

| 6 Translating Asterix

| 17 Brittain at War

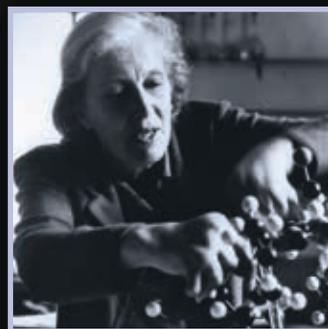
| 20 Medieval moments

# Somerville <sup>2014</sup> magazine

THE SCIENCE ISSUE

O is for Ocean:  
Alex Rogers and  
the GOC | 12

50 years on: Dorothy Hodgkin's Nobel | 10



# Contents

---

Principal's Message	3
News & People	4
Translating Asterix: 35 years later	6
Psychology at Somerville	8
<hr/>	
<b>Science at Somerville:</b>	
Dorothy Hodgkin, Somerville and Science	10
Life in the High Seas	12
Oceanic Aspirations	14
<hr/>	
Somerville's Great War	16
Marginal Mills	18
The Literature of Attack	20
A Century of definitions	22
Flying Solo: Val Rahmani	24
Living Stories: A student interview with Kati Whitaker	26
<hr/>	
<b>20 years of Men at Somerville:</b>	
Undergraduate in action: The many lives of George O'Shea	28
Medicine in new contexts: Alexander van Tulleken	30
Three men and their start-ups	32
<hr/>	
Scaling up: Somerville College Choir	33
A Profitable Exchange: Mary Kirk Profile	34
Future Events	35

---



#### Cover images:

*An Atolla Jellyfish. When disturbed, it glows bioluminescent to repel predators*  
© Alex Rogers

*Dorothy Hodgkin*  
by Jorge ('J.S.') Lewinski  
bromide print on card mount, 1967  
© Estate of Jorge Lewinski

#### Magazine committee

Design: *Laura Hart*  
Printing: *Hunts*  
Proofing: *Brett de Gaynesford, Jessica Mannix, Liz Cooke, Antoinette Finnegan*  
Editorial: *Alex Monro*



Somerville College  
Woodstock Road OX2 6HD  
Telephone +44 (0)1865 270600  
[www.some.ox.ac.uk](http://www.some.ox.ac.uk)

# Principal's Message



Somerville is bursting with activity and Somervillians are ever more ready to share their experiences with the rest of us. It has been difficult to winnow down the content for this magazine to a reasonable length. One thing that is special about this year's issue is the concentration on young Somervillians including

our undergraduates and very recent graduates. American profiles include some of the latter and two who are in the prime of extraordinary careers.

We also celebrate two notable anniversaries: the first is the centenary of the outbreak of World War One, a war in which both Somerville women and the College itself played active roles and which Vera Brittain memorialised so poignantly in *Testament of Youth*. Fittingly, the new room in the renovated Wolfson building is named the Brittain-Williams Room. Baroness Shirley Williams came to speak about her mother in November last year and to unveil a portrait of herself; and she plans to return later this year to address the theme of her mother's work and the role of women in the war.

The second anniversary we mark here is for Dorothy Hodgkin's Nobel Prize for Chemistry, awarded in 1964. We are planning a fundraising campaign in Dorothy Hodgkin's name which will

support continued work in her field; and it is good to note a number of Somerville women scientists who appear in this issue, whether in the news section for their honours (page 4), in the list of notables on page 15, or as individuals who have used their science degrees as springboards for very successful careers outside scientific research (pages 24-5).

Themes that will call for attention in future issues of the Somerville Magazine will surely include some of our Indian alumni and Fellows who have worked in India: all loyal supporters of the College's efforts to create the new Oxford India Centre at Somerville, which will include within it the Indira Gandhi Centre for Sustainable Development (see image below left). Meanwhile, the theme of sustainability research at Somerville continues with the Global Ocean Commission (GOC). It is a matter for pride that the GOC chose Somerville as its base and brought one of the four plenary meetings of its Commissioners to the College last November. The Commission will issue its report on the state of the oceans, with recommendations for sustainable governance, in the summer of 2014. The GOC Executive has been a stimulating presence in the College and the work they provided for our students as interns, profiled here, was a great mutual benefit.

The Somerville community, in other words, continues to live up to its reputation for innovation. This issue of the magazine demonstrates that characteristic in the lives and deeds of numerous Somervillians.

**DR ALICE PROCHASKA**



Pallam Raju, Indian Minister for Education, visited the College in February following his government's generous grant to Somerville, and to meet the Principal and Somerville's first three Indira Gandhi scholars.



The Somerville College Choir migrated to Keble Chapel to record their second CD: *Advent Calendar*, the more upbeat sequel to *Requiem Aeternam*. Concerts and a tour are due to follow this year (see page 33).

# News & People...

**Dr Alf Gathorne-Hardy** was appointed Research Director for the Oxford India Centre, at Somerville in February 2014.

## Students

**University Challenge:** Somerville's Fab Four have made it through to the semi-finals of the renowned BBC TV quiz show, Jeremy Paxman noting their "impressive" performance and Stephen Fry tweeting on "delightful" team captain, **Michael Davies**. Somerville has only won the competition once – in 2002.

25-year old **Peter Forbes**, a third-year DPhil in Statistics, was selected from hundreds of applicants to present his research in forensic statistics to the British Parliament on 17 March this year.

## Fellows and Alumni

**Tessa Ross (1980, Oriental Studies)** was appointed Chief Executive of the National Theatre.

**Jennifer Coates (1962, English)**, Emeritus Professor of Language & Linguistics at Roehampton University, has been made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, in recognition of her "achievements as a writer and lecturer on English Language and Linguistics".

**Dame Kay Davies (1969, Chemistry)**, Honorary Fellow, was named one of Britain's top ten 'explorer scientists' in a list of top British scientists produced by the Science Council.

**Baroness Onora O'Neill**, Honorary Fellow, was made a Companion of Honour for services to Philosophy & Public Policy – the post is only ever held by 65 people concurrently. Baroness O'Neill was formerly President of the British Academy, Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge and now chairs the Commission on Equality and Human Rights.

**Professor Marian Dawkins (1962, Zoology)**, Emeritus Professor of Animal Behaviour and Emeritus Fellow, was appointed CBE for services to animal

welfare. Professor Dawkins is the author of several books, including *'Why Animals Matter'*.

Four Somerville scientists won major research awards: **Steve Roberts**, Professor of Engineering Science, led the team that won \$10 million to train DPhil students in his field of autonomous intelligent machines; **Dr Jonathan Marchini**, Tutor in Statistics, won a five-year £1.3 million European Research Council (ERC) grant; **Steven Simon**, Professor of Theoretical Condensed Matter Physics, received the Wolfson Society Research Merit Award to fund five years of research; **Dr Renier van der Hoorn** won £1 million from the ERC to fund research into protein degradation in plants.

**Dr Natalia Nowakowska**, Somerville Fellow and Tutor in History, was selected for a £1.4 million Starter Grant by the ERC for a five-year research project called *The Jagiellonians: Dynasty, Memory and Identity*.

**Felicity Hindson (1953, History)**, received an Honorary Fellowship, University of Winchester.

## 2013-14 Books

**Breaking New Ground: A History of Somerville College through its Buildings**, was published in late 2013. It is available for £12 at the online shop (see page 35) and in the Porter's Lodge.

**Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1802**, edited by Professor Fiona Stafford and with an "excellent introduction" (*The Guardian*). Wordsworth and Coleridge's founding text of English Romanticism is printed for the first time with the text of both editions, plus the crucial Preface and Appendix, as well as letters and notes.

**The Mystery of the Hanging Garden of Babylon: An Elusive World Wonder Traced** by Honorary Research Fellow Stephanie Dalley locates the last Wonder of the Ancient World – but not in Babylon.



Family Day 2013

**European Sports Law** by Professor Steven Weatherill.

**Re-imagining Democracy** by Joanna Innes.

**In Touch with the Future: The Sense of Touch from Cognitive Neuroscience to Virtual Reality** by Professor Charles Spence.

**Plant Conservation – Why it Matters and How it Works** by Timothy Walker.

## 2013 Events

**Family Day** in September saw College grounds turn amusement park (Mad Scientist, Story Gnome, Bouncy Castle, Zorbing) for alumni and families while, inside, Tutors offered interactive introductions to their subjects.

**Teachers' Day**, an annual College day for alumni teachers and guests, opened in Flora Anderson Hall on 17 June with a welcome from the Principal, followed by talks by Steve Rayner and Amy Crossweller, a lunch and some mock interviews.

**Hermione Lee** DBE, President of Wolfson College, delivered a talk on the (Somervillian) subject of her recent biography, *Penelope Fitzgerald: A Life*. "Terrific speaker – delicious lunch – our table couldn't stop talking!" reported one alumna.

**Charles Moore**, Margaret Thatcher's biographer and the former editor of both *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Spectator*, entertained Somerville alumni on 12 October with tales of the most famous of Somervillians.

# Commemorating

## Somervillians who have died (as of 25 March 2014)

This year Somerville's Commemoration Service will be held in the College Chapel on Saturday 14th June 2014. This important event in the College calendar underlines the enduring relationship between Somerville and its former members. All Somervillians are welcome to attend the annual service.

The service opens with the traditional words of the College Bidding Prayer, in which we commemorate the College's founders, governors and major benefactors; it ends with the solemn reading of the names of members of the College and its staff who have died in the last year.

If you know of any Somervillians who have died recently but who are not listed here, please contact Liz Cooke at Somerville College, Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6HD.

Email [elizabeth.cooke@some.ox.ac.uk](mailto:elizabeth.cooke@some.ox.ac.uk) or telephone 01865 270632

### Honorary Fellows

Margaret Constance <b>Davies-Mitchell</b> (Professor Davies, Lady Mitchell)	<i>née</i> Brown (1941; Honorary Fellow, 1999) on 25 August 2013	Aged 90
--	---	---------

