

# NEWNHAM COLLEGE

## US COMMITTEE

Issue 7

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April 2008

### **CAST YOUR VOTE NOW FOR THE 2008 TRAVEL AWARD!**

Choose the best proposal for travel to the USA in the Summer of 2008 on our website. The winning Newnham student will receive \$4,000, kindly contributed by the US Committee Members, for travel here. The runner-up will receive \$1,000 towards her travel plans. [www.NewnhamInAmerica.org](http://www.NewnhamInAmerica.org)

User ID: sidgwick (all lower case, no "e") - Password: peile (all lower case, and in peile "e" before "i")

### **VISIT TO NEWNHAM JANUARY 2008**

**By Rhoda Dorsey N'49**

In January I went up to Cambridge for a day while staying in London. Term hadn't started, so the halls were quiet. I spent some time in the new Library with the College Archivist about which more later, and then went to the SCR by way of the new Buttery--a wonderful bright space whose color and warmth dazzle. There will be detailed articles about it in the next Roll Letter, so I only show a teaser photo here. In the SCR I was entertained at tea by the Principal, Dr. Gillian Sutherland and Penny Hubbard, the new development director, who had brought along some of those eternally tempting Fitzbillies' Chelsea buns! The Principal will be coming to our West Coast this spring and I hope all of you who can will greet our new and dynamic leader.

*Juan Tian, PhD (Education) student, making calls*



Gill Sutherland was in Washington, DC and New York last year speaking about her newest book and we hope we can entice her back in the future. Penny Hubbard was also in New York this fall and we shall hope to see her on a regular basis.

Penny was full of news about Newnham's annual telephone campaign which was a great success: £185,000 was pledged with 24 legacies promised and a number of gifts of shares and other investments made. The telephone campaign is key to connecting Newnham with its alumnae not merely to ask for financial support but to enable present students to talk with alumnae.

*(Pictured left: The Newnham calling team 2008)*

wonderful: one Newnhamite recalled that she played the violin in the same orchestra as Prince Charles (a cellist). They were far too cramped and their bows kept clashing but she didn't feel she could ask him to 'budge over'. Another's suitor wrote 'I love Myra' in weedkiller on the lawn with the disastrous result that the relevant portion had to be dug up. I recalled a night in when the fire alarm bell rang; tradition held that you placed your pillow outside your door to show the porters that you were safe and had evacuated to the meeting point. As the students poured down the corridor for what they thought was merely a practice they were horrified to smell smoke. A number of girls had to turn on their heels and race back upstairs to rescue partners they had left in bed before they could be toasted alive. Happily the fire was minor but there were a number of sheepish males left shivering on Sidgwick Avenue.

My visit to the College Archives was prompted by the Whitstead Booklet that Sophie Consagra and I put together last year. We collected some marvelous photographs of Newnham, of Whitstead, of students and of Cambridge for the book and it occurred to us that it might be valuable to appeal more widely for Newnham photos for the Archives. (The Archivist agreed and so I shall be happy to receive any of your photos, copy them and return the original if you wish, or send the original on. Please date and identify people and places and send to me at 5 Nearfield Road, Lutherville, MD 21093.) The new Archives section has a photograph collection that may be greatly enriched thereby.



*The new buttery*

## FALL VISIT TO THE EAST COAST

### Penny Hubbard, Development Director N'79

The end of November saw me winging my way to the USA to meet some of you at the wonderful events hosted by the Chairman of our US Alumnae, Vicky Elenowitz (N'77). Vicky is an inspiration: not only does she rally Newnhamites across the US with enthusiasm but also donated nearly £20,000 to support the development drive at Newnham. We are thrilled that Vicky has kindly agreed to be the international chair of our pre-campaign steering group. In Washington Heather Wolfe (N'93) showed me round the stunning Folger Library and I caught up with Rumu Sarkar (N'83) whom I had met when she visited Newnham in September for our Major Benefactors' Lunch.

On Friday 30th November Professor Mary Beard came down from Boston, where she had been signing copies of her new book, *The Roman Triumph*, to conduct an informal private tour for Newnhamites of the New Classics Wing at The Met. This was an enormous privilege and great fun as Mary introduced her provocative perspectives on Roman Sculpture and how it should be displayed. We then adjourned to Vicky's apartment where Mary continued entertaining us in explaining her radical re-examination of *The Roman Triumph* whilst we enjoyed cheese and wine.

