1936, the museum is devoted to town rather than gown. Its substantial collection of pictures, documents and household objects tell the story of the Cambridge region through the lives and customs of working people.

Architects Freeland Rees Roberts have added to the original sixteenth-century building a striking brick-and-timber extension in bold vernacular style, above, approached across what was once the stable-yard of the White Horse Inn. Yet despite new visitor facilities, the museum has lost none of its unique atmosphere.

2/3 Castle Street, Cambridge. Mon–Sat 10.30–5; Sun 2–5 (Oct–March, closed Mons). See www.folkmuseum.org.uk

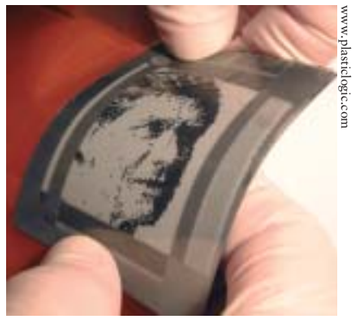
MICHAEL DERRINGER

Grandstand view. *Fenner's, the home of Cambridge cricket, has been transformed by a new £9m residential building for Hughes Hall, the University's oldest graduate college. Built on a curve around the ground's northern boundary, the development contains study bedrooms for 80 students, a 100-seat dining hall and a combination room shared by students and college fellows. From the crease, the building gives Fenner's a real sense of sporting arena. And, yes, a window has already been broken…*

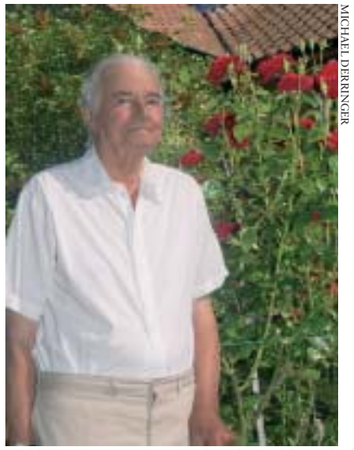
University inaugurates impact study

No one doubts that Cambridge provides tremendous economic value, particularly in terms of technological innovation. Direct spin-offs include companies such as Cambridge Display Technology and Plastic Logic, right, which is developing electronic circuits printed on plastic.

Now Cambridge has commissioned a survey of the entrepreneurial activity of its alumni as part of a pioneering attempt to quantify the University's national and international impact. A questionnaire is enclosed with every copy of *CAM*, which readers are invited to complete and return. The results will be reported in these pages.



www.plasticlogic.com



MICHAEL DERRINGER

In bloom. *Botanist Max Walters has celebrated his 85th birthday with a new book – a superb photographic field guide to the trees of Britain and northern Europe. Written with John and Jill White,* Trees *is published by OUP at £25*

NAOMI LONGWORTH/INSET MICHAEL DERRINGER

Shipping forecast. *Cambridge won the first ever cross-Channel boat race on 20 June when a crew from the Lady Margaret Boat Club at St John's, inset, beat two Oxford boats over 21 gruelling miles from Dover to Sangatte in a time of three hours 37 minutes. In close pursuit across one of the world's busiest shipping lanes was a First & Third crew from Trinity, which completed the course just three minutes behind. The charity race may now become an annual fixture. See* www.thechannelrace.org

MICHAEL DERRINGER

Sultry. *Warm weather brought out revellers as the sun came up after St John's May Ball*

EMPICS/BOZIDAR VUKICEVIC

Titanic achievement. *CUBC double Blues Rick Dunn (St Edmund's 2000), saluting, and James Livingston (St Catharine's 1999) experience that sinking feeling at an exhibition race in Croatia in May, while rowing for the alumni club, Crabtree*

KETTLE'S YARD

True to type. *'Mechano-Faktur' by the Polish artist Henryk Berlewi, from the arresting show* Avant Garde Graphics, 1918–34, *at Kettle's Yard gallery from 30 July to 25 September. Open Tues–Sun and BH Mons, 11.30–5. Free*

Tom Ebbutt on Student Life

☐ Summer visits to Cambridge always hang under the threat of unwanted interruption from boys in boaters loitering almost everywhere between the Anchor and Magdalene Bridge. For the city's punt touts only clear academic credentials qualify you for non-harassment, and carrying an enormous pile of chemistry books on every trip past Trinity can get a little tiresome. Now the city council is considering a bye-law that could see touts

IMIMAGES.CO.UK

prevented from making 'unreasonable approaches' to members of the public. In future, they will need to be licensed and anyone caught flouting the law could face a fine of up to £500. So here's to a more peaceful Cambridge this summer. Now all we need is for someone to put a quota on the hordes of pesky tourists.

☐ Formal hall, arguably one of the key experiences that makes Cambridge special, has been under the spotlight with a survey from CUSU that peers under the tablecloth to give a university-wide picture of this long-established institution. The gulf between the best and the worst performers is startling. Prices range from Hughes Hall, where you are hit with a monstrous £12 charge, to just £3.15 at Jesus. At Magdalene you can dine under candlelight for a mere £3.33. When food quality is taken into consideration – with Magdalene's being described as 'far from special' – it is Churchill that emerges top of the league, with good quality fare on offer for £5. So now Cambridge's drinking societies know where to head when it all starts all over again in Michaelmas.

☐ Those of us about to leave university life behind can look forward to a metropolitan market increasingly populated with schemes allowing us to relive much-loved Cambridge institutions. One recent launch, 'Boys and Girls', takes the idea of formal swaps, dispensing with gowns and decorum and keeping just the tried and tested formula of a great night out. As with Rumboogie, the club night stalwart of Cambridge Wednesdays that has recently had a few tentative outings by the Thames, instinct says that it's an idea with potential far beyond the fens.

☐ Students who shrink at the prospect of a commute or a standard nine-to-five day now have on offer an even greater range of opportunities with which to turn their bright ideas into hard cash – they can take to the stage to compete in Cambridge University Entrepreneurs' new 'Dragon's Den' competition. Those who entered the inaugural den this year were nothing if not ambitious. One company, EnvAl – which has worked out how to recycle drinks cartons in their entirety – won funding of £150,000. And so precocious is another winner, Bopphy, that it is now looking across the pond to Wall Street for funding to commercialise its technology. The idea – and this is no joke – is to provide internet services through power lines. Mindblowing.

☐ Forget the *Times* or *Guardian* tables. The latest way to rank the nation's universities is by 'duck density'. Those who have produced the league table say that ducks provide the 'the ultimate mark of

MICHAEL DERRINGER

a university's prowess and brilliance'. At present Cambridge sits just outside the top five with a rating of 5.4, well below Loughborough University, currently in pole position with an outstanding 14.3 ducks per rood. However, investigation reveals that only the river Cam has been included in the survey, meaning that the outstanding pond at Emmanuel, above – as much a symbol of the college as the chapel is of King's – is not yet included. Readers can therefore rest assured that once justice is done there will again be clear water between Cambridge and the rest of Britain's academic flock. For the table itself, see *duckdensity.org.uk/* ■

Tom Ebbutt has just graduated from Trinity Hall in History. For more student news, visit www.varsity.co.uk