

# NETHERHALL NEWS



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## I. EDITOR'S NOTES

High quality guest speakers talking on WMDs and the future of continents. Secret preparations and communal celebrations for Fr. Joe's birthday. A pulsating and potentially divisive football match watched by a partisan crowd. These ingredients blended together for just another month at Netherhall...

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For me, the most intriguing guest speaker talk this month was on moral relativism, given by the philosopher, Dr. Christopher Martin ([see p.6](#)). In a lucid and thoroughly witty discussion, he picked at two specific forms of relativism (consequentialism and the fact/value distinction).

Now, one of the perks of writing for the newsletter is the opportunity to speak to guest speakers at greater length than most. So, it was a privilege not only to hear a robust and engaging critique of the fact/value distinction, but also to encounter seamlessly interlaced references to Dr. Martin's namesake, the singer Chris Martin, and the perils of dyeing one's beard, which illustrated various points along the way.

Moreover and as the Director pointed out, Dr. Martin's talk coincided with the acquisition of a new book for – you guessed it – the Netherhall library. (Increasingly, these editorials seem incomplete without some mention of the finest collection of books this side of Finchley Road).

If, by chance, you happen to be strolling along Nutley Terrace with time on your hands and your hands in your pockets, take a quick detour into the library and search out a collection of essays called *Human Values* in the philosophy section. Flicking through the pages, you will no doubt be struck by a

particular essay. Which one? Well, the one entitled, "The Fact/Value Distinction". Who's it by? By none other than the philosopher, Dr. Christopher Martin.

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In the middle of the month, the house was taken over by a flurry of preparations in time for Fr. Joe's birthday. Aside from the enjoyment of the party itself, there were two particularly striking things worthy of note.

Firstly, on 15<sup>th</sup> February, we – or, at least, most of us – donned smart jackets for a formal birthday dinner. After dinner, a host of residents treated us to a poetry recital, literally performing a series of poems from all over the world in their native tongues.

These ranged from a part of Luiz de Camoes' *Lusiadas*, narrated by the Portuguese contingent, to Thibault Merillon's melodious reading of Baudelaire – and, er, an exciting, accented rendition of a Max Boyce piece by the Director and his Deputy.

Given that poetry is not really as strongly followed as, say, football (more on this below), it was impressive to note the work that went into this miniature reading for our polyglot, poetry-loving chaplain.

And, secondly – though I know the Director mentions this below – the preparations for the buffet and show on February 18<sup>th</sup> were equally impressive. Living next door to David Strinati, I was treated to sneak previews of the short film he showcased at the show, to the audience's delight. I can vouch for him that it took a lot of time – and fun – to make (i.e. script, shoot, edit, re-edit etc),

with help from his brother and former resident, Charlie.

More immediately, the night before and hours leading up to the show saw Sidney Rofe risk life and limb to deck the multi-purpose hall. Charles F and others could be seen bolting together the bar and stage with superhuman strength and speed. Old boy Robert Devlin came back to lend his expert hand at the finer points of illumination and ambience (and rolling cigarettes). And, even I played my part by standing around and observing everyone bustle, if only so that I would have something to write about the night before the newsletter goes out...

But, the most amusing story illustrating the effort that went into the celebrations goes a little bit like this...

#### *The Wonderful Story of Alfredo Meneses*

“Once upon a time, there was a thoroughly decent Mexican chap called Alfredo Meneses. As luck would have it, he came to the magical realm of ‘Netherhall’, a hall of residence in Hampstead with a fine library and rugby-playing chaplain. He ended up living at ‘Netherhall’ for the whole of the academic year 2003-04, before returning to Mexico with happy memories. Even after he had left, his fellow residents could hardly forget how he had dazzled audiences with his strong but beautiful voice.

Time passed and people could often be heard saying, “I wonder what happened to that thoroughly decent Mexican chap, Alfredo Meneses, he of the strong but beautiful voice.”

Then, one day, a plan was hatched. Festivities for the rugby-playing chaplain’s birthday had been planned and a clever man had a wonderful idea: “Why doesn’t that thoroughly decent Mexican chap, Alfredo Meneses, come back to Netherhall for a big surprise? He

could come back *incognito* and then sing especially for our rugby-playing chaplain in that strong but beautiful voice of his.”

Everyone agreed that the idea was wonderful. So, Alfredo came back *incognito*. But there was a problem. Alfredo would have to stay at Netherhall for a few days – how could they keep his arrival secret from their rugby-playing chaplain?

Another clever man had another wonderful idea, in many ways as wonderful as the first idea: “We can tell Alfredo to stay in his room whenever our rugby-playing chaplain is in the house and bring food to his room and give him a signal whenever it is possible for him to go out of his room”.

So, for that week, Alfredo stayed (some might say, “was quarantined”) in his room whenever the rugby-playing chaplain was in the house and his friends brought food to his room and gave him a signal whenever it was possible for him to go out of his room.

Finally, on the night of the birthday show, there was a big surprise when Alfredo was introduced and sang in his strong but beautiful voice and made everyone happy, especially the rugby-playing chaplain.

And, after the show, the rugby-playing chaplain asked, “Hey guys, how did you do that?”

And, a third clever man, waving his finger in the air, replied immediately, “Aha! Sit down and I will tell you *The Wonderful Story of Alfredo Meneses...*”

So, why did so many people – far more than could be mentioned – quite happily put in those hours? Well – and I hope our rugby-playing chaplain will pardon my sentimentality – out of real gratitude for the friendliness, dedication and warmth that Fr. Joe always brings to Netherhall. And he’s pretty good at rugby too.

