Newsletter of
Darwin College
Summer 2001

THE DARWINIAN

First Impressions

The Master (left) in conversation with Jeffrey Hoffman, astrophysicist and astronaut

Roger Whitehead

I had to confess, when I welcomed the new intake of Darwin students last October, that since I was as new to the College as they were, there was little I could tell them about the place. All I could do was report on its reputation: a pretty setting, a famous public lecture series, and a name for being friendly, informal and lacking in flummery. Half a year later we are all better placed to judge that reputation. What is my own initial impression?

So far as the physical setting of the College is concerned, the initial positive impression continues to grow. The view of the Cam and its islands from my desk is incomparable, changing with the light by the hour as well as by the season. No-one had led me to expect kingfishers outside my office, but then no-one had led me to expect the islands to vanish under the winter floods.

Equally attractive is the endowment that the College has inherited from the Darwin family with Newnham Grange. When, over 30 years ago, my mother gave me a copy of 'Period Piece', she could not have imagined that the house therein so lovingly described and drawn by Gwen Raverat would become my workplace. It is particularly delightful that the Darwin family continue to maintain their links with the College. Only a few weeks ago they sent us a splendid sepia photograph that had turned up, dating from 1886, of baby Gwen in her parents' arms in front of the Grange.

The experience of my first Lecture Series has been remarkable on several levels. There is the awareness that it has become a great Cambridge institution, with a large and loyal following, to an extent that strangers have stopped me in the street, even on the London Underground, to share their views on recent lectures. Then there is the privilege of spending several hours getting to know the lecturers themselves, each one chosen for their infectious enthusiasm as well as their

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Editorial

Darwinian Evolution

For a number of years Darwin College has had a substantial annual magazine. But *tempora mutantur* and the spirit of evolution drives us forward relentlessly. The retirement of Philip McNair as editor has created an impetus for some 'punctuated evolution' as we seek to adapt to a new niche.

The wish was expressed that Darwin should have something different in the twenty-first century. Not so much a magazine as a newsletter – a leaner, livelier and more up-to-date publication to communicate news about the College. This is in addition to DCSA's *RiverRat* which appears from time to time. The Darwinian is aimed at all Darwinians; the alumni of this now quite venerable College of ours (37 years old!), as well as the students, fellows, and staff.

The Darwinian will be produced twice a year, in the spring and the late autumn. This first issue is something of an experiment. We now need *your* input to act as Darwin's selective forces 'rejecting that which is bad, preserving, and adding up all that is good'. Let us hear your views and send us your copy.

We launch the first issue of the *Darwinian* with the traditional welcome to the reader: *lectori salutem!*

The Editors

Inside

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expertise. But most rewarding of all has been discovering the extraordinary commitment of so many people in the College to making sure that the production of eight popular but intellectually serious lectures proceeds smoothly. It has been exciting to join the team.

This leads naturally to the social life of the College. Getting to know a community of over a hundred fellows and staff and four hundred students cannot be done quickly, but people have been unfailingly kind in helping me. I have certainly found the ethos of the College to be friendly, egalitarian and unpompous, and I have also found it admirably professional. People seem really to care about doing things well, and doing them with good humour. I have been impressed by the commitment of everyone involved in the running of the College, from the day-to-day responsibilities of catering, maintenance and the gardens to the voluntary organisation of activities such as concerts, the Ball, and lunchtime seminars.

Alongside these initial impressions of the College as a community is developing my own sense of what I can best contribute to it. Foremost is the need to nurture a supportive environment within the University and in the wider world at a time when finances are under threat. It will help that the other job that I have taken over from Geoffrey Lloyd is Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies. Although graduates are now a third of all students in Cambridge, and although this proportion is set to increase steadily, they remain in many ways poor relations in an undergraduate-oriented university. They deserve better resourcing, teaching and care at all levels. I look forward to Darwin College continuing to take the lead in bringing this about.

Willy Brown, *Master*

Cambridge University Entrepreneurs (CUE) Award

Dr Emily Shuckburgh (Research Fellow) and her colleagues in Weather Informatics have won first prize in the Cambridge University Entrepreneurs (CUE) competition. The award was made at a ceremony in Robinson College on Friday 2 March, 2001 before an audience including the Vice-Chancellor and representatives of local high-tech companies. Emily's team have also won the NERC Business Plan Competition.

