newsletter of the retired senior members of homerton college, cambridge. April 2010

The Royal Charter
The future of education
Sailing through life
Farewells, Emeriti and more...
a word from the editor

Dear Readrs,

This ‘bumper issue’ of the RSM newsletter will, I’m sure, stir up a mixture of feelings. Pride that College has been granted the Royal Charter, but also sadness, sadness at the loss of so many friends and colleagues. I would like to single out John Hammond, who we all know, worked tirelessly for Homerton and the RSMs. John was always there to support us when Patti and I were preparing issues of this newsletter. His loss is immense.

I’m sure you will be pleased that Pat Cooper has, at last, given us another wonderful piece about her extraordinary life at sea. It’s also great to have two pieces by Pauline Curtis and the introduction by our Chair, John Murrell. I think this is a really useful addition and should be a regular feature of the newsletter. Even our Treasurer has written a piece! Mike Younger’s piece, following his marvellous talk to RSMs is reproduced in full.

As for the obituaries, despite my sadness about the loss of such wonderful people, they make fascinating reading. I have included two pieces about a past colleague who was not an RSM, but some of you may remember him – John Jackson, who joined the Art Department back in 1973.

Please submit pieces, however small, for publication. Memories of aspects of College life, your interview day, what you are up to now, anything which you feel would be of interest. No submissions – no newsletter!

Philip

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I
t was the best of times, it was the worst of times...

As for Charles Dickens, so for us this year.

There have been good, even excellent, things to reflect on and be thankful for. We have solved (possibly) the question of organising convenient times for meetings and events and having inexpensive meals in College. Holding the AGM at the same time as the Alumni Weekend and lunching with returning students was clearly a success and the same arrangement will be followed this year. Michael Younger’s seminar this term on ‘The Future of Education in Cambridge?’ followed by lunch in the Great Hall, was well attended and extremely well received.

We have been fortunate enough to recruit new blood to our ranks in the healthy form of Bev Hopper and Peter Raby, with the promise of Ian Morrison joining us in the summer. We extend a warm welcome, thank them for lowering the average age of the RSMA, and look forward to their contribution to the life of the association.

We have taken steps towards becoming more actively involved in the social life of the College. With the majority of members on email, news of college events is now circulated regularly and quickly so that RSMs can join in with such activities as those organised by Sue Conrad and her Social Committee, and we will be kept informed of any excursions resulting from the newly formed Theatre Group. This year, for the first time, an RSMA team took part in the Homerton Charity Quiz Night. Other initiatives have included that of Barbara Pointon and Jane Edden, who are in the process of forming a Choir, the name of which is yet to be determined, but could be ‘The Crumblies’.

We have successfully raised the funding and initiated the process of selection for our Bursary, which will be offered for the first time this year to a Homerton graduate intending to become a teacher. Originally labelled the ‘Foundation Bursary’, we have decided to change the name to more appropriately ‘Charter Bursary’ to more accurately identify it with the big success story of the year, the granting by the Queen of a Charter signifying the final stage in Homerton’s transition from a College of Education to a College of the University of Cambridge.

On the very day that the college received news of the granting of the Charter, one of our number, John Hammond, was elected as Emeritus Fellow.

The pleasure of this significant and happy moment in the history of the college is mixed with great sadness at the loss of six of our colleagues, including John Hammond. Their obituaries stand as evidence of the degree to which they played their part in laying the foundation of the reputation for excellence, which has enabled Homerton to reach its exalted, and well deserved, new status.

For each of them we can only hope that it will be true to say, as Charles Darnay expressed it:

‘It is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known.’

Time alone will tell whether for those who work in the new Homerton it will be true to say:

‘It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done.’

RSMs Emeriti, John, Ian Morrison, Barry Jones and John Beck were elected to Emeritus Fellowships on 15th March 2010.

Postscript:

With the official passing of the role of Homerton Trustee, I have written to all non-College members of that body in the following terms:

‘I write in my capacity as the Chairman of the Homerton Retired Senior Members Association, often referred to as the RSMs. As you will know, this is a group of former members of Homerton staff, which was established by Alison Shrubsole during her time as Principal, to enable some continuity between the past and the ever-changing nature and ethos of Homerton. We have more than seventy members, some of whose service to the college dates back fifty years.

I am confident the College authorities will have it in mind to recognise appropriately your contribution as a Trustee, but the purpose of this letter is simply to express, formally, sincere thanks to you for all the time, energy, commitment and loyalty you have shown to the college, from those of us who, though looking forward with enthusiasm to the ‘new’, belong to the ‘old’ Homerton.’
sailing through life
in the wake of Arthur Ransome and beyond
by Pat Cooper

It all began with ‘Swallows and Amazons’, which we read and re-read avidly in our childhood. We envied the Walkers and the Blacketts and their sailing adventures on Windermere, the Norfolk Broads and the East Coast, but, living as we did in a West Riding town in the heart of the textile industry far away from either coast, we had little hope of following dreams of sailing in our very own boat. Thirty years were to pass before we achieved that ambition. Meanwhile, as Sea Rangers, we had to make do with a whaler on the Huddersfield canal where our ‘voyages’ took us past the gasworks and other ‘notable’ landmarks! However, managing a 16’ boat with five oars in that narrow waterway taught us quite a lot about boat handling. Our early sailing skills were acquired on a reservoir out on the moors in ‘Last of the Summer Wine’ country and eventually on Windermere and the River Dart.

The Arthur Ransome connection has guided us along the way from our early pottering about in Secret Water (aka the Walton Backwaters) where we had our own mooring, sailing off the East Coast out of the River Orwell and, when time permitted, across to Holland. Yes, we did mean to go to sea and later followed in the wake of Ransome in the Baltic States to the Gulf of Riga (where his boat Racundra was built), to the island of Ruhnu and through Estonia, notes alongside our charts. In his book, Racundra’s First Cruise he writes, “The chart that I had read so often in the winter took visible and solid shape as we moved….far away to the east a fantastic

The benefits of cruising under sail according to Eric Hiscock:

“The spice that a suggestion of danger lends to it: the satisfaction of working the winds and tides to the best advantage; the confidence which is acquired when a good landfall is made after a rough passage or a difficult piece of pilotage has been successfully carried out; the feeling of achievement when a strange coast or harbour has been reached under sail; and the never-ending fascination of dark woods of the island of Worms; there, as if floating in the sea, the handful of low buildings on the tiny island of Harry; and somewhere ahead another bell-ruy to be found and passed to make the channel along the eastern side of Harry and avoid the rocks of Worms.”

In our three decades of sailing as joint owners-skippers and qualified Yachtmasters we have travelled North beyond the Arctic Circle, South to Portugal, East as far as St Petersburg, West to SW Ireland and the Western Isles of Scotland and most of the places in between. In fact, we have sailed to seventeen countries and chartered in nine others across three continents. The Baltic has been our preferred cruising ground for the past several years and our present boat, Victrix of Harwich, has, for the last three years, been wintered indoors in NW Sweden. This has enabled us to avoid the inevitable North Sea crossings and concentrate on further exploration in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, the Oslo Fjord and the coast of Norway.

Our boat is in her true element at sea but she has also taken us uncomplainingly cross-country in Sweden. The Gota Canal is a very useful
shortcut across the Swedish peninsular but with 65 locks to negotiate it is not an easy option especially for a short-handed crew. We tackled it three years ago - more or less unscathed. Small vessels transiting the canal provide spectator sport along its banks for the many tourists who eagerly await the not infrequent disasters. So many things can go wrong. As the one who goes ashore with the lines to make the boat fast, I get to meet a lot of people. Many have come up to us and asked, “Are there just the two of you?” One young Swedish lock keeper remarked, “I’ve never seen two old ladies come through the canal on their own before.” Well, he was only about nineteen years old and I don’t suppose he could envisage his granny tackling it! The scenery along the way is mostly rural and very beautiful and we were blessed with glorious weather so it was all worthwhile in the end.

