



# Brazen *Notes*



# The Frankland Visitor Scheme

Brasenose 'Frankland Visitors' are just one of the College's student enrichment offerings, bringing expertise from fields beyond the academic world.

A Frankland Visitor is a distinguished artistic, cultural or public figure who resides for several days in College, with a specific remit to interact with students through a variety of events. Frankland Visitors are not academics, but are prominent in other fields. Students can come to events and engage with renowned professionals from other walks of life, with a particular focus on performing arts, culture, and the media – giving students an experience which is different from, but complementary to their core studies.

The scheme is named in honour of the College's primary female benefactress, Joyce Frankland (1531-1587), who was a celebrated philanthropist. The daughter of a London goldsmith from Essex, she married twice and became widowed twice before losing her only son in a riding accident. An acquaintance of **Alexander Nowell (1536)**, it is thought that he was the one to persuade her to leave her fortune to benefit young scholars at university. Frankland owned a substantial amount of property and went on to endow several scholarships at



Portrait of Joyce Frankland (1531-1587)

both Oxford and Cambridge. Brasenose has three portraits of her, one of which hangs in the Hall (see left).

Who are the Frankland Visitors?

**Kenneth Lonergan** was the inaugural Frankland Visitor, and first visited College in 2019. Kenneth is a film director and screen writer, whose movies include *You Can Count On Me*, *Margaret* and *Manchester by the Sea*, the latter for which he won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. He also co-wrote the 2002 Martin Scorsese film *Gangs of New York*. His play *The Starry Messenger* came to London's West End in 2019.

For his visit to Brasenose, he participated in a Principal's Conversation, and there were showings in College of his films *Margaret* and *Manchester By The Sea*.

After the viewings, Kenneth led Q&A events with students, talking about his work, what inspires him, and his views on the writing process. There was plenty of spirited discussion about screenwriting and filmmaking.



Principal John Bowers KC in conversation with Kenneth Lonergan

Kenneth returned for a second year in March 2020, when he worked on an even fuller programme of events, including more film screenings with Q&A discussions, creative writing sessions, and some teaching in connection with the University's Continuing Education strand. He returned to Brasenose once again in 2022 for another Principal's Conversation, this time along with his wife, *Succession* actress J Smith-Cameron.

In 2022 we were able to resume the programme after the pandemic, with alumna **Hannah Cusworth (History & Politics, 2008)** as the next Frankland Visitor. Hannah is a PhD Researcher, former secondary school Head of History, and a history education consultant. As a teacher, she led a curriculum that embraced migration stories and the history of empire and race. In her current research she is examining the hidden history of mahogany and its relationship



Hannah Cusworth

to slavery, in the context of three English Heritage properties. Whilst in residence, she ran a programme of events for students, which included discussions about inclusivity with the JCR, a Diversity Dinner, and she spoke on the History of Mahogany and the British Empire to a group of Economics & Management students, and gave another talk to the Ashmole Society, which was very well received. Hannah also spoke in a Principal's Conversation entitled *What do we stand to gain from more inclusive teaching?* along with fellow BNC alumna **Zaiba Patel (Learning & Teaching, 2020)**. They discussed their experiences of education from the perspective of people of colour, and made the argument for a more inclusive history curriculum, as a means of improving engagement with students from a variety of backgrounds.



Principal's Conversation with Hannah Cusworth and Zaiba Patel



Jo Baring

Hannah previously took part in our Annual Equality Conversation in 2020, along with **Rajan Datar (PPE, 1981)** and **Martin Forde KC (Jurisprudence, 1979)**, discussing some of the wide-ranging issues associated with racial identity in modern society. Both of these talks are available to view on the Brasenose website.

The current Frankland Visitor is **Jo Baring (Modern History, 1996)**. Jo is Curator and Director of the Ingram Collection, former Director of Christie's, an author, speaker, and co-presenter of the *Sculpting Lives* podcast. She set up a workshop with students to design the exciting new re-hanging of artworks in the Amersi Foundation Lecture Room, and also took part in two different Principal's Conversations, along with other student events.

Jo explains, 'I've been working with students to re-imagine the art in College, to ensure that there is a meaningful narrative in what is shown, and that the student experience is reflected in what is on College walls. In curating the Amersi Foundation Room, I've been so impressed by the enthusiasm, ideas and rigour of the students. The final curation was unveiled in November, where the students presented the exhibition theme and thoughts behind the chosen artworks. It's such a joy to be back at Brasenose and to be able to provide opportunities such as this for current students.'