*(Pictured right: Mary Beard at The Met. Tara Connaughton (N'92) and Margaret Campbell visible.)*



Saturday morning Margaret Campbell (N'66) and her husband John treated me to a proper American Brunch preceded by a brisk walk across the Brooklyn Bridge – something I have always wanted to do. On Saturday, following the CAM lecture afternoon, Vicky and David hosted a joint dinner for Newnhamites and their guests with alumni and guests from Kings College during which Mary spoke on the pitfalls of running her blog, 'A Don's Life,' on Times Online. The alumnae I met are too numerous to mention but needless to say I loved talking to you all and exchanging news and views about Newnham and Cambridge. In particular it was an extraordinary coincidence to discover that Jennifer Lilley (N'67) had taught at the same direct grant grammar school I attended in Manchester – whilst I was there!

*(Pictured left: Penny and Margaret on the Brooklyn Bridge)*

This is the wonderful thing about being involved in the Newnham Community: we make new friends and discover old contacts. On behalf of all of us here I would like to thank all the Members of the US Committee, many whom have hosted events in their home towns in the past two years (13 in all in Princeton (NJ), NYC, Boston, Washington (DC), Los Angeles, San Francisco and Silicon Valley). Dame Patricia is looking forward to catching up with many of you during her visit to the US from April 4th – 9th. She is moderating the panel discussion at CAM's lecture morning in San Francisco on April 5th before flying to New York on the 6th. One of our illustrious alumnae, Catherine Stimpson, University Professor and Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Science at New York University, is speaking in San Francisco so Newnham will have a majority presence on the platform. More of this in the next issue!

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## MARINA'S BABY

Marina Barinova (N'98) featured in our November '06 Spotlight has given birth to Julia on November 22, 2007. Baby, husband, Tolik, and Marina are all doing well.



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**We welcome news from our readers! If you have something to share, please send it to us.**

## SPOTLIGHT ON NEWNHAM US ALUMNAE

### LOOKING BACK SIXTY YEARS: JEAN ATCHESON

I landed at New York's Cunard pier on October 27, 1957, aged 28, as an immigrant with a job as a trainee editorial researcher at Time Inc., expecting to stay maybe a couple of years. I was looking for an adventure; I didn't know it would last a lifetime. Next year I'll be 80, and my memories encompass times as distant from the life of today as the wartime Britain of my youth was unlike this energetic, exciting land where I would make my living, marry, and bring up a family. Sixty years ago I came up to a Newnham burdened by postwar restrictions. Rationing was still in force; coal was scarce for the fires that warmed our rooms; to save electricity we used such low-wattage light bulbs that several students got headaches from eyestrain. We had spent precious clothing coupons on buying new outfits to suit our no-longer-schoolgirl status, but the New Look came in that fall, and our clothes were immediately out of date. Hemlines had dropped a good six inches!

We did our best, with every sort of subterfuge from bands of let-in, often contrasting material to gatherings of frills. None of them worked, and I remember the delight of at last being able to afford a "costume" with a nipped-in waist and yards of mid-calf-length skirt (which used to catch in the back bicycle wheel, along with the gowns that women were finally privileged to wear in our second year). The women of Newnham and Girton were a mere handful compared with the thousands of men, most of whom had spent two years doing national service and were more mature than girls like me, directly from school. Opportunities beyond lectures abounded to meet and make friends, to act, sing, perform, and play about, to whatever extent seemed appropriate in those shyer, less demonstrative days. But signed-in men visitors had to be out of college by 10 p.m., and women had to be in by midnight. My father, escorting Dame Myra Curtis home from a concert late one evening, reported a series of flutterings in the shadows as they neared the main gates, but the Principal strode on, looking neither right nor left.

We wrote all our essays and examinations in longhand. Typing was not a subject taught in British schools. But when we started looking for careers, all Women's Situations Vacant ads were seeking secretaries (with skills of at least 110 words per minute in shorthand and 50 in typing), while a man with an identical degree was not asked for any additional attributes and could enter the management stream immediately. Yet we took this situation for granted and trotted off to acquire the skills that would subordinate any woman taking dictation to the man who was giving it. The amazing thing is that -- for decades, anyway -- we didn't even resent it!