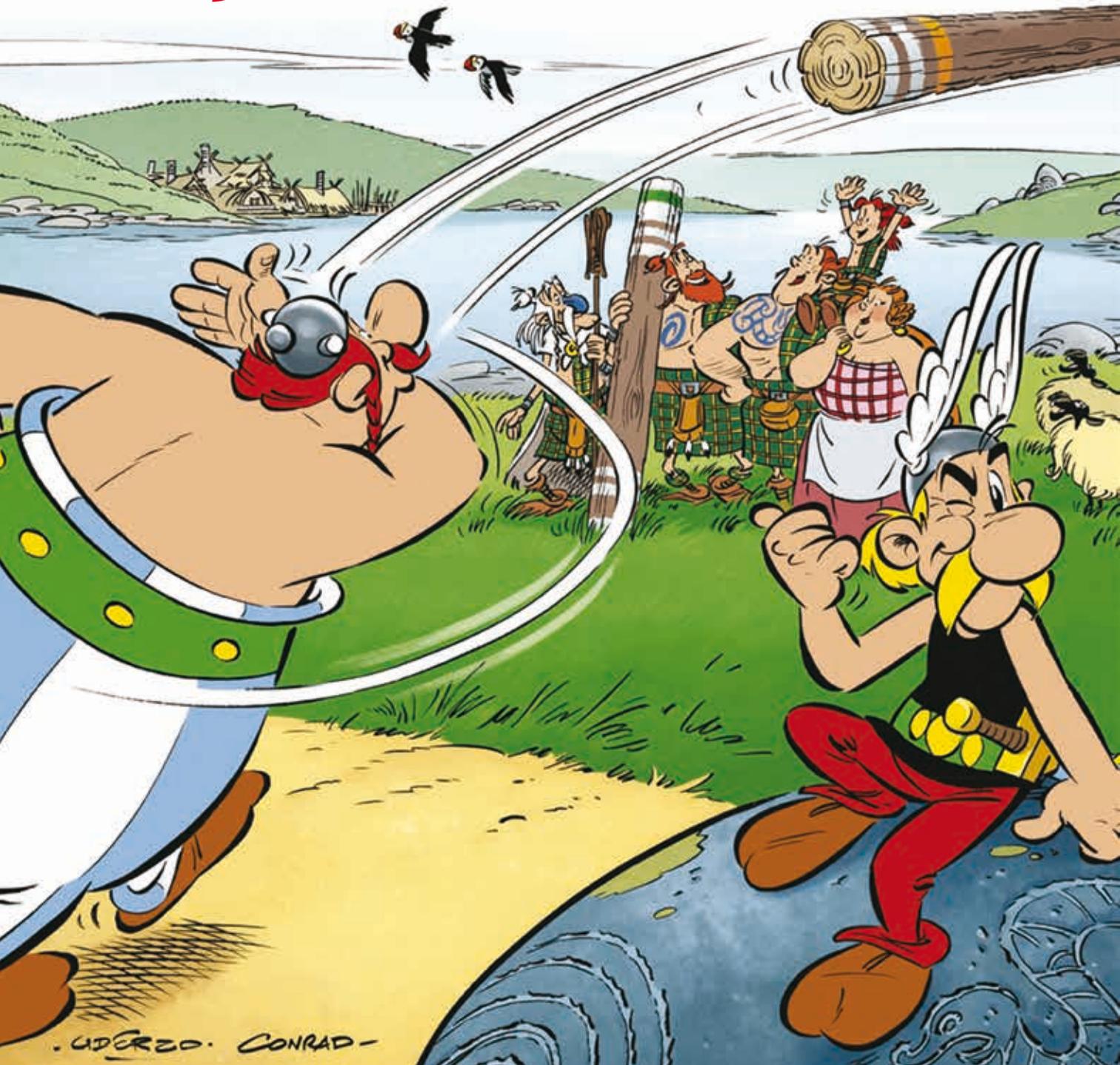
### Alumni

Margaret <b>Arthur</b>	<i>née</i> Woodcock on 13 March 2014	Aged 90
Lorna Margaret <b>Bottomley</b>	(1941) on 28 December 2012	Aged 90
Celia <b>Clarke</b>	(1952) on 30 August 2013	Aged 79
Elizabeth Ann <b>Colbourn</b>	(1971) on 23 February 2014	Aged 65
Dorothy Moorhouse <b>Coleman</b>	<i>née</i> Thompson (1943) on 15 November 2013	Aged 88
Susan Daphne <b>Daly</b>	<i>née</i> Highwood (1968) on 16 June 2013	Aged 63
Joan <b>Ann Davies</b>	<i>née</i> Frimston (1940) on 14 November 2013	Aged 92
Valerie Ethel <b>Davies</b>	<i>née</i> Todd (1945) on 29 October 2012	Aged 92
Jane Deborah <b>Dunnett</b>	(1979) on 2 October 2013	Aged 53
Prudence <b>Dwyer</b>	<i>née</i> Underwood (1945) on 6 May 2013	Aged 85
Elizabeth Mary <b>Graff</b>	<i>née</i> Spranger (1945) on 6 December 2013	Aged 86
Jenifer <b>Greenwell</b>	<i>née</i> McKinnon Wood (1949) on 7 February 2014	Aged 84
Jean Margaret <b>Hampton</b>	<i>née</i> Burridge (1949) on 12 August 2013	Aged 81
Hazel Christine <b>Hoffman</b>	<i>née</i> Gill (1943) on 27 May 2013	Aged 87
Pauline <b>Hunter Blair</b>	<i>née</i> Clarke (1940) on 23 July 2013	Aged 92
Mary Jennifer <b>Kearsley</b>	(1949) on 23 May 2013	Aged 83
Soonu Maneck <b>Kochar</b>	<i>née</i> Kapadia (1956) on 13 January 2014	Aged 80
Bridget Mary <b>Mackenzie</b>	<i>née</i> Gordon (1952) on 17 February 2014	Aged 80
Gillian Erica <b>Naylor</b>	(1950) on 14 March 2014	Aged 82
Patricia Margaret <b>Norman</b>	(1939) on 12 August 2013	Aged 92
(Emma) Louise <b>Page</b>	(1988) in May 2013	Aged 42
Denise <b>Pelczynski</b>	<i>née</i> Cremona (1946) on 22 November 2013	Aged 85
Eileen Margaret <b>Picken</b>	<i>née</i> Cox (1952) on 25 October 2013	Aged 80
Hope Vera <b>Rosenthal</b>	<i>née</i> Rossitter (1935) on 1 August 2013	Aged 96
Moira Enid <b>Rowland</b>	<i>née</i> Armstrong (1945) on 8 May 2013	Aged 85
Marianne (Mary) Viktoria <b>Salter</b>	<i>née</i> Kelemen (1954) on 30 June 2013	Aged 81
Marguerite Elizabeth Hope <b>Sansom</b>	<i>née</i> Lapham (1944) on 2 June 2013	Aged 86
Marcia Isobel Pamela <b>Sefton</b>	<i>née</i> Harvey (1938) on 4 February 2013	Aged 93
Rachel Fell <b>Shackleton</b>	(1940) on 9 October 2012	Aged 91
Robyn <b>Stevens</b>	<i>née</i> Vennings (1991) on 20 June 2013	Aged 40
Daphne Iris <b>Stroud</b>	<i>née</i> Vandeeper (1939) on 11 November 2013	Aged 92
Salima Rafia <b>Tyabji</b>	(1961) on 20th December 2013	Aged 74
Edna Winifred (Wendy) <b>Vandome</b>	(1952) on 10 March 2014	Aged 80
Pamela Joan <b>Vandyke Price</b>	<i>née</i> Walford (1941) on 12 January 2014	Aged 90
Audrey Geraldine Northcliffe <b>Verity</b>	<i>née</i> Stokes (1939) in May 2013	Aged 93
Hazel Caroline <b>Woodcock</b>	(1973) in March 2013	Aged 58
Vera <b>Woolf</b>	(1947) on 5 February 2014	Aged 85
Joan <b>Wyatt</b>	<i>née</i> Darnell (1942) on 22 July 2013	Aged 88
Rachel Mary Ransford <b>Young</b>	(1932) on 11 January 2014	Aged 99
Mary Margarine <b>de Zouche</b>	(1942) on 22 January 2013	Aged 88

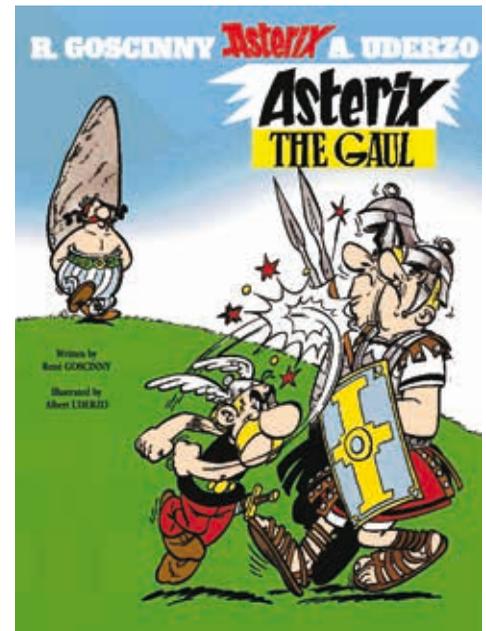
# Translating Asterix

## 35 years later

by ALEXANDER MONRO



UDERZO. CONRAD-



*Asterix and the Picts*, the diminutive Gallic hero's 35th published adventure and his first in eight years, has been published in English, in a translation produced by Somerville alumna Anthea Bell (1954, English).

Anthea Bell, whose past translations include all of Stefan Zweig's fiction, has enjoyed working on a wide range of translation projects over the course of a distinguished career, which saw her awarded an OBE in 2010.

Asterix's enormous success comes as no surprise to Bell – even in the UK.

"It's successful because we actually share a lot of things with the French – such as a liking for making fun of our ancient history," said Bell. "Every French child's history begins by praising the Gaullish ancestors, a little as happens with 1066 in England."

"Also, there's the humour of anachronism – 1066 and all that works well and we enjoy spoof history. For ten years it was thought it wouldn't be possible to translate Asterix but the humour of anachronism really works in the UK. Asterix has never sold as well in the US."

## Vital Statistics

*Astérix le Gaulois*, the first album-version of the cartoon, appeared in 1961 and has enjoyed enormous success ever since, especially in Europe. (It had first appeared in *Pilote* magazine in 1959.) The English translation, *Asterix the Gaul*, would appear only a decade later.

Asterix comics have been translated into more than 100 languages and sold more than 325 million copies worldwide,

making René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo France's best-selling authors abroad.

The latest volume, *Asterix and the Picts*, is set in Scotland and some Scottish nationalists had hoped that, by playing up the 'Auld Alliance' (between Scotland and France), the publication might help to boost the nationalist cause in Scotland, ahead of the September referendum. Unfortunately for Scottish nationalists, however, the plot takes Asterix and his menhir-lobbying companion, Obelix, on a royal mission to bring a prince to the throne that is rightfully his.

Moreover, Bell argues that Asterix has always been hard to co-opt to nationalist purposes.

"Goscinny always said there was absolutely no reference to French nationalism and the first German translation was turned down by Goscinny and Uderzo because it was seen as too nationalistic," she said. "After that they got a very good German translator and she did nearly all the subsequent books – and they became immensely popular in Germany."

Images © 2013 LES ÉDITIONS ALBERT RENÉ

Main image: Obelix impresses the locals with some caber tossing

Top left: Auld Alliance: Obelix shows some Highland spirit

Top right: How it all began: Anthea Bell's first *Asterix*

# Jo Demaree-Cotton

2013 was a good year for Psychology at Somerville. One Somerville undergraduate won the top first in Psychology. Another, Jo Demaree-Cotton, won the top first in PPP (Psychology, Philosophy and Physiology). We spoke to her about her experience at Somerville, what she's doing now and where she might be headed.

It was her grandfather who, Demaree-Cotton says, first sparked her interest in philosophy as he debated ethics with her when she was a child.

"Grandpa fancied himself a bit of a philosopher and that was how I first got interested," says Jo. "We would have these long conversations about ethics, plus I took Religious Studies at GCSE and A-Level, which was really a Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Science and Ethics course."

In time, Jo developed an interest in Psychology, despite never formally studying it at school. But, following in her grandfather's footsteps, Jo's stepfather would read Psychology books to her and she became intrigued by how unconscious we often are of the processes driving our behaviour and experiences.

"I thought to myself: how could you not want to learn about how that works?!" says Jo.

It was attendance at an access event, organised through her school, which first made her aware of the existence of the PPP course at Oxford, although she would ultimately skip the Physiology to focus on the other two.

At this point Jo was living in North Yorkshire, where she had moved at the age of nine. Born in New York, her family would then cross the Atlantic to Amsterdam, where she attended a Dutch school for four years from the age of five. She began at Somerville in 2010.

**"I found the College very friendly and sociable. It did not conform to the Oxford stereotypes."**

"My first impressions were very positive," says Demaree-Cotton. "I was worried that every conversation would be an intelligence contest but then I realised that 18-year-old boys were still 18-year-old boys, with their usual brand of toilet humour! And I found the College very friendly and sociable. It did not conform to the Oxford stereotypes."

Philosophy, she says, came more naturally than psychology, which required her to engage in a "new style of learning. I now had to use a totally new essay-writing technique which involved



combining lots of scientific data and facts with theoretical argument, and memorizing lots of citations."

"It took a lot of figuring out," says Demaree-Cotton. "So I asked Professor Charles Spence (see page 9) for his advice and he said that at university he'd learnt dirty ditties as aide-memoires. That was not my approach, but gradually I began to get a handle on things and by the third year I felt like I was up to speed."

Demaree-Cotton was taught Ethics and Logic by Hilary Greaves, who she describes as an "absolutely fantastic teacher". When Greaves was on maternity leave, she invited Demaree-Cotton to her house to help with an application for postgraduate study.

