



# Cantabrigian heaven

Over the past 12 months, I have met three visiting scholars: a French Linguist, a German Lawyer and a Turkish Natural Scientist. It has been refreshing to discuss what people who are new to “the system”, and who already have the experience of 2 – 3 years of study as PhD students in different environments, have to say about Cambridge. More interestingly, it was fascinating to note how their opinion evolved over the 3-6 months that they spent in Cambridge.

I have realised that at Cambridge, we take much of “the system” for granted. Take, for example, the facilities provided by departments: the Turkish scientist explained enthusiastically that he “really, really like(s) Cambridge, because things are better. I want to stay here, he said, and become an academic...”. He explained that while the academic laboratories of Turkish Universities probably have all the facilities available at Cambridge, there were political or procedural barriers which would come in the way of students, thereby limiting their progress. So should Cambridge be complacent about its arguably excellent facilities?

In his *Letter from Singapore*, Muipong Goh reports on how much money is invested in academic institutions in Singapore, how much funding is available to students and how the elite of American Universities are setting up campuses in the island-state. It doesn't take much to realise that Cambridge is still lacking in many areas, compared to its leading American counterparts, and the growing competition from South-East Asian universities; a problem which is mainly related to the general scarcity of funds in British Universities. But the future is bright for Cambridge, as it launches its most ambitious fund-raising campaign to date, linked to its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary. One can only hope that some of the money will be spent on better facilities for graduates, especially in the areas of accommodation and work space.

Much of the political and procedural side of Cambridge, which the visiting scholars are not aware of, but which are very familiar to all students, start with the application sent to the Board of Graduate Studies. Much frustration often ensues by the apparent lack of organisation and deadlines by which to expect replies. Afia Aslam and Jane Ding met Dr Laurie Friday and their article sheds light on the monumental duties of the BoGS.

**Gown** was founded in Michaelmas Term to provide a platform for students to discuss graduate life in Cambridge, and inform of matters that are of interest to graduates. I hope, as I write my last editorial, that our readers will agree that we met our aims. There is still much to investigate and write about and I hope that many of you will consider joining our new editorial team which will take over in the new academic year. Thanks are due to our core team, many of whom have been supportive of the project from its inception, and all the writers which have made it possible to publish **Gown**. I also thank Dr Robert Macfarlane, our Senior Treasurer, for his support and advice over the past year.

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