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Many of you will know about the survey we conducted to celebrate our 60th anniversary and our thanks go to the 954 alumnae that took part, all of whom came across as very determined people who have overcome many challenges in their home and professional lives. While it was clear many had juggled differing demands, there was a great sense that they were satisfied they had made the right compromises.

We learnt a lot about what our alumnae feel about the world of work. The most powerful finding was that, when asked about challenges faced in their careers, 38% of the answers were about an unsupportive work culture, which might have included bullying, discrimination, a sense they had to do better than men, or that promotion was not based on merit. Shockingly, amongst our 20 – 29 year olds workplace issues were mentioned by 31%, so this is not just something that older alumnae experienced. Overall, 22% of the comments were about juggling family and work, surprisingly fewer than those on workplace culture.

When asked about what made an employer appealing or unappealing, alumnae wanted to feel valued, to have their voices heard and to feel they were making a difference in the world. They did not want to be in organisations where promotion was not based on merit and many commented that, after leaving Cambridge, they were surprised to find the world was much less meritocratic than expected. That was exactly my experience too.

What alumnae said would have helped them deal with these challenges was confidence building, understanding networking and how to do it, and leadership development. Of course, these skills are what we are trying to build into our Gateway programme, which we hope to extend to graduate students in the next academic year. We also plan to set up a mentoring programme for our 25 – 35 year-old alumnae, as we know this is one of the key times when women feel the need for support and reflection.

The survey did, of course, make me reflect on my own experiences. I loved being a leader in the NHS and I was truly privileged to be Chief Executive of Oxfam. Nevertheless, I felt in tune with so much of what was described in the survey. I certainly experienced a lot of macho behaviour in the NHS and a bullying style at the top. In Oxfam, the organisation itself was much more equal, not least because around 70% of poor people are women and girls so you simply can’t work on poverty without focussing on women. However, outside Oxfam I was dealing with senior leaders in governments and the private sector and I often experienced the stereotyping which can be so devastating to confidence if you let it get to you.

There is still much to be done to achieve gender equality. With greater understanding of what our women are experiencing, I hope that the College can play its full part in getting young women prepared for their future lives and full of aspiration for the difference they can make in the world.
Since joining Murray Edwards in July 2013, Dame Barbara has been working closely with the Fellowship to define the College’s strategic intent for the coming years. Our main aims over the next five years are:

1. To pursue educational excellence, seeking to ensure that every student is able to achieve their full academic potential, and for this to be expressed particularly (but not exclusively) in their Final examinations. We aim to sustain an intellectually inspiring environment, which enables each student to take responsibility positively for their own learning and progress.

2. To attract the most academically talented women for graduate study at Murray Edwards College and enable them to excel.

3. To give each undergraduate and graduate student the tools and confidence to identify and achieve their individual aspirations, and consider how to support young alumnae.

4. To ensure that the Fellowship continues to develop as a vibrant, well-rounded academic community.

5. To make the College much better known and understood.

6. To maintain the ethos of the College as inclusive, friendly and modern and to make sure the environment and life of the College continues to be vibrant and innovative.

7. To secure the College’s financial ability to deliver these objectives.

If you would like to learn more about the College’s strategic direction, please contact us by emailing development@murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk

There is a palpable sense of determination in the College as it celebrates its 60th anniversary. The strategic direction focuses that energy. One of its most striking features is the desire to promote and support women of all ages, and each objective detailed here reflects a different aspect of that endeavour.

The document also expresses pride in the College as a space: in its architecture and in the art that makes it beat with inspiration. Of course, the strategic direction also reflects some of the most pressing needs of the College, as a community of students, teachers, and researchers: the ongoing need, for example, to increase the representation of women in STEM subjects, and to support graduate students in the face of intense constraints on funding. Yet the College is fortunate in its friends, female and male, in Cambridge and beyond, all of whom are committed to supporting women as they realise their potential. This is an ambitious document – but ambition is an essential part of success.