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In last month's newsletter, a section of the editor's introduction ran as follows:

"The harmonious dynamics of the house may be tested in the middle of the month when...Arsenal inevitably beat Real Madrid with ease in the Champions' League. (Will these words come back to haunt me? Not if Monsieur Thierry has his say...)."

Whatever your stance on the fact/value distinction, it is *objectively* true that, as it turned out, Monsieur Thierry did have his say and led his team to a famous victory.

But, what has been surprising in the aftermath of the match has been the pretty quick resumption of goodwill between Netherhall's ample Real Madrid community and the relatively meagre number of Arsenal fans.

Strong passions were on display during the match itself. Pablo "I-Know-You" Hinojo – the nickname seems to have caught on recently – offered an intriguing case. Since his arrival here at Netherhall, poor Pablo has had to juggle his native loyalties to Real alongside a blossoming allegiance to the North London team. Judging by the mixed bursts of English and Spanish that could be heard, this tension was prominent throughout the match, although – and I hope he will forgive me for this

hypocritical observation – his loyalty to the evening's referee was not quite so prominent.

And while the next morning's breakfast hosted some forlorn faces, these Netherhall *galacticos* have – to their credit – since managed to regain an upbeat cheeriness, even when quite literally faced with the undoubtedly irritating grins that took hold of Arsenal fans like myself (grins which were quickly wiped away after 'the Goon' lost ignominiously the following weekend). It should also be noted that these *galacticos* stoically endured a few toothy Catalonian grimaces too...

Despite the fluke prophecy in last month's newsletter, I do not really fancy eating my words after the second leg meeting between the sides, so the official Netherhall newsletter editorial stance will be one of neutrality:

"With Arsenal and Real Madrid preparing to resume their football battle once again at Highbury for the second instalment of their encounter, who knows which of these two great teams will emerge victorious?"

Although, of course, Monsieur Thierry may have his say. Again.

Best,

Ed.

## II. DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Last month, we announced our plans for the upgrade of the Netherhall oratory and for a fundraising campaign to pay for the works. It is looking more and more likely that the trip to Spain will now take place in early April 2006. Peter Herbert (Director, 1987-95), who now lives in Taiwan, is having an operation on his eye in the middle of March. As soon as he is able to fly, we shall hit the road. In the meantime I am very grateful to those former residents who have already expressed their willingness to help with the project.

You will read elsewhere in this illustrious publication of the more glamorous aspects of the celebrations for our chaplain's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. For reasons I will explain, it would be a pity, however, if no mention were to be made of the less glamorous but equally important part of the celebrations: the preparations and the clean-up operation.

As with most large functions in the House, a fair bit of preparation needs to be done. To turn the multi-purpose hall

into a [Welsh rugby club](#) with a bar and stage - draped in Welsh and other flags - required a lot of work and considerable imagination. Preparing such things requires a combination of creative minds and patient hard-workers. So, it was edifying on Friday and Saturday to see a small band of talented residents spending all day preparing both the main decorations and finishing off even the smallest details, unlikely to be noticed by many of the guests.

The clear-up at the end is for the generous. There is neither glamour nor reward and, yet, on Saturday at 10.30pm there was a team of cheerful helpers filling black bags with rubbish, taking down decorations and moving furniture. I mention this because it is precisely acts of service and generosity like these that, for those involved, turn Netherhall from an institution into a home.

Regards,

Peter Brown

### III. NETHERHALL DIARY

#### **Fr. Joe's Birthday:** **"When the Welsh Dragon** **turned 40..."**

It isn't everyday that Netherhall residents get the opportunity to be part of history. But they did on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February, when chaplain **Fr Joe Evans** turned the ripe old age of 40, a fact that was not helped by the good-natured jibes flying thick through the hall.

However, the real party was on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February: the multi-purpose hall was meticulously transformed into a [Rugby Club Bar](#) for the evening, adorned with the flags of different countries, though the Welsh flag dominated (see here). (The Portuguese residents were overheard passing remarks about the 'Escudo' on their flag being the wrong way around).

A 'Wall of Fame' exhibition highlighted Fr Joe's contributions to Welsh rugby over the years and the bar counter even had a muddy pair of rugby boots as a memorial.

The show – masterfully [compered](#) by David Strinati – got off to a rocking start with a rip-roaring [drum duet](#) by Oskari Juurikkalla and Dennis McCarthy, followed by a rendition of U2's ['With Or Without You'](#) by Aamir Asad (vocals) and Emiliano Renzi (keyboard/vocals),

our very own Bono and the Edge for the evening.

A tongue-in-cheek [sketch](#), acted out by Peter Brown, Alvaro Tintore, Pablo Hinojo, Dominic Burbidge and Celestino, illustrated Fr Joe's allegedly rough ways on and off the playing field, while the residents from next-door Rutland paid tribute to his Welsh origins in song, led by [Bill Boardman](#).

Next, compere David Strinati presented an undercover documentary. Shot largely at Twickenham, it investigated whether or not the memory of the 'Welsh Dragon' lives on. If the footage is to be believed, rugby fans will never forget him...

The evening then took a twist when – to everyone's surprise – Alfredo Meneses, a former resident from Mexico, teamed up with Sydney Rofe and Humbert de Feydeau for a beautiful performance, which was like having the real [Three Tenors](#) in the house.