We hope that in the coming years, philosophical novelist **Joanna Kavenna**, and playwright **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**, will take on the role.

Recordings of Principal's Conversations featuring Frankland Visitors and other guest speakers are available to view on the BNC website here [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/recordings](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/recordings)

# Arts Week: Behind the Scenes

Approaching its 30th year in 2024, Brasenose Arts Week has a great reputation across Oxford. Brasenose Arts Rep for 2022-2023, law student **Peter Chen** provides some behind-the-scenes insights.

## How does the Arts Committee decide on the overall theme of the year's Arts Week? Is it difficult to get agreement?

The overall theme for the week is usually one of the first things that the Committee decides on, as it helps to guide us in terms of the types of events that we want to do. In recent years, during 'hustings' (where potential Arts Reps field questions from students during JCR meetings) candidates have been asked to propose an overall theme that is indirectly voted upon by members. I, for one, did not follow through on my original proposal, which was 'Surreal' as the Committee felt that it was too similar to a theme we had just a few years back. As for this year's theme, we were originally planning for something regal, as the first day of Arts Week this year coincided with the Bank Holiday to celebrate His Majesty the King's coronation. However, further deliberations and consultations with the JCR Executive Committee led us to adopt the theme of 'Daydream,' which aimed to celebrate the 'dream-like' attitude students felt being able to have a full year free of COVID-related restrictions.

## How many people are on the Arts Society Committee? Do other JCR members get involved?

The number of people sitting on the Committee varies; this year, there were 12 students on my committee, representing undergraduates from all four years, as well as a graduate student helper during Arts Week. What is equally important, however, is the close collaboration between the Arts Society and the JCR Committee. It is not unusual to see joint events with Entz (*Entertainment*), E&E (*Environment & Ethics*), and Welfare during Arts Week, and we are supported by other Committee members throughout the year.

## Does the Committee seek inspiration from previous years' Arts Weeks, or do you start with a 'blank sheet'?

As far as events go, experiences from past years are crucial to building a successful programme. There is a tradition that previous Arts Reps will volunteer to sit on the Arts Committee in a non-active role, to guide and advise the current members on how to ensure a smooth running of the week. It really is a team effort. Of course, this process was hampered by the fact that prior to last year, the most recent Arts Week dates to 2019! Thankfully, the last Arts Rep – Liv (Olivia Francis) – did a great job in pulling the strings back together and I was able to hit the ground running this year. This ties into the next question, but some very popular events – such as *Drunk Shakespeare* – always make an appearance though we do try to innovate in terms the types of activities that we plan for students.

## Arts Week has clearly evolved over the years into a much broader range of events than its original incarnation as the heavily drama-based Brasenose Summer Arts Festival in 1993, but would you still consider drama one of the most important elements throughout the week?

I recently found out that Arts Week had a much shorter history than I imagined. Because the week is so ingrained in the culture of Brasenose – being the only thing I remembered after reading



Peter Chen at the newly built student accommodation block, Frewin Annexe



Appreciating the Arts Week banner

the rather-long prospectus – it is difficult to imagine the College without one. Of course, despite the various iterations and changes throughout the years, drama remains of central importance during the week. This year, I distinctly remember (previous Arts Rep) Liv's serious admonishment after I proposed that we cut one of the two plays to give the evening programming more variety. Drama truly is the main show of the week! Maybe it's because plays tend to have the largest student participation, or maybe because everyone loves a good show, but the weekly plays always draw the biggest crowd in the week. They are always a highlight, and I hope that it stays that way.

**There have been some fantastic guests this year, including Mark Williams (English, 1978), Kenny Lonergan and J Smith-Cameron, as well as Frankland Visitor Jo Baring (Modern History, 1996) – how do the JCR members feel about meeting such high-profile speakers?**

As with all these high-profile speakers and guests, it is really difficult to know in advance just how popular they will be. For example, students who were familiar with *Succession* – mostly the Americans amongst us – were incredibly thrilled about Ms Smith-Cameron's event. Museum fans loved hearing from our incredible Frankland Visitor this year about the opportunity to re-hang the modern art

collection in Amersi Foundation Lecture Room, but I was intrigued by the controversy that it brought.