Weather Informatics consists of Emily and three colleagues (all meteorologists - 1 from Oxford, 2 from Reading). Their research focuses on understanding the ocean-atmosphere system, and work related to climate change. They are setting up a spin-out company that will exploit some of the recent advances in this field.

Weather Informatics will exploit recent advances in scientific understanding of the ocean-atmosphere system to provide bespoke long-range weather forecasts. Some 70% of all businesses, and as much as $1000bn of the U.S. economy alone, are significantly exposed to weather-related risks. The customer-specific products provided by Weather Informatics will enable weather-sensitive businesses to greatly improve their management of weather-related risks and thereby offer them significant competitive advantage.

Andrew Prentice

Andrew Thompson prepares for take-off

The Bursar Moves On

Andrew Thompson's 7-year reign as Bursar at Darwin has seen the College through the most active period of development in its history. He has steered us safely through difficult financial times and somehow conjured up the resources to acquire magnificent new properties (the latest of which he describes in his piece on Darwin Developments).

Andrew's successes are recognised both within the College and in the wider Cambridge community. His appointment as Senior Bursar at Magdalene reflects the high esteem in which he is held – though the Darwinian naturally questions whether this represents a promotion!

With his airforce background Andrew remains a keen aviator and his move will deplete the small but growing band of Darwinians who have been evolving wings. We wish him happy flying as he takes off for Magdalene.

Propagation of the Species

Congratulations to:

Rachel Camina (Research Fellow) and David Timney on the birth of their son, Alf Daniel on 10th Jan 2001.

Alan Blackwell (Fellow) and Helen Anthony on the birth of their daughter Elizabeth Clare on 15th May 2001.

Susan Jebb (nee Parkinson, Old Darwinian) and Richard Jebb (Old Darwinian & Chairman of Darwin College Society) on the birth of their son Felix Charles Richard on 4th May 2001.

Please e-mail your announcements to sandra@dar.cam.ac.uk.

It would be interesting to know how many marriages and partnerships have started in Darwin, and how many Darwinian descendants (defined as the offspring of couples who were both at Darwin) we have so far accrued. Have any of these yet entered Darwin themselves? Please email us with details.

The New York Times

Dr David Mackay (left) and Seb Wills - winners of the 'mus silicum' competition

How the Brain Knows What It Knows

by SANDRA BLAKESLEE

A group of physicists from Cambridge University in England has won an intellectual contest that challenged scientists from around the world to figure out how a simulated brain was able to extract meaning from the stream of information flowing in from the outside world – or, in this case, recognize the word "one."

The contest, set up in early October by Dr. John Hopfield of Princeton University and Dr. Carlos Brody of New York University, was posted on a Web site. The site drew 17,000 hits and 4,000 downloads within a few weeks.

The winners, led by Dr. David McKay of Cambridge, arrived at the correct solution after about one hour of brainstorming, Dr. Brody said.

In the contest, scientists were given the description of a silicon mouse that could understand the word "one." Based on a thorough description of the mouse's nervous system, the challenge was to figure out how the mouse did it. Dr. Brody said Dr. Hopfield had discovered that something called synchronous rhythm was the key to solving the puzzle, and they wanted to see if other scientists would come to the same conclusion.

Sights, sounds, smells, textures and other information flowing into the brain arrive not all at once but over brief intervals of time, he explained. For example, a spoken word may have several consonants and vowels that unfold over a half second, and somehow the brain cells have to bridge this gap.

The brain does this by exploiting the fact that cells involved in recognizing various aspects of the word produce identical firing patterns, Dr. Hopfield said. Cells that fire with the same rhythm fall into the same marching step, as the bits and pieces of the word are comprehended by the brain. Meanwhile, cells that fire at slightly different rates are not reinforced and fall out of step. This fundamental synchrony is crucial to comprehension, he said.

The Fellowship

Substantial changes in the Fellowship have occurred since the last College magazine. Professor Sir Geoffrey Lloyd has retired from the Mastership and been elected an Honorary Fellow. Professor Ian Hodder has resigned to go to a Chair and start a new programme in archaeology at the University of Stanford. Dr Thomas Cocke's work for the Council for the Care of Churches has required him to resign on moving to Suffolk. In a departure of particular distinction that will fortunately keep him in Cambridge, Professor Ekhard Salje has resigned to become the next President of Clare Hall.