And, finally, the spotlight focussed on what was perhaps the highlight of the show. Following their Christmas show, expectations were high but the [band](#) did not disappoint.

Zubin 'Bleeding Fingers' Mistry gave the performance of his life (so far) on vocals and bass,

while visiting virtuoso, David 'Fingertip' Quirk, reaffirmed his musical genius. Oskar 'Beatbox' Juurikkala was simply blistering on the drums, while Dan 'White Keys' Mulhall cooked up classy flourishes, blending organ chords and sampled sounds.

Their musical road trip passed through garage rock and blues, with hip-hop and reggae stop-offs en route, and when they left the stage 35 minutes later, we knew that we had witnessed something special [RP & PB] ||

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#### **Modern Moral** **Philosophy: "The** **Dictatorship of Moral** **Relativism"?**

In his last address before becoming Pope, the then Cardinal Ratzinger warned of the dangers of what he called "a dictatorship of relativism". On Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February, **Dr. Christopher Martin** (pictured [here](#)) set out to explore some of the connotations of this bold statement.

Moral relativism holds that no moral idea can be held as true independently of its context. Based at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas and an expert in both Medieval and Analytical Philosophy, Dr. Martin was suitably equipped to explore two influential facets of moral

relativism, in the form of *consequentialism* and the *fact/value distinction*.

### 1a

#### *Consequentialism*

As a philosophical theory, consequentialism (or, as it is sometimes known, *proportionalism*) holds that acts are good or bad according to whether their results are good or bad. That is to say, however one acts to achieve an end the act is justified if the overall result is good (i.e. ends can justify means).

An obvious corollary of this is that nothing is intrinsically good or bad. Rather, things are good or bad relative to their consequences.

Dr. Martin offered a humorous version of an ethical problem that typifies the differences between consequentialist and traditional moral thinking...

### 1b

#### *The fat pot-holer dilemma*

Ten pot-holers enter a cave through a narrow entrance in order to go pot-holing. They walk in single file and the last pot-holer happens to be a somewhat large chap – in technical terms, he is ‘the fat pot-holer’. After a successful pot-holing session, they turn around and head out in reverse order.

Now, unfortunately for them, on the way out of the cave, the fat pot-holer becomes stuck in the mouth of the cave. However hard his colleagues try, they simply cannot push him through the entrance. They are stuck in the cave too.

Furthermore, Dr. Martin went on, they cannot simply wait around for the fat pot-holer to lose sufficient weight in order to come unstuck because, as chance would have it, a group of radical philosophers have arranged for floodwaters to rise within the cave. Since the entrance is still blocked by the fat pot-holer, the fate of his nine colleagues looks sealed: are they going to drown?

But, in another stroke of hypothetical luck, they happen to have some explosive charges. If they were to attach them to the fat pot-holer and detonate them, their lives would be saved (though, of course, they would have to kill the fat pot-holer in the process). What should they do?

According to consequentialist thinking, there is no contest: it is a case of nine lives versus one. By contrast, in terms of traditional morality, they cannot simply take the life of one man in order to save their own. In this context, Dr. Martin conceded, traditional morality is “inconvenient” but, then again, “it is not

directed towards what is convenient, but is directed towards what is good”.

### 2a

#### *The Fact / Value Distinction*

Another influential form of moral relativism, Dr. Martin continued, is the so-called fact/value distinction (FVD), whereby value judgements are held to be of a different logical order to factual judgements. In terms of popular thought, he suggested, this translates into the assumption that judgements of scientific or historical fact are held to be objective, while judgements of values, such as moral judgements, are held to be subjective.

How does this lead to relativism? Well, the relativism obviously resides in seeing value judgements as relative to an individual subject. Dr. Martin then chose to examine a few arguments supporting the fact/value distinction.

### 2b

#### *The Argument from Disagreement*

One supporting argument for FVD runs as follows: looking around us, we notice that people agree about facts and disagree about values. This difference stems from facts and values being of different logical orders.

Does this stand up to scrutiny?

Dr. Martin began by pointing out that we actually disagree on factual judgements and agree on value judgements far more than is supposed.

As an example of disagreement over facts, Dr. Martin recommended reading the ‘Dumb Britain’ column in the satirical magazine, *Private Eye* – the column contains *real* answers people have given to questions of facts in British quizzes on the television and radio.

**2c**

*A Dumb Interlude*

[So I did a bit of research in the name of philosophy. This month’s column in the online edition features the following:

Q: Which ship sailed, in 1831, on a round-the-world voyage with Charles Darwin on board?

A: The Marie-Rose Celeste

AND

Q: What was Bram Stoker’s most famous creation?

A: Branston Pickle

The respondents’ answers, I am sure you will agree, adequately clarify Dr. Martin’s point.]

**2d**

*Back to the Argument from Disagreement*

Another good example of factual disagreement is polls investigating public knowledge of science. According to a recent poll, Dr. Martin pointed out, only four out of ten people know that a year is defined by the duration of the earth’s orbit around the sun and as many as eight out of ten people think that radioactive milk can be made safe by boiling it!

Dr. Martin’s point was that factual agreement is a dubious premise. “We don’t call these examples *disagreement*,” he said, “but instead we call it bloody ignorance (or just ignorance, to be polite)!” So, why the differing attitude to values?