"She gave me her number too, in case she was in labour!" says Demaree-Cotton. "Nobody in Somerville has a bad thing to say about her."

Now studying for a BPhil, Demaree-Cotton says that several areas appeal, but that Cognitive Science is her first love. Big debates look set to remain part of Demaree-Cotton family life for some time yet.



# Sixth Spence

Professor Charles Spence is head of the Crossmodal Research Laboratory at Oxford University's Department of Experimental Psychology. His prize-winning research is focused on how a better understanding of the human senses can be used to help design improved experiences. His field is called neuroscience-inspired multisensory design and it draws on the latest research in Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience.

Professor Spence has applied this approach from the design of warning signals, to make driving safer through to which combination of paint and fragrance to make people more productive in the office environment. The majority of his funding has come from some of the world's largest companies, such as Unilever, P&G, McDonalds, Starbucks, Pepsi and Coca-Cola.

Over the last decade, the focus for the majority of the research in the lab has shifted to applying the neuroscience-inspired design approach to the world of food and drink, working with established chefs like Heston Blumenthal, Ferran Adria, as well as emerging chefs such as Josef Youssef (London) and Charles Michel (Colombia).

Later this year, his new book *The Perfect Meal: The Multisensory Science of Food and Dining*, co-written with Betina Piqueras-Fiszman will be published by Wiley-Blackwell.



# Dorothy Hodgkin, Somerville & science

by  
GEORGINA  
FERRY

Is it possible that Dorothy Hodgkin would not have won the Nobel Prize had she chosen a different College? For her biographer, Georgina Ferry, Somerville played a decisive role in steering the course of Hodgkin's career.

Born Dorothy Crowfoot in Cairo in 1910, Hodgkin was the eldest of four daughters of John Winter Crowfoot and his wife Molly. Her father was an administrator in the colonial education service, first in Egypt and, after World War I, in Sudan. His real passion was archaeology and when Hodgkin was in her teens he became the Director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. While Hodgkin and her sisters were based largely in a rambling family house in Norfolk near Beccles, their parents spent at least half the year in North Africa or the Middle East.

She discovered chemistry at the age of 10, in a small private class where for one term the curriculum included practical experiments. "I was captured for life," she wrote, "by chemistry and by crystals." Her mother encouraged her interest. She gave Hodgkin a collection of lectures for children, *Concerning the Nature of Things*, presented by William Henry Bragg at the Royal Institution. Bragg and his son William Lawrence had discovered in 1913 that it was possible to ascertain the three-dimensional arrangement of atoms in a crystal by studying the diffraction pattern produced when a beam of X-rays passed through the crystal. When Hodgkin read that "we can now 'see' the individual atoms and molecules", she immediately made up her mind that she would use the technique to study the molecules that make up living things.

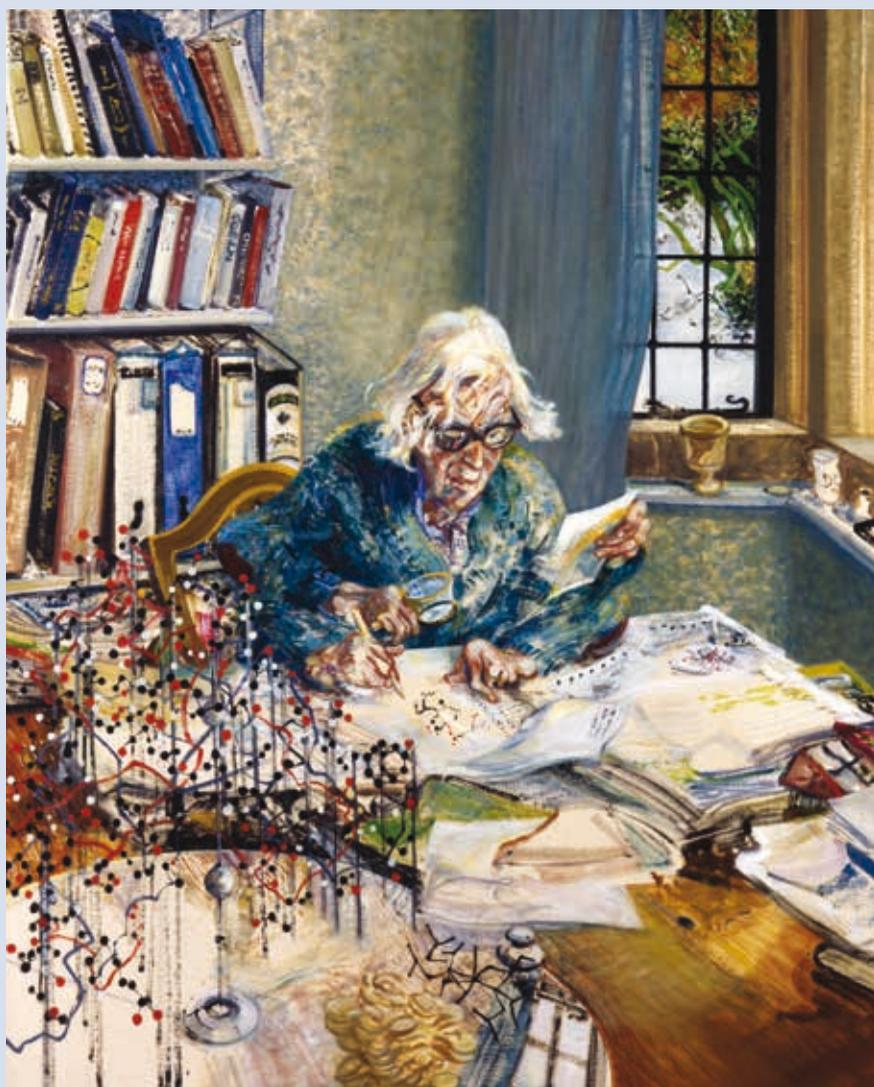
John Crowfoot had previously met Margery Fry, the energetic social reformer who had taken over as Principal of Somerville in 1927. So Hodgkin applied to Somerville and was accepted to read Chemistry in 1928. The College at the time had no science fellow of its own: the five women's colleges shared a Director of Studies for science, the zoologist Jane Willis Kirkaldy, who arranged for tutorials with male and female Fellows from the other colleges. For her fourth year research project, she was finally able to achieve her ambition to train as a crystallographer. The Chemical Crystallography department had just bought the necessary X-ray equipment and she solved the structure

of an organic compound, thallium dimethyl bromide. She was rewarded with a first class degree.

Hodgkin had been brought up with a strong social conscience and although she loved research, she wondered whether she ought instead to become a social worker. Anxiously she consulted the Principal. As her friend Betty Murray reported in one of her voluminous letters home, 'The Fry had quite silenced her prickings of conscience and encouraged her to go ahead with research which is of course what Dorothy really wants to do.' Hodgkin went to Cambridge to undertake a PhD with John Desmond Bernal, a former student of Bragg's who was beginning to use X-ray crystallography to study biological molecules. Hodgkin assisted with his first successful X-ray study of a protein, the digestive enzyme pepsin, and was his co-author on the paper published in *Nature* that essentially marked the birth of protein crystallography.

In 1933 a Somerville committee on the teaching of natural sciences recommended the appointment of 'someone who is already distinguished in research or shows likelihood of becoming so.' The new Principal of Somerville, Helen Darbishire, wrote to Hodgkin, still in her first year at Cambridge, to offer her a two-year research fellowship. She accepted on the condition that she could stay a further year in Cambridge before returning to Oxford to do 'research and a little teaching'. In 1936 she was elected an official fellow and she remained part of Somerville (as Fellow, Professorial Fellow and later, Honorary Fellow) for the rest of her life. The secure base and regular salary shielded Hodgkin from the insecurity that often bedevils the early stages of a research career.

Somerville was also to feature in the development of her family life. Staying with Margery Fry in London, she met Fry's cousin Thomas Hodgkin: they were married in December 1937. Her first child was born in 1938 (others arrived in 1941 and 1946), presenting a new challenge for the College: hardly any of the Fellows were married and none had previously given birth.



*Dorothy Hodgkin* by Maggi Hambling, oil on canvas, 1985 © National Portrait Gallery, London

Without asking her first, the Governing Body awarded Hodgkin maternity leave and maternity pay ('which slightly shocks me', Dorothy wrote to Thomas), making it possible for her to continue her career.

It was not until 1946 that the University, somewhat grudgingly, appointed her a Demonstrator (Junior Lecturer). By that time she had achieved her first great breakthrough: solving the three-dimensional structure of the antibiotic penicillin, for which she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1947. The first female Fellows had been elected only in 1945.

Hodgkin was delighted when Somerville elected a scientist, the pathologist Janet

Vaughan, as Principal in 1946. The two became friends and allies and had shared research interests: Vaughan had worked on the treatment of pernicious anaemia and Hodgkin's research during the early 1950s focused on the structure of the 'pernicious anaemia factor', otherwise known as Vitamin B12. Vaughan was also a Trustee of the Nuffield Foundation, which provided generous funding for the computing resources necessary to complete the work on this complex molecule. Hodgkin's solutions of penicillin and Vitamin B12 brought her the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1964. She spent little or none of the prize money on herself, but gave donations to support overseas graduate students at Somerville and to

found a College crèche when in 1974 no fewer than three SCR babies were born.

In her later years Hodgkin both continued her scientific work, solving the structure of the protein hormone insulin in 1969, and took a higher profile in campaigning for peace, social justice and international understanding. Her political beliefs had always been firmly on the left and she made many visits to both Soviet Russia and Mao Zedong's China. It was not only her Nobel Prize that gained her entry to Downing Street to argue her case for greater East-West rapprochement. Margaret Thatcher, Britain's Prime Minister from 1979-1990, had been a Chemistry student at Somerville from 1943-1947, tutored by Hodgkin and supervised by her for her Part II in crystallography. Despite being her polar opposite politically, Thatcher held Hodgkin in great esteem and even kept her photo in her office.

The *Observer* report on Hodgkin's Nobel ceremony described her as an 'affable-looking housewife' (she was by then the Royal Society Wolfson Research Professor). The world in those days saw her achievement as totally out of the ordinary for a woman. Somerville, in contrast, provided an environment in which exceptional achievement evoked admiration, but never surprise.