**Looking back at all the previous festivals gives an insight into changing trends – there have been plays, bhangra, salsa, zumba, percussion, pole dancing, drag, musicals, fine art, films with live piano accompaniment, satirical sketches, 'knit and knatter' sessions, stand-up comedy – but the most consistent items over the years seem to be Shakespeare (drunken or otherwise), jazz, and Pimm's – why do you think these three have such an ongoing appeal across the generations?**

I, too, was surprised to learn of Oxford students' enthusiasm for jazz. I thought as Ryan Gosling famously says in *La La Land*: 'Jazz is dying.' After a year here, I now finally understand why it is very much alive. There really is nothing better than live jazz music on a rainy night with all your friends. It of course helps that our very own Jazznostrils are not only incredibly talented, but also free. As for Shakespeare, English has always been very strong at Brasenose and the English students love to recite 16<sup>th</sup> century plays whenever they can. I guess there is just something nice about a sunny afternoon, sitting in the marquee on New Quad and sipping Pimm's with your friends whilst daydreaming about the summer ahead.

## The Original Arts Festival Committee

**Paul Burgess (English, 1993)** was one of those who set up the original Brasenose Arts Festival, and is now Chair of the King's Hall Trust for the Arts. In the run up to the 30th anniversary, he spoke with some Brasenose contemporaries who were also involved in the early days.

An unexpected benefit of being a co-founder, trustee and now chair of the King's Hall Trust for the Arts is seeing how BNC's theatre scene, and Arts Week in particular, has evolved over the years.

When we first arrived at College, there was a drama society, which wasn't greatly active, and a sporadic tradition of Christmas shows in Hall. Some students were active in the university drama scene. But



The original Arts Festival Committee in Chapel (photo: Thomas Furlong)

it didn't feel as though it was at the heart of College life. Our year, however, was blessed with a handful of enthusiastic theatre-makers. By the time we graduated, we had started Arts Week (then called Brasenose Summer Arts Festival), founded the KHTA and turned Brasenose Players into an active funding body. Some of us also set up Daedalus Theatre Company, which is still going today.

The first festival comprised *Romeo and Juliet* and *Coriolanus* in New Quad, the medieval morality play *Everyman* in the Chapel, and an early music concert. It was chaotic at times but, as **Rikesh Shah (Mathematics, 1993)** puts it, 'The steep learning curve in those early years was valuable experience, particularly for those who went on to build professional careers in the performing arts.' Rikesh is now Project Director for the London Symphony Orchestra. I'm a freelance theatre designer.

Over the years, the KHTA has helped when required with funding and advice. We've seen Arts Week evolve from something which had to prove its right to exist into a settled part of College life, freeing the organisers to be bolder than the traditional programming of the early years.

I think **Liz Owen (PPE, 1993)**, now a senior civil servant, sums it up when she says, 'Seeing Brasenose Arts Week go from strength to strength makes me feel very proud to have played a small part in the early days.' We'll all be eagerly watching how it flourishes into the future.

# Brasenose and Frewin Hall: A Potted History

As the College gears up to undertake a major renovation of the student accommodation in Frewin Hall, we explore some of the key periods in its rich history.

The story of the place we now know as 'Frewin' begins nearly a thousand ago: Frewin Hall stands on the site of a Norman manor house, comprising a 'semi basement' with Hall and Solar chamber set above. Of the original, only the semi basement or 'Undercroft' now remains.

Research by Brasenose alumnus and historian **John Blair (Modern History, 1973)** in the late 1970s dated the Undercroft to within a century of the Norman Conquest, around 1090-1150. He wrote in 1978 'it must count as one of the oldest domestic buildings remaining in England.' This is remarkable survival; the basement Undercroft has remained a constant for around nine centuries.

During its early years, this substantial town house would have belonged to a succession of wealthy citizens. The first owner of the property that we can identify with certainty is Geoffrey Fitz Durand, an important figure in 12th century Oxford, who married into the prestigious de Oxford family.

By the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century, after passing along a succession of well-to-do owners, the Hall was in the possession of Sir Peter Bessels, Member of Parliament for Oxfordshire. Sir Peter died in 1425, leaving a request in his Will that the land be used as the site of a college 'pour moignes blancs ou chanoins' – 'white monks or canons'.