Last summer our four month cruise took us from NW Sweden across to the northernmost tip of Denmark to the SE coast of Norway then round the southernmost point and up the West coast as far as the islands of Lofoten beyond the Arctic Circle – and back, logging almost 3000 miles, a record for us in one season and perhaps our best cruise to date. We met many new friends and were rewarded with magnificent scenery as we sailed amongst fjords and snow-capped mountains to glaciers, fishing harbours and snug deserted anchorages with stunning views - places so quiet and utterly peaceful that even to talk seemed an intrusion. There were very few yachts to be seen north of Bergen and often we had the waters to ourselves. With 22 knots (severe gale force) in a narrow channel with the water suddenly seething and whipped up to a frenzy of foam; sailing in torrential rain like an aerial attack; threading through channels so narrow that you could have struck a match struck a match on the rocks at either side of the boat; negotiating a tortuous way through inner leads where the navigational marks are nothing but thin iron stakes
descend and obliterate every fingerposts with no fingers; with no discernible indication of which way to turn or fingerposts with no fingers; caught in fog which can
crossing the busy shipping lane into Felixstowe, dodged a score of moored boats and never saw or felt a thing!

Above: Lofoten Reflections and Midnight Sun

The Good and Bad of Cruising, according to Weston Martyr:

After a long and mixed experience of life aboard small craft I have come to two very definite conclusions concerning it. One is that life on a small boat in fine weather is the only kind of life worth living. The other is that, in bad weather, it’s just plain hell.

hours of daylight in ‘the land of the Midnight Sun’ plenty of opportunity to enjoy the effects of the changing light, the wraithing mists on the mountains fading into each other, the fantastical shapes of the peaks and the glistening of melting snow and waterfalls down the steep cliffs and valleys. The magical beauty of the Lofoten was well worth the effort of the journey

There are, of course, times when we wished we were anywhere but in the present moment: caught out in a katabatic gust of 48 knots (severe gale force) in a narrow channel with the water suddenly seething and whipped up to a frenzy of foam; sailing in torrential rain like an aerial attack; threading through channels so narrow that you could have struck a match stuck a match on the rocks at either side of the boat; negotiating a tortuous way through inner leads where the navigational marks are nothing but thin iron stakes

Above: Lofoten Reflections and Midnight Sun

a kettle for hot water and a portapotti. Sailing in those days was a very steep learning curve and we did not always know precisely where we were. There was the time when, sailing down the coast towards Harwich, we were enveloped in thick fog. We pressed on – very slowly and with great trepidation; sounds were muffled – suddenly a figure loomed up out of the mist in oilskins and souwester, water up to his knees. “Where are we?” we asked. “I’m Father Neptune and you’re just off Dovercourt Pier,” he replied. We then realised with a frisson of horror that we had crossed the busy shipping lane into Felixstowe, dodged a score of moored boats and never saw or felt a thing!

Nowadays we rejoice in owning Victrix of Harwich, an ocean-rated yacht, with many of the comforts of home and an array of electronic instruments which facilitate navigation and pilotage enabling us to travel widely, relatively safely and seek out many places inaccessible by land; usually knowing where we are.

So what is so special about sailing? Boats are very demanding of time, effort and money; our average cruising
speed is only 6 knots (7 miles per hour: it’s quicker to travel by bicycle!); it can be hard work, particularly for just two people, wet, bruising and cold. The combined forces of wind, waves and weather can deal some nasty experiences in a small ship alone at sea, not infrequently at an angle of 45 degrees. There are, of course, many times when other vessels are encountered and it is sometimes difficult to discern their angle of approach and distance as they can be ploughing along at 22 knots and a yacht is a mere speck on their radar. One thing is certain though: if you can see both sides of a large commercial vessel or both its port and starboard lights at night pray that you make the right decision as you change course; the old adage ‘steam gives way to sail’ no longer applies! A ‘garden shed’ doesn’t stand a chance against a ‘block of flats’!

One of our most alarming close encounters was at night with an oil rig which turned out to be on the move - unlit. Its tugs were not in evidence until suddenly we saw their navigation lights and their searchlights picked us out. We didn’t stop to take a photograph! Another was when we found ourselves looking down the barrel of a Russian gunboat while on an overnight passage in the Gulf of Finland. We indicated our British ensign and hoped for the best. Fortunately the ensign was recognised and they disappeared.

Cruising has two main pleasures. One is to go out into wider waters from a sheltered place. The other is to go into a sheltered place from wide waters.

Howard Bloomfield.

Perhaps the most terrifying experience of all was during one night off a very inhospitable section of the Polish coast when we were caught in a megawatt thunderstorm with lightning all around, reduced visibility and our metal mast a sitting target. The radar indicated our dire position very clearly, right in the centre of a storm ‘clutter’ but mercifully, it also showed that there was a keyhole exit – we had plenty searoom so we steered for it, escaped from the storm and eventually reached Gdansk safely the following morning.

Then there are so many golden moments: crossing the Arctic Circle and seeing the Polar Circle Monument on a small island exactly on the line of latitude; mooring in close sight of the Svartisen Glacier in Norway and walking to the foot of the glacier itself where it is possible to chip off ice for the G&Ts; sitting at ease in the cockpit watching the sunset over the gentle East Anglian landscape; shooting through a narrow gap in a reef wall and anchoring in a tiny lagoon in the Maldives with just enough room to swing and snorkel from the boat.; the immense satisfaction on reaching St Petersburg in our own boat; scenting land and getting our first glimpse of the black and white houses and churches of Horta in the Azores after an 1,800 mile Atlantic passage and 19 days at sea; watchkeeping alone in the cockpit at night - Arthur Ransome describes the feeling perfectly: “I had the little ship alone in my hands in a night of velvet dark below and stars above, pushing steadily along into unknown waters. I was extremely happy.”

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I believe that I am the only RSM who was a student at Homerton. Following the daughter of my Headmaster, I came to College in the mid fifties. Miss Skillicorn was Principal, and to most of us she was a remote character. She interviewed us each year, and delivered a ‘pep’ talk at the beginning of each term. After a summer in Canada she warned us of the dangers of being too interested in our clothes. She announced, ‘I took one suit, two or three blouses and a hat with me and I lost my hat while travelling on the Canadian Pacific Railway. I did not bother to replace it!’ I was a music student studying under Alan Percival – an inspirational teacher – who later became principal of the Guildhall school of music. Because of him, I spent my life teaching music. Because of him, I was good at it!

We were not allowed to apply for first jobs in Cambridge so I went home to Yorkshire for three years and taught music at a secondary school. I then married Godfrey, whom I had met while singing in CUMS. After four years teaching in Cambridge we bought a house in Hills Avenue and my daughter was born. Here my connection with College restarted! While waiting in the local shop I met the newly retired Miss Skillicorn. She invited us to tea several times, always saying ‘I hope you will make tea, I am not very good at it!’ She took me into College and we met Miss Westall who introduced me to members of the Homerton Association and within a very short time I became Secretary. The rest follows a natural progression. In 1980 the voluntary Homerton Association became the Homerton Roll where every new student became a member. The job changed and required much more time. Luckily I was only teaching music Part time. Alison Shrubsole gave me encouragement and a small amount of secretarial help in College. We tried to contact as many previous members of College as possible to invite them to join the Roll. It was not easy. Changes of address and surname turned it into a detective game, and of course our numbers grew enormously. In 1982 Alan Bamford invited me to talk to the staff about the Roll and shortly afterwards I was delighted to be invited to become Honorary Senior Member. I retired as Keeper of the Roll in 1997 after twenty five years. Then I joined you – as an RSM!