---

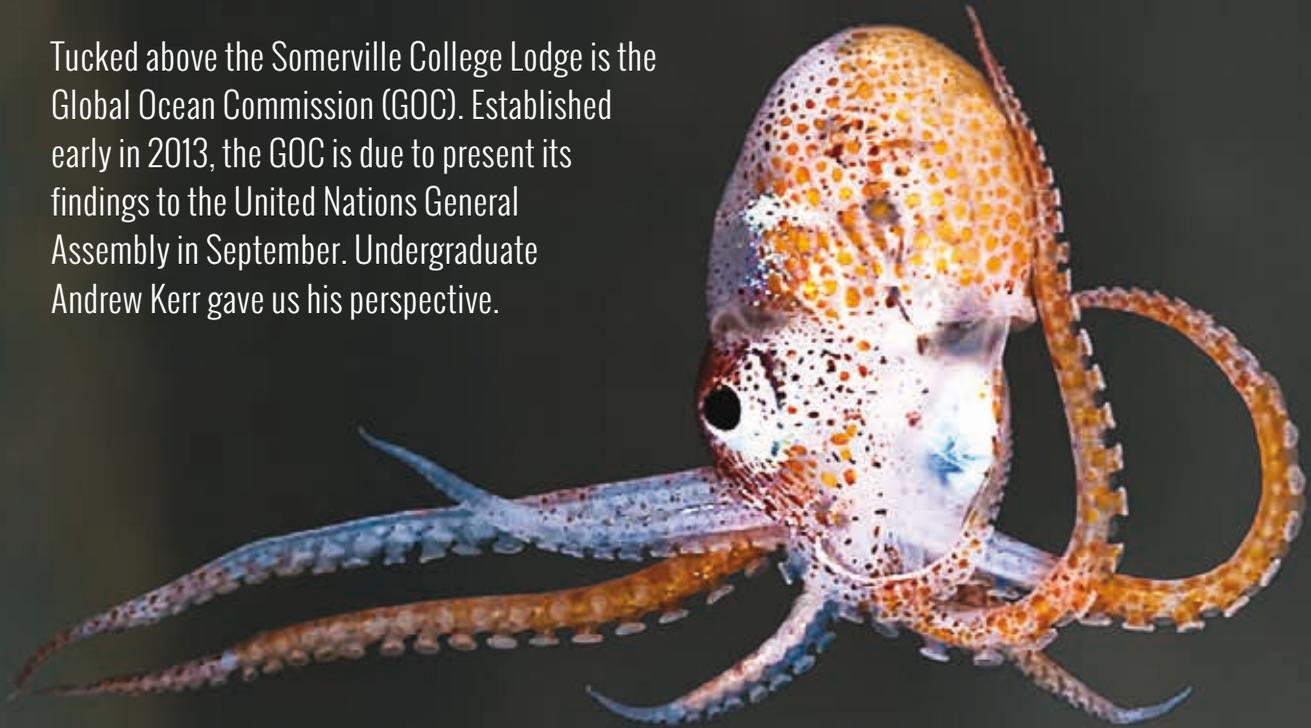
*To mark the 50th anniversary of Dorothy Hodgkin's Nobel Prize, Somerville is in the early stages of planning a project in her name at the College as a lasting legacy that will enable further research and teaching in her field. Further details will be circulated in due course. The College is also hosting - or involved in - various anniversary events. A list of forthcoming Somerville events can be found on the inside of the Magazine back cover. A further autumn anniversary event is also being planned, with details tbc.*

**Georgina Ferry is the author of *Dorothy Hodgkin: A Life*, published by Granta Books in 1998. Further details can be found at [www.georginaferry.com](http://www.georginaferry.com)**

# Life in the High Seas

by ANDREW KERR

Tucked above the Somerville College Lodge is the Global Ocean Commission (GOC). Established early in 2013, the GOC is due to present its findings to the United Nations General Assembly in September. Undergraduate Andrew Kerr gave us his perspective.



The 'high seas' cover 45% of the earth's surface; the term refers to those parts of the oceans beyond the exclusive economic zones of each coastal nation. These areas are governed by the United Nation's 1973-82 'Convention on the Law of the Sea' and its' implementing agreements.

The high seas continue to be both heavily exploited and widely misunderstood. This is perhaps not surprising, given that more people have travelled into space than into the ocean depths.

## Fellow in a ship

One of the few who has plumbed the depths of the oceans is Professor Alex Rogers, Fellow at Somerville College and Lecturer at the Department of Zoology. A leading expert in both deep-sea ecology and the impact humans exert on it, Rogers has led numerous research trips, working with organisations like the World Wildlife Fund for Nature and International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

One such trip, to an area of volcanic vents on the East Scotia Ridge, south of South Georgia, particularly caught the media's attention as a new crab species was revealed, nicknamed 'the Hoff' (after actor David Hasselhoff) on account of its hairy chest. Such undiscovered species lie in areas of sea only a few hundred miles from land.

"The excitement of discovering whole new ecosystems on the Hoff-crab cruise was as intense as being at a football match, but it lasted 6 weeks!" said Rogers. "We discovered a whole new community of hydrothermal vent animals, all unknown to science, black smokers belching fluid at more than 380°C, a whale skeleton complete with its own collection of new species, and an entire underwater volcano with delicate chimneys leaking liquid sulphur and poisonous chemicals."

The GOC's determination is fuelled not only by ambition for its projects but also by a sense of urgency, particularly in its focus areas: overfishing, loss of biodiversity, lack of enforcement procedures and empty governance of the high seas. It aims to make recommendations for 'cost-effective, pragmatic and politically feasible reforms of high seas governance, management and enforcement'.



*Professor Alex Rogers*

The Commission is co-chaired by three leading political figures in David Miliband, José María Figueres and Trevor Manuel. Finance and business is also well-represented; past Commissioners include Sir Mulyani Indrawati and Ratan Tata. The Commission's close relationship with Somerville – and its students – has been enabled by Professor Rogers.

"Both my students and those from other disciplines represented by the College Fellowship have benefited from their GOC interactions," said Rogers. "Many undertook research projects for the Commission Secretariat and attended the Commissioner's meeting in November."

In Hilary term 2013, an eclectic group of student interns gathered in the Margaret Thatcher Centre to hear of the Commission's purposes and aims, undergo assessment and receive their briefs (see pages 14-15). My own work was to examine religious charities from around the world which had displayed an interest in the preservation and maintenance of the oceans.

What was striking about the Commission was the dedication and enthusiasm its staff and associates had for their work. Some had moved city or even country to

play their part. David Miliband arrived for a panel discussion 'fresh' off a flight from Turkey where he had been assessing the Syrian refugee crisis. There was a good deal of excitement and expectation.

"We can provide the scientific evidence about human impacts on the high seas and how poor governance and management of human activities is leading to the declining health of the oceans," explained Rogers. "But only by bringing together some of the most respected and talented policymakers from across the world can we draw political attention to these issues, reveal the true value of the oceans and enable the action required for a healthy ocean for future generations."

As the Commission works towards its final report, and the Commissioners and Co-chairs turn up the rhetoric and push for support, it is a rewarding feeling to know that the work I did last summer has played a small part in their findings and thinking.

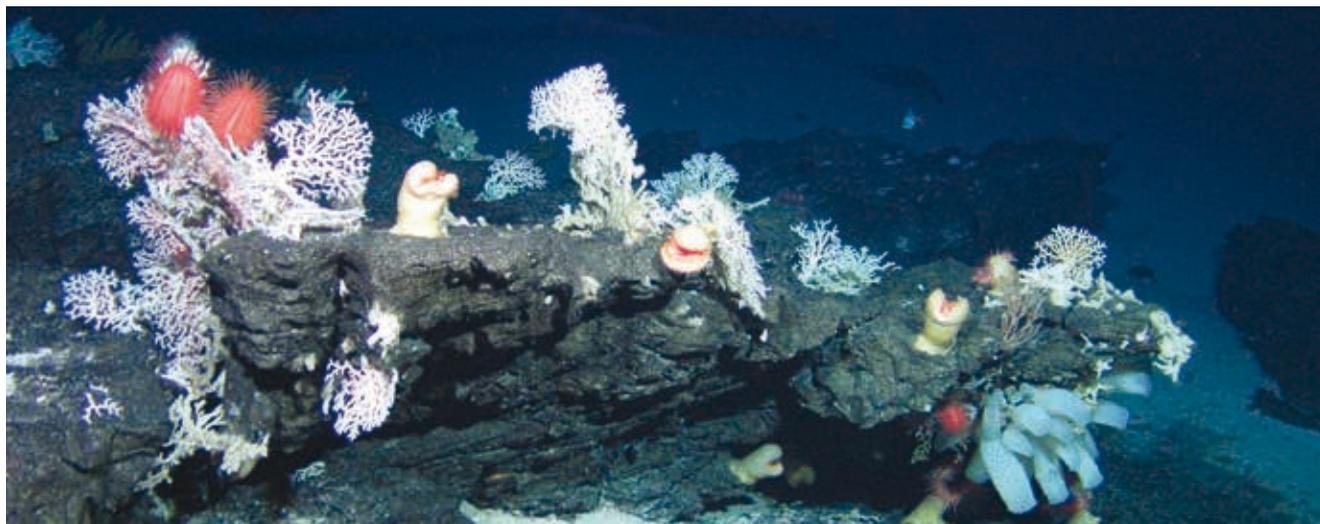
The Global Ocean Commission embodies much of the spirit of Somerville. When she opened the Commission discussions last September, the Principal noted that the College has a history of public service and academic leadership. I agree wholeheartedly and would add that it also demonstrates the worldwide collaboration for which Somerville is increasingly gaining a deserved reputation.

**Andrew Kerr (2010, History) finished his undergraduate degree at Somerville in June and was an intern at the Global Ocean Commission last summer. He is currently studying for a Graduate Diploma in Law.**

# Oceanic Aspirations



A few fortunate Somervillians were selected to be interns at the Global Ocean Commission. Three of them told us how they found the experience.



ALEXANDRA BOGDANOVA  
(2013, Chemistry)

I got involved with the Global Ocean Commission because I wanted to explore the global interconnectivity and impact of scientific issues on our environment and our daily lives, as well as trying out various jobs and tasks that suited my knowledge and skills. A lot of the work I did was only possible because I am bilingual in Russian and English.

I researched and composed reports on mainstream and digital media in Russia and on the media's overlap with the international interests of the Global Ocean Commission. I found the comparisons and contrasts between the Russian and British

media particularly interesting. Cultural and economic differences, as well as a higher rural profile meant that many organisations with interests overlapping that of the Commission did not have a strong online presence.

I also did some informal translation work for the Commission, such as translating planned tweets for their Twitter feed. This was a complex challenge not only due to the character constraints, but also because of grammatical differences between the languages, differences which made it hard to achieve the Twitter 'hashtag-keyword' format.

Overall, the internship was incredibly fun and challenging and full of different and fascinating tasks that allowed me to further my interest in how science can shape our environment, while letting me contribute to something that really matters.



ROBERT SMITH  
(2011, History)

I really wanted the chance to contribute something to an important organisation carrying out a work of global significance and so this definitely fitted the bill. It also gave me some valuable experience – and a good reference for future employers!

I'm an organ scholar and so my work was to look into the GOC hosting a major concert to which it could invite significant global leaders and other influential figures. This meant researching possible venues in New York and London and producing sample programmes based around the theme of the sea. It also meant looking up performers, from solo pianists to symphony orchestras, and seeking out composers who would be prepared to take a commission from GOC.

A lot of the minutiae could be very mundane, but the exciting part was researching the music and the composers, who

needed to have a connection to China, Japan or Russia – as those are the countries the GOC is trying to get on board. I almost managed to organise a meeting with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, which sadly did not work out.

GOC is trying to safeguard the oceans for future generations by ensuring they are managed sustainably. It is of immense ecological and economic importance. It is (literally) trying to fill a large gap in the legal framework of the high seas. Its importance lies in providing an opportunity for global leaders to do something about this outside of the usual UN channels.

The internship had unforeseen consequences too. I was once interviewed by a reporter from the Chinese edition of the New York Times about my role as an organ scholar. I ended up telling the reporter about the GOC too and was passed a contact in Shanghai, to whom I sent an email. Before I knew it they were trying to finalise arrangements for me to book their symphony orchestra to come to New York!



ZOË FANNON  
(2011, PPE)

I'm interested in policy design and governance, particularly in an international context – I am an international student, after all! So I was very eager to get involved with the Global Ocean Commission's efforts to design a new framework for the governance of the global oceans. In August, the GOC set up an online survey to allow all

interested parties to contribute to the discussion around the ten core global ocean policy areas they've identified. I and a few other student interns were tasked with reading through all the survey responses to look for common themes. I've worked on similar response-based qualitative analysis before and it's a

good way to develop an understanding of a topic; most of the responses came from people working in conservation, marine science, ocean governance and ocean-related industries, so I learned about Marine Protected Areas, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and Vessel Monitoring Systems by piecing together people's reflections. I got a sense of what the viable policy responses to unsustainable fishing or biodiversity conservation look like. From an analytical point of view, it's exciting to see these themes emerge as you work through the responses. This project was particularly exciting because it was so truly global. It was surreal to be sitting at my kitchen table over the winter vacation, writing a final report about the opinions that were shared by people from fifty different countries. I really enjoyed gaining an insight into a policy area that I simply had never thought that much about before.

