

# classics @ cambridge

The Newsletter for the Faculty of Classics

Michaelmas 2010



*Scenes of metamorphosis at the Faculty, 2009-10*

## From the Chairman

The Faculty has this last year been something of a building site. We were fortunate to receive funding, channeled from the Higher Education Funding Council for England, to construct a small extension to the Faculty building, around the area of the lobby to the main entrance. So back in July 2009 works began, with the Library temporarily reduced in size and entered from the west end, the Museum closed for the duration, and our literally long-suffering secretarial staff decanted to a portakabin in the courtyard. The building operation itself went remarkably smoothly, and was completed at the end of February of this year, within budget and on time. Our thanks are due to all involved in the operation - architects, contractors, quantity surveyor, consultants, estates staff, as well as our own staff - which from our end was orchestrated with

meticulous care by Holly Kinnear, our Administrative Officer.

Now the portakabin has gone, and the courtyard has been landscaped, with a delightful border fronting the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies building, and three standing stones: a boulder of Scottish granite, a pillar of Welsh slate, and a *stele* (if I may so call it) of Irish quartz. The doors to the reconstituted entrance achieved some notoriety in the national press, but the new quarters are pleasant to look at and work in, and colleagues seem universally happy with the extended lobby area, expanded library space, a reconfigured administrative suite, and - the initiative which attracted the HEFCE grant in the first place - research offices on the first floor. The first occupant of this new Research Centre is the Greek Lexicon Project, where Dr Anne Thompson, senior member of the editorial team working to produce a modern dictionary of

ancient Greek that will serve the needs of 21st century students and scholars alike, is installed in what she describes as the loveliest office in our building.

This year we welcomed two colleagues to help us temporarily with the teaching need created by Dr Carrie Vout's two year leave as winner of a Philip Leverhulme Prize, a celebrated award scheme for younger scholars (former holders among colleagues are Dr James Clackson and Dr Rebecca Flemming), and by absences of Professors Mary Beard and Simon Goldhill researching on their project - again funded by the Leverhulme Trust - on the reception of the Classics in Victorian England. Dr Victoria Moul lectured on Latin literature and ran an MPhil class on the reception of Classics. Victoria was a tower of strength all round, and now moves to a permanent position at King's College London. Professor





*Two pillars of wisdom*

Robin Cormack, after a distinguished career at the Courtauld Institute, lectures remarkably both on classical Greek art and for the Part II X paper 'Prostitutes and Saints'. We are very pleased that he is able to be with us for a second year in 2010-11.

One new permanent addition to the academic staff also joined us. We have been delighted to welcome Dr Renaud Gagné, a scholar in the field of early Greek literature, who comes to the Faculty and to a Fellowship at Pembroke from McGill University in

Montreal, having with Dr Kinnear's help having successfully negotiated the anfractuosités of the UK Border Authority's rulebook. His Part IB course on Mythical Narratives has already made an impact. Dr Helen van Noorden, formerly Research Fellow at Clare, and also a scholar of Greek literature, has moved to a Fellowship at Girton, as Wrigley Lecturer and Director of Studies in Classics. Helen's teaching duties are split 50-50 between College and Faculty, where she is adding further needed strength to the literature lecturing. Finally, to our great pleasure Dr Andrew Wallace-Hadrill returned to Cambridge a year ago as Master of Sidney Sussex, and has already been helping the Faculty in a variety of ways. He is to be congratulated three times over, since he has now been made both an Honorary Professor of the University and a Fellow of the British Academy, an accolade also going this year to Mary Beard.

The most notable student achievement in 2009-10 speaks volumes for the continuing success of our teaching programme, now seven years old, for the four year pathway through

the Tripos taken by the cohort who spend a first extra year learning the Latin they had insufficient (if any) opportunity to take at school - before going on to the Intensive Greek course in their second year. There have been four year degree students achieving first class results in previous years. This summer, however, Rosalind Quick of Robinson College, originally from Abingdon and Witney College in Oxfordshire, topped Part II of the Tripos with a starred first. We congratulate Rosalind on this remarkable result. Rosalind now goes on to take the MPhil, funded by one of the three hotly contested Arts and Humanities Research Council research studentships allocated to the Faculty.

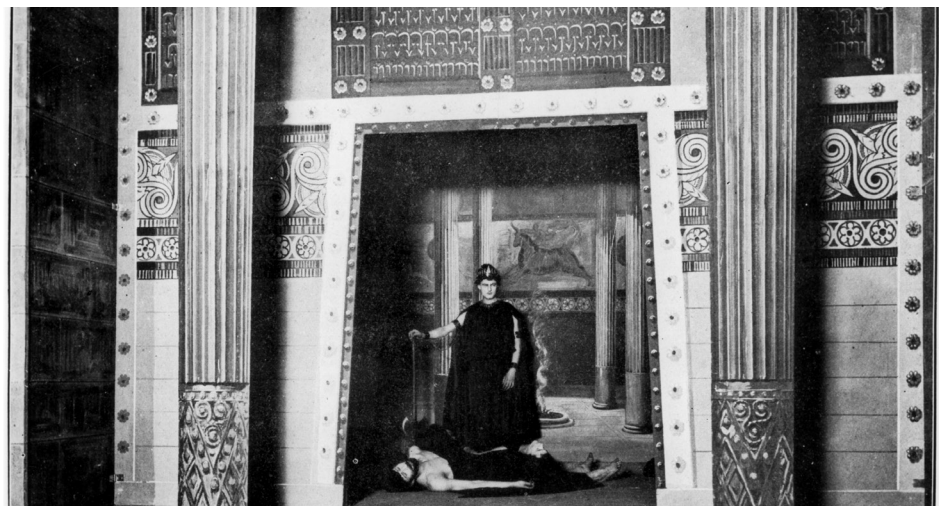
The Faculty is of course planning for a future where everything in the country will be less generously funded than in recent times. We are determined to maintain the quality of what Cambridge Classics does and of the opportunities we can give to young people. I retire myself at the end of the coming academic year, but I have no doubt that colleagues who remain in post will be seeking your help in ensuring that that happens.

*Malcolm Schofield*

## The 2010 Greek Play

The Cambridge Greek Play this year reaches the fortieth production in its 128-year history, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. It is an ambitious project – last attempted in 1953 – to bring Aeschylus' rich poetry to the stage in the original language, though the combination of surtitles and music, we hope, will help to bring lyrics and dialogue to life for Hellenists and Greekless alike. Director Helen Eastman, herself a classics graduate and the Producer of the Onassis Programme in Oxford, has brought with her a Greek-trained collaborator, composer and ex-Cambridge classicist Alex Silverman, with whom she recently worked to produce *Cloudcuckooland*, a musical adaption for children of Aristophanes' *Birds*. Singing and live instrumental music will be central to the production, keeping alive traditions both ancient and modern (past Cambridge Greek Play composers include Parry and Vaughan Williams).

A mostly student cast was assembled in the Lent term and spent a week in workshops during the Easter



*From the 1900 production*

vacation. For most of them Greek is a new experience: language coaching with Anthony Bowen and James Diggle is bringing them up to speed on pronunciation if not necessarily every point of grammar. As it turns out, there are more classicists on the crew – not just the indispensable surtitle operator, but also several of the stage managers. Creative work by Helen and Alex, as well as designer Neil Irish and lighting designer Neill Brinkworth, is already well advanced, but the company's

work begins in earnest in September, with four weeks of intensive rehearsals before the Michaelmas term begins. The show will then run for eight performances across four days (13-16 October), in its traditional venue, the Cambridge Arts Theatre. Booking is open now at [www.cambridgeartstheatre.com](http://www.cambridgeartstheatre.com) (or 01223 503333), and more information about the play can be found at [www.cambridgegreekplay.com](http://www.cambridgegreekplay.com), including details of schools talks, and a symposium planned for 17 October.

## Research at Herculaneum

Herculaneum is significantly different from its more familiar neighbour, Pompeii, both in the precise dynamics of its destruction and in the history of its excavation. Buried more deeply under the layers of hot ash consolidated into rock, it was always much harder to explore than Pompeii, and was spared the systematic looting which Pompeii suffered. At the same time, the heat carbonised organic materials like wood and foodstuffs, with the result that it preserves some of the most vivid testimony of ancient life. But the same features that make the site vivid, mean that it is delicate and hard to conserve. The Herculaneum Conservation Project was set up in 2001 to help the Italian authorities, the Soprintendenza Archeologica, to address the mounting crisis affecting the site. The initiative was that of the US philanthropic foundation, the Packard Humanities Institute, under Dr David W. Packard, which has to date spent around