Don’t think of your school art lessons. Imagine the breakfast room of Philip Rundall’s house, the table displaying a collection of tray, tea cosy, jug, apple, cutting board, brass animal (being an intriguing variety of shapes, colours, and sizes evoking different moods) and surrounded by a collection of 6 Cambridge residents each with a cup of coffee.

The initial task: observe, then draw from memory. Was this to be a test? (no, forget SAT’s) or a competition? (no, remember at least one of us was a total beginner), but just for a brief moment it felt like both – rather like the first time you sat behind the wheel with a driving instructor watching. And after our efforts:

We all commented on each other’s work, Philip chipping in, and then we drew again, this time from observation. We looked at the work of some accomplished masters, took in some explanations of techniques, aids and tips from our mentor, and wrote down the homework task. Yes, homework, and it usually meant some hours of peaceful absorption in satisfying dedication. (“Look at a chair or settee again – ideally the same one as last week – but spend a lot of time measuring. Ignore texture and pattern.

Concentrate on shapes. Flat shapes on a flat surface. Use outline only.”)

Each week started similarly but developed uniquely, as we thought about outline, primary and secondary shadow, negative shapes, composition, tonal perspective, and using viewfinders, estimating measurements, concentrating on angles or ellipses, and eventually de-camping to a farmer’s field for outdoor scenes.

For a beginner like me it was essential to challenge with questions (how can one element of a drawing be the “visual”? – surely the job lot was visual? But no, there was the medium, the stimulus, inspiration and observation.) And each of us in turn vacated our chair to let the teacher see the drawing from the same angle and give individual advice.

One of the most satisfying outcomes of the course is that on Philip’s recommendation we had all, before we started, bought an A3 artist’s sketchbook into which we drew, wrote the feedback we got and noted the insights we had gained about how to improve. That sketchbook is now a record of the course with our work and homework in chronological order, interspersed with musings and valuable tips.
The sun shone on the day we went on a pretty perfect farm visit organised by Bob Arthur. It wasn’t an easy place to find, but with Keith’s help we all arrived in the farm yard more or less on time. Like many other family farms, traditional practices have had to change. After an introductory talk, Martin Jenkins, our host, started the morning by taking us on a short walk through the huge original storage barns. Here we were introduced to the principle of diversification. One barn housed the machines. By any standards these were vast. They were not bought for small fields but for large hedge free areas where one man can do the work of six on the sort of tractors we used to see as children in the countryside. Two of the barns have been adapted for entertaining. They have been carefully restored, equipped with tables and chairs and are rented out for weddings, parties and conferences.

We returned to the yard to be introduced to our transport. It was wonderful – a trailer with two sets of back-to-back benches pulled by a tractor. The farm has smooth concrete roads so we travelled in style and comfort. With Martin Jenkins as our guide, we visited the new storage barns. Every floor and piece of equipment was huge, clean and impressive. There were certainly no rats and mice here! The barns were nearly empty as the harvest season was not far away, but we were shown how the grain was moved to the cleaner and dryer before being taken by lorry to the mill and used for making biscuits. Mixed crops have almost been phased out. A variety of reliable medium height wheat covers most of the acres. The land at Dry Drayton is gently undulating and the crops looked golden and almost ready for harvest. We did not see many skylarks, but the hedges and small areas of trees were certainly inhabited by birds, and headlands on the edges of field have been left for self seeing wild flowers. There was also evidence of fresh tree planting. One of the men who travelled with us was the farm’s stockman. As we travelled back towards the farm buildings he proudly pointed out the new flock of Herefords which he is building up. The cows and calves were grazing, and a handsome pedigree bull swaggered in a nearby field. Their aim is to breed quality animals for meat, and although the numbers are still quite small it is hoped to increase the flock to an economic size. In the orchard were Herdwick sheep – the breed that Beatrix Potter favoured. The herdsman comes from Northumberland and selects animals when he visits his family farm. The livestock added interest, and a traditional aspect to the landscape.

The “farmhouse” – complete with small chapel – is Childerley Hall, of red brick construction which dates from the mediaeval period with Tudor and later additions, having been the focus of the Medieval village, the site still evident from earth-works. Childerley having been noted in the Domesday record.

Footnote: see Victorian County History of Cambridgeshire [available on reference from the College library].
The article about Homerton in this morning’s newspaper caught my eye, and I wish to send my congratulations to you and the College on this development.

My grandfather, after whom I am named, was Editor of the Cambridge Daily News for thirty-one years, and his daughter Marjorie Stuart was Secretary and Clerk to the Trustees at Homerton for many years. Please allow a monk approaching sixty to indulge in a few happy memories, some of which may make you smile.

As a small boy, I spent a fortnight every summer holiday with my aunt and accompanied her to work each day. I was never allowed in her office (!) but I was great friends with Shirley at the switchboard, Ivy, Esme and many others. The height of naughtiness for a six year old was to accept Shirley’s dare to ring Miss Skillicorn’s extension (presumably that good lady was miles away on her summer holiday). The wonderful Miss Thompson in the general office taught me how to type, so I was able to prepare the words of the Chorus for the climax of the holiday when all the ladies used to come for supper at my aunt’s house and an abridged performance of one of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas performed on my toy stage with my model figures, with me taking all the principal roles and them singing the Chorus; yes, the mind does indeed boggle. I have such wonderful memories of those holidays; clearly the ladies were less busy during August and therefore had time for a small boy.

I continued to visit regularly, learning to watch my Ps and Qs with Dame Beryl Paston-Brown, who was a very kindly lady. Meanwhile my elder sister, who admired Mary Whitely very much, set off for Neville’s Cross when that good lady moved from Number 2 at Homerton to Principal at Neville’s Cross. During my undergraduate and postgraduate days my aunt used to bring a Homerton contingent to see the Greek plays in which I appeared at King’s College, London, and, perhaps with more enjoyment, to the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas performed by the Grosvenor Light Opera Company, for which I was first light baritone lead and then producer. Our links with the College continued in the days of Alison Shrubsole, a great friend of my widowed father, and, although I was busy dividing my life between teaching Classics on Guernsey and in north Yorkshire and farming in southern Egypt, I always received news and loving messages from Homerton and supplied accounts of what I was up to.

We were so very proud of my aunt when in her late sixties and early seventies she embarked upon an Open University course and received a degree. Caught by the Second World War, she had foregone a university opportunity in younger days to serve in the Red Cross, so her determination and achievement were splendid. Only a few years later I learnt a very lasting lesson about the mind, for my aunt started to become confused. We never know what is in store, do we? However, she understood what was going on when I was clothed as a novice, which thrilled me.

As a former Superior and now Assistant Superior of this Society, I understand the concept of being part of the history of an institution, so I appreciate how you must be feeling as the College goes forward in its new status. I also realize that the path to this point has not always been smooth.

The 1950s are a long time away. So many of the names whom I have mentioned will have gone. My last connection was “Auntie Doris”, my aunt’s great friend Doris Pask who had worked at Homerton and then opened a knitting shop called Pearl-Plain in Chesterton. She died a few years before my aunt.

My sister – formerly a very fine classroom teacher and still coaching youngsters in her area as she fulfils her new and favourite role as Granny – will wish me to include her in our warmest wishes for the future of Homerton College. It must be a very exciting time for you.

Dr Morley Stuart
Assistant Superior,
The Society of
Saint John the Evangelist
It is with a sense of enormous privilege and inadequacy that I offer this view on education and training in Cambridge in the 21st century. Those of you who have viewed the Exhibition on the evolution of the Faculty of Education, on display in the Faculty’s Library on the Hills Road site, will know that Education has not always been viewed as a significant academic strength of the University.