Although Bessels' request was not carried out at the time, the site subsequently came into the hands of Thomas and Elizabeth Holden, who undertook to make a charitable gift of the property for the purpose of setting up a monastic college. To this end, Holden granted it to John Sevenoake, prior of the Augustinian priory of the Holy Trinity in London.

However, there was another potential obstacle: The King. As the legal owner of the land, Henry VI's permission had to be sought before the land could be gifted and a new college founded. Fortunately, the King was willing to give his approval, and St Mary's College was duly founded in 1435. It was operational on the site for just over a hundred years, housing around 12 students at a time. One particularly distinguished



*Frewin Hall, 1859 (Illustrated London News)*

student of St Mary's College was the European Renaissance scholar, humanist, theologian and influential thinker Erasmus of Rotterdam, who arrived in Michaelmas Term 1499.

However, in general the college was fraught with problems, and fell victim to both bad management and a lack of resources. Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-1541) wiped out the priories whose funding supported St. Mary's, hastening its demise as an Augustinian institution. It did continue

as a secular Hall of the University for some years after the Dissolution, though this phase was also not destined to last; by 1562 the College was no more, and ownership of the property had become the subject of a legal battle twixt 'town and gown'.

After much wrangling, the site fell into the hands of the Earl of Huntingdon, who then granted it to the City of Oxford on the condition that it be made into a 'Bridewell', or correctional school for

poor boys. However, the City failed to uphold its side of the bargain, running the school so badly that the Earl elected to reclaim the site.

Brasenose's history with the property begins in 1580, when a complicated deal with the Huntingdon family brought the site under the College's ownership. In the following years, Brasenose endured several legal challenges to the legitimacy of the deal, but its claims of ownership were ultimately vindicated.

Seeking to make a return on its newly-acquired property, in 1582 Brasenose leased the site to Griffith Lloyd, the second Principal of the recently founded Jesus College. Lloyd constructed a house which forms the core of what is now Frewin Hall, with the new dwelling being built to incorporate the original Norman house's historic Undercroft.

The eponymous Dr Richard Frewin enters the story over a century later,

when he took on the lease of the property in 1721. Frewin was a Professor of Chemistry, and remarkably, he managed to become Camden Professor of Ancient History whilst also working as a successful physician. Frewin (or 'Frewen') had a significant impact on the house, adding an East Wing at a right angle to the existing building, creating the Hall's distinctive 'L' shape.



*Frewin Hall, November 2023*



Frewin Hall, November 2023

As the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century approached, Brasenose began to let the house to the Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford, and from 1789 it became the official residence of the Regius Professor of Medicine.

We pick up the story again with the arrival of the Prince of Wales (and future King Edward VII), when he joined the University of Oxford in 1859. Although the Royal Family wished him to be a member of the overall University, the rules decreed that all students, even a Royal one, must join a college, so the Prince matriculated as a student at Christ Church. However, it was decided that he would reside in Frewin Hall along with his tutors, and take his lectures in the study. The young Prince developed a great love for the place, and four years later returned there with his new wife, to show her his beloved student home.

The latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw another notable tenant, Charles Shadwell, a University lecturer in jurisprudence, who later became Provost of Oriel College. He made his own contribution to the fabric of the Hall, by commissioning an additional storey to the main house. His collaborator in this was Sir Thomas Jackson, renowned architect of Oxford landmarks including the Bridge of Sighs and the Examination Schools, as well as Brasenose College's New Quad.

Lest there be any doubt as to his contribution, Shadwell also added a Latin 'chronogram' above the main front door: 'FREVVINI CAROLVS LAETAT SHADVVPELLIVS AVLAM', which translates as 'Charles Shadwell brings joy to Frewin Hall', the chronogrammatic element being that the larger letters are Roman numerals which add up to 1888, the year the renovation took place.

After World War II, when more undergraduate accommodation was needed, the site was brought back into the College's direct control; it has been used for this purpose ever since.

The site underwent some major renovations in 1975, when the terraced houses on New Inn Hall Street and St Michael's Street were

## Quiz

Frewin Hall is not the only place where chronograms by Charles Lancelot Shadwell can be found.