Dr. Martin suggested that if you were to stand outside a university lecture-hall and ask emerging students about a year in terms of earthly and solar rotation, most people would answer correctly (though this may not be true of the public at large).

By contrast, if you were to ask whether or not one could legitimately withdraw nutrition and hydration from people in comas, there would almost certainly be disagreement.

But, Dr. Martin went on, imagine asking the same questions in, say, 1620. The first question – on earthly and solar rotation – would be likely

to provoke much disagreement. But, the second question – on the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration from the comatose – would prompt a far greater degree of agreement. “It is a good thing,” he quipped, “that the fact / value distinction was not invented in 1620. Otherwise, we would hold factual judgements to be subjective and value judgements to be objective!”

Often, he continued, proponents of FVD fail to take into account differing levels of difficulty in terms of questions asked. In a modern context, certain questions of value (such as the legitimacy of euthanasia) are prone to cause disagreement while questions of planetary rotation are ostensibly simple to answer (though, as Dr. Martin pointed out, we can’t prove it but happily appeal in good faith to the people at NASA).

Or, to take another example, whenever Dr. Martin asks his philosophy students to guess his age and height, there is a wide range of responses, albeit clustered around certain values. There is, he recounted, always disagreement and ignorance over his real height and age, but that hardly means that his age and height are not objective.

It is simple for proponents of FVD to set

up easy questions of fact (i.e. are tables roughly rectangular?) against notoriously difficult questions of value, and then go on to claim from this that facts are objective but values are subjective. In reality, though, argued Dr. Martin, this masks a deep problem within the distinction.

## 2e

### *'Queer Properties'*

Another argument for FVD holds that value-type properties are, in philosophical jargon, 'queer properties'. Why?

Firstly, they are *metaphysically* queer: they are not physical nor do they exist in time or space. Secondly, they are *epistemologically* queer: we cannot see, touch, smell, hear or taste them.

But, Dr. Martin responded, there are many things that are metaphysically and epistemologically queer: for instance, the past and the future neither exist physically nor can be perceived by the senses, yet they are nonetheless *real*.

The other important thing to bear in mind, he urged, was that "different good things are good in different ways". Or, to put it in more technical language, goods are *incommensurable*.

Through 'goodness', a property is made compatible with a whole

set of other properties even though these properties may be individually incompatible.

For instance, the properties required for a *good* donut may be: softness, sweetness and a suitable dusting of icing sugar. Likewise, the properties for a *good* spanner may be: hardness, a metallic nature and a suitably pronged end. Obviously, a spanner, which was soft, sweet and (un)suitably dusted with icing sugar, would make for a *bad* spanner (and vice versa). This should be no more worrying, he said, than the dimensions, which make a big mouse big and a small elephant small.

## 3a

### *What becomes of the fat pot-holer?*

The point about the *incommensurability* of goods poses a problem for consequentialist thinking. You cannot, argued Dr. Martin, simply lump together various properties, call them goods, add up the totals and say – to return to the fat pot-holer – that nine lives are better than one.

Alongside the goodness of saving nine lives is the incommensurable badness of murdering someone. The dichotomy is not between nine lives and one, but between the good of saving nine lives and the good of not murdering someone. How do we add

these up? The point is – given the *incommensurability* of goods – they do not add up.

As a final example, Dr. Martin pointed to the firefighters who risked and some of whom lost their lives in response to the 9/11 attacks. "Did they stand around," asked Dr. Martin, "and measure the relative chances of getting many people out as balanced against the chances of losing their own lives, with regard for etc etc? No. They went in".

In terms of numbers of lives saved and firefighters' lives lost, it might well not have been the "better result". But, he concluded, it was ultimately a show of goodness. [ZM] ||

## DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

*"Out of the ashes of a phoenix  
A new African phoenix is born  
As black and as famished as ever  
Carrying the same loads of thorn  
The same batches of infamy  
Of disease, of wars, of hunger  
The same scars in the horn  
As politicians to each others whisper  
Sweet lies; with no conscience to scorn  
As they exhale and praises inhale over dinner  
And more ranks to their siblings adorn*

*Africa stands aloof as distant  
as ever  
As unique as an alien unicorn  
Writhing in mounds of litter  
Burdened, broken and  
outworn...*

'African Phoenix' by Bashir Goth

Development in Africa is one of the most interesting topics of debate for politics students, writes *Dominic Burbidge*, and with good reason. The talk given by the Ambassador of the Ivory Coast, **His Excellency Youssoufou Bamba** (pictured [here](#)), on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January was introduced with a solemn list of facts helping to explain the grim reality of just what makes the continent "special":

- Half the population of Africa live on less than \$1 a day.
- Malaria is the biggest single killer of African children; half the deaths could be avoided if parents had access to diagnosis and drugs that cost little more than US \$1 a dose.
- Two million people will die of AIDS in Africa this year; in Zambia, by 2010 every third child will be an orphan and teachers are dying faster than they can be trained.

His Excellency, a lifelong Ivory Coast politician, did not try to hide the perilous situation

of the continent. "300,000 people died in the Tsunami," he said, "Africa has a tsunami every day, but it's actually quiet – not noticed by the media." In introducing the talk, His Excellency dared to ask the audience, "Is Africa a cursed continent?"

The Ivory Coast used to be the most prosperous country of West Africa. It became independent in 1960 under a President who tried to put agriculture, education and infrastructure before oil. After a series of political upheavals, Ivory Coast underwent a coup led by Robert Guei, which has led to the division of the country (something His Excellency has experienced first-hand).