Dr Charlotte Lee, Junior Research Fellow in German
Over my time at Cambridge, I’ve been fortunate enough to try my hand at directing a variety of shows, to varying degrees of success and wildly varying reception. Broadly, though, I’ve stayed within the pleasant and approachable parameters of small-scale drama and slightly mad sketch comedy. With this penchant for low-key, mid-commitment and high laugh count productions in mind, some of my anxiety and potential foolishness in agreeing to direct this year’s University Opera Society main show might gain some context. Armed with a patchy-to-poor knowledge of the operatic canon, or indeed how to go about it, the producer, Tamsin Lim (MEC 2010), and I joined forces with the musical direction half of the team last summer to begin work on Don Giovanni.

Over the course of seven weeks, the cast and creative team spent an average of thirty hours a week (please don’t tell our supervisors) rehearsing the show. Among this number was Sophie Horrocks (MEC 2011), whose rich voice and skilful naturalistic acting made a Zerlina to remember. The particular challenge of the process for me was in striking the balance between keeping dialogue intense enough to be naturalistic, but outward enough to maintain diction and presence. Luckily, many hours stressing over staid translations, clunky scene transitions and irritable building custodians were made worth it by an appreciative response and chancing upon a mind-blowingly talented and highly entertaining group of people.
Murray Edwards College Boat Club
by Henrike Schulte to Bühne, MECBC Publicity Officer 2013-2014, 3rd Year, Natural Sciences

In Michaelmas Term, no fewer than five novice crews joined the MECBC squad.

For the returning seniors, term saw some solid racing results: W1 won their division in Autumn Head and placed 3rd in Winter Head. In The Fairbairn Cup, W1 again came 3rd and W2 placed 4th in their division.

The one-way system around Chesterton during Lent term (complete with traffic lights!) meant that the number of boats allowed out on the river was restricted. Despite the limited water time, we made the most of training, finishing term with a strong overall performance in Lent Bumps after W3 and W2 both secured a spot during the Getting on Race. W3 subsequently went up two stations, whilst W2 went down one. W1, after coming 4th in Newnham Short Course, went up three stations.

It has become apparent that two boats fit for racing are no longer enough for the requirements of our squad. We are planning to purchase a second-hand shell this summer and are currently raising funds for this. We have already raised over £1,200 towards our goal and we are planning a sponsored bike ride from Cambridge to Oxford.

In Lent 2014, I was President of the Cambridge Union Society, which was founded in 1815 as a debating society. It now also hosts regular speaker events, alongside a packed schedule of weekly social events. The Union is the only student society to have its own building, complete with bar, library and snooker tables, and our debaters run the largest access scheme in the University.

I have been involved with the Union for two years and it’s been a fantastic experience. Highlights include interviewing the comedian Tim Minchin and chairing a debate on private schools, where the atmosphere in the room demonstrated the strength of student feeling surrounding the issue. The President speaks in the final debate of each term. Successfully arguing to keep the Human Rights Act alongside Liberty Director, Shami Chakrabarti, is my favourite Union memory.

Aside from these snapshots, the best part of my time at the Union was working alongside inspiring committee members. Many of these were and are Murray Edwards students. In Michaelmas 2013, the President, Joanna Mobed, Vice President, Alex Porter, and I were all from Murray Edwards. Two others, Amy Gregg and Eloise Oakley, are now on the Society’s Standing Committee, and more are getting involved. I am really proud that Murray Edwards women are taking such an active role in the University’s largest society, and that we are encouraging and inspiring one another along the way.

THE GATEWAY PROGRAMME
by Flora McFarlane, 1st Year, MML (French and Russian)

Gateway has been such a beneficial programme to be a part of during my first year here at Murray Edwards. In the weekly sessions dealing with everything regarding Cambridge life – from approaching my first supervisions, to structuring my week, to dealing with exam pressure – the advice that I have received has really equipped me in my first year here.

The presence of the student advisors has been particularly helpful. Each week, not only were Fellows and staff leading the sessions, but there was also an older student, who had already experienced the ups and downs of the course and university life, on hand to give relevant and helpful advice. Another aspect of the programme, which is unique to College, is the focus on careers. I attended the internship initiative day, which was a brilliant event set up to provide helpful and insightful information about opportunities for the future. I even had a chance to hone my interview skills with Dame Barbara!