**Professor Llewelyn Morgan** invites you to test your chronogrammatic mettle on a couple more:

***In which year did Charles Shadwell serve as Sheriff of Oxford and inscribe a silver cup as follows:***

CIVITAS OXONIAE GAUDET IN SCABINO/ ET CRATERA PORRIGIT  
VOBIS PLENUM VINO ("The City of Oxford takes joy in its Sheriff, and offers you a mixing bowl filled with wine")

***When was this very friendly holiday home near Deal in Kent built by a graduate of Oriel (Shadwell's college)?***

SI MEA LAETA PLACET CASA TV PRECOR HOSPES ADESTO  
("If you like my cheerful cottage, stranger, do please come in")

***Additional question: when did Professor Nicholas Purcell and Dr Emily Kearns gift a fine set of outdoor furniture to Brasenose SCR inscribed by Dr Kearns as follows?***

AVE COLLEGA NASUM CAVE NE SOLIS RADII COLORENT  
("Greetings, colleague: be careful the sun's rays don't turn your nose red")

converted into student accommodation, and the interior of the Hall, John Wesley House and the Cottages were adapted to provide more bedrooms. In another phase of redevelopment in the late 1990s, a further extension was added to the main Hall, replacing a car park.



Charles Shadwell's Frewin Hall chronogram

The next exciting stage of the site's history is now upon us; the College has ambitious plans to restore and refurbish the main Hall, and to bring the different elements of the site together in a harmonious and historically sympathetic way, celebrating its unique history. Here's to the next thousand years!

The story of St. Mary's is explored in more detail in Brazen Notes Issue 31 (available online at [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/publications](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/publications)). Thanks to **Luke Davis (Lit Hum, 2017)** for his recent research on Frewin Hall and St. Mary's College, and credit to **John Blair (Modern History, 1973)** for his work on the site in the 1970s.

1894 (CIVITAS OXONIAE GAUDET IN SCABINO ET CRATERA PORRIGIT VOBIS PLENUM VINO)  
1906 (SI MEA LAETA PLACET CASA TV PRECOR HOSPES ADESTO)  
2018 (AVE COLLEGA NASUM CAVE NE SOLIS RADII COLORENT)

Answers to quiz

# A Revealing Future

Used as a dormitory to house students since of Brasenose since the late 1940s, Frewin Hall was last reconfigured 50 years ago. Exciting plans have been drawn up for a major refurbishment to return some historic authenticity to the Hall, improve its carbon footprint, and bring some communal and study space for the second-year students who live at the site.



Above and opposite bottom right: Once the Prince of Wales' drawing room and currently a student bedroom – complete with unsightly washbasin – the Panelled Room, with its ornate fireplace will become part of the sweeping suite of communal spaces which will provide informal and more library-style study spaces.

Top right: The Undercroft, currently an isolated, leftover space with no recognisable use, will be converted into a study space using furniture to enhance the space with no impact on the ancient and well-preserved Norman fabric; power and lighting will be cleverly routed via the furniture.

Left: The front door will be restored as the main access; the plans show the rear entrance opening out into a bright, level, accessible conservatory leading on from an attractive courtyard.





Architect, **Tim Lee (Modern History, 1990)** has drawn up detailed plans to strip the 1970s cladding back to reveal some of the original detail where possible. The bedrooms on the upper floors will be configured to work with the remaining historic features and unsightly fire screens will be removed to reveal the Victorian T.G. Jackson staircase and landings. Construction of a ground source heat pump is already under way and careful thought has gone into insulation and other means of improving the environmental credentials.

# Travel Grants at Brasenose

One of the many ways that College offers financial support is through small travel grants. These are made possible through the generosity of donors, and enable students to go on excursions which may not otherwise have been feasible. These trips are intended to be intellectually constructive, but also enjoyable and refreshing.

## Marine Mammal Surveys Along The Pacific Costa Rican Coast

**Thomas Stone (Biology, 2019)** talks about a remarkable trip.

I recently returned from a sailing voyage along the Pacific Costa Rican coast on the tall ship *The Pelican of London*. As a Scientist in Residence with the organisation 'Seas Your Future', I led a project carrying out marine mammal surveys in an understudied region. This data will help calculate the abundances of marine mammals in the region, to help inform conservation measures, as well as enhancing understanding of humpback whale migration routes.