## Science at Somerville: A tradition of excellence

**Margaret Adams** (1958, Chemistry), Emeritus Fellow and Tutor in Chemistry

**Carys Bannister** (1963, Physiology) OBE, UK's first female neurosurgeon; d. 2010

**Fiona Caldicott** (1960, Medicine) first woman President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Principal of Somerville

**Kay Davies** (Partridge, 1969, Chemistry), DBE, FRS, Dr Lee's Professor of Anatomy, Governor of the Wellcome Trust

**Marian Dawkins** (Stamp, 1963, Biology), Emeritus Professor of Animal Behaviour and Tutor in Biology

**Jenny Glusker** (Pickworth, 1949, Chemistry), Emeritus Professor Fox Chase Cancer Center, Philadelphia

**Joanna Haigh** (1972, Physics), CBE, FRS, Professor of Atmospheric Physics, Imperial

**Julia Higgins** (Stretton Downes, 1961, Physics), DBE, FRS, FREng, Professor of Polymer Science, Imperial College, formerly VP and Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society

**Dorothy Hodgkin** (Crowfoot, 1930, Chemistry), OM, FRS, Fellow & Tutor in Chemistry, Nobel Prize in Chemistry; d. 1994

**Judith Howard** (Duckworth, 1966), CBE, FRS

**Louise Johnson**, DBE, FRS, Professor, Fellow & Tutor in Molecular Biophysics; d. 2012

**Carole Jordan**, DBE, FRS, first female President of the Royal Astronomical Society; Emeritus, Professor, Fellow and Tutor in Physics

**Jane Willis Kirkaldy** (1897, Nat.Sci), one of the first two females to gain a First in Natural Sciences; d. 1932

**Angela McLean** (1979, Mathematics), FRS, Professor of Mathematical Biology, Oxford

**Josephine Peach** (1960, Chemistry), Emeritus Fellow & Tutor in Chemistry

**Janet Vaughan** (1919, Physiology), DBE, FRS, Principal of Somerville

**Angela Vincent**, Emeritus Professor, Fellow & Tutor of Neuroimmunology

**Cicely Williams** (1917, Physiology), first 'Mother & Child Health' Director of WHO; d. 1992

**Dorothy Wrinch**, Lady Carlisle Research Fellow, first woman to receive Oxford DSc

**Julia Yeomans** (1973, Physics), FRS

# Somerville's Great War

by ANNE MANUEL

2014 marks the centenary of the outbreak of World War One and, like many other institutions across the globe, Somerville College is planning a programme of events and activities in commemoration, writes Anne Manuel, Somerville College Librarian.

---

## Somerville and the Great War Blog

'Somerville and the Great War', our new blog, has gone live and the first post is up. Here we are planning to use items in the archives and Special Collections to trace what was happening step-by-step in Somerville over the four years of the War and how it affected everyday life for students, staff and Tutors. Items already identified for this year include extracts from Vera Brittain's diary when she came up to Somerville for her entrance exam, photographs of the Somerville June Ball of 1914, letters documenting Maria Czaplicka's preparation for her anthropological research trip to Siberia just as war broke out in Europe and extracts from the JCR minute book exhorting students to make their own beds in order to help out the hard-pressed maids.

## Events and Exhibitions

Highlight of the year will be a Remembrance Day event at which Baroness Williams will talk about her mother Vera Brittain and her legacy. Exhibitions will be on display in the library throughout the year and will include some of the photos, letters and albums that belonged to nurses and patients who were stationed at Somerville Hospital, as well as extracts from students' recollections about being 'evacuated' to Oriel College. We are also planning some joint events with Oriel College to mark the centenary. (Commemorations will not, as has been suggested, extend to a re-enactment of the night the returning Oriel undergraduates took a pickaxe to the wall dividing the women's accommodation from the men's. Fearless principal

Miss Penrose sat up all night with a copy of the Oxford Book of English Verse facing down any undergraduate bold enough to try and crawl through the hole in the wall).

## Publication

Over the course of the year students and staff will be researching and writing articles about Somerville in wartime for a commemorative book to be published towards the end of the year. Material for this will come from the wonderful personal accounts of war work that are to be found in the College Annual Reports, the wartime letters and diaries written by Somerville students, the photographic collection in the archives and, of course, the Vera Brittain Special Collection.

## Community Collection

Finally, and ambitiously, we are planning a 'community collection' event in which we will ask Somervillians past and present to bring or send in pictures, stories, letters or artefacts from the First World War for us to scan and record with a view to adding to the larger collections currently being gathered in both the UK and Europe.

All in all it's going to be a busy year for the library and archives but it is well worth it! Look out for notices of events and publications over the coming months. Any other thoughts and ideas that you have would be very welcome and if you have any questions, then please do get in touch with Anne Manuel, College Librarian and Archivist: [anne.manuel@some.ox.ac.uk](mailto:anne.manuel@some.ox.ac.uk).



World War One saw Somerville accept men for the first time - as patients



Vera Brittain (1914, English): student, nurse, author, pacifist, feminist, Somervillian

## Vera Brittain's Great War

After just one undergraduate year, Vera Brittain left Somerville in 1915 and worked for most of the remaining three years of the War as a VAD nurse. Her fiancé, two close friends and her brother all died during the War. Her elegiac memoir, *Testament of Youth* (1933) is one of the greatest portraits of life in the Great War.

She promoted the League of Nations and later became a committed pacifist, joining the Peace Pledge Union. She worked tirelessly for their food campaign and other causes and as editor of *Peace News* wrote against apartheid, colonialism and the development of nuclear weapons.

On 11 November 1930 Vera Brittain framed what she saw as the great challenge for her generation in an Armistice Day article in the *Manchester Guardian*:

*“How to preserve the memory of our suffering in such a way that our successors may understand it and refrain from the temptations offered by glamour and glory – that is the problem which we, the war generation, still have to solve before the darkness covers it.”*

# Marginal Mills

by DR FRANKLYN PROCHASKA



One of the little known treasures of Oxford University is the personal library of John Stuart Mill, which his stepdaughter Helen Taylor presented to Somerville College in 1905.

Somerville was an appropriate home for Mill's London library. It was not only founded as a College for women (1879), which he would have supported, but he had recruited the leading scientist Mary Somerville, after whom the College is named, to his campaign for women's suffrage.

The Liberal statesman John Morley, who was instrumental in bringing Mill's collection to Somerville, officially opened the College library in July 1904. He expressed the hope that it would soon develop "a voice and physiognomy of its own". This was a necessity, for female students in Oxford were not in those days permitted to use the Bodleian Library. To mark the opening,

Robert Bridges composed a masque on the myth of Demeter and Persephone.

J. S. Mill's books arrived shortly after the library's opening. The collection, much of it formed by J. S. Mill's father, the economist and political philosopher James Mill, numbers about 2,000 volumes and covers a wide range of subjects, from poetry and political thought to the classics and economics. J. S. Mill's own writings are well represented, as are books on issues relating to women. Notable among the volumes are Bentham's *Works*, Tocqueville's *De la Démocratie en Amérique* and a copy of Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, inscribed by the author.

Over the years Mill's books have suffered some depredations. Some were sold off, including the travel and cookery books, which were deemed unsuitable for high-minded Somervillians. For decades, the volumes were distributed throughout the Somerville library for the general use of undergraduates, in keeping with Helen Taylor's bequest. But at the end of the 1960s the Pilgrim Trust provided a grant that permitted the College to bring the volumes together in a closed collection in what is now the Mill Room on the first floor of the library. Many of the books contain annotations, by both J. S. Mill and his father. But for all their intrinsic interest, these marginalia have attracted surprisingly little attention.

Correspondence in the Somerville library provides details of the various researchers who have looked at J. S. Mill's books over the years, usually in regard to specific subjects or individual volumes. Friedrich Hayek visited in January 1944 to look at economic texts only weeks before the publication of *The Road to Serfdom*. Intriguingly, his later great admirer, Margaret Roberts (Thatcher) was a first year student residing just across the quad from the library and John Robson, the general editor of the great Toronto edition of J. S. Mill's *Collected Works*, which does not include marginalia, was a frequent visitor. In 1969, the American literary scholar Edward Alexander published a brief article in *English Language Notes* on 'Mill's Marginal Notes on Carlyle's *Hudson's Statue*, which demonstrated Mill's irritation with Carlyle's opinions. In the 1980s, the Canadian political scientist Robert Fenn began a project to identify and transcribe the annotations by James Mill. Sadly, Fenn died before publishing the results of his labours, but his extensive notes, though not exhaustive, are a valuable guide to the marginalia of the elder Mill. (They are available for study in the Mill Room.)

James Mill's notes usually appear on the back flyleaf of the volumes under scrutiny, with associated page numbers

next to them. Often, they simply sum up the thought expressed in a sentence or paragraph by the book's author, but he often added his own view of a subject. On Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (6th edition, 1790), where Smith remarks that "every man, as the Stoics used to say, is first and principally recommended to his own care", Mill notes "Every man loves himself best". In a volume of Voltaire's *Oeuvres* (1819–25), where Voltaire writes, "I must confess that despotic and monarchical are exactly the same thing in the hearts of all sensible people", Mill comments: "One of the best things of Voltaire on government". On Hume's discussion of pleasure and pain in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40) Mill notes: "Pleasure and Pain the only motives, not reason – the province of reason is to be the slave of the passions".

On Ralph Waldo Emerson's Essays, Mill's annotations would have made uncomfortable reading for the author had he seen them: "fudge", "nonsense", "pooh", "sentimental", "superficial", "stupid", "very stupid", "trash".

J. S. Mill was less prolific in his marginal comments than his father, but he was more critical and caustic, which makes his interventions very illuminating, not least about himself. Unlike those of his father, his annotations are typically scribbled on the text, not on a flyleaf, thus giving them a more immediate and personal character. On Ralph Waldo Emerson's Essays, J. S. Mill's annotations would have made uncomfortable reading for the author had he seen them: "fudge", "nonsense", "pooh", "sentimental", "superficial", "stupid", "very stupid", "trash". On the first page of the essay 'Love', Mill writes: "Nature's trick to keep the world filled". On

the essay 'Friendship' he jotted: "Reality is so much higher & better than 'sacred & solemn'. When will people dare to give up the old religious nomenclature". The annotations show that the writings of Emerson, a dreamy transcendentalist, were never likely to find favour with an austere empiricist like J. S. Mill.

A preliminary survey of J. S. Mill's marginalia has turned up further annotations on the works of Carlyle, Kant, Rousseau and Tocqueville. The various books by Bentham in the collection are not annotated by either Mill, perhaps because they knew him so well. Many of J. S. Mill's marginalia are modest interjections – he had a passion for correction. On Kant's *Critick of Pure Reason* (1848), for example, he altered a few words and corrected a Latin phrase. On Tocqueville's *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (1840), inscribed to Mill by the author, he made a number of fascinating comments, which merit further study. Rousseau presents a problem, for the many marginal markings and annotations in *Eloisa* (1810) and the *Oeuvres Complètes de J.J. Rousseau* (1826) are in pen and pencil in different hands, which suggests that not only Mill studied these texts, but also generations of undergraduates.

Somerville is proposing to initiate a programme to foster research into the annotations and to preserve the collection. The Librarian would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to be involved at [anne.manuel@some.ox.ac.uk](mailto:anne.manuel@some.ox.ac.uk).

---

*This excerpt is from an article that appeared in the Times Literary Supplement on 3 January 2014.*

Dr Franklyn Prochaska is a historian of modern Britain, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and author of several books on the Victorian period. He is a member of Somerville College and is married to Dr Alice Prochaska, College Principal.

# The literature

It was an informal lunchtime colloquy of Somerville medievalists that highlighted both the exceptional number of medievalists in the College and the existence of a common research interest among them. A few workshops later, a volume of interdisciplinary essays appeared and, following it, the choice of a controversial topic for a second project.

Colleges provide a unique opportunity for the exchange of ideas across disciplinary boundaries and one result of Somerville's pursuit of such exchanges was the 2010 publication *Aspects of the Performative in Medieval Culture* or, how to do things with words in medieval culture. The project's success has led a group of Somerville medievalists, now reinforced by early modernists, to publish a second work. This time, the subject is polemic: the use of language as an act of violence.