Gateway is a unique and valuable part of College, which I would say has greatly enhanced my time here and has certainly increased my options for the future. I would encourage everyone to take advantage of this fantastic programme.
2014 is the centenary of Dylan Thomas’ birth – and the level of cultural interest visible is quite astounding. Photographs and handsome sketches of the poet adorn magazines and festival programmes; his ubiquity ranges from poems read at rugby games to canoe trips down the estuary at Laugharne, and a lyrical advertising campaign counterpoints a plethora of themed drinking games.

I have worked on Thomas’ writings (his uncanny short stories as well as his poems) for a few years now, but this explosion of interest has left me both pleased and slightly bewildered. Thomas has not been studied widely in British universities for several decades, and – apart from honourable exceptions – very little academic work has engaged with the poems. So amid this centenary-frenzy why does it matter to read Thomas now – and what might be lost when we just fall back, as happens so often, on the image of the poet? For biography – with all excesses documented, and a simplistic mythology present throughout – can substitute for the attentiveness to what Thomas himself called ‘my craft or sullen art’. The centenary has, however, led to the marvels of rediscovery: especially with academics catching up on the fact that Thomas is a poet still loved in the wider world, indeed I read the harrowingly beautiful ‘And death Shall have no dominion’ at the funeral of my taid (Welsh for grandfather). There are the obvious reasons for Thomas’ resilience in a wider culture, and they are worth enumerating: his lyrical intensity, his fireworks of rhyme, his searing images, and – perhaps most importantly – the mysterious synergy of disparate elements forms a greater whole: the parts of poetry which can never be ‘translated’ into prose.

These formal aspects of his work need, however, to be understood historically, the poems come not simply from the life he led but rather the world which shaped him. It is one of these aspects – his experiences in WWII – that I’m going to talk about in September at ‘Dylan Unchained’, an international conference to commemorate the centenary. Reclaiming Thomas as a war poet in 2014 is a useful and intriguing task. Firstly, because it makes us read again a number of poems he wrote in 1940–44: ‘Ceremony after a Fire Raid’, ‘A Refusal to Mourn’, and ‘Deaths and Entrances’, all of which sadly have now slid away from the public consciousness. Secondly, because these poems – passionate and yet imbued with despair – should force us as readers to change our category of war poetry, seeing how it might come from the Second, as well as the First, World War – and that it might not only be formed of trenches and mud, but also of civilians, bombed cities, and transformed debris. In ‘Ceremony after a Fire Raid’ Thomas attempts to move from charred corporeal remains to a teleology and theology of suffering:

In the cinder of the little skull,
Who was the serpent’s
Night fall and the fruit like a sun,
Man and woman undone,
Beginning crumbled back to darkness
Bare as nurseries
Of the garden of wilderness.

This will-to-transcendence from destruction is both moving and plaintive. Moreover, thinking of Thomas as a war-poet – and one who moved back-and-forth between Blitzed London, a devastated Swansea, and a Carmarthenshire countryside filled with evacuees – allows readers to meditate about Thomas’ problematic status as an Anglo-Welsh poet, but also a restless Modernist. For during the
war years his Thomas identity was shaped by the lure of a London cultural milieu and also a desire for seclusion away from work and bombs. This oscillation between the city and the country is not an opposition, and it makes more sense when a strand of Thomas’ visual imagination, one which runs right through his oeuvre, is fully taken into account. At the 1936 Surrealist exhibition in London Thomas walked among paintings from Picasso and Dali, recognising a visual corollary to what he had already achieved with language – a Biomorphic transformation of the human form: ‘the force that through the green fuse drives the flower / drives my green age and blasts the roots of trees’. This movement between the organic and inorganic, with the bestowing of agency in the violent material world, emerges again in WWII – especially through the scripts Thomas wrote throughout for the Strand Film Company, and which are only now being rediscovered. The best is probably Our Country (1944), especially as the stutter of the camerawork is transformed by the fluidity and grace of the voice-over vista:

And then the birds flying
Suddenly easily as though from another country,
And all the stones remember and sing
The cathedral of each blitzed dead body that lay or lies
In the bomber-and-dove-flown-over cemeteries
Of the dumb heroic streets
And the eyes of St Paul’s move over London.

