

transatlantic

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REPORT

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INTELLIGENT LOCAL FINANCE AND LEARNING FROM ABROAD

By NICHOLAS FALK



Nicholas Falk

William Plowden's invitation to write about my new pamphlet, which the Town and Country Planning Association has published, on Funding Sustainable Communities, made me think again about the value of the Harkness Fellowships. First my interest in cities stems from the time I spent at Stanford Business School, and what I learned not only about the factors that drove US economic success, but also about the vicious circle of inner city decay. Later it encouraged me to set up my own company URBED, rather than going to work for a large organisation again, to see how management thinking could be applied to the problems of regenerating run-down areas. I also realised, from my time in the States, the importance of local autonomy compared with the centralised state we have created.

Returning to a Stanford reunion 30 years on enabled me to catch up on progress with Business

Improvement Districts, and the Main Street Program, both of which have restored many town centres to life, and which are starting to be copied over here. I was also able to explore the impact of the Metropolitan Area Express (MAX), an integrated tram system, on making Portland Oregon a model for sustainable development. What is called Smart Growth, in the USA, and the ideas of the New Urbanism, are starting to take hold over here, (though it would be better if we looked to say Holland for models rather than Florida!) Similarly Pittsburgh is pioneering the use of a split charge on businesses, applying the principles of Land Value Taxation, but again we can also learn from Denmark, which has been using Land Value Taxation successfully for years.

Of course there is no one answer to the problem of restoring the balance between local communities and central government. Equal inspiration can be gained from European cities like Copenhagen or Montpellier, that have made a step change. However what the Harkness Fellowship enabled me to do was to see how the total system worked. Hence it helps avoid the mistakes we often make in transplanting ideas from one country to another, and being fooled by a quick visit, without understanding the context.

Of course I hope the Fellowships will be revived, and that they will enable individuals to develop answers to some of the strategic problems facing the UK. But I also hope the broader idea of 'fellowship' can be sustained, as I know I have gained immeasurably from being able to discuss ideas with other Harkness Fellows over the years.. To all who have encouraged me I am truly grateful, and I hope this new pamphlet may have as much impact as the one I did for the Fabian Society some thirty years ago on the Inner City!

Dr Nicholas Falk

Nicholas Falk was a Harkness Fellow in 1967-69 (Stanford).



The Portland Tram

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Harkness Fellows News

Publications etc

Val Billingham (HF 1995-96) has written and published (under her own imprint, Drenched Orchid) *Lovers' Pact*. She describes it as "a communication tool designed to help couples in long-term relationships discuss what they want to get out of their physical relationship over the next twelve months." (Details from www.drenched-orchid.com)

The work of **Harrison Birtwhistle** (HF 1966-68) was celebrated by a special festival, *Birtwhistle Games*, held at London's South Bank Centre in October/November 2004.

Stuart Devlin (HF 1960-62) was one of several silversmiths featured in an exhibition, *Creation*, organised by the Goldsmiths' Company in London, May-July 2004

Sir Terry Farrell (HF 1962-64) has written an account of his life and work to 1981. *Place: a Story of Modelmaking, Menageries and Paper Rounds* is, not as the book itself states, "a conventional autobiography. Instead, it concentrates on Farrell's own recollections of 'place' – houses lived in, schools and churches attended, and the streets, towns and cities around them. It is also about how a wider, less physical sense of place developed during a lifetime, from family and classroom friendships to career choices, partnerships and the development of personal attitudes that 'place' Farrell in terms of fashion, style and taste. Although mostly chronological, the book is sometimes non-sequential as past experiences and work life are compared to the present, while reflections and detours, particularly into thoughts about urban design and architecture, are frequent." Chapter 3, "America", describes Terry's years as a Harkness Fellow, beautifully illustrated (as is the whole book) with his own photographs and drawings. The book is published by Laurence King, at £29.95.

This book, like Nicholas Falk's pamphlet (see feature on front page) is particularly relevant to the Association at the moment given Terry's interest and involvement in many of the world's cities, especially London, and our current thinking about developing and relaunching a fellowship programme with an initial focus on cities, in the widest sense.

David Lodge's (HF 1964-65) novel about Henry James, *Author, Author*, was published in September 2004 (Secker and Warburg, £16.99). "Imaginatively lively" and "Outstanding" were among the many approving comments made by the critics.

A paperback edition of **Jan Morris'** (CFF 1953-54) volume of travel writing *A Writer's World* (2003) was published in 2004 (Faber, £9.99).

A novel by **Martin Sixsmith** (HF 1977-79), *Spin*, drawing on his experiences in government during the Blair administration, was published in April 2004 (Macmillan, £16.99).

Appointments

Timothy Hornsby (HF 1961-63) became chairman of the (UK) National Lottery Commission in October 2004. The NLC is a non-departmental public body set up to regulate the National Lottery.

