FROM THE CHAIRMAN

So far this year, the Burgon Society has held two very successful events. In April we held a fellowship study day in London at which interested members and intending fellows heard Nick Groves describe the UEA robes, Colin Fleming outlining his fellowship work on Stirling robes and Nick Jackson his work for an FBS on Warwick robes. I hope members who attended the day came away enthused with the prospect of undertaking an FBS. I know the Dean of Studies, Bruce Christianson, is keen to hear from members who have an idea for a fellowship. One member who provided useful feedback on the day suggested that for new, or even long-standing members, we could perhaps organise a study day on the ‘basics’ of academic dress. I would be very interested to hear of any other members who would welcome such a day. If there is sufficient interest the Council will give serious thought to putting on such an event.

The second event was a meeting at Christ Church University in Canterbury on 17 May at which 25 members and guests enjoyed excellent presentations on the academic dress of both Christ Church University and the University of Kent. These presentations were followed by a tour of the Cathedral, and sung evensong. The Society owes a great debt to Michael Brewer of Christ Church University for organising this event.

Events later this year include the annual Garden Party in July and the AGM and Congregation in October

The Council is keen to make sure that the events we put on meet the interests of members. If you have an idea for an event, please contact me, or any member of the Council.

Bill Gibson

NINETEENTH CENTURY VERSE ON WOMEN GRADUATES

The following verse appeared in Punch on 19 January 1884 ‘at the half-yearly meeting of the Convocation of the University of London, which has just been held, Lady Graduates for the first time took part in the proceedings.’

Girl Graduates! Old dons declare
You think the innovation pleasant
To sit in the Convocation there
And find, strange sight, the Ladies present
Full surely: you must all confess
‘Mid high debate in Greek and Latin
You love the rustle of a dress
And academic silks and satin

With brow serene and earnest looks
Those learned Ladies took their places
A Poet said that all his books
Consisted of fair women’s faces
So London Dons, methinks, will steal
Full many a glance of admiration
And, after this gay meeting, feel
There’s pleasure e’en in Convocation

With such an audience, I opine,
The men will feel themselves quite heroes
‘Twill mend their manners and the line
Goes on ‘Nec sinit esse feros’
If ‘Place aux dames’ should make the fair
Preside a curious question this is
How should a man address the Chair
If Mr Chairman is a ‘Missis’?

Thus Woman wins; Haul down your flag
Oh stern misogynist before her
However much a man may brag
Of independence, he’ll adore her.
Traditions of the bygone days
Are cast aside, old rules undone;
In Convocation Woman sways
The University of London.
TRANSACTIONS OF THE BURGON SOCIETY

In order to catch up on issues of the Transactions of the Burgon Society we plan to publish a second number this year. The contents will be: Graham Zellick on 'Lambeth Academic Dress and the University of London'; Matthew Cheung Salisbury’s "By our Gowns Were We Known": The Development of Academic Dress at the University of Toronto'; Nicholas Groves on 'Popularizing University Hoods and Gowns: Will’s Cigarette Cards, 1926' David Baldwin’s "Having Dignities ...": Academic Attire as a Component of the Livery of the Chapel Royal'; and John Brennan on The Robes of the Medical Royal Colleges and Other Societies: Medical Education outside the Universities.'

BURGON ARCHIVE—RECENT ACQUISITIONS

The Burgon Archive continues to acquire examples of academic dress from a variety of sources. We have been active on eBay, but have also benefited from personal gifts and other sources. Some of the recent acquisitions were on display at the Burgon Study Day in London in April 2008.

Harvard University—PhD robes

These robes are an excellent example of quality American academic tailoring, made by Cottrell in about the 1940's. The robe has full bell sleeves (rather than the closed bell sleeves often seen today), in light crimson with black velvet facings and bars on the sleeves. The hood is Edinburgh shape [s4] black silk lined Harvard Crimson. The square cap is ribbed black silk with a heavy gold bullion button and tassel. All the work is of an exceptionally high quality and is quite unlike the robes so often seen at Commencement ceremonies today.

Oxford University—DD robes

Robes with provenance always attract our attention. We have acquired (indirectly) from the estate of Eric Mascall, a well-known Anglican theologian and writer, a complete set of Oxford DD robes that can be identified with the owner. The robes acquired include his Doctor of Divinity robe, convection habit and hood (all made by Shepherd and Woodward), and a black square cap. The quality is very good—with the organ-pipe pleats on both robe and habit tightly bunched and well-shaped.