Dr Leo Mellor, Roma Gill Fellow in English
In January this year, I travelled to India with Action Breaks Silence, a not-for-profit company which aims to give underprivileged women and teenage girls in India training in personal safety and self-defence.

The company was founded in August 2013 by Debi Steven, one of the world’s leading self-defence instructors. Following the Delhi rape case in December 2012, which sparked outrage across the world, Debi founded Action Breaks Silence to try and help other women and girls in India protect themselves from the violence which has become so prevalent.

I first became involved after attending one of Debi’s self-defence courses at Kew Gardens and getting to know her team. In January, I travelled with them to Alleppey, in Kerala, where the local Roman Catholic Diocese arranged for us to teach at a variety of schools. Most of these were mixed schools, but the training was focussed on teenage girls. The lessons were three hours long, with a one-hour talk followed by two hours of practical training which included mock attacks and abductions. In the end, we were training groups of up to 150 girls at a time! The girls were very positive about the experience and, although nervous at first, they grew in confidence during the sessions and left feeling empowered.

The local Commissioner of Police for the area is a woman and when she heard about the programme she arranged for all of her female police officers to take part. The feedback we received from them was also very positive.

The aim is for the team to visit India at least four times a year (I will be going back in July), not only to teach directly but also to set up instructors’ training workshops so that local women, once qualified, can reach more members of their communities across India.

More information about Action Breaks Silence is available at www.actionbreakssilence.org
Helping Future Generations

A great deal of what the College currently is able to offer to today’s students has been made possible by those alumnae and friends who have remembered Murray Edwards, founded as New Hall, in their Wills. Such support is essential, allowing the College to plan for the future.

Roma Gill (1934–2001) was one of our first sixteen students. In 1994 she was awarded an OBE for services to English Literature; services which included the Oxford School Shakespeare Series. Roma generously left the royalties of her literary estate to the College which has established the Roma Gill Fellowship in English.

'I am leaving a legacy to “give back” so that future students may have the same opportunities that were afforded to me through the generosity of others.’

Sheila Brown (NH 1966)

Lorna Mee (1927–2009) came to the College to read for a PhD in Anatomy and was tutored by Dame Rosemary Murray. Lorna left a non-specific legacy to the College which has provided essential funds for teaching and support for our young female mathematicians (outnumbered 5-1 by male counterparts within the University).

'I have made a monthly payment by direct debit to the College since I qualified as a solicitor in 1981, in order to offer a chance of learning to other young women, at very little expense to me. Since I have been earning more, I have made provision in my Will to leave a legacy to the College. I am glad that so many young women will continue to have the opportunities that I had.’

Hazel Wright (NH 1975)

The Murray Society

The Murray Society has been set up to recognise the contribution of our living donors who have made a legacy in their Will in favour of the College.

Members of The Murray Society will be invited to special events in College, both in order to keep in touch with College but also with each other, and will be given special recognition in the annual Roll of Benefactors. The Society has the dolphin from the College crest as its emblem, and we will present members with a lapel pin of the dolphin as a symbol of their special connection to Murray Edwards College.

Many alumnae who would like to make a donation to the College are unable to do so due to other commitments. Remembering the College in their Will offers a different opportunity to give support and can make a real difference.

The Charitable Status of the College means that legacies and bequests to it are free from Inheritance and Capital Gains Taxes thereby reducing tax liability. Gifts of all sizes are welcomed and are warmly appreciated.

For more information about legacies, please contact Fiona Duffy, Director of Development and Fellow, development@murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk.
GARDEN ACTIVITY

Jo Cobb, Head Gardener

We recently had all of the College’s fruit trees identified so that we could conserve the heritage varieties, like the wonderful 19th Century ‘Golden Noble’ apple from Norfolk.

I thought it would be fun to exchange varieties with Trumpington Community Orchard and in return they ran a grafting workshop for us in College. And so, in March, we attempted some fiendishly difficult saddle grafts on apple varieties like ‘Gavin’ and ‘New Rock Pippin’, as well as local greengages.

Our horticultural apprentice, Louise Cook, provided the most exciting scion wood in the form of the Warden Pear. Documented as having been grown in the 13th Century, probably introduced by the Romans and mentioned in The Winter’s Tale, the pear tree grows in the village of Old Warden and its progeny are soon to grace Murray Edwards Garden.