Moreover, the latest medievalist project at Somerville is not limited to the Fellows, but involves a range of scholars who have been part of Somerville as undergraduates, research Fellows, Lecturers or visiting academics, specializing in a wide range of medieval subjects.

It also crosses the sometimes artificial time barrier that traditionally divides the Medieval and Early Modern periods, with a canvas that stretches to the late 17th century, as well as encompassing the study of a range of arenas in which polemic was used, such as music and literary debate, the schoolroom and debate over gender issues.

This crossing of borders is particularly apt in light of what the book is seeking to show: that polemic as we know it was alive and well in the medieval period. Sparked by a claim in a recent academic work that polemic had not existed before the 16th century, the Somerville medievalists began to plot a book which would show otherwise.

"If you are saying that polemic does not exist before the 16th century, then the onus is on you to prove that medieval polemic is distinctly different from what came later," said Benjamin Thompson, Fellow and Tutor in Medieval History. "But it is difficult to discern a clear change and certainly not a sudden and substantive one."

In fact, Thompson argues, the routine language of ecclesiastical reform in the Medieval period employed polemic as one of its

major tools. One of the dangers, Thompson argues, has been for Early Modernists to overlay both the relative paucity of printing in the late medieval period and the extent of its impact in the 16th century. The result can be that scholars wrongly assume that literary forms common in the 16th century cannot have existed before that.

"The Catholic Church was using printing long before Protestants got to it, to reproduce typically medieval works such as preachers' manuals and the large devotional literature in English," explains Thompson. "Catholics were quick off the mark to meet the Lutheran challenge in print, but the forms of these works were broadly based in medieval religious controversies and polemics against heretics."

Sermons are the focus of a chapter by Dr Almut Suerbaum, Vice-Principal of Somerville College, Fellow and Tutor in German and one of the book's three editors. Sermons, Suerbaum explains, engage in sharp rebuttal of a real or imagined opponent and highlight the moral ambivalence of polemic: as displays of clever rhetoric, they are often entertaining, yet they are also acts of verbal violence degrading the opponent and at times inciting violent action.

**"The project began in Somerville but has spread itself to other Colleges and even other universities. Somerville has therefore been central in driving an international research enterprise."**

"The volume sets out to explore this moral ambiguity in greater nuance," said Suerbaum. "Polemic as a way of exerting power through use of language is not confined to religious controversies, but widespread in academic and literary debates; within the period, it occurred in the classroom as well as among

# of attack

by ALEXANDER MONRO



From left to right: Dr Benjamin Thomson, Dr Almut Suerbaum, Dr George Southcombe

translators. Sometimes, insults took the place of physical attacks; at other times, history demonstrated the way in which words incite action.”

Part of the practicability of the project lay in the nature of College life, said Thompson, since Somerville enables regular contact and interaction between academics in different subjects. This inter-disciplinary approach has become a keynote of Somerville’s academic personality. But the research team has not been limited to Somerville either.

“The project began in Somerville but has spread itself to other Colleges and even other universities,” said George Southcombe, third editor and author of the final chapter, ‘The Polemics of

Moderation’; now a Fellow of St Catherine’s, he was both a Lecturer and a post-doctoral Fellow at Somerville. “Somerville has therefore been central in driving an international research enterprise.”

The group’s previous book (mentioned earlier in this article) was published in 2010 by Walter de Gruyter. This summer will see a second publication added to this Somerville collaboration’s output and a third is already being discussed.

“Having Somerville as a base has helped the process of cross-fertilisation,” says Thompson. “The key has been for us to find subjects that both historians and literary scholars can write on. We’re certainly not out of ideas yet.”

# A century of definitions

by  
ALEXANDER  
MONRO



Weighty work: Somerville's Dr Richard Ashdowne (right) with colleagues Dr Giuseppe Pezzini and Dr Carolinne White in Duke Humfrey's Library at the Bodleian

When a dictionary of medieval British Latin was begun in 1913, it was an ambitious project. It was not, however, supposed to take 100 years. We interviewed the Somerville Fellow who oversaw its completion.

It all ended, Richard Ashdowne explains, with Egyptian beer or, to be precise, with:

**zythum** [CL < ζῦθος], sort of drink made from fermented malt, (Egyptian) beer.

After 58,000 word entries containing more than 90,000 senses and just over 436,000 quotations, the 3,830 pages (or 17 volumes) of the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* was completed in December, shortly before the end of the work's centenary year.

The *Dictionary* had three editors over the crucial drafting years of 1967 to 2013 (compilation and editing were not continuous over the full 100 years), of which the last (from 2011) was Dr Richard Ashdowne, Senior Research Fellow and College Lecturer in Linguistics at Somerville.

One of his achievements, he says, was creating the architecture to enable the project to switch to working electronically, which only took place in 2010. Until that point, the entire process had involved going through slips of paper sent in by contributors from around the country and entering information in writing – a laborious and, in the digital age, inefficient process. These slips, by the end numbering around 750,000, each contain a quotation example of the use of a word. They were excerpted from their original Latin sources by a small army of readers, mainly volunteers, over the course of the project from the 1920s onwards. Each quotation used has required verification before its incorporation in the draft dictionary text.

“The output rate in the first decade was 232 pages,” says Ashdowne. “With the change in our working practice we published 800 pages in the final two years. Computerisation doubled the output rate, even allowing for the increased size of the team. Without it we could not have finished in time for the big anniversary.”

## 335 years of waiting

Scholars of Medieval Latin have been ready for just such a work to appear for some time. Hitherto, the standard reference dictionary for Medieval Latin was the *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis* (Dictionary of Medieval and Late Latin), written by Charles du Fresne, sieur du Cange, and published in Paris in 1678. The *Glossarium* was a remarkable work of scholarship and underwent numerous republications and revisions. Edward Gibbon described its editor as “our sure and indefatigable guide in the Middle Ages and Byzantine history”.

The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin in British Sources* is just one of several geographically-circumscribed dictionaries of Medieval Latin being worked on across Europe. It is also a period piece,

allowing it to capture a distinct era in British linguistic history.

“Latin was the most important written language of this island for 1,000 years, used for everything from accounts to zoology,” says Ashdowne. “British Latin was often markedly different to the Latin used elsewhere in Europe, especially that used by speakers of Romance languages. Indeed, England was a key source for the reinvigorated Latinity at the heart of the Carolingian Renaissance.”

Having joined the project as an Assistant Editor in 2008, Ashdowne found that the most enjoyable part of his own involvement came when he took over as Editor on the project in October 2011, as his work then shifted from drafting to revising entries. Aspects of drafting, he said, could be “a real slog” of searching through libraries to identify a vital but obscure quotation in barely legible handwriting on an aged slip.

“Revising was an interesting process because I needed to respect the integrity of what had been drafted by the hard work of my meticulous assistant editors while also encouraging consistency across the piece,” said Ashdowne. “I particularly like the long and complicated entries, basically because I’m a linguist. Prepositions are often good on that score.”

“Sub”, he said, had 28 different senses to tease out, while the verb “trahere” meant not only “to drag”, but also “to milk a cow”, “to draw water” and “to draw a line”, among its many senses.

The project brought a few stories to light as well. The word “cancellaria”, meaning “female chancellor”, had an especially surprising back-story. William Longchamp, Lord Chancellor of England in the 12th century, had tried to flee England dressed as a woman. But he was identified by a lascivious fisherman who had taken him for a prostitute and put his hand up Longchamp’s dress.

“Musella, musellum” (meaning ‘muzzle’) was another word with its own particular story. One example of its usage was from 1252, when a muzzle was purchased for the “White Bear” (sent down from Norway), who was kept in the Tower of London, together with strong rope for holding the bear when it fished in the River Thames.

Ashdowne argues that the decline of Latin as a subject in Britain in recent years has made the *Dictionary* even more useful. But is there life post-*Dictionary*?

“I don’t plan to do anything that takes this long!” says Ashdowne. “I hope to move back into linguistics research. That’s my first love.”

**You can read more about the *DMLBS* on its website at [www.dmlbs.ox.ac.uk](http://www.dmlbs.ox.ac.uk).**

# Flying solo: Val Rahmani

by  
ALEXANDER  
MONRO

Somerville's chemists follow many paths. Val Rahmani's career path has taken her to the top of the technology industry, while her hobby has taken her into the skies for her country.

---

It all began when Val Rahmani was at Somerville and IBM recruiters set up an evening at the Randolph Hotel. Rahmani was interested in the sales side of science, although she says the offer of a free bar was probably just as important.

Three decades later, Rahmani has achieved remarkable success in the world of technology and start-ups. Forbes Magazine has described her as "the poster child for moving from a large company to a small company and dealing with risk."

At Somerville, Rahmani says, she was introduced to a new level of intellectual independence.

"Somerville was an amazing place for me. Everyone was so smart!" says Rahmani. "I remember my first tutorial assignment: 'Electrons - are they particles or waves?' We were given a list of about 40 articles in various journals to read, and I was supposed to come to my own conclusion. Wow! This was not the type of work I'd done at school. And with only two of us in the tutorial to discuss this two weeks later, there was nowhere to hide.

"Once I got over the shock, this exercise started me on a path of questioning and learning and trusting my judgment that has helped me throughout my career. I was never again afraid to look into something I didn't understand. I had the confidence to be able to gather data and make decisions and I've used this every day of my life since, as I've moved from technology to management to raising money for a start-up," says Rahmani.

And she has, indeed, kept moving. Manager, board member, start-up mentor, technical risk management consultant and public speaker, Rahmani continues to combine different roles. She has worked in Europe and the US in several different capacities (systems engineering, sales, marketing, executive management, strategy) for leading companies, notably IBM. She also drew plenty of senior attention – in 1996, she had to cut a ski holiday in Colorado short as the Chief Executive of IBM wanted to see her. (She ended up working as one of his two Executive Assistants.)

But it has been Rahmani's knack for attaching herself to the right kinds of technological innovations which has probably proved most important. Her key bets were on mobile and wireless technology. She says that starting IBM's global wireless technology business in 2000 was a particular highlight for her, with talk of some day streaming TV across devices.

"It became very obvious that mobile technology would be a good route," says Rahmani. "Mobiles were taking off in Europe and I was based in the UK with a European mandate. Asia was the leader, then Europe, and the US knew nothing about it. Initially my bosses just allowed me to scope out the possibilities by working on mobile technology strategies on my weekends, but then they asked me to run the business around the world. I was basically given a start-up within IBM."

From there, she took several general management roles, acquiring Internet Security Systems (ISS), a company she then ran for IBM once ISS's own CEO had left. It was the pleasure of this new position which persuaded her to leave; Rahmani loved the role, but wanted to do it independently. In 2009 she was offered the chance to run Damballa, a three-year-old internet security company founded by a group from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

When she arrived, the company had 19 employees. By the time she left at the end of 2012, there were 85. She describes the work of Damballa, which protects companies from hackers who want to steal data or take charge of your devices, as a little like the opposite of what Google does.

"Google comes up with the right answer because it looks for the behaviour patterns of websites with the best reputations, but Damballa looks for the behaviour patterns of malware sites, which have bad reputations," says Rahmani.

## Fresh horizons

Rahmani exudes energy and charisma, and it is not hard to see her motivating large numbers of staff. In her early months at Damballa, she put up a counter on the wall with a bell that she'd ring whenever they won a new deal. Champagne would follow and with it, she says, "a growing sense of belonging".

Where IBM had given her the confidence to try things, Rahmani said two qualities had been key for success in a start-up: surrounding herself with people who had abilities she lacked and remembering that you can never communicate enough, especially when you've had a rough quarter.

Her hobby, then, should come as no surprise. She began aerobatic flying in the 90s but in 1998 a member of the British Aerobatic Team, Nick Onn, began to encourage her to push herself further. His instincts were right about her, as he discovered just how quickly Rahmani could master a new skill.