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### SPANNING THE GLOBE: SITA RAMASWAMI



I was born in India, but brought up mostly in Japan. I went to high school briefly in India and then to Delhi University, from where I went to Newnham. My principal at boarding school in Dehra Dun in India had been at Newnham at some point early in the century and she may have inspired me! So I grew up in the Age of Aquarius, but now, in the Age of Google, I am in touch with classmates from Japan and India, sometimes after an interval of decades.

I went to Wharton for an MBA after Newnham, and stayed on! I am now an American citizen and have lived here for more than 25 years. In 1987 I joined the World Bank, and have been here ever since, mostly based in Washington DC, but with one three year assignment in Istanbul, Turkey. I have held a variety of positions in the World Bank but currently I am in Knowledge Management, responsible for training, website development, publications and other knowledge products. Prior to joining the World Bank, I worked in New York, first as a management consultant at Grant Thornton and later, at Bankers Trust Co. (now Deutsche Bank). I'm currently based in Washington DC.

## TRANSATLANTIC TIES: CATHERINE BIDART

In 2004-2005, I spent a year at Newnham studying for an LL.M. in international law and played volleyball for the Blues, actively participated in the local Democrats Abroad chapter, and enjoyed frequent visits to London to see my partner, Jean-Paul Buchanan (a Liverpool native), who was studying at the L.S.E. After graduation, I found a way to stay in Cambridge for the summer by working as a research assistant for a professor. In the fall of 2005, Jean-Paul and I returned to the U.S., where we had met in law school at U.C. Hastings in San Francisco. After our return, we spent a couple of months doing internships in Washington, DC. Deciding that the weather was better in my native California, we decided to move to its capital, Sacramento. I now work as an attorney for the California Law Revision Commission, and Jean-Paul works for a California Senator. I miss Cambridge dearly, and both of us are always looking forward to a visit to the U.K.



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## THE OLD LABS

Newnham's Old Laboratories have a significant place in women's educational history. When Newnham was founded in 1871 women were forbidden to work in the University laboratories. Newnham's 'Old Labs,' complete with fume cupboards, were therefore built in 1879 thanks to donations from friends and students of Newnham. Designed, as was the rest of the College, by Basil Champneys they provided a laboratory where women in Cambridge could conduct scientific experiments.

During World War Two the building was a first aid post, then the gardener's headquarters and a studio for Artists in Residence. In 1995 since extensive repairs needed to be undertaken, an alternate use for the Old Labs was sought. The suggestion by two Freshers of a performance center was adopted. Opened on 18 April 1998 by former Newnhamite



Miriam Margolyes (who starred in such films as *The Age of Innocence* and *Harry Potter*) the Old Labs now offer excellent acoustics and state of the art lighting. They provide a first-rate arena for students to partake in drama, dance and music recitals. The first main show to be performed was Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*, presented by the Anonymous Players, which scored a five star rating in the student newspaper.

Newnham's Raleigh Society regularly holds concerts and lunchtime recitals in the Old Labs. This year we hosted a public master-class by world-renowned accompanist Roger Vignoles, sponsored by a former Newnhamite. Mr. Vignoles, who has worked with such stars as Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, coached singers and accompanists from both Newnham and Selwyn

leading to a Choral performance and strawberries and fizz on the lawn. An exhibition of students' artwork was held in June, with the grand finale of the "Expressions and Impressions" competition, allowing current students to showcase their talents and artistic flair. Other highlights include workshops with professional directors in acting and writing, a spectacular production of *Agamemnon* and a series of monologues for International Women's Week as well as the CU Light Entertainment Society's pantomime.

The Old Labs have certainly changed from the days of Catherine Holt – a student at Newnham in 1889: "We got arsenic and phosphorous fumes at the lecture yesterday morning and a frightful smell of ammonia in the Laboratory afterwards. It was perfectly disgusting. All the same Chemistry is great fun."

## NEWNHAM COLLEGE

U . S . C O M M I T T E E N E W S L E T T E R

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