15 million euros, and has thereby encouraged new investment by the Italian authorities. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill directed the project from the outset, supported by a multidisciplinary team of specialists, and the British School at Rome came in as a partner to take responsibility for carrying out the project. The main focus has been on the infrastructural problems of the site, like drains and roofs, on the relationship of the site to the modern city that partly overlies it, and on scientific research into problems of decay. It has produced numerous new findings about the site, including a long sewer still full of human and other waste, which casts important light on Roman diet, and, down by the ancient seashore, the entire remains of the timbers of an ancient roof, complete with the wooden ceiling, decorated with paint and gold leaf. Future plans include the excavation of the Basilica, today partly visible at the edge of the site, and the opening of a museum to display the site's unique artefacts.



*A peaceful scene in the Yorkshire countryside, July 2010: current undergraduates conducting a geophysical survey to determine sub-surface remains at the Romano-British site of Isurium Brigantium (Aldborough). The project is directed by Professor Martin Millett.*

## The Life of a Leventis Professor

First a disclaimer: what follows, I am uncomfortably aware, may sometimes sound like boasting - but this is very far from my intention, or from the spirit in which it is written. Classical studies in this country generally are, like the Arts and Humanities even more generally, in a parlous state, financially speaking, from the point of view of future funding, that is. Jobs, even whole departments, are at risk, from public funding cuts. Externally generated funding, in the form of private philanthropic benefactions, is no longer a desirable luxury but an imperious necessity, and will be so for the foreseeable future. I am therefore in the fortunate but almost wholly exceptional position of being able to celebrate a quite extraordinary piece of just such philanthropy: the first full endowment of a Classics chair at Cambridge since World War II.

The endowment occurred in 2008, thanks to the profound generosity of the AG Leventis charitable Foundation, established in 1979, which agreed to fund in full an established Professorship within the Faculty of Classics. Luck was on my, and our, side, in that I was chosen to be the first postholder. But there were other fortunately favouring circumstances, besides the sheer generosity of the current Foundation Trustees. The late Constantinos (Deno) Leventis had read Classics at Clare in the 1950s, and Cambridge was coming towards the end of a hugely successful, billion-pound



fundraising campaign, the so-called 800th anniversary campaign led by the Vice-Chancellor and the University's Development office, with which the Leventis Foundation had long established fruitful and cordial contacts.

I took up office as the AG Leventis Professor of Greek Culture (meaning all Hellenic cultural activity and achievement between roughly 1500 BC/E and CE/AD 330) on 1 October 2008. In February 2009 I delivered my Inaugural Lecture in the Mill Lane Lecture rooms (where I had begun my own Cambridge lecturing career almost exactly 30 years before) entitled 'Forever Young: Why Cambridge Has a Professor of Greek Culture'. I dedicated it to the memory of Deno Leventis (1938-2002). In the Lecture I proposed that this was to be a new kind of chair: a chair not only for Research but also for Outreach, for the advancement of the public understanding of ancient

Greek (pre-Byzantine) Culture. After explaining the Chair's origins and causes, and pondering the possible meanings of the Professorship's title, I sought to explore and explode four 'myths' about the ancient Greeks and their culture (or cultures), myths deliberately chosen to illustrate the huge and diverse range of the Hellenic tradition that is still actively at work in our own contemporary culture. The four, in order of discussion, not necessarily of importance, were: (i) that there was an entity called 'Ancient Greece'; (ii) that the ancient Greeks were technologically backward; (iii) that the ancient Greeks really were (or looked) anything like they



are depicted in such Hollywood movies as *300*; and (iv) that the Greeks invented democracy in anything like the form and sense in which we understand that institution today.

The Lecture was at once made available electronically, thanks to the Faculty's Computer Officer Steve Kimberley, as a podcast. It was published in hard copy format, revised and fully annotated, towards the end of 2009 by the University's Press. In the interim between the event and its C.U.P. publication I had published two books, an unusual collocation and coincidence: *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice* (C.U.P.) and *Ancient Greece: A History in Eleven Cities* (Oxford U.P.). Both in their different ways were intended to help fulfil my chair's outreach mission, but the former - in the nature of the 'Key Themes in Ancient History' series to which it belongs - was the more scholarly product, and so more restricted in its accessibility. Ancient Greece, however, was published by the trade section of the O.U.P. and launched at the Hellenic Centre in London, and has had numerous subsequent outings in the form of lectures and discussions. I have lectured on the project as such (how does one do anything like justice to the 1000 or so cities that together made up ancient Hellas over a millennium or more, in just 40,000 words?) in Cambridge and New York, on ancient Massilia (Marseille today) also in New York (the Onassis Foundation), Cheltenham (the Times Literary Festival) and Cambridge (Clare's annual Alumni day, 2010), on (Egyptian) Alexandria in the universities of Notre Dame and McGill, and on Athens and its democracy at the Guardian Hay Literary Festival. A revised paperback will appear next year in the O.U.P.'s hugely successful 'Very Short Introduction' series, which was inaugurated by Mary Beard's and John Henderson's wonderfully imaginative and provocative volume entitled simply (or rather complexly) *Classics*.

