

## KEEPING TIME

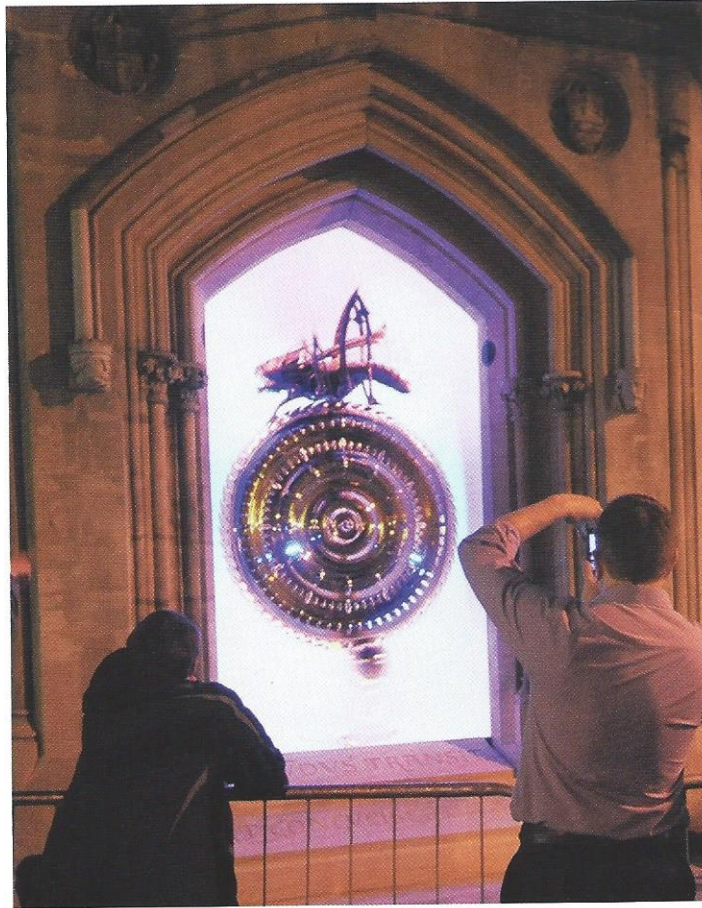
FROM EARLY in the morning till late at night, you will find a cluster of people standing on the corner of Bene't Street and Trumpington Street transfixed by the latest Cambridge landmark – the Corpus Clock.

And no wonder – this is no ordinary clock but a fantastical design that both tells us the time (accurate to the nearest 60th of a second every five minutes) and reminds us of our mortality, every hour on the hour, with a sinister sound of clanking chains.

Designed as an inside-out mechanical clock, the escapement takes the form of a giant grasshopper or chronophage (time eater) which stands above the clock face and devours time with each step. Every few seconds, the giant eyes of the insect blink and its stinging tail gives an ominous little wiggle, as if to say, "However smart you are, however invincible you feel, there's no escaping the onward march of time."

Beneath the grasshopper, the clock's golden face features three concentric circles formed by 60 slits. The hour, minute and second times are revealed by blue LED lights which flash through the slits. The design is both futuristic and historical. It is revolutionary in its lack of hands or digital display and its many unconventional features. It is retrospective in its use of a mechanical grasshopper in tribute to John Harrison, an eminent 18th-century clockmaker.

On a blustery autumn morning, admirers included Adrian Daffern, a visitor from Coventry. "I think it's totally



Day and night, the new Corpus Clock draws crowds.

the electric kettle: it is him we should thank for the cordless kettle.

The Corpus Clock is the first model of a new kind of mechanical clock which Dr Taylor worked on for seven years. The realisation of his design involved an entire team of industrial engineers, artists and craftsmen. Stewart Huxley, director of a local precision engineering firm and great-grandson of the scientist Sir Thomas Henry Huxley, together with industrial designer Gary Moore, translated Taylor's drawings into working mechanisms, a process that resulted in six new inventions and patents. Cambridge-based sculptor Matt Sanderson conceived the form of the chronophage; enameller Judith Mackarell produced the exquisite finish and detailing.

Pausing in a stroll along King's Parade with a guest from Australia, Dr Nicholas Branson, Treasurer of the Cambridge Scholarship Trust and Fellow of Darwin College, said he has his own reasons for enjoying the clock. "For me, it's especially amusing to see the clock here as it stands in what was once the doorway of the Westminster Bank, which was my bank when I came up to Cambridge almost 50 years ago."

He finds the chronophage's idiosyncrasy charming. "It's delightfully quirky – and I like the way it reminds us of the passing of time and our fragility," he said.

wonderful – fun and fascinating," he said. "It's great that Cambridge should have a new piece of art right in the city centre. I love the way it winks at you every so often. I feel that if I looked at it for more than a few minutes I'd be hypnotised."

The Corpus Clock, which was unveiled by Professor Stephen Hawking on 19 September, owes its existence to College alumnus Dr John Taylor, the highly distinguished and creative engineer who invented, designed and funded it. Dr Taylor studied natural sciences at Cambridge in the 1950s and then went on to change the face of



Dr John Taylor and Prof Stephen Hawking at the unveiling of the Corpus Clock on 19 September.

## DID YOU KNOW?

■ Dr John Taylor is one of the principal sponsors of Corpus Christi's new Taylor Library. Corpus Christi Fellow Librarian Dr Christopher de Hamel, who is responsible both for the Taylor Library and the Parker Library, which holds one of the world's finest collections of medieval manuscripts, has produced a booklet on the Corpus Clock. Priced £8, it is available from the Porters' Lodge, Corpus Christi College.

■ Beneath the clock, a Latin inscription from the New Testament, I John 2:17, reads *mundus transit et concupiscentia eius*, which translates to "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof".