



Buckingham English

The University of Buckingham English Newsletter

Nov. 2014



New Dean for English

Professor John Drew took up post on 1 September 2014 as the new Dean of Arts and Languages. John is an international figure, with academic collaborations in Japan and Australia, and we welcome him to his new role.

John has taught at universities in both Spain and the UK (he is a fluent Spanish speaker), and is best known for his book

Dickens the Journalist (2004), which first properly explored the fact that for his whole life Dickens was a practising journalist as well as a great and prolific novelist.

John calls himself a 'digital humanist' – someone bringing the humanities into the computer age. With a Leverhulme grant, he created *Dickens Journals Online*, a website which gives free access to all Dickens' journalism and to his novels as published in their original serial forms.

It is a massive resource for those interested in 19th-century society, history, politics, and literature, useful to school students and the ordinary reader, as well as specialists in Victorian studies. Do view the website at www.djo.org.uk.

It is surely true to say that John shares something of Dickens' huge energies. Perhaps something of that charge will take over the English department as a whole!

Dean's message

Autumn in the Chandos Road campus at the University is always rich with academic activities, the summer's harvest of our hardworking students, busy finalizing a range of assignments, in a range of media – written word, spoken word, filmed, streamed online, performed – and getting ready for important exams.

Happily, it's not all about assessment. Lecture halls are much in demand for evening talks, film screenings, and the meetings of various University societies; the radio studio is taken over for a nightly broadcast schedule; groups assemble for theatre trips; the news crew sets out on night-time filming missions. New research and publication by staff continues quietly in the background.

So what's new? We've been presenting some, at least, of our new work at conferences. Dr Karine Deslandes, for example, spoke at Trinity College Dublin last month. Angela Ghadery, lecturer in EFL and EAP, has returned from a visit to Athens, where a number of partner institutions are interested in delivering our programmes. As Gerry Loftus explains, we are privileged again to have the cultural and intellectual enrichment provided by the students from Soka (see feature).

In literature, there has been a flurry of scholarly articles by Stefan Hawlin and Hazel Mackenzie on 19th- and 20th-century literature. Brendan Fleming's book was published by Bloomsbury in September (see feature). *The Dickens Journals Online* project featured on the



national stage during November, with a two-week exhibition entitled 'Charles Dickens and the Victorian Press', hosted by Buckingham's Old Gaol Museum, as part of the first ever national Festival of the Humanities. Readings, evening lectures, and guided tours accompanied the display, which was also enjoyed by a coachload of students and staff from the University of Northampton, our close neighbour, who visited us on 19 November for a 'Digital Humanities Day'. Meanwhile, Peter Orford's *Edwin Drood* project gathers momentum, giving rise to a splendidly forensic one-day international conference at the Senate House, London, home to the University of London Library (see feature).

I hope this newsletter will give you some sense of the rich array of the department's activities and its connections with the wider world.

Professor John Drew

Highlights of 2014

25 May

Department ranked 1st *Guardian University Guide* for course satisfaction

September

Novelist Judith Allnatt teaches on Creative Writing course

24 June

Students of *Publication Design* produce *Fanfare* (see feature)

20 September

Department's *Drood Inquiry* Conference in London attracts international speakers and audience (see feature)

11 August

Novelist Naomi Alderman speaks at Creative Writing seminar

19 November

A conference on 'Digital Humanities' organized at Buckingham



Chandos Building

Solving Dickens' murder mystery?



The department's successful conference on Dickens' unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* took place at the Senate House, London, on 20 September, when speakers from around the world gathered to celebrate the launch of the department's project, *The Drood Inquiry*, and to discuss theories and ideas about the novel and its many possible solutions.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870) is a tale of jealousy, lust, and potential murder. Edwin is a young man engaged to Rosa Bud, though neither really loves the other. Edwin's guardian, John Jasper, is besotted with Rosa. When Edwin disappears one dark stormy night, Jasper leads the search and fears

his beloved nephew may be dead – but could the uncle be the culprit after all? It is a question that will never be satisfactorily answered as Dickens died before completing the story. Hundreds of enthusiasts have come forward over the decades with their theories about how the mystery ends. There have been books, films, TV series, and musicals all trying to complete it.

To explore this phenomenon, Dr Orford created *The Drood Inquiry* (www.drood inquiry.com), an interactive website where readers can view the original instalments of the story alongside newly commissioned graphic summaries, and then pore over character profiles,

clues, popular theories, and possible inspirations for the story before then submitting their own ideas about how the story ends, feeding into a global survey to establish the most popular idea of the tale's conclusion. To date the site and its associated blogpage have received over 10,000 visits. It is a great testament to the potential of digital humanities, which the department has already championed with its landmark website *Dickens Journals Online*.

To promote the project, an online reading group started in April 2014 to read the surviving instalments of the story at the original monthly pace, with contributors commenting via Twitter, Facebook, and the site's

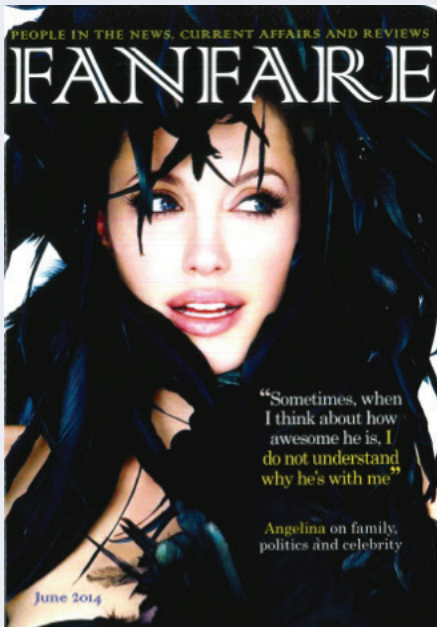
blog, so that when the full site launched in September there was a ready group of followers eager to come and meet in person and discuss *Drood* further. The conference in September was congratulated for attracting a wide mix of delegates including authors, academics, postgraduates, schoolchildren, enthusiasts, screenwriters, and artists all keen to share and learn. The conference panels were

chaired by the department's own Professors John Drew and David Paroissien, and Drs Hazel Mackenzie and Pete Orford. The keynote was provided by Don Richard Cox, Professor Emeritus at the University of Tennessee, who flew over to share his knowledge as the editor of the Annotated Bibliography of *Drood*. A lively and informative Q&A session was held with two writers – Sir David Madden,

author of a completed story in 2012, and Gwyneth Hughes, scriptwriter of BBC's *Drood* – who discussed their experiences of trying to complete Dickens's tale.

Dr Orford is now looking to expand the site with spoken dialogue and sound effects, and a museum exhibition is to be held in 2015 at the Charles Dickens Museum, London. A book is on the way. Watch this space!

Outdoing Vogue



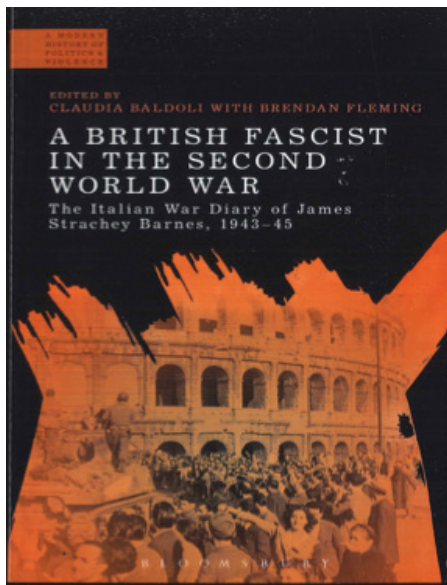
This year as part of their assessment, students on two modules produced their very own glossy. Everything about this – interviews, photos, editing, page design, even adverts – was at the highest professional level. Students thinking of careers in journalism will use the final product as a calling card to future employers. Richard Adamson, Ray Tindle Lecturer in Journalism, described it as 'one small step for print journalism, and one giant leap for Journalism Studies at Buckingham'!

The magazine was the result of collaboration between students on two courses: *Press Journalism* students submitted Feature and Profile assignments for inclusion; then the magazine itself was conceptualized and designed by students of *Applied Publication Design*. In each case, only the best work from each group made the final cut into the publication that resulted. Next year, of course, the magazine will have a different title and mode – depending on the students who take it on.

Roger Perkins

The poet and the fascist

Dr Brendan Fleming, on editing the diary of Strachey Barnes



The discovery of the diary of James Strachey Barnes (1890–1955) some years ago provided a significant new source for scholars of the politics and literature of the early 20th century. Editing it for publication in September 2014 finally opened that resource to a wider audience. Researching the diary enabled me to work alongside Dr Claudia Baldoli (Newcastle University), an expert on Italian fascism. The transcription of the diary was challenging: in places it was almost illegible. Work on the diary was studded with exciting and memorable discoveries: the consultation of the

transcripts of British Army Intelligence files being one, but perhaps the most gratifying was to finally trace Barnes’s descendants and to be able to reunite them with the diary. They had known of its existence, but not its whereabouts.