Apart from scholarly and less scholarly publication, I seek to achieve outreach in three main ways: by responding to a regular stream of email enquiries about ancient Greek history generally (I don't 'blog' - the Faculty already has a peerless blogographer); by giving schools talks in Sovereign Education sixth-form conferences in London and in schools ranging across the sixth-form spectrum from York College to my own alma mater, St Paul's,

and on topics including the making of *300* (for which I was a very minor adviser), and the narrative qualities of the *Odyssey*; and, not least, by 'doing' TV, Film and Radio. With Bettany Hughes I have helped make four documentary TV series for both Channel 4 and BBC 2, the latest on Socrates's Athens; in 2008 I was filmed at Sounion for a US History Channel programme on the Battle of Plataea (the topic of my next book), and most recently I have been filmed, in Sparta, for a six-part BBC Worldwide series on 'Ancient Worlds' to be aired in 2010/1. As a lesser sideline I co-edited a volume of scholarly essays on Oliver Stone's *Alexander* movie, a film which was not altogether well received either in scholarly circles or by the general audience but provoked a good deal of salutary discussion, both about the eponym himself and about the protocols of making historical non-documentary feature films. In radio Melvyn Bragg's Radio 4 'In Our Time' attracts a regular and devoted audience in seven figures, so it is always a privilege to be asked to appear on it, as it was to contribute to Michael Portillo's 'Democracy on Trial' R4 series.

For the immediate future I shall be organising a collaborative, interactive (phone-in/internet) series of talks and discussions on 'Marathon 2500', starting with a formal, broadcast lecture by me at New York University (where I hold a visiting professorship), in September 2010. There is a widespread but erroneous belief that 2010 is the 2500th anniversary of the Battle of Marathon (490 BC/E) - actually, that will fall in 2011. But in my series, which is organised under the aegis of the not-for-profit 'Reading Odyssey' organisation, we will seek to have our (sesame and honey) cake and eat it, by starting in 2010 and ending in 2011. Of course the modern marathon race takes its name from that Battle, and that is celebrated worldwide. But let us not forget the annual Spartathlon, almost six times as long, which commemorates the run of Philippides the bematist from Athens to Sparta shortly before the Battle took place. Philippides's mission - to persuade the Spartans to fight together with the Athenians and Plataeans against the Persians - was a failure. We offer a prayer to the great god Pan that ours - to inform and critically educate - will not be.

*Paul Cartledge*

## Pompeii and Delphi on the small screen



*Professor Mary Beard*

Television – *'The word is half-Latin, half-Greek. No good can come of it'* – continues to offer an extra-mural platform to Faculty staff. This autumn sees Mary Beard presenting an hour-long documentary about Pompeii, in which (she promises) there will be no dramatic reconstructions or computer graphics; while Michael Scott, (currently Moses and Mary Finley Fellow, Darwin College, and Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty), will front another documentary, investigating the oracular sanctuary of Delphi in ancient Greece and asking how it managed to survive as the 'bellybutton' or *omphalos* of the ancient world for over 1000 years, and what Delphi still has to say to us today. The programme examines not just the activity of the oracle at Delphi, but the stories of the many other gods, athletic games, monuments to unity and civil war that populated the sanctuary, showing how Delphi evolved to reflect and affect the changing world around it. (Michael's book on Delphi and Olympia was published by CUP earlier this year).



*Dr Michael Scott*

## Supporting the classics cause

Classics at Cambridge flourishes thanks to the generosity of its many supporters past and present. As government funding retreats, our need to call upon individual donors and private bequests becomes more pressing. If you are able to help maintain Cambridge Classics as a centre of excellence, open to students from varying backgrounds, please contact us:  
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