There have been periods of insignificance and stagnation; there have been Professors of Education who themselves have argued that Cambridge should have no role in initial teacher training, or perhaps might restrict itself to preparing infant teachers only; there have been times when the University has rejected a close association with this College of Education, as it then was in the early 1970s; there have been times, even when Homerton itself appeared to lose a little of its sense of direction and impetus.

My own association with Homerton College dates back some 30+ years, to 1973, when I was appointed to a two-year, temporary post as Lecturer in Geography. It was a remarkable risk for the College to take – I was young, male, had never taught girls (let alone young women), knew little about the geographical aspects of the curriculum which Michael Carr, as the then Head of Geography, suggested the College needed to be taught. I still believe that my appointment owed not a little to the remarkably eccentric selection procedures that applied that day: sherry with Hilary Shuard at 11 a.m., and an interview at Noon with Alison Shrubsole that focused entirely on desertification in Spain and the effects upon the rabbit population thereof, and a rather more rigorous interview with Michael Carr which was memorably interrupted by Michael’s pressing need to watch the 2.30 p.m. race from Newmarket.

There’s not much here to do with the Faculty of Education in 2010, obviously! But my early years at Homerton quickly taught me many things (some of which I dare to share with you today, and others of which are best not mentioned!):

- That here was a place where outstanding young teachers were moulded and educated (not trained), where the holistic approach to children remained at the core of the enterprise
- A place where people were valued, regardless of status or role
- Where young teachers were challenged to find themselves, their own styles of working and teaching, their own styles of learning even
- Where there was teaching and scholarship of the highest standard, contributing to the development of outstanding teachers.

Who are we?

The Faculty of Education today is a very different place, existing in a very different world, yet it owes much to its origins, to where it has come from, and to its association with Homerton College. It owes much, too, the work of two inspirational Principals, in Alison Shrubsole, the architect of Homerton gaining Approved Society status in 1976, and Kate Pretty, the architect of convergence with the University in 2001, and their counterparts within the University Department of Education, Professors Paul Hirst and Donald McIntyre.

The founding institutions of this Faculty of Education come from different routes, with different strengths:

- The core of ITET, of course, and the real wealth of experience and expertise, rested with this College
- But there was also the Institute of Education, which existed, you may remember, as the awarding body for the Certificate in Education, for all the East Anglian Colleges of Education, from St Osyth (Clacton) and Keswick Hall (Norwich) to Wall Hall (Watford) and Saffron Walden; in the 1980s and 1990s, the Institute developed strengths in INSET, offering a myriad of professional development courses for teachers, the predominant strength which it brought to the new Faculty.
- Finally, there was the Department of Education, based mostly in a number of Edwardian houses on Trumpington Street, Brookside and Benet Place, training a number of one-year secondary PGCE students and offering Masters and doctoral courses.

Today the Faculty of Education reflects and incorporates the different traditions of the three founding institutions. But we are also different today because of the size and range of our work: together we are a community of around 220 academic and administrative staff, with 11 Professors, 3 Associate Professors (5 before the very sad and untimely deaths of...
Jean Ruddock and Donald McIntyre, 5 Readers, close to 60 USLs / Lecturers, and around 40 research staff; the years since convergence in 2001 have seen 8 new professorial appointments (4 of whom – unusually for Cambridge - have been women) and 4 new readers. We have around 175 undergraduates studying Education, 500 postgraduate students on the one-year ITET courses, 700 part-time students (mostly teachers) on PPD courses, 250 Masters students and 140 students following doctorates. In all, then, a student body of around 1750 people, not all of whom – of course – are on full-time courses. Compare that to the time when I became College Admissions Tutor here in 1984, when we were trying to recruit about 100 PGCE students and 180 BEd students annually; a student body in all of around 800 students.

The Initial Education and Training of Teachers

So there is a difference, then, of scale. A more significant difference, perhaps, is that education and training here within the Cambridge Faculty of Education in 2010 is concerned with a wide diversity of provision. The undergraduate course is no longer the central concern, nor indeed is it a route which provides qualified teacher status. Recruiting only around 60 students annually, from other Colleges as well as from Homerton (although Homerton provides by far the highest proportion of them, at around 85-90%), the Education Tripos has been recently restructured to offer a three year study of Education Studies and Subject Studies, to attract the most able undergraduates who wish to study Education as an academic discipline rather than simply as a prelude to gaining a teaching qualification. We are in a transition, then, whereby most of the subject studies work (geography, maths, music, history, biology) is now offered within other faculties rather than within the Education faculty or indeed on this site; most undergraduates come to us with very strong A levels (usually 3 As or 2As/B), and most wish to study education as a discipline rather than necessarily training to teach. This movement away from the BEd and indeed, more latterly, from the BA (Ed) has not been without its difficulties; indeed, it has been contested by some, but in part it relates to a national agenda, in part it is dictated by the particularities of this University.

What of teacher training and education? There is a strong commitment within the Faculty to the tradition of training and education outstanding new teachers for the state schools of this country. The route for ITET now is the PGCE route, and we offer courses for graduates, from this university and other universities, who want to train to teach in the Early Years & Primary stages and in all the secondary subjects within the National curriculum except for ICT and PE (but including Classics). Each year, about 180 EYP students qualify as NQTs, and 255 secondary students, so it is an extensive enterprise which involves the Faculty working in partnership with many schools across East Anglia.

You will know, of course, that teacher education has gone through a period of turmoil in the last two decades. The publication of government circular upon circular heralded a period of intensive scrutiny and change in teacher education in England. Predicated on the notion that teacher education courses were failing to give trainee teachers sufficient relevant knowledge and practical skills, and had become increasingly remote from the realities of teaching in schools, these prescriptive and tightly controlling circulars identified a series of detailed competences which trainee teachers had to meet before they could gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). So we had a period of intensive and rigorous central regulation and monitoring, designed to raise the quality of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Ultimately, in 1997, then, circulars defined over 150 competences which students needed to exhibit before they could be granted QTS.

Fortunately, the pendulum has swung yet again, as it frequently does with education policy, and we now have a more realistic and holistic approach, which is beginning to remember again that education is about children’s learning, rather than a matter of teachers’ technical competence and their ability to deliver set strategies on literacy, numeracy and the Key Stage 3 curriculum. There is a welcome shift, then, from the unduly mechanistic focus on training (ITT) to a more holistic focus on education (ITET).

The problem with initial teacher education in the last two decades, of course, is that governmental alarm about
the state of teacher education and training was based on half-truths, anecdotal comments from the editorial columns of the Daily Mail, and accepted realities from some training institutions. Consistent inspections of the quality of teacher education at Homerton, from the mid-80s onwards and through the 90s, commended the high quality of the students’ teaching, the quality of taught courses within the College, and the ways in which newly qualified teachers settled into and helped to transform learning in schools. Easy to say, perhaps, but the evidence is there to support the argument that teacher education and training here has always provided an outstanding cohort of newly qualified teachers for the schools of this nation. This, too, has been the experience since convergence in 2001: regular Ofsted inspections (and how regular they have been!), have awarded the Faculty the highest possible grades for all our ITET courses, with courses judged consistently to be outstanding by external agencies. We do, of course, contest the validity and value of League tables of ITET providers, but if we are to have them, it is good that we consistently lead them!

So, then, within teacher education, the aim is to sustain the ethos of innovation, rigour and challenge which has characterised teaching and learning on the courses throughout the last decade, to recruit the very highest quality trainees from a variety of backgrounds, cultures and communities across the land (and this is not always defined purely in academic terms, as our commitment to recruit mature students with experience of bringing up children, and those with industrial and commercial backgrounds, shows) – and to further develop a coherent partnership which acknowledges schools as active, supported research communities.

