

The Harvard Club of the United Kingdom



◆ **News & Notices** ◆ **November/December 2008**

Letter from the President

Another year has begun at Harvard and the Freshmen are settling into the Yard. October brought Janet Irons, Harvard College's Senior Admissions Officer with primary responsibility for the UK on her annual visit to UK schools. One topic that is regularly asked is what are Harvard students like and how is life at Harvard? We have asked a few of the Freshmen to describe their first months at Harvard.

Brandon Bradkin AB '89, JD '92

"Notes from the Yard"

My first few months at Harvard have been incredibly hectic but fun nonetheless and I feel like I've made some lifelong friends already. Living in Grays with four roommates has been brilliant so far as we all get along really well and at the end of a hard day I can always count on them for laughs when I return to the dorm. I've also made a lot of other friends and met a lot of interesting people; one of my favorite things about Harvard is how friendly and interesting the characters here are. My main activity is playing on the Varsity tennis team and this has been an awesome experience as everything about the program is geared up to maximizing your ability. It's also great being part of a team as it meant I had friends right from the start and our trip to California has probably been the highlight of my Freshman year so far. I soon discovered being an athlete here has meant my time is very limited and although I found the work load overwhelming to begin with I've now got used to the level of hard work and time management required. My transition from a small village in the UK to Harvard has been smooth and despite having to work far harder than I've ever done before I've only occasionally found myself wishing I'd stayed at home.

Alistair Felton, Class of 2012

Coming to Harvard is daunting. All kinds of questions race through your head: will I be homesick the minute I step off the plane? Will I make friends easily? And, of course, the most common worry: am I an admissions mistake? After all, they say that you spend your first year thinking "why me?" and your second, "why them?" when the next class of wide-eyed freshmen arrive.

Thankfully, within hours of entering the Yard that I had heard so much about and pictured so many times from my bed in London, all my fears were allayed. Not only was there a large, colourful group of smiley upperclassmen to greet the English freshmen at the airport but the three-day Freshman International Program could not have been better preparation for Harvard life – the extra few days to familiarise myself with the campus and the opportunity to pick the brains of seasoned upperclassmen on the freshman experience was invaluable.

Now, two months in, I am happy and settled in Natalie Portman's old room in Grays, the best dorm in the Yard (although everyone will say the same about theirs). I have a wonderfully eclectic mix of roommates, all from different corners of the States and love them all equally – it will be a tough decision who to stay with when Thanksgiving rolls around. One of the most difficult things about my first term, or semester I should say, is that there is so much that I have wanted to get involved in. I am a member of the Freshman Committee for the International Student Society, play Club Tennis for Harvard, and am part of the Hasty Pudding Club and still there are at least ten other things I would love to be doing.

That is not to say that it is always peachy. I have been homesick, stressed, and snowed under with work at various times but the key to avoiding all this has been making good friends – people who I could turn to when feeling low – and knowing my limitations. One of the shocks of coming to Harvard is that I was used to coming top of my classes at secondary school and suddenly I was surrounded by 1600 students who were used to the same, some top of their country. Everyone here is extraordinarily talented and it is easy to feel worthless in comparison. I just have to remind myself that they picked me and not the other twelve kids who wanted my place for a reason. As long as I do that, I predict a memorable freshman experience and fantastic four years.

Sam French, also Class of 2012

Upcoming Events

◆ ***22 November 5.00 pm**

THE Game - Live at Freshfields, 65 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1HS Contact: robertgould@post.harvard.edu

◆ **30 November 12.00-4.00 pm**

6th Annual Alumni American Thanksgiving Dinner hosted by HCUK. Smollensky's, 105 The Strand, London WC2R 0AA. Book via Club Events on www.hcuk.org Contact: sarah.otner@post.harvard.edu

◆ **4 December 6.30 pm**

Recent Grads Drinks evening. Cittie of York pub, 22 High Holborn, London WC1V 6B

Contact: Mark.Best@carlyle.com

**invitation enclosed*

See also events listing on www.hcuk.org

Harvard Book Prize

Each year HCUK sends a Harvard-related book to over 100 secondary schools in the UK as part of our outreach efforts to encourage top students to apply to Harvard. Many schools are sponsored by club members (£30/year) who build ties to the school by getting to know the head and the university advisor. A list of participating schools is on the website: hcuk.org, Get Involved, Book Prize. We are always looking for additional sponsors to either underwrite the cost of the prize or build relationships with the schools.

I have a few extra copies of this year's book, *Happier* by Tal Be-Shahar, a lecturer in the Department of Psychology. Ben-Shahar teaches two of the university's most popular courses, "Positive Psychology" and "The Psychology of Leadership," which attract over 1,400 students each term. If you would like a copy of the book at cost + postage, please contact me. hattiehartman@post.harvard.edu

WANTED: Seven College Conference Rep.

The Seven College Conference urgently needs a Harvard/Radcliffe Rep. as club member Brenda Harper-Vandamme '82 has stepped down. The HCUK is very grateful to her for handling this commitment for many years.

I have asked for an outline of the commitment required and hope that we might be able to lure a Harvard/Radcliffe grad from the club to be involved and to liaise between the HCUK and SCC. There are seven jobs for seven reps: president, secretary, treasurer, autumn event chair, junior year abroad tea organiser, spring lunch chair and book award chair. The president, autumn and spring events rotate in order annually; the other jobs are taken by who wants them that year. The idea is to obtain help if needed from one's college so that the reps aren't solely relying on each other, and that way sometimes new reps can be identified. The meetings are usually in August, October, December, February and May. The December one is a pot-luck lunch at the flat of one of the reps; the others are at 6.30 pm usually the second Tuesday of that month. In August the meeting is held to help the autumn event organiser finalise the event details so the invitation can go to the clubs for their newsletters by Sept. At the May meeting they divide up the jobs for the next year. The SCC provides a book bursary to a first year students on a competitive basis. HCUK members may have also seen many event notices over the years, as well as the SCC book group meeting dates. If you are interested in being involved please do contact me (jpmaciver@post.harvard.edu) and I will put you in touch with the SCC.

Outreach for Harvard College

Four days after the productive HCUK interviewers' evening with Janet Irons and the HCUK Schools Committee, I had arranged a visit with three of the four Harvard Cambridge Scholars *Gerardo Con Diaz, Laura Kolbe and Mishy Harman to Hills Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge. We were armed with all the materials that had been presented and I had made 30 copies to bring along. In the end we needed twice as many (they were sent to the Careers Office electronically for those who did not get a copy). It was a very successful mixture of discussing Harvard and the US liberal arts system in general. The three young Harvard grads were wonderful ambassadors both for Harvard and for the system and the 50 plus students showed a keen interest in the US university system – we were able to demystify many points. However, perhaps one of the more practical points that was raised, as two of the scholars were not from the US, was how homesick one can be – taking the plunge and heading to the US has many wonderful advantages but students need to be self aware given the rather large ocean between them and their families.

I sponsor the Harvard Prize Book for Hills Road Sixth Form College and I look forward to strengthening Harvard's ties to this remarkable state school and to its students. I urge fellow club members to try and do the same and become a link between a school and the club and the college.

Joan Porter MacIver '75

**I had already met Con and Laura soon after their arrival in Cambridge when I invited them to our Mill House to harvest pumpkins and apples and sent them back to Cambridge laden with produce!*

HCUK Justice online Discussion Groups

A hard core group of club members have gathered twice at the Royal Society to discuss the lectures and readings of the Justice online course. We would welcome other club members and if you are interested do contact me (jpmaciver@post.harvard.edu). We have set up a google group but in general we decided it was best to participate in the main blog for the course. We will be holding three more sessions: 18 November, 9 December and 14 January 2009. The course is a truly thought provoking exercise and I think all the participants are enjoying the challenge. Come join us if you are also following the lectures or feel free to add any input via the google group. I was peeling bramley apples (my windfalls) as I was listening to Professor Sandel's lecture on John Locke views on property rights – it seemed most apt.

Joan Porter MacIver '75