A number of new Fellows have joined the College. One is a former Research Fellow, Dr Torsten Krude, a Lecturer in Zoology, working on cellular biology. Dr Ianthi-Maria Tsimpli is an ADR working in the Centre for English and Applied Linguistics on language acquisition. Dr John Swenson-Wright is a lecturer in Oriental Studies concerned with contemporary Japanese international relations. Dr Niels Hovius is a Lecturer in Earth Sciences whose research is concerned with the erosion of mountains. Dr Alan Blackwell, previously recently elected as a Research Fellow, is a Lecturer in the Computer Laboratory working on human interaction with computers. The election of Dr Isabelle Joyau, the French Cultural Delegate in Cambridge, has continued a succesful tradition for the College.

Recently elected Research Fellows cover the usual splendid diversity of intellectual enquiry. Dr Hannah Thompson is the Adrian Research Fellow, concerned with modern French literature. Two newly elected Finley Research Fellows are Karin Tyberg, a former graduate member, working on the history of science in the late classical world, and Andrew Bell, whose research is on the organisation of public works in Medieval Britain. Dr Andrew Bunker, an astronomer working on distant galaxies, is one Charles and Katharine Darwin Research Fellow. The other, more recently elected, one is Dr Fanny Mann who uses micro-surgery to investigate the development of nervous systems. Dr May Chiao is working on low temperature particle physics. Dr James Leach is a social anthropologist working on a remote community in New Guinea. Dr Ralf Herbrich is the Microsoft Research Fellow working on the theory and application of machine learning. A recent election has been Dr Chris Pickard, a computational quantum physicist. Dr George Chen, the Schlumberger Research Fellow is working on medical titanium alloys. The College's links with Schlumberger were consolidated further with the election of the head of the company's Cambridge laboratory Dr Michael Sheppard, as an Honorary Fellow.

Some recent publications of note:

'Váltott hangokon' (book of poetry in Hungarian) Budapest 2000 and *'Magnetic Poles. Essays on Polish and Comparative Literature'* London 2000, by George Gömöri (Fellow).

'Corporeal Practices: (Re)figuring the Body in French Studies' Berne: Peter Lang, 2000 edited by Julia Prest & Hannah Thompson (Research Fellow).

'New Perspectives on the Old Red Sandiron' Geological Society of London. compiled and edited by Dr Peter Friend (Fellow).

'Galaxy Formation and Evolution at High Redshift' Astronomical Society of the Pacific 2000, proceedings of an International Conference in Berkeley, California edited by Andrew J Bunker (Research Fellow) & Wil J.M. van Breugel.

Darwin Developments

by The Bursar

The College Estate

In last year's magazine, I mentioned that there was progress on the Newnham Terrace front. Matters have moved on apace; the contracts to purchase Nos 9-12 Newnham Terrace from King's College were signed last summer and plans are well in hand to incorporate the houses into the College estate. We take them over from King's in July and then begin a programme of conversion and refurbishment to prepare the properties for occupation by Darwin students in October. We are also actively planning to convert No 1 Newnham Terrace to provide much-needed additional facilities. The plans as presently envisaged include the remodelling of the basement of the house to provide a new cloakroom/toilet area, the creation of linked seminar/meeting rooms on the ground floor and the conversion of the first floor into a discrete dining/meeting room, linked to the Dining Hall by a new-build bridge. Our plans are still at the design stage, but we hope to be able to commence work on-site in mid-2002.

Elsewhere, the Entertaining Room refurbishment has been completed successfully and the gravel paths around the Old Granary have been re-laid with stone, greatly enhancing the visual aspect, as well improving drainage. This latter consideration was brought in to stark focus at the end of February, when the river burst its banks and rose to unprecedented levels, completely inundating the Small Island (see pictures) and causing considerable problems in the College, resulting in a loss of electrical power for several hours. The Clerk of Works and his team had a very difficult few days, but coped admirably with the situation – we just hope that the remedial measures we have since taken will protect us should global warming make College flooding a more frequent occurrence.

College Finances

Regular readers will recall that the graduate College fee was protected when arrangements for the payment of the undergraduate fee were changed a couple of years ago. However, we now face a threat from a different quarter. One of the Research Councils has introduced a method of funding for doctoral students that makes no allowance for the Oxbridge College fee and it is likely that other Funding Councils will follow suit. This does not mean that the fee will disappear, but it does mean that arrangements for payment will have to be agreed with the University, thus increasing the likelihood of further controls on the fee system. For a College that is very dependent on fee income, this is not welcome news.