One final point to mention, of course, is that teacher education courses are tied into a national framework of qualifications, so that those students who successfully complete the PGCE course and become NQTs in post, carry forward – from their PGCE course – 50% credit towards an MEd degree within the University. This proposal, approved by the University last October, acknowledges that the Cambridge PGCE is a rigorous, high quality course, operating at Masters level, in which students engage critically with relevant literature so that they are then able to situate their subsequent classroom-based empirical study within the broader context of research and practice. This links centrally with the commitment, throughout Europe, to see the emergence of teaching as a research-based profession, where Masters study has the potential to inform practice and policy.

The Faculty’s ambition in the field of teacher training and education, therefore, is to become acknowledged not only as one of the leading centres of teacher education in the UK and Europe, an ambition which we have achieved, but to become recognised as an international leader in the field of initial teacher education. This means we need to engage centrally with the debates about how best to educate teachers, and to consider what is that teachers need to know in the early years of the twenty-first century, in a context of knowledge explosion and an increased accessibility to knowledge. There is a conviction within the Faculty that the best teachers are those who have been equipped by their courses to continue to learn and to respond to the challenges of teaching in a rapidly changing world, and whose courses offer them the capacity to think creativity, to have awful thoughts and to ask apparently naïve questions. So we challenge the early 21C emphasis upon standards and requirements, and the development of what Maurice Galton, one of our Professors, has called an atheoretical approach to teacher education, because such an approach is too mechanistic, it lacks coherence and it is vulnerable to external pressures and forces. Rather than focusing simply on the concerns of the present, of acknowledging and perpetuating a closed system of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, working within constrained parameters, we aim to ensure that beginning teachers are open to innovation and adaptation which is not centrally prescribed. Throughout the development of state schooling in this country, there has been the need for teachers who have been prepared to implement change, to challenge orthodoxy (whether from government or within established practice), to offer different perspectives and cogent alternatives … our aim is to educate teachers who can cope with the concerns of the future as well as those of the present.

The Continuing Education of Teachers
I spoke earlier of diversity of provision within the Faculty of Education, in these early years of the 21st century, and of the legacy of the Institute of Education. One aspect of this diversity of provision is in the Faculty’s ongoing concern with the continuing education of teachers, through practitioner professional development courses offered to teachers and professionals in ancillary professions.

The Faculty offers part-time courses for around 700 people in this area, often in partnership with schools and Local Authorities. So we have (among others) SUPER (the schools – university partnership for educational research with groups of local schools), CAMNUT (an evolving national initiative to support teachers’ learning circles run in liaison with the NUT), Hertscam (research-based approaches to the development of policy and practice, in collaboration with Hertfordshire LA and schools). We have, too, a new partnership with Cambridge International Examinations which is developing an international dimension, with CPD courses run to support teachers pedagogy and learning in India, Latin America and Southern Asia.

The core of this activity, though, is in the immediate region, and is essentially an outreach activity which takes the Faculty’s expertise and experience into East Anglia and beyond … some taught in Cambridge, but the majority are taught on sites in the region and elsewhere … exotic places like Chelmsford, Wheathampstead, Stevenage, Great Yarmouth, Peterborough.

These courses remain a central plank of how we conceive the Faculty’s mission, providing a key service to education professionals, offering courses in areas such as school improvement and leadership, counselling and guidance, special education and inclusion, careers education, and secondary subject-related knowledge and expertise in subjects such as science, geography, history. The courses are offered at various levels (certificates of further professional study, advanced certificate of educational research, advanced diploma), but essentially there are now integrated into a coherent framework which allows transition, almost through a modular structure, to Masters level (MEd).

The MEd degree is the current culmination of this professional route, and there are around 200 teachers studying at any one time for this part-time degree over a two year period. The degree takes as its starting point teachers researching practice, frequently in their own school, and relates these findings to relevant national and international literatures. The route is premised around the concept of the teacher as researcher and this perspective, with an exploration of the theoretical and practical implications, informs the module design. The modules allow students to explore practice and theory in the context of their own phase, subject and teaching context. The aim is to support teachers as they work towards their further degree, enabling them to reflect upon and develop their own practice in their own schools and working contexts. But we also hope that we help to regenerate in them an enthusiasm for learning, a capacity to initiate and respond to change, and to reawaken in them an understanding of their own capacity and potential as learners and professionals, so that they can revitalise their own career progression (and promotion prospects!).

Over the years, since its initiation at the Institute of Education in the early 90s, over a thousand teachers have progressed to the Masters of Education award; many of them now teach for the Faculty within the PPD partnership framework, and are anxious to progress their own learning further, so we have recently developed a proposal for an EdD, a doctorate for practising teachers based around their own researching of their own practice.

The MPhil and PhD degrees

A further aspect of the Faculty’s work at Masters and Doctoral level relates to the MPhil and PhD degrees. The MPhil is a one-year, full-time degree, which currently attracts about 100 full-time students, mostly international students from the Far East and the United States. These students follow a variety of courses, some of them subject-related (e.g. Arts, Culture and Education; Perspectives on Children’s Literature; International Perspectives on Maths Education, Psychology), others thematic (e.g. Counselling, International Perspectives on Special & Inclusive, Educational Leadership, Education, Equality & Democracy).

Another well-established MPhil is that in Educational Research, which effectively provides the first year of doctoral training, towards a PhD degree. This aspect of the Faculty’s work evolves predominantly from the former University Department of Education; it has grown significantly since convergence, so that now at any one time we usually have around 110 full-time doctoral students, and about 30 part-time doctoral students, working on dissertations, supervised by Faculty members of staff.

This strand of Masters and doctoral work is allied essentially with the research interests of Faculty members of staff. The emergence of the research focus of the Faculty is not new, but in the past, it is probably true to say that it was a minority interest, followed devotedly by a few members of staff, but usually in their own time or as an ad hoc activity. Now, of course, with the Faculty fully integrated within a research intensive University, and funding to the Faculty determined at least in part by the outcomes of the Research Assessment Exercises, research is an essential and integral part of the workload of every member of staff. This brings its tensions, of course, since many colleagues have been appointed for their teaching expertise and their experience of teaching in schools, and so the Faculty is unusual in its staffing profile, since only recently have lecturers been appointed on the strength of their research as well as their teaching.

Nonetheless, the appointment of new Professors and Readers, and the ‘reinvention of self’ by existing members of staff has given the Faculty one of the strongest Education profiles in the land. The Faculty’s research activity seeks not only to make rigorous, original and significant contributions to knowledge, but to support informed development of
public policy and professional practice through wide ranging engagement with professional leaders, policy makers, practitioners and other research users. So there is an enormous wealth of work on educational leadership, through the Leadership for Learning network; there is groundbreaking work in neuroscience; there is the major review of the state of primary education, led by Professor Robin Alexander; there is the Centre for Commonwealth Education and allied work in education, equality and development; there are major research initiatives in Arts and Humanities in Education, in School and Teacher Development, in Science, Technology, and Mathematics Education. Groups of researchers, then, are making significant international contributions to the development of educational knowledge and learning. Equally, though, colleagues are working on innovative and ground-breaking individual research, and becoming national and international names: amongst these are Homerton Fellows such as Morag Styles and Maria Nikolajeva (children’s literature), John Gray (school improvement), the late Jean Ruddock (pupils’ voices).

There is, then a vibrant research community, supporting and enhancing teaching, which I hope offers a sense of belonging, mutual support and identity to members of the Faculty and to students.

Vision and Sense of purpose

What, then, are we trying to do in this Faculty of Education in the opening years of this century?

We have, I think, a strong sense of purpose and identity, linked to our origins and histories. It would have been easy, in the years since convergence, to rationalize the scope of our provision, to concentrate on fewer activities, to become more research-intensive and less focused on teaching.