Rebels have controlled the north of the country since September 2002. Given the extent to which the Ivory Coast has fallen from grace, His Excellency's defiant hope is all the more striking. "There is a way out," he argued, "that's what I would like to shout about!"

His Excellency sees the Ivory Coast as an example of what Africa is suffering from – the problem of weak governments. "You should have dedicated politicians," he argued, "who want the welfare of the people."

He then went on to make a surprising contrast between Europe and Africa: "In Europe you

want to be a politician to share ideas. In Africa you want to be a politician to become rich."

Also surprising was his faith in the UN. In response to a question as to what more Britain could do, bearing in mind that she already gives aid, His Excellency stressed the need for international bodies to "make sure the election is accepted by all." He argued that in the Ivory Coast "we could face a situation like Rwanda. Experience shows that it will be much cheaper to solve the problem now, not after the crisis." Some 7,000 UN peacekeepers are currently overseeing the peace process in Ivory Coast.

Although many of the problems in Africa seem solvable in theory, His Excellency strongly feels the need for leadership. He praised both the first president of the Ivory Coast, whom he believed "had a vision for the whole area" as well as the UN Millennium Project. This project sets out a blueprint of eight universal goals in development that have been agreed to by all the world's countries and leading development institutions. The aim is to achieve these targets by 2015. In response to the question posed by your reporter (whether free trade *is* fair trade), His Excellency turned the issue on its head by answering that "free trade will be

complete when this trade becomes fair.”

Chima Okezue, the in-house African revolutionary, concluded the discussion by posing the following question: “We all know that African countries are artificially created. All such countries cause problems. Wouldn’t you think that, as they are artificial, it is time for African countries to form a federation?”

“That scheme is good,” His Excellency replied, “and it should be done. But – and there is a big but – you can have the best scheme possible but who can enforce it, who can put it into practice? You need leadership, leadership with vision. I am confident in the future generation.” [DB] ||

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**Musical Eclecticism:  
Review of Henriette  
Gärtner’s Piano Recital**

J. S. Bach  
*Fantasy in A minor, BWV 922*

W. A. Mozart  
*Sonata in F, KV 280*

C. Schumann  
*Nocturne No. 2, from Soirées Musicales, Op. 6*

F. Chopin  
*Variations on La ci darem la mano Op.2, from Don Giovanni*

M. Mussorgski  
*Pictures at an Exhibition*

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February, writes *Guillaume Collett*, we were fortunate enough to have a highly original and perhaps slightly eccentric recital performed for us by the German pianist, **Henriette Gärtner** (pictured [here](#) with her teacher, Peter Feuchtwanger).

A peculiar and thrilling style, which combined dramatic and abrupt changes in atmosphere and tone, with an ability to maintain a certain level of *agitato* throughout, brought out the eclecticism and individual character of the programme pieces, crystallised and reaching its apotheosis in Mussorgski’s great masterpiece.

To begin with, a ravishing Bach *Fantasy in A minor* set the mood, with its occasional drama and implicit tension, which Gärtner controlled and commanded with delicacy, if only to unleash pyrotechnics in her abrupt changes in pace.

We were then treated to a youthful, playful and exciting Mozart *Sonata in F*, one of his most pleasurable for an audience to hear. In this piece, Gärtner mixed effervescent exuberance - such as in the final movement which she played with clearness of tone and occasional beauty – with a restrained, pervading sadness, such as in the middle movement. Interestingly and oddly,

she was able to give this typically light, only occasional thrilling piece her own sheen of tension, but not to such an extent that its own character was lost.

In the first half of the recital, no piece better captured her knack for abrupt atmospheric shading than the feminine Clara Schumann *Nocturne*, with its thematic eclecticism and repressed drama.

Finally a solo piano transcription of a movement from Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* began to bring out her impressive technical proficiency by combining the aforementioned dramatic shading with this more Lisztian symphonic scale of writing. Powerful octave and chordal passages blasted away alongside showers of chromatic icicles in the upper registers. Although this piece was played in a rather heavy Germanic style, an elegance of phrasing was simultaneously maintained.

After the interval, we were privileged to hear a highly original Mussorgski piece. The magical thematic content, with its haunted castles, floating witches (*Baba-Yaga*), great walls that were never actually built, and chicken ballets, was reflected in Gärtner’s ability to change tone suddenly from one bar to the next. Indeed, she brought out the suite’s

incongruent thematic changes such as the move from the first relaxed Promenade to the second ghoulish movement in characteristic extremes.

With overall ease and technical competence throughout, Gärtner painted for us Mussorgski's Russian Nationalist School landscapes of traditional Russian folklore and rural culture with theatricality and dramatic flair, moving seamlessly between the bubbly ballet to the unborn chicks and the darker, technically monstrous pieces near the end.

Finally, Gärtner's mesmerising encore kept the audience temporarily silent upon its conclusion, such was its power. [GC] ||

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## SCIENCE & SECURITY

Science has numerous security implications, emphasised **Dr. Michael D'Arcy**, "ranging from WMDs to other less obvious ones, such as energy supplies and water resources".

Dr. D'Arcy ([seen here](#)) is a specialist on "homeland security" at the War Studies department of King's College, London. Last year, he worked at the Brookings Institute, an American think-tank that concentrates on the Islamic world. During his time there, he looked at ways in which the U.S. and West in general can deepen

cooperation with Islamic countries in science and technology.

On Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February, he explored several important security issues.

### Homeland Security

Homeland security is a US term that now has wide currency. Dr. D'Arcy began by stressing the influence of scientific and technological developments on issues relating to homeland security and combat. The past decade has seen the emergence of new advances and new threats. The first Gulf War, for example, was revolutionary in tactical terms through the techniques of intelligence gathering that were deployed. Likewise, the internet has emerged as a means of "secret communications" for terrorist groups.

Quite obviously, technology provides "both new threats and new measures to combat these threats". While explosive charges are increasingly "simple, effective and deadly", new technologies of detection can pick up non-metallic parts.

"What," then asked Dr. D'Arcy, "are the most obvious threats to an island nation such as ours?"

The range of threats, he suggested, is huge. If terrorists wanted to set off bombs in shopping centres

all over the country, there is not much one could do to prevent it.

In the case of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, he noted, the objective is different. The aim appears to be to "mount spectaculars", to organise more audacious and complicated attacks, which are consequently also more conducive to detection.

### Weapons of Mass Destruction

Another serious threat lies in WMDs – biological, chemical and nuclear weapons – or, as Dr. D'Arcy prefers, Weapons of Mass Effect. He argued that chemical weapons, though they may result in significant casualties, would not wreak mass destruction. Pointing to the Tokyo subway attack, in which 12 people died, the real import lies in the "psychological impact".

The technology of detection is not perfect. Take nuclear weapons as an example. Every port in the United States has radioactivity detectors as a counter-measure against the import of nuclear materials. Unfortunately, however, the detectors also pick up radiation emitted by kitchen tiles!

Moreover, a further motive of concern about a nuclear attack is the fact that there is nuclear material currently being stored in poorly guarded depots in Russia. Once

obtained, it is not overly difficult to fashion a nuclear bomb out of the correct material. While he did not want to be “alarmist”, Dr. D’Arcy nonetheless advised caution.

### Biological Weapons

Biological weapons are very difficult to detect, since there is no signature for detection (unlike the radioactivity emitted by nuclear material). A deadly amount of biological agent can be stored in a small vial.

The most likely agents would be “deadly but naturally occurring pathogens” like smallpox or anthrax, as opposed to genetically modified viruses.

What is interesting, he noted, is that, contrary to common perceptions, biological weapons are not a new phenomenon. In late medieval sieges, the dead bodies of plague victims would be catapulted into cities, sometimes with calamitous consequences. And even in the Second World War, the various Allied powers had biological weapons programmes.

In terms of combating this threat, the main thrust lies less in detection than in counter-measures like the provision of antibiotics and vaccines. There are, in Dr. D’Arcy’s opinion, good reasons for investing in these, both from the

perspectives of security and of public health.

The problem, however, lies in the difficulties of obtaining the relevant drugs. Unlike vaccines, antiviral medicines mitigate the effects of agents without eliminating them.

Typically, a vaccine takes eight years to develop at a cost of £500 million. And, what is more, vaccines are rather specific in terms of their application. Incidentally, the Chinese managed to develop an anti-Sars vaccine in just over a year, but there are questions over human rights violations integral to the development.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the necessary specialisation lies in the private sector. Pharmaceutical companies are happy to research and produce lucrative drugs to tackle chronic diseases. But there is little commercial incentive at present for the development of such vaccines.

### Surface to Air Missiles

Another neglected threat, Dr. D’Arcy pointed out, is surface to air missiles. There are thousands of these in the hands of terror groups and most of them originated in the West. For example, during the CIA backing of the Mujahaddin, the

Afghan fighters were equipped with STING missiles, which the US government have since been unable to buy back.

Their use was demonstrated in 2002, when an Israeli plane was shot at by such a missile, and in 2003, when a cargo plane was unsuccessfully attacked.

Counter-measures include the “encouragement of decommissioning”, securing of borders and installation of anti-missile technological components on planes.

Another possibility, though expensive and needing extensive development, is the installation of anti-missile lasers on planes and at airports.

### Identity Cards

Dr. D’Arcy then moved onto another topic that has captured the imagination of the British media in relation to security: identity cards.

A keen supporter of identity cards, Dr. D’Arcy nonetheless noted that there were questions about civil liberties associated with their use. The main push in favour of identity cards comes from the U.S., and biometric passports will be issued in this country from October 2006.

The major question about their implementation, he

suggested, lay in choosing an appropriate form of biometric data. Options include: fingerprints, iris scans and facial information.

Facial information stored on cards would typically result in a 90% accuracy rate, which is unacceptably low. Fingerprinting is far more accurate and has the added benefit of allowing the monitor of known criminals in general; the problem with fingerprinting lies in public associations between fingerprinting and criminality.

In theory, he went on, iris scans would be the most accurate form of biometric data (with a 99.6% accuracy rate). But there are practical problems, he added, in making people stare into a camera for ten seconds!

### *The Islamic World*

Dr. D'Arcy then chose to look at developments across the Islamic world. Firstly, he advised caution in talking about the "Islamic world" since it is a "heterogeneous place".

For instance, Malaysia currently has a good education system, burgeoning technological infrastructure and a growing economy, as too does Indonesia.

By contrast, Sub-Saharan African countries with large Muslim

populations – such as Mali or Nigeria – suffer heavily from poverty.

Ex-Soviet bloc countries in Central Asia – places like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – contain many highly trained, ex-Soviet scientists.

