

NORTHUMBRIAN CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

President: Prof. Heather Cordell

www.northumbrian-cambridge.co.uk

Hon. Secretary: Em.Prof. Gilbert Cockton

Psycho in Concert



Glasshouse International Centre for Music

Thursday 31 October, 2024

Our autumn concert trip will be to see Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller Psycho, with Bernard Hermann's chilling soundtrack played live by the Royal Northern Sinfonia. Anyone who missed the deadline for our block booking but would like to join us can book a ticket and meet up in the café for refreshments beforehand.

AGM and annual lecture, 2024

Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle

Wednesday 2 October 2024

This year's AGM will be followed by a talk given by the astrophysicist Professor Martin Ward, currently the Temple Chevallier Chair of Astronomy at Durham University, whose interests include black holes and quasars. Full details to follow on NCA website.



Along the Tees: Thornton Hall Gardens and Tees Cottage Pumping Station

This year's summer outing - an enjoyable visit to the colourful gardens at Thornton Hall and the magnificent steam engines at Tees Cottage Pumping Station - took place on 3 July 2024.



'Magdalenistas' in the Palace of Westminster

NCA member Malcom Pearce writes:

When invitations drop into your e-mail box some cannot be refused. 'Magdalene in London Dinner at the House of Lords' was one such event. As the invitation came from the Right Honourable Brenda Hale, Baroness Hale of Richmond, it was even more enticing. The former Girtonian, who had delivered the 2019 Girton lecture, '100 Years of Women in Law', Lady Hale, is known for her advocacy of what some described as 'Brenda's Agenda'. As she noted this was, 'quite simply, the belief that women are equal to men and should enjoy the same rights and freedoms that they do; but that women's lives are necessarily sometimes different from men's and the experience of leading those lives is just as valid and important in shaping the law as is the experience of men's lives'. Magdalene college was the last all-male college in both Cambridge and Oxford to accept the spirit of 'Brenda's Agenda'. It was actively being discussed when I was there as a Fellow Commoner between 1984-1985, was decided on by the Fellowship in 1987 and the first female undergraduates walked into the college and First Court in 1988.

The evening began with a slow but sure coming together of different pairs and groups, of gentlemen in black ties and ladies in long dresses, emerging from the throng of tourists around Westminster. As the tourists took their leave, many keen to photograph our distinctive appearance, we were coalescing into a very well-dressed force of 120. Our collective aim was to find Black Rod's Garden entrance gate and proceed to the inner sanctum.

After champagne and canapés on the terrace, with occasional salutations to passing river boats energetically reciprocated, an excellent five course meal followed. Appropriate wines accompanied dinner and then came the speeches. Incongruously we had an excellent but idiosyncratic American Master of Ceremonies on the night who, when searching for a collective noun 'for us all', alighted upon 'Magdalenistas'.

After a short but appreciative introduction from the Master of Magdalene, Sir Christopher Greenwood, himself an ex-professor of law, barrister for several UK governments and previously a judge on the International Court of Justice, we were in the hands of Lady Hale.



Lady Hale speaking, with the Master of Magdalene (Sir Christopher Greenwood) seated on her left

Without raising it specifically, 'Brenda's Agenda' made a covert appearance. When the previous master of Magdalene, Rowan Williams, informed Lady Hale of the invitation to become an Honorary Fellow in 2020 she said it occurred to her, 'I had better check with the Mistress of Girton that it was seemly for the Visitor of Girton, the first women's college, to join the last men's college to go mixed'. In the end they concluded it was, because in the same way 'men' had excelled at Girton so 'women' had excelled at Magdalene. The abiding memory she would take from the dinner and the evening was the huge age-range of attendees. She felt, this was 'a great testament to the college', and, how everyone could, 'look back with affection and respect to our time in college and in Cambridge'.

Lady Hale was very happy to chat afterwards. There was a long queue of admiring guests and photographs with everyone. Eventually, gently ushered out, we took a different interior route along an empty, long corridor of large mullioned windows and linenfold panelling. Dusk had fallen so the building looked rather sleepy in subdued lighting. We continued down a wide stone staircase into a huge space, octagonal with tall white statues of frock-coated statesmen in the corners and pointed gothic arches, with decorative tracery, soaring up several

storeys into the darkness overhead. As we left the Lords' 'red carpet' and approached the Commons' 'green' the distinctive mosaic floor suddenly reminded us this was 'The Central Lobby', of the 'Mother of Parliaments'. An attendant, amused at the impression his workplace made on unaccustomed visitors, confirmed it.