Two happy outcomes resulted. Rahmani competed for Great Britain for the first time in 1998. And, in December 2006, she married Nick Onn.

"She was fearless," says Onn. "What most students take months of practice to achieve she managed in just a few sessions. There just didn't seem to be a saturation point for her."

Rahmani continues to fly and technology and innovation remain important to her. She is a board member for Teradici, a virtual desktop technology company with offices in Vancouver and Silicon Valley, and works as a mentor for various start-ups. One area she's especially excited about for the future is education and the benefits that can be reaped from applying technology to this most fundamental of provisions. She's also very concerned that too few are getting the right education to succeed in the new world that's emerging.

"It's actually pretty hard for education to keep up with what children can do," says Rahmani. "You have 12-year-olds writing web apps now, so how is a 40-year-old teacher meant to stay on top of it all?"

"One of the most exciting developments is that US schools are embracing online courses in addition to classroom teaching. Some schools have concluded that they don't need to teach a computer science course when the best guy at Stanford is available online. That frees the classroom teacher up to chair a discussion," she says.

Despite a Chemistry PhD from Oxford, Rahmani may not be done with the world of education quite yet.



# Living stories

## A student interview with Kati Whitaker

Reporting from crisis zones has provided Kati Whitaker with remarkable opportunities - and great responsibilities

by SASHA WARD



“Part of my history has been always proving people wrong in some way.” So said Kati Whitaker (1977, PPE), summing up her time as a student and then journalist. Having chosen to study Theology at Oxford, a subject not offered by Somerville, she had to satisfy the College that it should go to the trouble of finding her a place. After three terms studying the subject she transferred to Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) – and never looked back.

“Switching to PPE was by far the best thing to do and I am indebted to Somerville for having had the flexibility and generosity to have let me mess things around like that!” says

Whitaker. “It was studying PPE that really began to fuel my interest in journalism.”

Whitaker describes her entry into journalism as “haphazard” and “serendipitous”, beginning only after a brief period working in the legal profession in London.

Her first journalistic assignment was a radio feature on Egyptian dancing for BBC Radio 4’s *Women’s Hour*. Egyptian dancing was a hobby which she had pursued during her time at Oxford and even briefly considered pursuing as an alternative career.

“I think they were sufficiently intrigued and probably amused

by this young girl who didn't even know how to use a tape recorder," she says.

Following another radio programme about life on an oil rig, Kati landed a three month contract with the BBC's News and Current Affairs Department, having initially applied for a position as a Talks Writer at the Romanian Service. This was a position which, she recounts, allowed her PPE studies to "come to life".

She then pursued a freelance career and, although the insecurity could be difficult, loved the freedom it gave her to choose much of her work. Three years later, she landed a regular presenting position on Radio 4's Disability programme, *Does He Take Sugar*. She stayed for 10 years.

She has since worked in several hostile environments too, reporting from conflict zones in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone. Her programme on Rwandan widows three years after the genocide won her a Sony Award nomination. It was, she said, "my first really challenging assignment emotionally".

"If you are empathetic towards people, you cannot help but live with them what they are going through," she said.

"Some of those stories were so difficult to take, especially people talking about their loved ones who had been killed. They stayed with me for many, many months afterwards and formed a sort of turning point at that stage, making me realise how important journalism can be and giving a sense that these stories have to be told".

While based in the DRC last October where she was working on a series of reports on the issue of gender violence, Whitaker visited a hospital which was set up by a Congolese doctor, who had witnessed such excesses of suffering.

"The sense of love and compassion which I saw was a complete surprise going to a place like the Congo, where you expect to be faced with the worst of humanity. That kind of evil is able to bring out the best in people".

Side by side with her work as a freelance journalist, Whitaker is a trustee of the Rwandan Development Trust, a charity supporting Rwandan organisations working in the country.

"As a journalist there is always a balance to be struck between being an impartial observer and having strong feelings about what you're covering," she said. "On the one hand I was able to make programmes and on the other I felt as though I was doing something positive".

Whitaker has since turned her hand to production too, which has provided her with opportunities to head in entirely new directions. Thus she is currently working on a series of programmes presented by Peter Hitchens on the Anglo-American special relationship.



Conflict zone: Reporting in Congo

One of her most rewarding projects, Whitaker said, was a recent radio programme on the 1963 March on Washington, which she produced for the BBC. The programme involved following in the footsteps of the civil rights campaigners who participated, recreating the same train journey from Chicago to Washington.

"Reliving the experiences of the people who went on the march, talking to them and meeting those iconic figures you've read about, people like Jesse Jackson, gave me the feeling of reliving a slice of history," she said.

But it has been reporting on current history where she may have had the greatest impact. In Rwanda, she was once approached by her interpreter, who relayed a message from the widows she had been interviewing. "We are telling you our story," they had said, "and you are our ambassador to the world."

"Having that sense of responsibility on my shoulders was tremendous," she said.

Sasha Ward (2012, History) is a second year student at Somerville and currently Online News Editor for *The Oxford Student* newspaper. She hopes to pursue a career in print journalism.

Undergraduate in action:

# The many lives of George O'Shea

by ALEXANDER MONRO





Cotting on: Interning in Tajikistan



Recycling campaign: As College Environment and Ethics Officer

Political presidency: At an *International Relations Society* event

It is hard to believe there is just one George O'Shea, such is the list of achievements and activities he has thrown himself into since his 2011 matriculation. We've tried to boil them down.

Educated at a state school, George did not make the grades for Oxford the first time round. After a year at Southampton University, he applied again and won both a place at Somerville and an Opportunities Bursary, which he says has been "life-transforming".

"My time here's been amazing – absolutely amazing," said George. "And the bursary has meant I've been able to do all sorts of different things, as well as concentrate on my studies."

O'Shea's degree is in Politics, Philosophy and Economics – his own interests are global politics, development and human trafficking – a course he is due to complete this summer.

"I have loved both Development Economics and Labour Economics," he said. "It feels like the study of humanity today, as it's all current and relevant."

In summer 2012 he was part of a student group called 'Oxford Development Abroad' who went to Uganda to work on a sanitation project for two months, teaching local people how to build advanced sanitation facilities from local materials. It delivered clean water to hundreds.

That same summer, he also spent a month running a library as part of Somerville College's Library Project in Ghana.

In summer 2013, O'Shea spent two months in rural Tajikistan writing articles and doing research as part of a paid internship for a company that shipped cotton, cocoa and coffee all over the world.

"Somerville has just provided these incredible opportunities for travel," said George. "On each of these projects I made some really firm friends from both inside and outside Somerville."

### Still not enough

George began rowing for College in his second year, but only got into the College first boat more recently. His boat won 'blades' in the Summer Eights.

Another Somerville post came George's way a year ago, when he was elected Environment and Ethics Officer for the College. George persuaded Somerville to put a recycling bin into every accommodation room, thereby approximately doubling Somerville's recycling output. He also frequently

promoted 'More Veg Mondays', after the JCR voted to stop eating meat one day a week as a means of raising awareness of the impact it has on both the planet and the human body. ("The food at Somerville is great," he assures me.)

In the wider university, George has been President of the International Relations Society, organising and hosting talks by a head of MI5 and the UK representative to the UN, among others. He also pioneered a student trip to Brussels, which gave 20 undergraduates the chance to meet a MEP and visit various political institutions.

George has applied for the Civil Service Fast Stream and a graduate programme in the Department for International Development.

In the meantime, he hopes to get the chance to practice his Arabic (which he's been learning in the language centre opposite College) and, of course, to complete his degree.

"Eventually I'd like to get involved in the fight against human trafficking, perhaps with the police or with an NGO," he says. "And I'll always remember Somerville."

And as you should have guessed by now, it could hardly forget him.

# Medicine in new contexts

# Alexander van Tulleken

by ALEXANDER MONRO

Alex van Tulleken (1996, Physiological Sciences) has worked in the midst of humanitarian crises, presented two series of medical programmes for the BBC and is now editing a medical handbook. Such experiences have opened his eyes to the limits as well as the opportunities of medicine – and the importance of its human context.

“Humanitarianism has become so efficient that it looks like a solution, but it is not,” says Alex, speaking of his time in Darfur as a medical coordinator in 2005. “In fact, this problem of perception is so widespread that Médecins Sans Frontières felt the need to take out a two-page ad in *Le Monde* which said that doctors can’t end a war. They felt they had to say it.”

It is, perhaps, not the message you would expect from a doctor committed to medicine in tough places, but van Tulleken says his own experience in Darfur showed him not simply the limits of Western medicine – but also the centrality of understanding the social context.

“The interpreter I had for the first few weeks didn’t speak the same language as a lot of my patients but I didn’t realise,” he says. “Large numbers of patients were very traumatised, so I took it on faith from an interpreter that patients were shy or quiet for that reason. It was as I settled into the job that I began to realise that several of my consultations had been fruitless.”

It is this ability to question even himself that led van Tulleken to explore some of the deeper problems that can arise when Western medicine is brought to conflict or disaster zones. In Darfur, he was based in a camp of 200,000 people (the city of Oxford has 150,000) where he worked hard with others to provide high-quality medical services at a time when the Sudanese government was bombing villages and causing mass migrations.

“When the government kicked us out of the country, it became clear that we had been in the business of helping them build concentration camps,” says van Tulleken. “The government troops would surround the camp, supposedly for security, expel the NGOs and then control and manipulate the population as it pleased. If you work in those areas, then you have to understand that abusive governments are very sophisticated at taking advantage of aid organisations.”

But perhaps the larger lesson came when he returned to Darfur in 2010 and was able to see what the visible results of all the billions of dollars that had poured in for food and medical aid now amounted to.

“The answer was nothing,” says van Tulleken. “And that’s what we ask of humanitarianism. It’s neutral and apolitical. It can’t be part of this conflict.”

## Studies unfinished

But medical training and experience delivering humanitarian aid in a conflict zone did not disillusion Alex or, in fact, remove his desire to learn and to contribute. Quite the reverse. So it was that, after his brother Chris had been filming in the Arctic, an idea was hatched to explore the medical culture of some of the least accessible people groups on earth – and to do so with a camera.

The result was *Medicine Men Go Wild*, a Channel 4 series featuring Alex and his brother (also a medic) as they travelled to learn about the medical treatments practiced by the Central African pygmies (who still live as hunter-gatherers), the Asheninka in the Amazon (who use hallucinogenic plants as part of a highly spiritualised approach to medicine) and the festival of



Alex (left) and brother Chris in the Arctic Circle filming *Medicine Men Go Wild*



Spot the Doctor: Publicity for *Medicine Men Go Wild* (MMGW)



Medicine for mandrills: Taking blood samples in Gabon while shooting for MMGW

Thaipusam (face-piercing) in Southeast Asia. In every case, van Tulleken says, trying to report on an unfamiliar culture you did not know presented an enormous challenge. Perhaps the most revealing of the various cultural encounters was a visit to whale-hunters on the remote Chukotka Peninsula in Russia.

“They were whale-hunting, which obviously felt uncomfortable at first,” says van Tulleken. “But they were doing it sustainably and only killing two a year. The World Wildlife Fund for Nature was actually paying for their hunting equipment because a by-product was whale bones, the provision of which prevented the polar bears from entering the towns and getting killed. It was such a subtle, nuanced situation – not easy to tell on TV in 45 minutes!”

His travels mean van Tulleken has encountered some unusual situations – in Peru, a baby developed a lump on its neck for which the locals didn’t want to risk a journey to the city. Instead,

they used a steam treatment – and it worked. In Darfur, on the other hand, he saw a man dancing frenetically and realised it was a case of *Sydenham’s Chorea*, a symptom of acute rheumatic fever very rarely seen in the West. In this case, antibiotics and antipsychotics provided the solution.

Van Tulleken now works for the international Institute of Humanitarian Affairs at Fordham University in New York City and is compiling the Oxford Handbook of Humanitarian Medicine. He also has a new TV programme – the Bafta-winning *Operation Ouch!* – which seeks to appeal to kids with the gory and lighter sides of medicine in order to engage them in the issues. The best feedback yet, he said, was when a doctor told him: “the kids who watch your show are better patients”.