The College Appeal

This leads me perhaps naturally on to the subject of fund raising. We continue to be grateful for the support offered by Old Darwinians and friends of the College, and the money we receive from donations is of increasing importance as we seek to improve both the physical facilities of the College and the support we can give Students by way of bursaries etc. Darwin remains the most popular of the graduate colleges – and is now the second most popular choice for graduate admissions across the whole University – but it will only continue to be so if we can offer our students facilities and support comparable with that available elsewhere. So, all help is gratefully received. An easy way to help may soon be at hand, as it is possible that the long-trailed College affinity card will finally come in to being later this or early next year.

Farewell

As I write these few notes, I do so in the knowledge that someone else will be reporting on College developments next year. I shall be leaving Darwin in the autumn to become Senior Bursar at Magdalene. Peter Brindle (currently the Domestic Bursar at Christ's College) will be taking over as Bursar with effect from 1 September 2001. I have enjoyed seven extremely happy years at Darwin, made particularly pleasant by the support and friendship of the Students, Fellows and Staff. The College has seen much change over these years: for example, it has 25% more students and now enjoys significantly better accommodation and improved facilities. However, I am pleased that it has retained its welcoming and friendly atmosphere, the student-centred ethos that makes Darwin the place for graduate study. Long may it continue to do so, and I wish the College, its Students, Fellows and Staff continued success for the future.

Andrew Thompson

Award winning work on cancer diagnosis

As Charles Darwin Professor of Animal Embryology and Fellow of Darwin College Ron Laskey has impeccable DARWINIAN credentials. He is now the Director of the newly opened Hutchinson/MRC Cancer Research Centre at Addenbrooke's Hospital.

In the past few years Professor Ron Laskey and his team at the Wellcome/CRC Institute have won several international science prizes for their ground-breaking research on how cells divide and develop. The proceeds of one of these prizes, the Louis-Jeantet Prize for Medicine, have now contributed to the team's latest success in winning the BBC Tomorrow's World Health Innovation Award for their development of a revolutionary new screening test for cancer.

Early detection of cancer is crucial because treatment is much easier and more effective in the early stages of disease. This is the reasoning behind population screening programmes for cervical and breast cancers, and could be applied to other cancers if more reliable screening techniques were available.

Throughout the developed world cervical cancer is screened using smear tests that have to be read by eye after normal histological staining. This simple procedure has proved exceptionally valuable but, perhaps not surprisingly, has its flaws. The differences between normal and abnormal cells can be very subtle. Observer fatigue can compound this problem and lead to false negatives in which diseased cells are overlooked.

City team raises hopes for cancer test boost

Laskey's team have improved the reliability of conventional screening by developing an immunological stain for abnormal cells making them much easier to detect. The search for suitable markers of diseased cells had its origins in studies of yeast and Xenopus eggs, and provides yet another example of fundamental blue-skies research leading to practical end points in a surprisingly short period.

A fundamental problem in the search for suitable markers to use in screening is the extraordinary range of molecular changes that contribute to carcinogenesis. One approach to this problem is to use microarray technology in the hope that the molecular 'signature' of tumours can be detected. This may prove feasible in the future, but the challenges are daunting. In the meantime, the Wellcome/CRC team have taken the opposite approach. Instead of looking for subtle differences across many molecular markers they focussed on properties common to cells that are proliferating in the wrong place. To do this they searched for markers present in all tumour cells, but absent from normal cells at the surface of the epithelia (those cells that can be easily biopsied).

They chose the proteins of the minichromosome maintenance complex (MCM). These proteins control the initiation of replication in all organisms that have been investigated – they are conserved from humans to yeast and even archeobacteria. There appears to be no alternative pathway to initiate cell proliferation without these proteins. A key feature of the MCM proteins is that they are degraded when cells enter the quiescent phase of the cell cycle, but can be detected with immunological stains when the cells are proliferating.

Collaborations were initiated with Addenbrooke's Hospital to see if the MCM proteins could be used as clinical markers for cancerous cells, and the first small scale trials looked extremely hopeful. They had a 100% detection rate compared to classical histology, and had the added bonus of detecting several cases of disease that were missed by histology. Clinical trials are now in progress with cancers of the cervix, lung, skin, colon and endometrium with very encouraging results.