The Emma Darwin Greenhouse

In December 2013, we were delighted to welcome alumna Ann Altman (née Körner, 1966) to College to unveil a beautiful new plaque in the Emma Darwin Greenhouse, for which she very generously donated the funds.

The plaque commemorates the College’s link with Emma Darwin, who lived at The Grove from 1883 until her death in 1896. Part of The Grove, along with The Orchard which was donated to the College by Emma’s granddaughters, went on to become the site of New Hall/Murray Edwards College.

The plaque was designed by Lida Kindersley and carved from Caithness stone at the Cardozo Kindersley Workshop in Cambridge. It reads:
Our President, Dame Barbara Stocking, spoke about the College’s plans for the future and how important philanthropic support is in helping us to achieve all of our goals. She also highlighted some of the other ways in which alumnae can help the College, such as spreading the word to parents, teachers and outstanding young women about why Murray Edwards is so special, or offering an internship to one of our current students.

We were also delighted to hear from current student Joanna Mobed (MEC 2011) about how support from the Rosemary Murray Fund has helped her and from alumna Sarah Morgan (NH 2000) about why she chose to give to the College.

Of course, we would also like to thank all of our donors who were not able to attend the Garden Party and we hope that you may be able to join us next year.

If you are interested in making a donation to the College, please contact the Development Office: Email: development@murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk Phone: +44 (0)1223 762288

Donor Garden Party

Over 100 guests joined us for our annual Donor Garden Party on Saturday 26 April this year. We were especially delighted to welcome the 80 donors who attended and to have the opportunity to thank them in person for supporting the College so generously over the past few years.
A biography of our first President, Dame Rosemary Murray, was published on 27 May by Unicorn Press. The author, Alison Wilson, is a former Librarian of New Hall/ Murray Edwards who knew Rosemary in her final years and recorded interviews with her and many of her contemporaries for the College Archive.

Rosemary had an exceptionally full life, devoted to education and especially the promotion of equality for women. A book about her is long overdue; she is, after all, the College’s “Emily Davies” and deserves to be commemorated and revered in the same way as the founder of Girton. Generations of New Hall and Murray Edwards College alumnae owe their educational opportunities to her successful development of an institution with a tiny group of pioneering students in rented accommodation into a full College of the University with its own distinctive buildings. An influential figure in post-war Cambridge, Rosemary was the first woman to be chosen as Vice Chancellor, a tremendous breakthrough in the male-dominated University, bringing reflected glory to New Hall.

The biography is illustrated with over 70 photographs and has a foreword by the Duke of Edinburgh. It costs £25 and can be ordered from: Unicorn Press Ltd., 60 Bracondale, Norwich, NR1 2BE

Follow our 60th anniversary blog: www.murrayedwardscollegegoingplaces.wordpress.com

For further information about any of these events, please contact the Development Office: alumnae@murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 762288

Join our online network

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/MurrayEdwardsCollege
Follow us on Twitter: @MECCambridge
Network on LinkedIn: New Hall, Cambridge Alumnae Group
View our photostream on Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/murrayedwardscollege

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**New Hall Society Family Day**
Sunday 13 July 2014

The College’s annual Family Day will include a range of fun activities for all the family. Alumnae with young children or grandchildren are particularly encouraged to come along, but everyone is welcome to attend, with or without children!

**East Asia Visit**
September 2014

The President will visit Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Beijing in early September 2014 to meet with alumnae, celebrate the 60th anniversary and share news about the College. Alumnae in the region will hear more soon!

**Alumnae Weekend**
Friday 26 – Sunday 28 September 2014

The 2014 Alumnae Weekend will be the focal point of our 60th anniversary celebrations. The weekend will include a symposium on Women in Science, a panel discussion on women achieving against the odds, music and dancing in a marquee in Orchard Court, and a gala dinner in the Dome. All alumnae and their guests are invited to join us to celebrate the College’s anniversary.

**Silver Street Lunch**
Tuesday 30 September 2014

Alumnae from 1954 – 1964 will be invited to join us for a visit to our original home on Silver Street, followed by lunch at Murray Edwards College.