It is true that we are different to our predecessor institutions, and some of my colleagues may regret that fact. But we have taken enormous steps to create a new Faculty of Education, within one of the leading Universities in the world. We have made moves to develop an outstanding research profile, to make internationally significant and original contributions to knowledge, and to support informed development of public policy and professional practice, within a research-intensive context.

At the same time, however, we have remained faithful to the original commitment, as originally conceived within convergence, to sustain teaching and learning from undergraduate to doctoral level, and to continue to make significant contributions to the initial education and training of teachers, to the continuing education of teachers and other education professionals, and to the further development of Masters and doctoral work. This is an unusually wide remit for an education department within a research-intensive university; indeed we are unique not only in the quality of the courses we offer but in the range of courses we offer. Oxford, Exeter, Bristol, Durham: similar universities with vibrant departments of education, but none of them sustain the range and scope of work which is found here at Cambridge.

In essence, then, we have ambitious aims for the future, which build on foundations from the past…

To have a tangible impact on the world of education - on government, on local authorities and on schools – nationally and internationally, and to build capacity for improvement.

To engage in research and scholarship at the highest standard, offering international leadership within our distinctive research specialisms, and contributing to the development of knowledge within a global context.

To develop a close relationship between teaching, scholarship, and research, to enrich the quality of learning offered within schools and other educational contexts from the local to the international scale.

To work with other departments within the University in interdisciplinary contexts, to contribute towards policy which improves quality of life and enriches opportunity, and addresses inequalities and injustices.

To take a leading role in developing the next generation of educational researchers, school teachers and headteachers, educational professionals and policy-makers, for the nations of the world.
Already by nature a very private person, Barbara always adhered strictly to her oath as a signatory to the Official Secrets Act, so very few of her colleagues and students at Homerton College, where she spent most of her later career, can ever have known of her intelligence work at Bletchley Park nor, probably, of her later experiences at the Nuremberg trials and her imprisonment in Egypt during the Suez crisis.

Although born in London, Barbara was connected to Cambridge through a long family history. She could trace Cambridge links among her ancestors going back over 200 years. These included James Clerk Maxwell, the first Cavendish Professor of Physics, and her grandfather, Peter Giles, who was a long-serving Master of Emmanuel and Chair of the Girton College Council (1910–18). Two aunts had also been at Girton so her choice of college must have seemed predestined. Nevertheless the College recommended that, before coming up to read MML in 1941, she should spend a year with a German émigré family in Oxford to improve her understanding of the German language and culture. This was to prove a very influential experience.

At the end of her first year she was called up for service in the ATS and posted to the initial training camp on Northampton racecourse – clearly something of a sartorial experience: 'There' she wrote 'we were kitted out from the skin up, there being no lingerie allowance as there was for the WRNS. Naturally everything was a khaki colour, including rayon bloomers.' Transferred to Bletchley Park, she joined MI8 and played a crucial role. She tuned in to transmissions from stations all over Germany and, because of her acute ear for the language, she could recognise and distinguish different voices, especially those that were mobile, and so pin down troop movements. She also read tapes from the Enigma machine and was able to pinpoint critical pieces that linked with her audio receptions. The German family in Oxford noted that her colloquial German was improving fast and wondered where she could be using it.

After the German surrender she monitored remaining German units in Czechoslovakia, then moved to Germany and acted as a translator for many of the war crime trials at Nuremberg. By 1946 she was back at Girton, now reading Anthropology and Archaeology for Part II. On graduation she trained at the Roehampton Froebel Institute and then taught in Bethnal Green before spending five years as a child-care officer in Reading.

1956 was a significant year for Barbara. She was initially involved in arranging billeting for Hungarian military personnel driven to Britain by the uprising. She wanted further involvement with them but when that proved impossible she took a British Council post as head of Victoria College, Cairo, only to become caught up immediately in the Suez Crisis and to find herself imprisoned and then expelled from Egypt. She returned to her Hungarians, acting as senior instructor for a group employed as miners in Wales. The following year she was back in Africa, taking a post as senior mistress at Tripoli College, Libya, where she remained for six years. She returned for a move into higher education, joining Leeds University as a Nuffield Research Fellow, working on teaching material in French for primary schools. This experience led to her final and most long-lasting appointment, as Senior Lecturer and Warden–Tutor at Homerton College. There she remained for seventeen years, retiring in 1983. Most of her academic work there was in French, with only a small demand for German, but she also had the considerable responsibility of arranging student accommodation both in College and for the large proportion of students living 'out' with landladies in the City. This last duty, requiring great tact and much negotiation, left Homerton students from every discipline deeply in her debt.
Sylvia took pride in her Yorkshire origins, having been born in Sheffield, and in many respects she reflected a common perception of Yorkshire folk having a forthright and independent character matched by a capacity for warm relationships and making many long-standing friendships.

She had a remarkable gift for assessing problems and achieving workable solutions, typified by one particular memory of a trip with friends on the Norfolk Broads. An abandoned length of rope had fouled the propeller and halted the motor launch mid-stream. Cutting short the discussion of how to solve the problem, Sylvia asked for a knife, jumped overboard and cut away the obstruction. She was several months pregnant at the time.

This pragmatic problem solving approach to life was typical of her work at Homerton where at a time of uncertainty and when the Principal was in ill health, she took the post of Acting Deputy Principal. She was brilliant in working with many varied groups of teachers both in this country and overseas.

She was a warm and most constant friend and hostess who for many years enlivened the long lunches of our dining group, often provoking earnest discussion and not a little heat with her forthright views. These gatherings and others held at her home in Little Shelford were always beautifully and bountifully arranged.

Those who visited her in the last stages of her illness when she was looking out at the open landscape beyond the garden in a room cramped with cards and flowers from well-wishers, will remember her immense courage, her dogged spirit, her sense of humour and final serenity. She was a true and well loved friend.

John Ball

Sylvia arrived at Homerton in 1964 as part time lecturer in chemistry, and continued in that role until 1970 when she left to start a family. Thereafter she continued to make occasional contributions to chemistry and maths for scientists courses for many years. This was the period of major change. From Wing College designation for specialist three year secondary courses in maths and the sciences to B. Ed London status, and Sylvia was a key member of the physical sciences team in developing courses and setting appropriate standards. She initiated courses in practical radioactivity and in chromatography and followed this up with work in schools and links with the emerging Cambridge science teachers centre. She was keen, competent, well organised and forthright. Characteristics that continued throughout her Homerton career. She was a busy person, but always found time to help and support students. The abiding memory is that of seeing Sylvia supporting students on Teaching Practice by finding time to see them on Saturday mornings in the lab.

Derek Johnson

Below: Spot Sylvia in this picture of RSMs in 2004
Sylvia as Educator

Sylvia had little time for educational theorising and, as far as I know, never put pen to paper to set out her own educational philosophy. She was nevertheless a teacher with a very clear, passionately held and, in the context of Cambridge academicism, often controversial educational vision, revealed most vividly in her practice. First, she believed that people learned not just from books or from instruction but from experience – and that what was learned from experience deserved recognition, valuing, indeed accreditation by academic institutions, as much as any other form of learning.

By extension she valued the learning which was associated with work and working lives of all kinds. She valued the technical, vocational, presentational, administrative and entrepreneurial skills which people acquired in working lives on a par with and possibly above other more traditional academic learning. She was angered by the lower status attached to such learning in educational settings and even more by the lower esteem which in Cambridge in particular was attached to people whose skills were of this kind or whose occupations were based on their exercise. She was at least as proud of the skills which her own sons Nick and Chris demonstrated in their respective worlds of IT and management consultancy as of their more conventional academic achievements.