And the Middle East has a great deal of diversity too, with sharp contrasts between oil rich countries (like Saudi Arabia) and those which have been forced to develop other economic sectors (Jordan).

Undoubtedly, however, there is a fair amount of hostility towards the West and, particularly, towards the U.S. throughout these regions.

Dr. D'Arcy suggested that one huge source of tension was "the digital divide" and offered the exchange of scientific and technological as one potential avenue of integration and reconciliation. [ZM] ||

### **REFORMING THE HEALTH SERVICE**

On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February, **Professor Barry McCormick**, Chief Economist at the Department of Health, gave an absorbing talk on the National Health Service ([click here](#)).

Professor McCormick outlined the four main areas of concern: waiting times for treatment; quality (both in terms of innovation and survival

rates); efficiency; and, personalisation. [ZM] ||

### **PARADIGM REGAINED**

Netherhall residents were given a glimpse of "the black abyss" of genocide from a soldier and doctor, who has had ample experience of dealing with its consequences.

On Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February, **Major General Alan Hawley**, Director General of the British Army Medical Services, spoke of the "real cost" of human barbarism, not just physical, but also psychological. He gave as an example the emotional scars suffered by staff members of his who had served under him in Rwanda at the height of the massacres.

General Hawley has served in most of the world's major trouble spots in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq. He has survived sniper and machine-gun attacks, car-bomb attempts on his life, and even "friendly fire" from American allies. To cap it all, he has also come through unscathed after a mugging in Guildford, Surrey (though the would-be muggers did not).

The awe-inspiring effect of the Major General's talk came from his experience as both soldier and medic, after already having served some time in the army before completing his medical studies. Apart from sharing his experiences of being in the line of fire, Major General Alan Hawley gave his views on "humanitarian war".

Despite the many different crises he has experienced, the Major General saw in the examples of genocide a parallel. There was something in common with what had gone on in many

of the places he had visited and he saw the cause as being something in human nature, "the flip side of courage, selflessness and charity". Despite being an excellent speaker, there was something that held him back from fully describing the scene in Rwanda. "We were facing a black abyss," he said.

Throughout this captivating talk, Major General Alan Hawley hinted upon the question of "the real cost" of war. This he saw solely in human terms. Something of a shock to the cultural relativism often found among students was his unquestionable faith in

humanity and morality. He believed that war was at times justified, though it should never be undertaken lightly. [DB] ||

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**MARCH @  
NETHERHALL**

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>**  
Weekend Retreat  
Wickenden Manor

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup>**  
Guest Speaker:  
*Professor Sir David  
Watson*  
*Institute of Education*

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>**  
Gig  
*L'Skam*

## IV. FORMER RESIDENTS

### PASSING BY...

The last month has seen a very large number of former residents drop by at Netherhall:

Firstly, **Arnaud Richou** (2004-05) spent a weekend with us. He is now living in Madrid and is completing the final year of his degree with the ECAP business school. Netherhall's favourite Frenchman was in fine form and agreed to be interviewed for the weekly Desert Island Discs Sunday night session, where he admitted to missing certain things about England!

**Charles Gamo** (1995-96) called in very briefly on a flying visit to London. He is still in contact with **Eric Adamson** (1995-96) and with **Fr Michael Lowenthal**, who was Secretary of Netherhall (1992-99) and is currently the Chaplain of Greygarth, the 'Netherhall of the North'.

**John O'Dwyer** (1996-99) stopped by briefly while on business in London.

Another visitor was **Dilip Bassi** (2000-05),

who has paid a couple of weekend visits to Netherhall while on Olivier Awards duty.

One 'surprise' visit was that of our great tenor, **Alfredo Meneses** (2003-04). Alfredo had come secretly to perform for Fr. Joe's birthday celebrations and on several nights, treated us to an array of beautiful songs ([click here](#)). He was effectively quarantined in his guest-room for the days leading up to Fr. Joe's birthday in order to create a surprise.

Another (genuine) surprise visitor was **Yoichi Miyazaki** (2003-05), whose visit to Netherhall happily coincided with the celebrations for Fr. Joe's birthday ([click here](#)).

**Olivier Coste** (1996-97, 2002-03) also visited at the end of the month.

Finally, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February we had the pleasure of meeting once again with young **Aidan McKeague** (1999-2000), who now lives in his native Newcastle and works for British Airways in – surprisingly – the IT division. Aidan was in cracking form and does not seem to have changed

at all – whether or not this is a good thing is a question for his contemporaries to decide. *Humbug, stuff* and *nonsense* remain his bywords...[PB & ZM]

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### NEWS FROM FORMER RESIDENTS

In his native Malaysia, **Danny Tan** (1967-68) recently became a *Dato*, the equivalent of receiving a knighthood.

**Julio D'Escrivan** (1986-87) currently lives in Cambridge with his wife, Milly, and their four daughters. He is a lecturer in Creative Music Technology at Anglia Ruskin University.

Upon finding out that Peter Brown is the Director of Netherhall, he writes:

"Blimey! What did you do to Peter Herbert? (Or to Andrew Hegarty, for that matter?)."