With characteristic modesty Ron Laskey comments that 'Our novel approach to screening is still in its infancy, but shows exciting promise'. He warns against sensationalist media reports that new screening programmes are just around the corner, but speaks with growing conviction as each new trial reveals the clear advantages of the new technique.

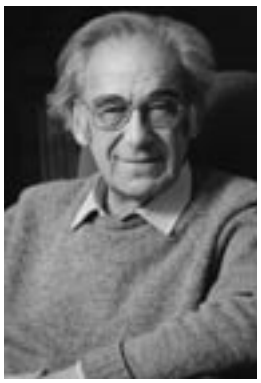
Andrew Prentice

Obituary Gerd Buchdahl

Studying the relations between science and philosophy

GERD BUCHDAHL'S lifelong interest was in the history of metaphysics and epistemology, and the way in which they have influenced and been influenced by the developing natural sciences. His book *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science*, demonstrating in detail the interactions of philosophy and experimental and theoretical science in the period from Descartes to Kant, changed the scholarly perspective on the history of both philosophy and science.

Buchdahl then concentrated on the philosophy of Kant, to which he brought insight exceptional in the English-speaking world, as his book *Kant and the Dynamics of Reason* testifies. He was able to establish detailed relations between Kant's critical philosophy and contemporary scientific work, and his colleagues rarely came away from discussions with him without an exciting sense of having seen things in a new light.



Gerd Buchdahl, historian of the philosophy of science, was born on August 12, 1914. He died on May 17, 2001, aged 86.

Gerd Buchdahl was born in Mainz, and, being of Jewish origin, he sought asylum from Hitler in England in 1933, and trained and worked as an engineer. In 1940, after Dunkirk, all non-naturalised German refugees were interned, and along with many others he was transported on the *SS Dunera* to Australia, where he was again interned.

On Churchill's admission that 'mistakes had been made', he was released and joined the Australian war effort as a design engineer. He took a philosophy degree at the Melbourne University and became senior lecturer and founder of the department of history and philosophy of science there in 1949.

Four years later he had a visiting lectureship at Oxford, and in 1958 he returned permanently to England as the first lecturer in history and philosophy of science at Cambridge, where he was responsible for developing one of the most active centres in the world in his subject. He was among the founding fellows of Darwin College in 1964, and was appointed University Reader in 1966. In 1973 he was Tarner lecturer at Trinity College.

Many students remember with gratitude how Buchdahl opened up the world of philosophy in his lectures and seminars. He would arrive slightly distrait, having clearly thought through all the problems afresh the night before, and probably throughout the night.

Even when they had found the subject matter difficult to assimilate, students would say that he had shown them what it was to think as a philosopher, and he was unfailingly generous in giving his time to would-be writers and teachers. Brief acknowledgments to the editor in the journal he founded, *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, often indicate hours of patient correspondence and help in redrafting. Absolute philosophical integrity was his primary concern in all aspects of his work.

Gerd Buchdahl is survived by his wife, Nancy, and their three sons.

The Changing Face(s) of Darwin College

My first impression of Darwin, on the gloomily grey, rainy day of my interview for a Research Fellowship was of a severely efficient, dark, slightly forbidding place. Since then, I have spent nearly two years working in what has turned out to be a surprisingly welcoming and warm environment. The dark corridors of the Rayne building belie the friendliness of the people who inhabit it. No day now is complete without the cheerful greeting of the porter, the casual chat with one of the fellows, a member of staff, or a student in the corridor, the crucial moment in the servery when Alan or Deirdre await my ever-more complicated explanation of what new cunning mixture of main course and salads I might decide on that day. Darwin College consists not so much of its buildings as of the students, staff, and fellows who people it. When I recently complained about Alan's inevitable departure this Summer, I was told that although it was always sad to see someone go, I should look forward to the new face that would replace him - apparently, all the people who come to work at Darwin in whatever capacity are people to look forward to knowing. And that's a good thing to know.