Lawrence Goldman (HF 1979-80) became the Editor of the New Dictionary of National Biography in October 2004. He is Fellow and Tutor in Modern History at St Peter's College, Oxford.

Geoff Mulgan (HF 1986-87) became the new Director of the Institute of Community Studies, in east London, taking over in September 2004. He had previously been Head of Policy in the office of Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Chris Rodrigues (HF 1974-76) left Bradford & Bingley in spring 2004 to become chief executive of Visa International,

In Memoriam

Alistair Cooke KBE, probably the most celebrated of all Commonwealth Fund/Harkness Fellows, died in March 2004, just after the last edition of this newsletter had gone to press. He was 96. Readers of any of the serious newspapers will have no need of a supplementary obituary in this edition, nor will those who attended his October memorial service in Westminster Abbey, the only occasion on which the Stars and Stripes has flown there. Suffice it to say that he was outstanding among the many Fellows whose life and career was permanently shaped by a Commonwealth Fund fellowship – in his case, held in 1932-34 at Yale and Harvard, to study drama and criticism. His broadcast *Letter from America* ran from 1946 until shortly before his death. Those who have seen the Harkness film, made last year, will remember that it opens with some words from one of the last few *Letters*: "I suppose the day that changed my life was the day I had a letter from the foundation of one Edward S Harkness, an American tycoon who had given his fortune over to good works. In the spring of 1932 I found myself one of the lucky twenty-five and I was launched, I must say, on the most generous fellowship for two years' study in the

United States." Few Fellows can have done as much to realise Edward S Harkness' ideals, and to explain one trans-Atlantic country to the other. A selection of his "Letters" was published by Penguin as *Letter from America* in October 2004 (£25).

Dan Goyder CBE (HF 1962-64) died in February 2004, aged 65. He was a leading authority on competition law, and author of *EC Competition Law* and *The Anti-Trust Laws of the USA*. He lived and worked in Ipswich all his professional life, save for the two years of his Fellowship, held at Harvard and Berkeley.

Alexander Youngson CBE (CFF 1947-48) died in April 2004, aged 85. Born in India, he served in the Fleet Air Arm during the war and was present at D-Day. Later, he was Professor of Economic History at Edinburgh University, and a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland, of which he was the chairman from 1982 to 1990. His book, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, was published in 1966 and has been described as "the absolute bible on the history of the New Town".

Harkness Fellows Association: developments and plans

The Association is making progress on our long term ambition to revive the Harkness Fellowships. We have forged alliances with three bodies who could help us deliver and manage a new programme. First, NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts). NESTA run a Fellowship programme. Secondly, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), who run the Marshall Scholarships and Marshall Sherfield Fellowships, and currently help us administer the Association, are keen to assist. Last but by no means least the BBC will support any new programme, field candidates, publicise the programme on their internal networks and consider broadcasting Fellows' reports. As an initial theme for the programme the Committee has selected 'The Future of Cities'; this could encompass architecture, town planning, policing, traffic management, social welfare, art and literature, and other themes. Terry Farrell and other Harkness Fellows are helping us to work this up, and once this is done we will be actively seeking seed corn funds, assisted by Judy Digney, an experienced fundraiser. If any Fellows would like to help us in carrying this forward, please contact William Plowden, Judy Digney, Timothy Hornsby or Natasha Bevan.

In terms of forthcoming events, we shall be running a joint event with NESTA on the evening of 28 February with speakers on regenerating communities in Detroit and Lewisham. In late April we have Georges Arbus'

lecture on old age – see separate note. We then hope in early May to have another event with NESTA on 'Changing Places' – the stimulus to creativity from experiencing other countries, a theme close to our hearts. In the autumn we hope to repeat our successful dinner at Nuffield, with a discussion on Britain's current and future relationship with the United States. We would like to continue our series of informal evening seminars (or other events) and would welcome suggestions and/or offers.

Timothy Hornsby hopes to create a partnership with the Harvard Club, whereby their members could have access to some of our events, and our members to their excellent programme. If any of our members belong to other US alumni associations with which we might make a similar deal, please let one of us know. The London School of Economics has agreed that we might publicise their very full programme of events to our members and we hope to make similar arrangements with other organisations. More generally, if anyone has an update on his or her present occupation and address please let Natasha know; our database is becoming rather out of date.

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Forthcoming Events

Georges Arbus (HF 1962-64) recently published a book *Le Grand Age: Chance ou Fatalité?* We have invited him to give a public lecture about the issues, personal and institutional, raised by the increase in the numbers of people living into extreme old age, and about the current position in France. The lecture will take place at 5.30pm on Monday 25 April at the Cavendish Conference Centre, 22 Duchess Mews, London W1. It will be preceded by tea from 5.00pm and followed by a reception. The event is being organised in association with Help the Aged, and is being generously funded by the Nuffield Trust. Since space is limited, could anyone who would like to attend please contact Natasha Bevan as soon as possible, letting her know how many places you would like to reserve?