As for what is next, van Tulleken says humanitarian medicine remains his first love. Given his track record, it is probably not wise to try guessing too much beyond that.

# Three men and their start-ups

UK universities are not always famed for producing start-up successes, but three Somerville alumni have proved otherwise.

**RAJEEV JEYAKUMAR** (2002, Physics) moved to New York in September 2007, the start of the subprime crisis.

“My timing was impeccable!” he says. “Client revenues were uncertain, cost-reduction measures urgent. The old investment-heavy model of financial services was becoming less viable.”

On an MBA at Wharton, Pennsylvania, he developed an idea for an online consulting marketplace. The result was SkillBridge, which now boasts 1,500 freelance consultants and 200 clients and has been featured in Bloomberg Business Week and the *Wall Street Journal*.

“Two things from Somerville have really mattered for me since – the spirit of challenging convention and the close friendships I formed,” he says.

**JAMES FORSYTH** (2002, PPE) enjoyed College breakfasts, tutorials, ‘bops’ – and the company of Somervillians.

“College was great for forming friendships – my peers were intellectually curious, interesting and supportive,” says Forsyth. “When I stood for the Oxford Union, Somervillians marched to the polls in support.”

Forsyth worked for George Osborne on questions that have since been overtaken by events (such as policies for growth and jobs, and for environmental economics.) Next came HSBC, MIT’s Sloan School of Management (where he founded the Public Speaking Club) and AIG, until a chance meeting with Antonio Galloni, one of the world’s top wine critics.



From left: Rajeev Jeyakumar, James Forsyth and Anthemos Georgiades

Shared oenophilia was the basis for co-founding Vinous Media, a wine media platform, which now has readers in more than 40 countries. The perks, Forsyth says, beat almost any other business sector going.

**ANTHEMOS GEORGIADES**’ (2001, Classics) Finals thesis – ‘Tree and Plant Metaphors in the Homeric Epic’ – did not indicate business. But he joined Boston Consulting Group as a management consultant and saw the financial crisis from a front-row seat.

“Soon I got restless – why on earth not just do it myself?”

After two years at Harvard Business School, Georgiades flew out to Silicon Valley to found Zumper, a mobile-to-mobile property platform. In two years as CEO he has raised \$8.2 million in venture capital.

“I have finally found my calling,” he says. “Entrepreneurship combines the logic and rigour I learned in four wonderful years at Somerville with the obsessive mentality I’ve had since I was five.”

## Rising tide: three more (male) movers



From left: Ian Mulheirn, Alex Finlayson and Tom Fraine

### IAN MULHEIRN (1999, PPE)

Somerville’s second male JCR President spent six years on the civil service fast stream as an economist (mostly at HM Treasury) and took an MSc in Economics at UCL, before becoming Director of policy think tank The Social Market Foundation (Prospect Magazine’s 2012 Think Tank of the Year). In 2013 he joined the consultancy Oxford Economics. He married fellow Somervillian Colette Hooper in 2011 and they have one child, Emmeline.

### ALEX FINLAYSON (2002, Modern History)

“Here in Myanmar, a rapid process of democratisation is taking place after many chaotic decades of oppression and exclusion,” says Alex, who works for the British Council to strengthen civil society. Formerly at Shoreditch Trust (delivering *New Deal for Communities* programmes to deprived parts of East London), he hopes the women pioneers of Somerville past would raise a smile over what its menfolk are doing.

### TOM FRAINE (2003, English)

From graduate analyst at Goldman Sachs (London, New York), Tom worked at Innocent Drinks from 2008 as HR Business Partner and Change Manager. A 2012 sabbatical took Tom to Berlin as consultant for a Texas-based start-up, also working as an actor (watch him at <http://bit.ly/NQMo8B>). Back at Innocent for a year now, he is guiding the team through the change that follows their buyout by Coca-Cola.

# Scaling up Somerville College Choir

by ALEXANDER MONRO

Somerville College Choir continues its impressive rise. Today, there are twelve choral scholarships, two CDs out and foreign tours in the pipeline. We spoke to David Crown about the six years since he became Choirmaster.

College choirs can be awkward undertakings. Early starts, unusual garments and the very concept of practicing could be enough to discourage many students.

Yet in recent years Somerville College Choir has grown in experience and reputation under the leadership of Choirmaster David Crown and has enjoyed considerable success already. Crown, a musical omnivore whose own background was more instrumental than choral, playing the violin from the age of four and conducting youth orchestras in his early teens. A choral scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, however, set him on a new path.

"It's an excellent choir at Somerville and I find it really rewarding to be involved," says Crown, whose full head of curly hair (reminiscent of Simon Rattle) suggests the role of conductor comes naturally. "What's really encouraging is to hear it being recognised as a good choir outside Somerville – even by the music industry."

Reviewing the 2012 album *Advent Calendar*, the first of two recent CDs, International Record Review noted how "musicality has informed the selection of the music and of each individual performance, for all indeed are fine... a truly excellent and worthwhile disc".

There have been challenges, Crown says, among them building fresh levels of expectation and catering to the varied Chapel programme of a non-



Now available at [www.somervillechoir.com](http://www.somervillechoir.com)

denominational College. In six years, he says, Somerville has been blessed by a handful of exceptional voices – those voices are crucial in energising the rest.

The other great challenge is practice – no great surprise in a context where academic commitments have to take precedence. It is not yet in the choir's psyche, Crown says, to turn up to rehearsal only if you already know your notes, but his aim is to instil sufficient pride in their singing for this approach to come naturally.

"Hopefully one day the undergraduates will just join the choir and feel that is what is expected and part of achieving this is making the choir attractive enough for top singers to apply," he says. "A really good choir with CDs coming out should get talked about, which in turn encourages school music teachers to recommend

Somerville to top student singers."

Crown bats away questions about favourite composers, arguing that he likes an enormous range and that diversity is beneficial to the choir anyway. One week might be early Renaissance plainchant, another week Schoenberg. His most important musical choices are for CDs and tours.

At the end of 2013 the CD *Advent Calendar* was released but 2014 is a year of public performances. Two performances of Bach's St John Passion took place in March, one in Somerville College Chapel, the other in St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock. In June, funds allowing, the choir plans to travel to the US, where it will perform in Washington DC and Boston and a pre-tour concert is expected as well. (More details on Somerville's choir can be found on its website and performances can be viewed on its Youtube channel.)

For the moment, however, it is all about bringing the recent entrants up to speed.

"I try everything to cajole them, from humour to extreme irritation, with hopefully not too much of the latter!" says Crown. "I want us to be talked about more and more and that means creating expectation and doing more gigs out of Oxford."

With YouTube hits recently passing a quarter of a million and a date confirmed at Washington National Cathedral, all the signs are encouraging.

# A Profitable Exchange: Mary Kirk Profile

by TONI COFFEE



When Thomas Jefferson was serving as US Secretary of State, he had a staff of six and the State Department maintained just two diplomatic posts (Paris and London) and 10 consulates. Diplomacy was a limited affair.

Today, America's diplomatic service employs thousands of staff and relies on the participation of private citizens in academic, professional and cultural exchanges administered by State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Mary Kirk (1979, History) heads up the Bureau's Office of Exchange Programs, which focuses on education.

"It's a key element of Public Diplomacy," says Kirk. "The academic exchange programs we sponsor are focused on leadership development at home and abroad and build long-term connections around the world."

The cornerstone is the Fulbright Program, which has brought many Americans to Somerville.

"We support exchange opportunities between the US and more than 150 countries, for postgraduate students, young professionals, faculty members and teachers," says Kirk.

The program was created in the aftermath of World War II by Senator J. William Fulbright, who had studied in Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in the 1920s. His hope was that interaction and engagement among citizens would break down stereotypes and promote better understanding and cooperation – in short, prevent another world war. Today the program supports nearly 8,000 participants each year and more than 310,000 since it began, among them prime ministers, Nobel Prize laureates, corporate CEOs, Pulitzer Prize winners – and thousands of lecturers and teachers.

The Office's 2014 budget includes nearly \$200 million approved by the US Congress, boosted by significant partner-government contributions and the support of the private sector. Kirk's office manages the overall program and budget, and coordinates the worldwide institutional network it requires.

"It's a network that includes governments, US embassies, binational Fulbright Commissions and a host of private sector organizations," says Kirk. "Open and merit-based selection is a hallmark of the program – our participants must reflect the diversity of the US and of other societies."

"Beyond Fulbright, we manage a variety of programs supporting shorter-term undergraduate exchange, particularly in the developing world. I also work with the Department's political

leadership to create new exchange opportunities that reflect foreign policy priorities and meet the needs of the US higher education community. My office staff in Washington is about 70-strong and there is never a dull moment!"

Tracing her own involvement in international education, Kirk cites her time at Somerville as her first significant experience abroad.

"It was an incredibly enriching experience both intellectually and personally," Kirk says. "I studied Modern History, but just as important was the immersion in British culture and society, particularly since I lived in College."

"The old adage is true – immersing yourself in another culture teaches you just as much about yourself, your values and perceptions, and how your home country is seen abroad as it does about your host culture. So I became a true proponent of international exchange and decided to pursue a career in the field."

After returning to the States, Kirk worked on US-Soviet Union exchanges for IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board) just prior to *glasnost* and *perestroika*, before joining the Institute of International Education to establish their offices in Budapest and Moscow in the 1990s.

She then broadened her portfolio and worked with the full range of programs at the Institute in New York, including Fulbright, travelling widely. In 2012 she accepted her current position at the State Department in Washington.

"I am more convinced than ever that international exchange programmes build understanding and expertise, create global citizens and advance international relations," says Kirk. "Somerville has always had an international character and I am pleased to see that still flourishing, along with a commitment to diversity among students and faculty alike."

Toni Coffee has been a regular contributor to Somerville publications for 18 years. She is a graduate of Barnard College, a women's undergraduate division of Columbia University, and divides her time between Oxford and New York City. She is a former editor of the Barnard Alumnae Magazine.



**Somerville City Group: An evening at Christian Louboutin, Mayfair, London, March 2014**



**Baroness Williams of Crosby unveils her portrait in the new Brittain-Williams Room, November 2013**

# Future Events

## May

- 1** Louise Johnson Memorial Dinner
- 7** Georgina Ferry's play *Hidden Glory: Dorothy Hodgkin in Her Own Words*, Flora Anderson Hall
- 8** Neil Spring: *The Paranormal*, Oxford & Cambridge Club
- 10** Medics' Day
- 22** Esperanto Talk & Lunch for Marjorie Bolton, Somerville College

## June

- 14** College Commemoration Service
- 28-9** Gaudy for 1978-88

## September

- 8-9** 1954 60th Reunion
- 17-18** 1964 50th Reunion
- 19-21** University Alumni Weekend & Celebration of 20 Years of College Co-education

## October

- 16** Somerville London Group: Joanna Haigh on Climate Change, Imperial College

### Further dates to be confirmed

Vera Brittain Commemoration, Somerville College  
 Dorothy Hodgkin Commemoration, Somerville College  
 City Group & Lawyers Group Events

## SOMERVILLE HAS A NEW ONLINE SHOP!

Teddies, hoodies, cufflinks, books about Somerville and much more!

Visit [http://www.somerville.ox.ac.uk/6805/all/1/ONLINE\\_SHOP\\_%28UK\\_only%29.aspx](http://www.somerville.ox.ac.uk/6805/all/1/ONLINE_SHOP_%28UK_only%29.aspx)



## Somerville College

Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6HD

E: [development.office@some.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development.office@some.ox.ac.uk)

T: +44 (0) 1865 270600 (General)

T: +44 (0) 1865 280626 (Development Office)

**[www.some.ox.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.some.ox.ac.uk/alumni)**

Somerville is a registered charity. Charity Registration number: 1139440