We continued down wider flights of stone stairs into an even more enormous space, wide and tall with an unmistakeable hammer-beam roof discernible in the shadows - Westminster Hall. What a weight of history was there here and it was a privilege to walk through it without crowds alone with our thoughts. We handed in our passes and headed for, on Lady Hale's recommendation, the 'Red Lion' in Parliament Street.

The last pub to have had a working 'division bell' for thirsty MPs, it was the ideal location for further liquid refreshment and reminiscences. It was good to see that Magdalene was rubbing off on one of its newer and more exalted 'Magdalenistas'.



Malcolm Pearce on the Terrace

'Baby of the House'

Congratulations to Sam Carling, newly elected MP for North West Cambridgeshire, who, at 22 years of age, becomes the 'Baby of the House'.

Past events

Annual Dinner

Wednesday 13 March 2024

The 2024 annual dinner of the Northumbrian Cambridge Association was again held in the splendid surroundings of the Northern Counties Club in the centre of Newcastle. We have dined here over the last nine years, and, once again, had another enjoyable evening there.

Hexham Races

Saturday 11 May 2024

NCA members enjoyed six exciting races at Hexham, including The Heart of All England Hunter Chase!



Situated 600 feet above Hexham, Hexham Racecourse takes full advantage of its natural amphitheatre setting to provide superb viewing of racing. The left-handed undulating track extending to 1 mile 4 furlongs places emphasis on stamina and is surrounded by magnificent countryside. We enjoyed the meeting and some of us even managed to win more than we wagered

Summer Walk

Saturday 20 July 2024

Members enjoyed a walk taking in Jesmond Dene and following the Ouseburn to the Quayside. Luckily, it did not rain this year!

Broken Light

NCA member Jennifer Denning has published her first novel. Here she writes about its genesis.

As many an English graduate and teacher before me, I have long cherished an ambition to write my own novels! I'm thrilled to have finally completed my first, *Broken Light*, and to have been fortunate enough to find a publisher in Sacristy Press.

After visiting the National Glass Centre in Sunderland several years ago, I became fascinated by the long history of glass making in the Northeast. I was particularly inspired by the story of the Anglo-Saxon bishop, Benedict Biscop, and his journey to the continent in the seventh century to engage Gaulish glaziers to re-teach the natives of Britain the lost art of stained-glass. My novel is based around this story, both literally and as a metaphor for the timeless human search for meaning, beauty and love.

Alliterative poetry, telling the tale of Alwin, a novice monk and companion to Biscop, is interspersed with prose, narrating the story of Adam, an academic working in Durham in the mid 1990s. Alwin's story is presented as a recently discovered mediaeval manuscript, which Adam is translating into contemporary English. As his own life falls apart, Adam finds his thoughts increasingly haunted by the ancient words. Overwhelmed by a sense of spiritual pursuit, he feels driven towards the quiet Lucy, whom he has previously despised and feared. She emerges as the artistic, spiritual and physical catalyst for the story; an embodiment of wisdom and light.

It was important to me that both journeys towards self-understanding and the rediscovery of lost knowledge should begin and end against the sea-haunted backdrop of Northumbria. The Northeast has such a long, distinguished spiritual and creative heritage and I wanted to draw on this wealth and atmosphere. I have been privileged to live in Durham for the last twenty-five years and have grown to love the region's deep but unassuming sense of history and the



strange juxtaposition of heavy industry and wild natural beauty, particularly evident along the miles of coastline. I hope something of this distinct and unique sense of place comes through in this tale of loss, creativity, love and redemption

You can purchase *Broken Light* from Sacristy.co.uk and most book retailers.
ISBN:9781789593525.

Coming events

Saturday 31st August 2024 - Barbecue, Ovingham

Thursday 19th Sept, 2024 - Freshers' event, Literary & Philosophical Society, Newcastle.

Wednesday October 2nd 2024 - AGM and annual lecture - Literary & Philosophical Society, Newcastle.

Thursday 31st October, 2024 - Autumn concert, Glasshouse -soundtrack to Psycho

Friday 29 November 1st 2024 - Christmas lunch, County Hotel, Newcastle

Saturday 14 December 2024 - Festive film & tea, Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle

[Full details of all events are given on the NCA website](#)