It was these and related commitments which led Sylvia to engage creatively and enthusiastically with a number of educational initiatives that had their roots in what might be regarded as the ‘progressive’ initiatives of the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Employment through, in particular, the 1980s: the Certificate of Prevocational Education, the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative and then the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative – many of these in partnership with The Engineering Council as well as leading figures in the local and regional business community. She took over the Old Sanatorium (then on the edge of Homerton car park and in a rather ramshackle state) and turned it into a HIVE (Homerton Inservice in Vocational Education) of high quality innovative activity with far reaching impact.

But Sylvia’s quality as an educator was most vividly expressed through the way she related to students (most of them mature) and the colleagues she worked with. Whether in Cambridge or Ethiopia (she managed the Homerton/Kotebe link for several very successful years) or later in Bangladesh, she gave people a new belief in themselves and in the value of the skills and talents which they had, but which had hitherto been unrecognised. She showed them how they could acquire new skills and higher aspirations and she created situations and working relations which allowed them to develop them.

People grew in confidence and self belief under her influence. ‘Go on’ she would say – to the office secretary, the out of work teacher, the ‘failed’ student, the engineer seeking a career change, the anxious Ethiopian science lecturer in his barren laboratory or the Bangladeshi teacher trainer tasked with producing a new resource book. ‘You can do it’. ‘Yes’, they replied in the face of Sylvia’s evident conviction ... and they did! This was the mark and the achievement of the true educator.

David Bridges
John Hammond was a Suffolk Lad, who became a Homerton Man. Born in Rendlesham in 1935 he went to the local one-room village primary school from which he won a scholarship to Framlingham College. From there he went to work for a short time as a meteorologist before completing his National Service in the Royal Air Force. By the end of those two years he had realised that he wanted to teach and in 1955 he began a teacher training course at the College of St. Mark and St. John, which was at that time situated in London in the King’s Road, Chelsea. After successfully completing the two-year course, he was selected to take a newly instituted third year specialist course in science teaching. At the end of that year he was appointed as a Biology Master at a prestigious and old foundation London County Council Grammar School, Emanuel School, in Wandsworth. He taught Biology there for the next seven years, becoming a Housemaster, coaching sport and serving as an officer in the R.A.F. section of the Combined Cadet Force. He was also very much involved in the foundation of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme.

Correctly predicting that as a non-graduate teacher his career would be limited, he attended evening classes at the then Regent Street Polytechnic, firstly gaining A-levels and then going on to complete a BSc (Honours). His lecturers soon spotted his academic and teaching potential and he was offered a part-time evening lectureship on the completion of his degree. In 1965 he was appointed as one of only a handful of men on the staff at Homerton College, which was then one of the newly designated ‘Colleges of Education’ offering a three-year certificate in teacher training. The certificate was awarded, not by the University of Cambridge, but by a central validating body called the Cambridge Institute of Education. Over the next forty-four years he served the ever-changing College at every level and in every capacity, ranging from Lecturer, Head of Department, Senior Tutor, to Staff Trustee.

His love for his subject and his desire to improve his own knowledge never diminished, and despite a more than full workload at Homerton, he managed to complete a part-time M.Ed at Chelsea College, London. Typically, when he was given a year of sabbatical leave he chose to use it to study for a Cambridge M.Phil. In achieving this, he became the first Homerton College member to be awarded a higher degree by the University of Cambridge, a fact of which he was justifiably, but quietly, very proud.

His specialist enthusiasm and expertise were not confined to his work at Homerton. Similarly, at Homerton he was the moving force behind many innovations, not least of which was the Junior Year Abroad programme. His enterprise in developing this course, which offered suitably qualified students from overseas the chance to study in Cambridge, meant that by the time he finally retired, he had not only extended the reputation of Homerton internationally, but had also obtained for the College a total income in tutorial fees alone in excess of one million pounds. John’s commitment to Homerton continued long after official retirement. He was a stalwart supporter of the Homerton Retired Senior Members Association.

Top Left: On 19th November, 2009, the day on which the College received official notification that the Queen would be granting a Royal Charter, two of our members, John Hammond and Peter Raby, were elected to Emeritus Fellowships.

Wildlife Trust. As such, he played a seminal role in the evolution of Natural History, as it was known in the 1970’s, to the currently wider Environmental Education.

by John Murrell

John Hammond (1935-2009)

by John Murrell
believing it to be important to maintain the link between the Homerton that was and the new Homerton. He served as Chairman of for ten years, the maximum period allowed by its constitution.

He also continued until recently in his role as Keeper of the Roll, editing the Homertonian, arranging reunions and travelling, always as a welcome guest, to the various branches of past students across the country.

A few weeks before his death, to his immense joy, he was elected an Emeritus Fellow, an event made even more poignant by taking place the very day on which the College received notification of the granting of its new Charter. He referred to the day as, “The ideal closure.”

Significant as they are, these facts are but the bare bones of a life. What they do not identify is the uniqueness of the man. John was not only a gifted and well-loved teacher, colleague and friend, he was an exceptional person. He had an ability to find qualities in others, which were not immediately obvious, to others and sometimes not even to the individuals themselves. As is shown by the responses to the ‘Facebook’ page, set up by the College on his death, there are so many former pupils, students and colleagues, who can identify a moment when his statement of trust, or belief in them caused a significant change in their life. Sometimes it was a moment of intellectual truth, giving insight into a difficult academic concept, or as those who appeared before him in his role as Senior Tutor can testify, it could be a moment of personal truth, when he would gently, but firmly indicate how life could be more sensibly spent. Nor was this gift of being able to make you feel capable of better things limited to his students. Those of us privileged to be among his friends also received the benefits of his wisdom, both professionally and personally.

There is no doubt he was a devoted, loving and caring husband, father and grandfather. Alongside this devotion to his family, however, there was a rival for his affection. His wife, Judith, expressed it best when at his funeral she wrote that she always thought of John as “A stick of rock with Homerton College printed all the way through”.

Homerton College, like us, must face the sad truth that we have to say, with immense gratitude, ‘Nunc Dimittis.’

John Murrell

Joan Clark (1916 – 2009)
by Trish Maude

Joan Clark died peacefully at home on 26 April aged 92. Joan had lived in Stapleford since 1971 when she joined the staff of Homerton College as Senior Lecturer in Education. She was particularly interested in children’s religious education, as prior to her appointment to Homerton, she was Advisor for Religious Education in Cambridgeshire. Joan worked with students preparing to teach in primary schools and is remembered as a supportive and sympathetic tutor who was much respected by the students. As the teacher training programme changed she became especially involved in the Language and Literacy courses. She was very interested in Children’s Literature, having been a Librarian earlier in her career – she encouraged students to write and make their own books. At this time and after her retirement in the early 1980s, she was an Ely Diocesan Bishop’s Visitor to Church of England schools. She brought her extensive knowledge and experience and was quite outstanding in this role. She also gave years of service as a school governor of the Community Primary School in the village.

Since then she remained as active as she could in the church, organising the Tuesday Bible Study Group which met in her house right up until she died. Underlying her approach to people was Joan’s unobtrusive, genuine and deep Christian faith.

Trish Maude
Tony Crowe (1935 -2009)

by Peter Raby

Tony Crowe died peacefully at home on November 1st, 2009, aged seventy-four, after a long illness. He was born in 1935, and educated by the Christian Brothers at St Joseph’s, Blackpool, an experience that gave him a special empathy with the James Joyce of Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. He won a scholarship to St Catherine’s College, Cambridge, in 1953, where he read English under the wise and liberal direction of Dr Tom Henn. Teacher training followed at the Cambridge Institute. One of his placements was at one of the new comprehensive schools in Tulse Hill. Tony was a strong advocate of the comprehensive system, and accepted a job at Tulse Hill, from where he moved to the John Ruskin school at Croydon. Then, in 1964, he accepted a job in the English Department at Homerton, partly attracted back to Cambridge by the encouragement of Brian Jackson, of A.C.E., for whom he later taught many popular courses, including ‘Children and Books’ and ‘The Teaching of Shakespeare’.