BIG IN BULGARIA

By **DAVID EDMONDS**

SUNDAY, 28 NOVEMBER

Can a vegetarian survive in Bulgaria? The question strikes me because on the Bulgarian Airlines flight to Sofia I see the hillock of gristly meat served up to my neighbour – a few minutes later I take solace from spotting a forlorn green bean buried beneath the mound. For the days I needed to travel, Bulgarian Airlines was, literally, an eighth of the price of its British Airlines equivalent. When we land, after an uneventful flight, entirely free of turbulence, the other passengers burst out in spontaneous and sustained applause. They must know something I don't. Has our safe landing somehow defied the odds?

I am met at the airport by Mario, our publisher. He takes me to an exclusive restaurant – starched white table cloths, a hushed atmosphere. 'That's one of the most important men in Bulgaria', he whispers, pointing at the next table. It is the American ambassador.

There are seven vegetarian options. They're washed down with the first of many warming shots of Rakia.

MONDAY, 29 NOVEMBER

What am I doing here? Will there really be enough interest to justify coming all this way? The subject matter of the book, Wittgenstein's Poker, was obscure enough in English – what possible demand can there be for a Bulgarian edition? My first interview is with the BBC Bulgarian service. The interviewee has just returned from London – her office was on the floor above mine in Bush House.

En route to a TV station the street vendors hovering around traffic lights are hawking two products, the daily newspaper, and Playboy. There's a sign at the TV station – inside, no guns allowed. It is the opposite of reassuring. The half hour interview for a programme called Checkmate is partially conducted over a game of chess (I win).

TUESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER

Bulgaria was the Soviet Union's closest ally. It was the easiest place for Soviet citizens to get permission to travel. There was a Russian saying, 'A chicken is not a bird, and Bulgaria is not abroad'. The Soviets have gone – but outside the city-centre, their ugly architecture remains, everywhere. Bulgaria will join the EU in 2007. It doesn't seem to elicit much enthusiasm – 'we are a small country, we have no choice', is the prevailing attitude. Popularity for the aloof prime minister, the former Bulgarian King, has dwindled. Meanwhile the communist party is polling at 20%. Travelling south, to the American University (which occupies the former communist party building), you see the human effects of a nation 'in transition', factories closed, houses abandoned, farms empty. In some rural areas unemployment is 40% – people are

pouring into the capital in search of work. Meanwhile, much of the intellectual future – university graduates – are seeking employment abroad. The national population is in decline.

WEDNESDAY, 1 DECEMBER

My brother, Philip, a steel trader, is in town. I accompany him to a meeting. It's with a mini-me Abramovich, one of the new class of East European multi-millionaires. He has a big face, and a big car – Mercedes, bullet-proof. He acquired the country's largest steel mine for the princely sum of \$1, and is now trying to sell it for a \$100 million. My brother is cross with him – he has tried to renegotiate two fixed contracts. A big smile spreads across his big face. 'Let's not talk of history, let's talk of the future', he says.

Lunch with the Austrian cultural attache – an enthusiastic Wittgensteinian. Wittgenstein, like Popper, Freud, Zweig etc., has been reclaimed by Austria. The Wittgenstein family would still like to recoup the staggering sums of money it paid the Austrians to purchase Arian status, and safety, for Ludwig's two eldest, elderly sisters.

THURSDAY, 2 DECEMBER

One of three university lectures. What are the Bulgarian national traits – I ask one student. He ponders for a long time, 'The Bulgarian distrusts all non-Bulgarians'. Perhaps not surprising – all Bulgaria's neighbours and near neighbours, the Russians, Serbs, Greeks, Romanians and Macedonians – have at various times in history wanted a piece of the country. A typical Balkans tale.

After the obligatory questions about the book, what students and journalists really want to know is what I think about Bulgarian politics, the demonstrations in Ukraine, the BBC (currently in the Bulgarian courts, charged with illegally recording an interview). Their questions are disconcertingly open – what can Bulgaria learn from Britain. 'Who really is David Edmonds,' I'm asked live on air. Crikey. That's too philosophical for me.

FRIDAY, 3 DECEMBER

I fly home, Colin Powell flies in for an OSCE meeting – for ordinary Bulgarians it's a hell of a nuisance. Security is being tightened, road blocks erected. I still don't understand the economics of the book business. The Bulgarian edition is £6. Mario has many costs – the rights, photos, translation, editing, design, distribution, printing and then 50% of the retail price to the bookseller. He seems to live from hand-to-mouth. I desperately hope, for his sake, he sells a lot of books.

David Edmonds was a HF in 1993-4 (University of Chicago). The Bulgarian translation of Wittgenstein's Poker – co-authored with John Eidinow – is the 21st edition of the book.