



Newnham in America

Welcome from Margaret Campbell (NC 1966), Chairman of the US Committee



The New Year started with a visit to NY by the Principal, Dame Carol Black, who gave a talk at Cambridge in America on 'The Meaning of Success', which was followed by a lively discussion with the enthusiastic audience. In March, Newnham alumnae met with Sarah Dunant (NC 1969) who was moderator of an afternoon session on the same topic (see the piece below by Jennifer Delaney). Alumnae on the West Coast had an excellent evening with Baroness Jean Coussins (NC 1970) in April in San Francisco.

The Changing Lives Campaign has concluded, successfully raising £500,000 more than its £15m target. I would like to thank our US alumnae for their generous support throughout, with contributions from 200 alumnae in the USA (47% of our total US alumnae).

We have had three excellent shortlisted candidates again for the US Travel Award; thank you to all of you who voted for the winner. Watch this space for an update of the successful candidate's travels! You can read the report of the 2014 winner, Clare Donaldson, overleaf.

Cambridge in America Day: the Meaning of Success

On Saturday 21 March, as has become custom, Newnham alumnae gathered for brunch ahead of Cambridge in America Day in New York. In a corner booth at Lexington Brasserie, our huddle was a mixture of familiar and new faces and conversation flowed about our shared memories of Newnham as well as learning about each other's lives in and around New York.

The Cambridge in America event itself was held in the Waldorf hotel and to our pleasant surprise we had a Newnham table just for us, right up front – perhaps thanks to Newnham's Sarah Dunant's starring role as moderator. The presentations were engaging and the new format, which asked senior members of the University to comment on a common issue – the Meaning of Success – was very well received. The discussion was wide-ranging, covering how the University and wider society measures success and how that plays into issues of gender equality. The day resulted in a lively Q&A session followed by a no less quiet cocktail reception. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year!



Sarah Dunant



Newnham alumnae at the CAM Day

An internship at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory – Clare Donaldson (NC 2011)



Last summer, I travelled to the Big Island, Hawai'i, for an internship at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory (HVO). I had an incredible time, working on a project I am passionate about in an amazing location. I was lucky to be chosen for this internship, which will make up part of my Geological Sciences MSci. I worked in the seismology group, whose principal role is monitoring the earthquakes that occur under the Hawaiian volcanoes. I decided to work on a project using a geophysical technique that is relatively new, only starting to be used in the last ten years. By studying the data recorded on HVO's network of seismometers it is possible to detect variations at which seismic waves travel through the top few kilometres of the

volcanoes. This has been used in Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean to detect precursors to volcanic eruptions, so is a potential forecasting technique, but has not successfully been used in Hawai'i yet. The method of this technique meant that I had to learn computer coding and programming, a valuable skill and one that I (slightly surprisingly) enjoyed learning.

I lived in the Volcanoes National Park, and cycled to work every day. It was a breath-taking ride along the edge of Kilauea summit crater, which is up to 5km wide and 165m deep. Within this huge crater is yet another crater, and within that is the world's second largest lava lake. I was lucky enough to be able to go to the lava lake with geologists from HVO – it is closed to the general public because of the dangerous gases. It was a jaw-dropping sight: at dusk the lake is bright orange with white cracks breaking up the surface; the connecting lava sounds like ocean waves crashing onto a beach; and some points on the lake spatter and bubble lava, throwing it tens of metres into the air. There is an overlook to the crater just five minutes from where I was living; I will really miss the astounding view of the glow from the lava lake lighting up a sky filled with stars and the Milky Way.

During my trip, I learnt a huge amount about volcanic hazards and the associated public communication. There is currently an active lava flow on the Big Island which threatens to wipe out parts of a town and cut off a highway – the only road at present linking the town to the rest of the island. The geologists at HVO had the job of mapping and monitoring the flow, as well as explaining the situation to the public. The social, economic, political and health effects of this hazard are far-reaching and complex. Communicating what was known about the flow and any predictions that were possible to make was an important and tricky task for HVO. By observing the community meetings held for the citizens of the area, as well as the regular meetings between staff at HVO, I learnt a great deal.

As well as work, I had every weekend to explore the island. I snorkelled with many tropical fish, turtles and manta rays. The manta ray snorkel was particularly special, with these beautiful, 16-foot wide creatures somersaulting underneath me, inches away. I hiked to the top of Mauna Loa, the world's largest mountain by volume and 4,169m high. The crater at the top was absolutely spectacular. I also went to the top of Mauna Kea, where several astronomical observatories are located, and watched the sun setting beneath the layer of clouds below. I went to black, white and green sand beaches, jumped into the ocean at the southernmost point in the USA, surfed in the famous Hawaiian waves, and hiked countless amazing trails in the national park.

I had an unforgettable summer in Hawai'i. I am hugely enjoying working on my project that could help in understanding volcanoes and predicting future eruptions. I got to see some phenomenal geology and work with scientists who were passionate about what they were studying.

I am enormously grateful to the US Alumnae Committee for funding my trip and to Margaret Campbell for her advice before my departure. Thank you!

US Travel Award 2015

Mei Yin Wong (NC 2013), a second-year Pre-Clinical Medical student, was the clear winner with 25 votes. Mei Yin will spend ten weeks at the Feinstein Institute for Medical Research in Manhasset, New York, where she will work under Dr Betty Diamond, head of the Centre for Autoimmune and Musculoskeletal Diseases.