I have nothing but fantastic memories of some of the very best years of my life, at Netherhall. And I have just been looking through the pics on the website... what memories!"||

## V. PLANS FOR THE ORATORY

*The Bible tells us how it was Solomon, the wise king and son of David, who was inspired by God to build the first ever Temple in Jerusalem, writes Fr. Joseph Evans. The pious ruler took enormous care to build a worthy "house" for the Lord and sought out the very best material available at the time: cedar imported from the Lebanon, costly carved stone, pillars of bronze, and an altar and lampstands of pure gold. This was to house Israel's most prized possession, the Ark of the Covenant, which was the cask containing the stone tablets on which God himself had written the Ten Commandments.*

When the work had been completed, Solomon assembled the leaders of Israel to dedicate the new Temple to God. One senses deep wonder in his prayer for the occasion: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house which I have built!"

Such are my thoughts as we stand on the threshold of a new phase in Netherhall's history. The hall's oratory, built in the 1960s, with its altar-piece from the 1970s, is about to be completely re-done. This has been made necessary by the collapse of the underfloor heating. For several years, to pray in the oratory in winter-time has been a brave decision requiring at the very least a good coat or thick jumper. But we want to make a virtue of necessity and follow in the spirit of the great king Solomon by giving the Lord the best possible "dwelling-place" we can offer.

It is a remarkable fact. In every church or chapel, the almighty God, whom heaven and earth cannot contain, wishes to dwell among men in a construction of human hands. But what blessings his presence brings! Solomon knew this. He knew that God's eyes

would be "open night and day towards this house", that he would hear the prayers of his people and answer them.

This has always been our experience. Having the Lord Jesus really present among us in the oratory has been the centre of the home that Netherhall House is. God's presence among us – hidden under the form of bread inside that metal box we call the Tabernacle – has been the true source of the hall's life from its beginning, the wellspring of every blessing. If the hall is indeed an oasis of peace in the heart of this throbbing city, then our oratory has always been the oasis at the heart of the oasis. Thanks to it, those words of Saint Josemaria, Netherhall's real founder, have come true: "If the centre around which your thoughts and hopes turn is the Tabernacle, then, my child, how abundant the fruits of your sanctity and apostolate will be!" (*Forge* 835).

It is always so beautiful to come into the chapel and find various residents praying, pouring out their hearts and intentions to God, submitting their youthful lives to his divine action. Netherhall House is all about helping young men to grow, and the best way to grow is through prayer, by which God enters inside us to build us from within. It is worth noting, by the way, that these "prayers" are by no means always Catholics: other Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and even the "non-religious", also find their way into the oratory in search of peace, or for a moment of reflection, sensing that there is something transcendent about this "room".

Nourished, "energised", by their time with God, they can then go out to face the challenges London poses, bringing into the city and its life a spiritual power. In a culture dominated by noise of every sort,

how important a place of silence is. At a time when every effort is being made to squeeze God out of contemporary life, how great is the need for a “place” dedicated exclusively to him.

What an atmosphere of peace! What a truly sacred space, as the light streams in through the stained glass, and the large figure of Christ stares down in love from his place on the Cross. Discretely as always, the Blessed Virgin Mary is there close to her Son, never to the fore, holding the baby Jesus in her arms in the delightful statue that for years now has presided over the oratory’s side wall, opposite the main windows.

None of these key features will change but there will be a new altar-piece of great artistic quality and, apart from the underfloor heating, the new floor and walls will be brighter in colour to give the oratory a more cheerful feeling. Everything will be done to the highest possible standards, in the spirit of the wise Solomon. [Click here](#) to see an artist’s impression of the proposed design. You can see the brighter floor and the beautiful paintings. Their general theme is that of “calling”. Various images show Gospel scenes of Jesus calling his apostles. We feel this theme is especially timely at a moment when first Pope John Paul II and now Pope Benedict are urging Christians to undertake a new “evangelisation”, a new effort to bring the Gospel to society. Our altar-piece will help to remind students that they are in the front-line of this new evangelisation.

Naturally we have wanted St Josemaria to enjoy a prominent position on the altar-piece. St Joseph also figures, being such a great patron and guide for youth. He is truly a man’s man, an example of how a young heart can beat with purity, and of how to live, even in one’s formative years, with courage and responsibility. The image of the Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary is in fact

formed of two sliding doors, which close during Mass but are left open during the day to reveal the Tabernacle.

This explains why we have launched a major fund-raising appeal to collect money for the oratory works. The generosity with which we want to build requires the generosity of donors to match it. Ever since Jesus rebuked Judas for his mean resentment when that woman poured rich ointment over the Lord’s feet, Christians – and all believers – have always known that one must give the best to God. We are appealing to you because, if you are generous, we can give everything we want to God. It could be your way to thank him for everything he gave you in your time at the hall.

I recently read a lovely, and true, story. A priest in a small village in Spain wanted to buy a “monstrance” (a receptacle for the Blessed Sacrament during the ceremony of Benediction). He went to a suppliers of such articles and chose from the catalogue a good quality silver one, pleasant and worthy in appearance. The sales’ assistant asked him: “How much money do you have?” He answered the truth: “At present, nothing.” At this the assistant suggested he turned to the next page: “Given that you don’t have any money”, he said, “why don’t you buy this one?” It was beautiful, gorgeous, also silver but richly worked with enamel ornamentation. Obviously more expensive, it was, quite simply, the best! The priest and his parishioners chose that one and set to work to raise the necessary money, through special collections and asking donations. Sure enough, the sum was gathered and the beautiful monstrance now plays an important part in the village’s Eucharistic adoration. With your help – and, like that good priest, starting financially from zero – we also want to have the faith and the love to give Our Lord *simply the best*.