Although he arrived fresh from six years teaching in London, during which his interests in film and theatre had already been explored practically, he characteristically decided to seek more experience as to how children acquire language, and worked one afternoon a week with Valerie Harbird at Babraham Junior school. This was to become a life-long study, fed by a sabbatical in 1975 at the London Institute with Harold Rosen, and by personal experience as a father to Lucy and Joseph. Another sabbatical in 1982 took him to France with Judith and his children - in the long-serving Land Rover, towing a trailer tent - where he studied at the Sorbonne and imbibed a good dose of structuralism, which in due course made its way into his Media courses.

Part of a formidable English department, Tony could teach everything - perhaps his favourite author was Dickens, and his favourite novels Great Expectations and Hard Times. He took responsibility for the Secondary Postgraduate course in English, and this became a flagship course. He was deeply committed to the well-being and training of these students, and was involved in a great many innovations, including, with John Murrell, fresh methods for interviewing and selection (based around responses to a segment of one of his favourite films, Ken Loach’s Kes.) As in many of his ventures, he formed very close associations with a number of schools and teachers, and the work his students were involved in at Parkside over the years was especially remarkable. It gave him great pleasure that when he retired in 1993, one of his postgraduate students, Gabrielle Cliff-Hodges, took his place. Gabrielle remembers Tony as ‘an extremely influential P.G.C.E. tutor. He was closely attentive to our progress and always intellectually stimulating. He taught us to think about English teaching from learners’ perspectives, to care that we read literature aloud well or that our work on language would arouse pupils’ curiosity. I still include practical filmmaking in the P.G.C.E. course: I’ve never forgotten what an exciting experience it was, actually going out and about in Cambridge and making our own films. We learnt powerful lessons about the way framing and editing decisions resulted in particular effects, lessons with implications for many other areas of English teaching that have remained with me to this day.’

Tony drew continuously from his deep knowledge of literature, drama and film, and helped to develop the study of the latter with Saturday film courses, and with much input into the construction of GCSE curricula in Media and Film Studies. Again, this first-hand knowledge of issues, and practitioners, was immensely useful in the course he put together in Media as an option for Curriculum Studies in the B.Ed - a course originally aimed at secondary and middle students, but later successfully adapted for a younger age-group.

Tony was an inspirational teacher. He was warm, caring; immensely supportive; imaginative; unassuming, gentle in manner, but at the same time absolutely certain about his aims and methods, as well as hugely knowledgeable; unstinting in the effort he put in before a class or lecture; his feedback was rigorous but encouraging, sometimes longer than the piece of work he was commenting on. And he was wholly committed and protective towards his students, especially his post-graduates: he was a great trainer of teachers, eager to provide them with the very best models and materials. His reading lists and supplementary materials were generous, expansive, beautifully selected, and always practical.

It was these and related commitments which led...
John Jackson
(1938 - 2010)

by Mike Bibby and Philip Rundall

The Xerox might have been invented just for Tony. Viv Brands’ pulse rate would quicken when Tony came into the reprographics room, stubbed his cigarette out in the sink and advanced on the photocopiers with armfuls of black and white photographs….

Stella Hurley was at Homerton in the 60s, and was one of many ex-students who wrote to Judith about Tony. "When I arrived in Cambridge as a very unsophisticated student from the backwoods of northern England, I felt quite intimidated by some of the supremely confident and self-possessed individuals I met. What a joy to find I was in Tony's tutor group, and discover a man without pretensions, a genuine honest man of complete integrity.

I remember with gratitude his sensitive approach to novels and poetry. One of the texts was 'To Kill a Mockingbird' - I always associate it with Tony… I always felt there was more than a touch of Atticus Finch about him.

As my tutor on teaching practice, Tony was incredibly supportive. I don't suppose I was the first student to dissolve into tears when a lesson goes wrong, but he was always encouraging and constructive. He knew what many of my school teachers never realised, that a few positive words of praise achieve far more than criticism. Tony's humanity and dedication came across quite gently. The integrity of his philosophy has had a great impact on me, and I'm certain hundreds of other students fortunate enough to work with him."

We were very lucky to have known and worked with Tony. He believed fervently in the value of education, in the need to make it as rich as possible, and available to everyone: great expectations. He set an extremely high standard, and his enthusiasm was infectious. He had a lovely sense of humour, and an inexhaustible supply of references, examples and stories. We send our sincere sympathy to Judith, and to Lucy and Joseph.

Peter Raby

John Jackson, a long time member of the Art Department, died 2nd January 2010.

John was a committed distinguished working and exhibiting sculptor. He was also a splendid teacher of drawing. His professional involvement in the community of practising artists ensured that, through him, his students were always involved and well informed. He was indeed a natural teacher. The world's Art and Art Education are all the poorer with his death.

John had inherited the quintessential irrepressible humour and free flowing wit of his cockney forbears. His sense of humour and the apposite turn of phrase were always there. As an example of this was the occasion when he spotted the rather large feet of a colleague. He immediately remarked on this with the polite enquiry as to whether or not his shoes had been crafted by Harlande & Wolfe!

Everything about John will be missed! Mike Bibby

I'm afraid those shoes belonged to me and I'm not surprised that the remark stuck in Mike's memory! John always lit up one’s day with his humour, his ability to prick bubbles of pomposity. This sense of fun, this sense of the ridiculous was always balanced by his professional seriousness and an impressive knowledge of and commitment to sculpture, drawing and printmaking.

John and I were both appointed in 1973. I was a mere twenty-five-year old and I was struck by the sheer quality of the teaching staff within the college Art Department. It was like a mini-art school and I felt privileged to be a part of it. But, above all, I believe that I learnt more about drawing (in particular) from John than from any teacher I have encountered before or since. For this I will always be grateful.

In an attempt to pip Mike’s story, I remember a ‘phone conversation with John, long after he’d left College. He told me that he had accidentally cut off the tips of two fingers with a circular saw. After telling me how he found his way to a hospital, I asked him how he was managing to draw. Modest as ever, he replied, “as you know, my being one of the best draughtsmen in the country, in a way the accident was a good thing as it forced me to learn to draw left handed.’

This reply was typical of John, for it revealed his confidence as an artist, his self-belief and his positive, ever practical spirit. I remember him as being an artist of great ability, a demanding teacher and a person who was great fun to be with.

Philip Rundall
Coffee Mornings

Meet for coffee and chat in the Combination Room at 10.30am on Friday 16th April and 21st May.

Committee Meetings

Your Committee will meet on 26th April and 26th July. If you have any comments, suggestions, or matters which you would wish the committee to discuss, please contact any one of the members.

Alumni Luncheon

Cambridge members are invited to the Cambridge Alumni Luncheon on Saturday 8th May. For details please contact Cathy Bogg (cb647@cam.ac.uk or 01223-747280)

Charter Celebration

On Saturday 12th June, all members of the RSMA are invited to attend a Garden Party to celebrate the award of the Royal Charter. Formal invitations will follow.

Easter Term Luncheon

This will take place at 10.30am on Saturday 19th June, when Peter Warner will give a seminar on 'Homerton at War'. It will be followed by luncheon in the Great Hall. Full details will follow.

AGM

This will take place in the Bamford Room at 2.00pm on Saturday 25th September. As last year, it will coincide with Alumni Day at Homerton and details of the programme for the day and booking form will come with this year's edition of the 'Homertonian'. Demand for places at luncheon in the Hall will be high, and members wishing to do so are encouraged to book early to avoid disappointment.

John Hammond Celebration:

Following the Alumni Day, a celebration of the life and work of John Hammond is being planned for Sunday 26th September. Full details will follow.