



Clare MML Newsletter

Issue 2 ~ Spring 2007

Clare MML Directory: thank you for a fantastic response

The postbox with your responses to our questionnaire for the Clare MML Alumni Directory was fascinating. A range of generations wrote in, the earliest student experience coming from someone who came to Clare in 1935.

Clearly, many made up for the fact that the year abroad had not been compulsory in their day, one respondent formerly from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office having spent periods in Moscow, Pakistan, Bolivia and Bulgaria. A more recent graduate was currently cycling home from China in a fund-raising event for diabetes.

Many of our respondents are out there making sure that there will be future generations of linguists, teachers being joined not only by those who vet (as in Ofsted) but by those who work in organizations to promote language learning in general, such as CILT, or have devoted themselves to linguistic research. There are translators among you (some with exotic languages), interpreters and reporters.

There have been migrations, not infrequently into the law, but also to medicine, while others have gone on to use their administrative capacity in the Civil Service or Diplomatic

Service, or setting up their own businesses. A regular further destination for Clare MML alumni has been into music, whether in music administration, or as freelance musicians, while others work within more general cultural and creative enterprises.

We are very grateful to those of you who said you could offer careers advice to current MML students, and in some cases, to offer Year Abroad placements (including – in one case – a temporary work-slot with the Berlin Marathon). It is clear from your responses that you are keen to enable others to participate in the rich experience that you have had. We hope that the future, further contacts with the students of the College, through your generous offers of time and interest, will in their turn have something to offer you.

Alison Sinclair ~ as49@cam.ac.uk

Alison Sinclair is Professor of Modern Spanish Literature and Intellectual History, and President of the Fellowship at Clare.

A new MML Fellow writes...



I joined the College as a University Teaching Officer in October 2005 and I am the first Fellow in Italian Clare has had. From October 2006, I have also been Director of Studies for MML Part IB.

I did my undergraduate degree at IULM (Istituto Universitario di Lingue Moderne) in Milan and won a scholarship to come to the UK to do a PhD at the University of Reading.

Before coming to Cambridge, I was 'Friends of the Italian Department' Fellow at University College London. In December 2002 I received the British-Italian Society Rooke Memorial postgraduate prize and in January 2003 a British Academy-Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei research award held at the Warburg Institute. From 2003 to 2005, I was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Italian Department in Cambridge and a Research Fellow at New Hall.

I have worked for several years in the media, first at Mediaset, then as a programme maker at RAI Valle d'Aosta, and I collaborated with the Italian broadcast television LA7 as London cultural correspondent.

My research interests include: linguistics; history of language; history of linguistic thought; comparative philology; Renaissance studies; gender studies; history of women from the Middle Ages to the present; 18th, 19th and 20th-century Italian literature; translation.

My book, *Donne, precettistica, lingua nell'Italia del Cinquecento. Per un contributo alla storia del pensiero linguistico (Women, Prescriptivism and Language in 16th-century Italy. A contribution to the History of Linguistic Thought)* is forthcoming with the Accademia della Crusca in Florence. At present I am writing another book on women and grammar in Italy between 16th and 19th century.

Since coming to Clare, I have taken up rowing with the Fellows' boat and thoroughly enjoy it!

Helena Sanson ~ hls37@cam.ac.uk

Broadening horizons

Linguists need to travel. Indeed, one of the delights of being a linguist is that travel is, in a sense, work. I mean real travel, of course, not the mere covering of distance and crossing of borders that the word so often implies in the age of multinational business and cheap holidays; not hopping from conference hotel to conference hotel or resort enclave to resort enclave, but the kind of immersion in another place and another culture which, paradoxically, becomes more difficult as transport becomes more accessible and as English colonizes the parts that even the old Empire couldn't reach.

In the eyes of the University, travel for linguists means language courses abroad. The University's Vacation Study Fund is immensely helpful in this respect, but is strictly limited in its scope (the more so since responsibility for allocations was clawed back to the University from the Colleges). But linguists know that courses, too, are only part of travel. Over the years Clare linguists have made some wonderfully enterprising journeys. Whether to the depths of Siberia or the tip of South America, the educational benefits have been huge.

Please contact me or the College Development Office if you would like to contribute towards this project. Thank you.

Tales from the year abroad

The Year Abroad continues to be an essential part of the MML course. Each autumn, at the start of the final year, we have an informal 'debriefing'. Some students have clearly had a brilliant time, and are still buzzing with the excitement of it all; others may have had a more difficult or testing experience, whether in terms of their work or study, or because of their living circumstances, but all of them are noticeably more confident, both linguistically and personally. Even in those rare cases where the experience did not perhaps quite live up to expectations, the benefits are clear, without exception. A current 4th-year student who took a teaching assistantship in Leipzig wrote: "It has opened my eyes to German culture in a way that a holiday could not. Here I have gained insights that will stay with me for the rest of my years."

Traditionally, the Year Abroad has been spent as a teaching assistant; while some students continue to take this option, there has been a trend over the last decade towards finding work of a more varied nature, whether in journalism, television, car sales, fashion and design, public relations, voluntary work or the legal profession. One of our current fourth-years worked in Berlin as an intern at Cornelsen Verlag, one of Germany's largest educational publishers, and described the wide-ranging nature of her work: "My tasks and responsibilities were very varied, ranging from proof-reading, to writing

Sadly, however, educational enrichment can bring material impoverishment. It would be a great pity if linguists' opportunities for serious travel were to be limited either to formal courses or—for non-course travel—to students who happen to have access to additional funds.

image courtesy of France Tourism



Clare would therefore like to establish a new Travel Award, specifically in order to encourage and enable Modern Linguists to undertake educationally valid travel beyond the formal requirements of their Tripos course.

My MML colleagues and I would very much welcome help from former Clare Modern Linguists in this endeavour. We hope to raise a fund of £25,000 which would provide up to £1,000 per year in perpetuity. The College would be pleased to name the travel award according to the wishes of the donor in recognition of a major gift.

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Simon Franklin is Professor of Slavonic Studies and a Fellow of Clare

exercises and texts, to preparing transcripts for CD recordings, to compiling wordlists. My favourite jobs involved genuine 'content editing', and taking part in meetings with the authors, advisors and editors." She felt that her German improved enormously, while working in a foreign country made her "stronger, more open-minded and keener than ever to travel and work abroad". Another student, having taught English in Moscow, took on a two-month internship with BBC News's Moscow Bureau and enthused: "This was wonderful, very rewarding—if you can find a spare two months, do an internship there: the opportunities are endless."

A fair proportion of students study at a university abroad; we have an exchange between Clare and the École Normale in Paris, and we are currently trying to establish a similar link with a Spanish university. Musical studies abroad are also popular, from studying viola in Poland to singing in Strasbourg, and others have studied literature in Munich, art history in Rome or linguistics in Seville. All students have, of course, to spend some of their time abroad studying, whether for their dissertation or their translation project. Some have taken advantage of their time abroad to analyse features of language usage in the region where they have been living and working and have subsequently submitted dissertations on, for example, Milanese dialects or the subtleties of formal and informal modes of address in Andalucia.

With the ever-increasing financial burdens on students, there is a definite shift towards working rather than

studying during the year abroad. This has clear benefits for the acquisition of work experience (our Moscow newsman has subsequently gone into the media), but it would be a great shame if the opportunity, for example, to study music in a conservatory abroad was limited by such financial constraints. Hopefully, it will remain the case that there are as many options for the Year Abroad as there are individual students.

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Tess Knighton is a Fellow and Director of Studies in MML at Clare