But it's not just the faces *in* the college that are constantly changing. The college itself is receiving small but important face-lifts all the time. I work in the painted room, Gwen Raverat's former playing room, the walls of which she covered with frescoes depicting religious scenes and a number of university dons. It's the little room at the end of the beautiful veranda leading to the Old Granary and overlooking the River Cam, a room that used to house the rowers' ergometers and that now houses the humanities Research Fellow(s). When I arrived, I used to have to jump over the puddles in the path connecting the veranda with the college and to pick the gravel out of my shoes. Those days are past: a gorgeous-looking crazy paving has replaced the uneven gravel path, and where there used to be a wild and gloriously flowering bush to the right just before the little turn-off into the college's back-entrance, there is now a rigorously raked Japanese stone garden. Opposite, the island has been turned into a disciplined, practical and yet aesthetic barbeque space, with a new bench commemorating one of the college's sadly vanished faces, that of Linford Cazenove. The island, of course, was entirely under water earlier this year, but now both it and the equally dramatically flooded bicycle cellar have been given a new look and lease of life. Even inside the college, changes are constantly happening. The old drinks machine has disappeared and in its stead we are confronted with a broken-down wall and a rusty bulding-site in the corridor where a new, more sophisticated machine is to replace it. Like all the changes at Darwin, it's probably one that I should look forward to. And that's a good thing to know.

Pascal Aebischer, Research Fellow in English

Darwinian Achievements

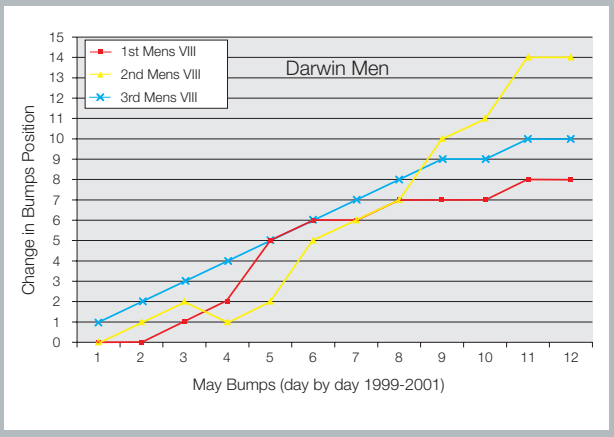
Professor Richard Henderson received the Gregori Aminoff Prize for Crystallography from the Royal Swedish Academy.

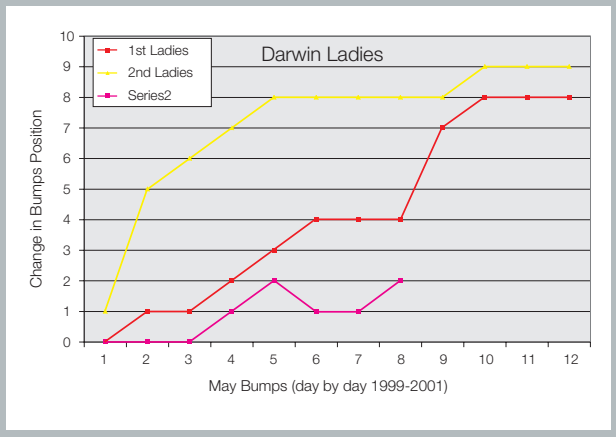
Professor Roger Whitehead has been awarded an Hon DSc from the University of Ulster.

Professor Ron Laskey and his team have won numerous awards including the Tomorrow's World Science Award *(see article)*.

Dr James Leach has won the JB Donne Essay Prize in the Anthropology of Art awarded by the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Boat Club Progress





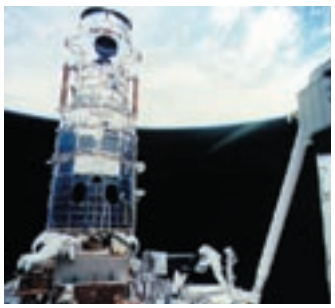
From Inner Space to Outer Space

Darwin College Lecture Series 2001

Appropriately for the year 2001, 'Space' was the theme of this year's Darwin College Lecture Series. It proved to be extremely popular. Average attendance was 541 and even overflowed the overflow hall to the main lecture hall on two occasions. Several lectures were picked up in the national press.

The sequence of the lectures took the audience through ever expanding orders of magnitude. Susan Greenfield started off with a neurological explanation of the 'inner space' of human consciousness. Perceptions of space and meaning were then explored in Karen Emmorey's lecture on psychological research on sign language. The series entered the realms of virtual space when Char Davies presented her 'interactive virtual reality' art, reflecting her progression from painter to software specialist. More concrete visual imagery came with Daniel Liebeskind's lively account of his own architecture, such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin. In a lecture combining the history of both art and science, Lisa Jardine demonstrated how the portrayal of maps in Renaissance tapestries reflected and reinforced political power. The contemporary political world was the subject of journalist Neal Ascherson's discussion of 'international space', an account made all the more vivid by being illustrated by no more than compelling prose. We then moved into the natural world, with John Barrow's lucid exposition of current understanding of the physics of space. Finally, Jeffrey Hoffman, an astrophysicist who happens also to be one of the most experienced astronauts, brought the series to a fascinating end with his account of exploring space.