Dalhousie University

We acquired a number of hoods from Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia as a gift from the executor of the estates of William and Ruth Henderson in Bermudas. They are a BA (Edinburgh shape [s4], black lined white silk and edged with white fur); Bachelor of Commerce ([s4] black lined white, faced 2.5cm light blue silk) and Bachelor of Music Education (pictured) ([s4] lined lavender and edged 2.5cm white silk). Also included was a BA cut in the Wareham Guild shape. These are the first examples of Dalhousie's robes in the Archive. Observant members will note that the Dalhousie BA is identical to the Edinburgh BA.

New Mexico State University—LLD hood

This item attracted our attention because it had proved provenance and a British connexion. The hood is the standard Inter-Collegiate Code shape in black, lined red with a white chevron (NMSU's colours) edged four inches purple velvet (the ICC colour for Laws). The hood was acquired
from the estate of Vice-Admiral Levering Smith, USN, who was heavily involved in the US Navy’s ballistic submarine programme. He spent much of his time at the Naval Ordnance Missile Test Facility at White Sands, New Mexico, which helps to explain why a land-locked State university honoured a sailor. In January 1972, Smith was appointed an Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire, in recognition of his assistance with the Royal Navy’s Polaris programme. Of this involvement, the Daily Telegraph observed that “It was no small measure due to [Levering Smith] that the British Polaris programme was completed on time and on budget—an unprecedented feat in British naval history.” Adm Smith died in 1993.

University of Dundee—BSc hood
The first example in the Archive of a Dundee shape hood [a5], the hood is black, fully lined yellow-gold and edged with synthetic fur. It is more interesting for its comparisons with other Aberdeen shapes.

Other items acquired recently include Glasgow LLD and PhD robes, London DMus robes, and a miscellaneous collection of hoods yet to be identified—items surplus to the Archive’s requirements will be sold at the Garden Party.

Oxford academic dress—post cards
The Archive also acquired a set of twelve coloured postcards dating from the early 1900s showing robes of Oxford University. Included were Doctor of Divinity (full dress and Convocation habit), Doctor of Music; Bachelor of Divinity; Proctor; Beadles and other officers and graduates. Colin Fleming

WHAT’S IN A NAME? PROBLEMS OF COLOUR DEFINITION
Describing exact shades of colours is very difficult: one man’s ‘purple’ will be another’s ‘violet’. There are several standardized methods of giving shades, such as Pantone, but the one best known to members will be the British Colour Council’s Dictionary of Colour Standards, issued in 1934, (2nd edn, 1951), used in George Shaw’s 1966 book. Liz Scott wrote about it in TBS vol. 5; members of the Yahoo! academic dress group will find scans
of the pages can be found in the photo album.

One colour which has caused problems for me recently is mazarin blue (or mazarine – the University of Wales uses the form without the –e). It is the base colour of the Wales faculty silks in Arts (shot with green) and in Divinity (shot with red). It has proved very difficult to acquire correctly coloured Divinity silk, and the Arts silk has quite certainly changed in recent years from a very dark and subtle silk to a rather brighter (but equally attractive) one. In the case of the Arts silk, this appears, from comparison of various hoods, to be due to the gradual lightening of the blue.

E&R does not have any spare Divinity silk, and an ex-hire hood I have bought does have the correct silk. Well, I thought it was. Samples sent to me as alternatives had a light blue shot with red – not so nice, as it gives a mauve effect, as opposed to the plum purple of ‘the real stuff’. So, out of curiosity, I consulted the BCC dictionary, to see what it said. Colour number 145, ‘Mazarine Blue’, is as follows:

- almost the same shade as used in the substitute silk, but nowhere near the blue that has been familiar from Wales hoods, which is much closer to colour number 150, ‘Lapis Lazuli’:

A Google search was very revealing. It would appear that Mazarin(e) Blue is in fact a colour close to Lapis; it is a well-known glaze colour used in antique pottery, which fits with the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary’s definition as a ‘deep, rich blue’. On the other hand, there is a butterfly, extinct in the UK, but still around on the continent, called the Mazarine, and pictures of it show it to be a very light blue.

Widening the search turns up various sports clothing suppliers, who seem to understand ‘mazarine’ as anything from a royal blue to a bright, light, shade and a paint-maker who thinks it is a strong turquoise!

So, although the substitute silks are correct in terms of the BCC, as they use a light blue, I think the BCC is wrong, and that mazarin blue is more like Lapis. The fact that it has been getting lighter of late is not surprising: this simply illustrates the ‘Christianson Principle’, (formulated by the Dean), which is that shades do gradually lighten, because when an exact match is not available, we tend to go for the lighter option. An extreme example is the Oxford DPhil: originally lined with navy blue, it is now lined with bright royal blue. What is surprising is that (a) the BCC is so far off-beam, and (b) that even though it appears to be a well-known colour designation, there is such a wide interpretation of it.

—Nick Groves.