The diary sheds light on Barnes’s position in Italy as one of the most prominent British Italophiles to reside there and support Mussolini. Of particular interest to literary scholars is Barnes’s friendship with the American modernist poet Ezra Pound and his appearances in the diary.

From the diary, it is clear Barnes and Pound were close friends. Pound had moved to Italy in 1924, and like Barnes became increasingly supportive of Mussolini’s brand of fascism. They both broadcast propaganda for the regime on Rome Radio during the war. In the case of Pound, detailed knowledge of his work during this period is sketchy: when the fascist government moved north to Saló many documents were lost or destroyed. For literary scholars interested in Pound, Barnes’s diary provides tantalising mentions and glimpses of Pound during this period.

A British Fascist in the Second World War: The Italian War Diary of James Strachey Barnes, 1943–45, ed. by Claudia Baldoli with Brendan Fleming (Bloomsbury, 2014)

The novelist and the zombies

Naomi Alderman is certainly no ordinary novelist: on the one hand, she is the author of award-winning literary fiction like *Disobedience* (Penguin) and *The Liars' Gospel* (Viking), on the other, she has written and co-created several games, including the smash-hit, crowd-funded smartphone fitness game *Zombies, Run!* Narrative exists in many contexts.

The breadth of Alderman's experience informs changing approaches to the teaching of creative writing. She spoke about this and other aspects of creative practice to the students on the modules in *Creative Writing*. Afterwards there was a lunch, with Naomi and her father, Buckingham's own Professor Geoffrey Alderman.

Is the career of the novelist changing? Some would argue it is. The 21st-century writer is no longer allowed to hide at the back of the library filling a fountain pen, but must now take part, through interactive and interconnected media applications, in a plethora of creative and social practices designed to spread the word.

As expectations of writers develop so must courses in Creative Writing, and Buckingham University offers students three courses in writing associated with artistic, creative endeavours. Practical exercises, exemplar materials, and visiting speakers enable students to gain a sense of life as it is lived by authors, writers, and

other artists working in digital, musical, textual, print, and screen arts.

Naomi Alderman's visit, shocking in its realism (we learnt just how little some novelists earn), touching in its warmth and inspiration (we found that even the best writers cringe sometimes when they read their own work), inspired us all – and her father amused us over lunch!

Cherry Coombe



The English Department welcomes...



This year we warmly welcome Vicky Tomopoulou as a new Lecturer in Publication and Online Design. Vicky will be teaching *Design for Media*, *Design for Print*, *Digital Publishing*, and *From Data to Story*. Here she explains some of the challenges faced by anyone passing on a skill-set involving complex negotiations between logic, functionality, readability, attractiveness, and beauty.

Like learning to ride a bike?

What designers do when presented with a design brief is a private game, and when asked to describe it we tend to give the answers we *think* people expect to hear. What motivates us is the pleasure of playing around with problems. Typefaces, colours, images, shapes can be used in infinite combinations. Each will provoke a different response from different people. What I like, you may not like – it's as simple as that. So what defines good design?

First, a respect for function. We've all suffered trying to complete forms with tiny type and not enough space to write in, struggled to read yellow text blurred on a blue background. A good idea that doesn't work is not a good idea. As Steve Jobs said, 'Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works.'

Two, apparently opposite, characteristics are essential for good design: logic and intuition. A designer uses logic to assess the problem, but it's her intuition that will have the idea that brings a solution and a surprise at the same time.

The modules I'm teaching challenge students in two ways. They will have to analyse design problems, choose solutions, try them out, throw them away, try again, experiment, think, think harder, and emerge with an idea. They will also be trained to use the latest technologies in order to communicate these ideas effectively to their intended audiences.

On completion I want my students to proudly showcase their work and declare in Sherlock Holmes' fashion: 'No, Watson, this was not done by accident, but by design'.

Vicky Tomopoulou

A Japanese Erasmus

Cultural richness and exchange, open-heartedness about the other, is one of the things on which Buckingham English prides itself. We have formal links with both Momoyama Gakuin University, Osaka, and with Soka University, Tokyo. We were very glad again this year when, as usual, the English Studies degrees were enriched by the arrival of another group of students from Soka, as part of their 'double-degree' programme.

These double-degree (DD) programmes, developed between the two universities, work somewhat in the manner of the European Erasmus project. After one year's study in Japan, students come to Buckingham to read English Studies for two years, before returning to Soka for their fourth and final year. These students contribute enormously to the reality of courses like *Intercultural Communication* and *Global Communication*.