This Space series was organised by Francois Penz, Greg Raddick and Rob Howell and its success, as always, depended upon the time and enthusiasm of a host of other Darwin College members behind the scenes. The series for 2002, on the theme of 'Power', is already planned and details can be found on http://wol.ra.phy.cam.ac.uk/power . In the year after that the Lecture Series will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the discovery of DNA.



Jeffrey Hoffman at work

George Gömöri has been awarded an Emeritus Leverhulme Fellowship.

Dr Emily Shuckburgh and colleagues at Weather Informatics won the top prize in the Cambridge University Entrepreneurs Competition. She also won the NERC Business Plan Competition *(see separate article)*.

Professor Andrew Prentice was awarded the British Nutrition Foundation Prize 2000, and the Society for International Nutrition Research Prize of the American Society for Nutritional Sciences (awarded at Experimental Biology, Orlando, 2001).

Professor Ekhard Salje has been awarded the Humboldt Research Prize and the Schlumberger Medal. He has also been appointed to the Presidency of Clare Hall from 1st October 2001 following the retirement of Professor Dame Gillian Beer

The Art of Pouring a Drink

Congratulations to Darwin's new Butler, Alessandro Comin, on winning through to the national finals of the Sommelier of the Year Award for the second time. After winning the regional competition in Birmingham (photo) he met other finalists at the Savoy in London to do battle over an oenological assault course. The competitors had to explain the characteristics of a bottle of wine and recommend food to go with it; detect errors in a wine list; decant a bottle of wine; recommend, cut and light a fine cigar; and open and serve a magnum of champagne pouring it equally among 16 glasses without revisiting any! The competition was sponsored by Ruinart Champagne and the Academy of Food & Wine Service.

Darwin College Lecture Series

In the Second Term of every academic year since 1986, Darwin College has organised a series of eight public lectures. Each is built around a single theme, approached from a multi-disciplinary perspective and prepared for a general audience by an leading authority in his or her subject. These lectures have been revised, collected and published by Cambridge University Press.

The latest book in this series is *Structure: In Science and Art* edited by Wendy Pullan and Harry Bhadeshia, published in November 2000 (ISBN 0521782589, price £19.95).

Books in this series are available to members and alumni of Darwin College at 20% off. For more details about the series and how to order, please email Hannah Proctor at hproctor@cambridge.org.

Omar Ahmet retires

We wish Omar Ahmet a long and happy retirement in his new home in Spain. His inimitable rendering of 'Ladies and gentlemen – dinner is served' will be missed by many.

Our thanks to Philip McNair

In his years as editor of the Darwin College Magazine Professor Philip McNair has made an enormous contribution to the College and we thank him deeply. As any of you who have been editors of such a magazine will know, it is not an easy task. Philip's dogged determination and tact in persuading people to contribute material, and his single-handed editing amounted to a great deal of work each spring. In leafing through a recent copy, and marvelling at the fact that Philip also composed the crossword, I came across a clue that immediately resonated with Philip's annual deadline at the printers 'In March, a date to beware (4)'. Most of his clues were a great deal harder than this and, too late for this issue, I regret not asking him to stay on as crossword compiler. Philip, perhaps you could feature under a nom de plume suggested by: 'Squeeze in clue from diverse McNair (4,2)'?

Andrew Prentice

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Roger Whitehead

It's *YOUR* newsletter…

Dear Darwinians,
This is the first of a new format in which we are trying to develop a more immediate way of communicating with college members, and particularly our alumni. Such newsletters are dependent on … *NEWS*. Please send us yours. The more news we receive the more flexibility we will have in developing different sections. So please don't hide your lamp under a bushel. Remember that other Darwinians will enjoy basking in the reflected glory of your achievements whether large or small. It gives us all an opportunity to see the contribution that our College makes to the wider world. We especially need news from our overseas alumni whose movements are more difficult to track. Please e-mail your news to *sandra@dar.cam.ac.uk*.

Thank you,

Richard Jebb
(DCS Chairman)

Andrew Prentice
(DCS Secretary)