The cultural and linguistic contribution our Japanese students make benefits all the department's students who are training to be teachers of English, since the close interaction that results from small class sizes guarantees that British students have every opportunity to learn first-hand from their Japanese counterparts. Not only are serious issues being raised about intercultural communication and understanding, but the real problems and pleasures of language learning and teaching are made alive to everyone.

Gerry Loftus



News from Narnia

My research project for my MA in English Literature has been a journey of the mind, but also a journey to interesting places, archives, and collections. My subject is the interaction between C. S. Lewis the scholar and C. S. Lewis the writer of children's fiction, how his love of Shakespeare informed his creative writing.

Initially, I consulted Lewis's own scholarly writings alongside the *Narnia* books. Crucial here was his contribution to the *Oxford History of English Literature* focused on the sixteenth century. Lewis also gave a lecture to the British Academy on *Hamlet*, wrote an essay entitled 'Variation in Shakespeare and Others', and spoke at the Annual Shakespeare Conference at Stratford-upon-Avon. Sadly, any record of the Stratford speech has been lost, but I was able to consult a number of newspaper articles held at the Shakespeare Birthplace



Archive which gave some insight into his talk.

By chance and on an impromptu research trip, I was able to consult material at the Shakespeare Institute library, Stratford, where I discovered a reference to an unpublished essay on *Othello*, located in the vast collection of Lewis material held at the Wade Centre, Illinois. The emphasis Lewis places on magic and fairy-tale elements in this piece on *Othello* is symptomatic of the inter-relationship of his Shakespeare criticism and his fiction.

I also discovered a small collection of Lewis manuscripts – his notes on a large number

of Shakespeare and Renaissance plays – in the library of Magdalene College, Cambridge. I was able to spend a week working through these volumes, which had not previously been consulted, many annotated with marginalia and notes in Lewis's hand. Here his deeply personal and private relationship with Shakespeare is laid bare. Dr Rowan Williams, Master of the college (and former Archbishop of Canterbury), is a great expert on Lewis, and the author of *Narnia: The Lion's World*. He was kind enough to grant me an interview, which hugely benefited my project.

Now I'm revving up for submission of my thesis. As is the way with postgraduate work, my project has been specific, but I'm hopeful that it has much wider implications.

Sarah Waters is a candidate for the MA in English Literature

Retrospect



Ducking out: Julian Lovelock starts the Duck race 2014

Julian Lovelock, who recently retired as Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Arts and Languages, looks back on his time in the English Department.

It was William Morris who said ‘No man is good enough to be another’s master’ and certainly that is so in the English Department. The faculty is talented, enthusiastic, and immensely caring. Everything that has been achieved recently – and it has been much – has been through a team effort: the growth in numbers; the launch of Journalism as a major subject; the Dickens Online project; the growing links with

universities in Japan; the outstanding results; the consolidation of our position among the best in various league tables – including, in 2013, 100% satisfaction in the National Student Survey.

While my two years as Pro Vice-Chancellor have had their own fulfilments, I have missed the collegiality of the English Department and, in particular, teaching some very bright and dedicated students. I will carry on missing the students, but at least I hope I will now have time for some serious writing and research.

My one regret is the recent turning of higher education into a tawdry

marketplace, and the conspiracy of all shades of political opinion to regard a degree as a mere commodity. In a world that overvalues technology and training we have to be bold in stating the real worth of Humanities. After all, our graduates have a myriad of transferable skills and remain valued by all but the most short-sighted employers. Lest we forget – education is not just an economic tool. Understanding is as important as knowledge, wisdom as know-how. Neglect of ‘the wisdom and beauty of the ages’ impoverishes the individual and society at large.

Scholarships and bursaries

High achiever scholarships

From September 2014, an automatic scholarship, worth £2,500 per annum, is available to undergraduate Home (UK/EU) students (excluding Medicine) achieving ABB or above (or equivalent) in their A Levels (excluding General Studies).

Four counties scholarships

If you live in Buckinghamshire (including Milton Keynes), Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, or Oxfordshire, you will be entitled to a local scholarship of £2,500 per annum providing you meet the conditions of your offer. This scholarship is dependent on your making Buckingham your firm choice. You are not eligible for this award if you hold another scholarship from the University.

Buckingham bursaries

If, when you join the University, you are in receipt of a Maintenance Grant from Student Finance, you will receive a further bursary of £1,100 towards your tuition fees. This bursary may not be held with any other scholarship from the University.

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