I joined the ship in Golfito, a picturesque town in the south of Costa Rica with spectacular rainforest-edged coastline. Following a calm first night's sailing, I began my marine mammal surveying. Our first spot was a pod of acrobatic, bow riding bottlenose dolphins, soon followed by an enthralling sighting of a sperm whale – these are some of the deepest-diving marine mammals in the world, having been recorded diving to depths of over 2000m. Sea birds featured predominantly amongst the other wildlife we saw. The most common of these were frigate birds, pelicans and three different species of boobies; brown, red-footed and Nazca. Spectacular mobula rays were also frequently spotted leaping clean out of the water, clumsily flapping through the air before splashing back into the ocean.

The next day we arrived in the port city of Puntarenas to swap some of the ship's crew before heading back west, then turning north at nightfall. During daylight hours, a few humpback whales teased us with their presence, their blows being spotted in the distance. After sailing through the night, we arrived in the Golfo de Papagayo area. This meant the first of our dedicated humpback whale searches from the ship's rigid inflatable boat could begin. These involved visual scanning from observers on board the boat, as well as regular stops to use a hydrophone to listen out for any singing humpbacks.

The main aim of these searches was to gain photos of the humpbacks' tails or flukes which could then be matched to database



*Thomas using a directional hydrophone to listen for singing humpback whales (Photo credit: Yasmin Deter)*

photos to discover more about their migration routes. On this first search, we were lucky enough to have a breathtaking sighting of two humpback whales, but unfortunately no fluke pictures were possible as the whales refused to show their tails.

Over the next few days we continued to carry out the surveys; numerous pantropical spotted dolphin pods were sighted, along with some captivating olive ridley sea turtles, but sadly no more humpback whales were seen.

Our last night at sea was one I will never forget. As a pod of spotted dolphins approached the ship they were lit up by bioluminescence in the water. They chased fish, leaving sparkling trails behind them like fairy dust – a truly magical sight.

Rising with the tropical sun the next morning we were greeted by pods of bottlenose dolphins and later more pantropical spotted dolphins. With conditions optimal, we decided to

launch the inflatable boat for a final humpback whale search. After just fifteen minutes, a group of three humpbacks were spotted: two adults and a calf. These whales were being followed by a group of spotted dolphins which were attempting to steal droplets of milk from the mother humpback whale as she fed her calf. What a way to finish the voyage.

Excitingly, the photos we managed to take of the adult whales' tails during this last sighting have been matched to individuals from an international database. According to the database, the mother humpback has been spotted seventeen times since she was first sighted in 1994, twenty-eight years ago. She migrates to Costa Rica annually from the coast of California and had not been spotted in Costa Rica since the year 2000. This was the third time the other adult had been spotted and the first time it had been seen in Costa Rican waters, having also previously been sighted off the Californian coast and near Mexico whilst on its migration route.



*The whale tail photo used for photo-ID (photo credit: Frank Garita)*

Overall, the voyage was an incredible experience; getting to know so many amazing people on board and seeing so much of the abundant Costa Rican wildlife. I am left with feelings of awe and an even stronger love for our oceans, and a heightened awareness of the ever-growing need for us all to protect and treasure them and their inhabitants.

I am very grateful to Brasenose for awarding me funding that allowed me to carry out this project.

¡Pura Vida!

## Scottish Witchcraft Trials

**Lola Francis (Geography, 2021)** was a recipient of a grant funded by donations, enabling a research trip to Scotland.

I was lucky enough to be awarded grant money from both Holroyd-ColliEU-Stelling-Hall Memorial Travel Grant and the Brasenose Annual Fund to support my undergraduate archival research in Edinburgh, for two weeks in June/July 2023.

Between the 26<sup>th</sup> June to the 9<sup>th</sup> July I stayed in Leith, Edinburgh to work at the Scottish National Records Centre. Here I was able to access six Scottish witchcraft trials for data for my geography dissertation regarding enchantment and female subjectivity in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Scotland.

These trials span the length of breadth of Scotland, reaching across Edinburgh, Argyllshire and Orkney. All of the trials are written in different variations of Old Scots (depending on the publication source) so after transcribing the trials, I translated them all with the aid of the Scottish Old Language Dictionary.

On the days where the Records Centre was closed, I spent time running around the city and walking in the nearby hills.

It was an extremely rewarding trip which I will look back on fondly. I'd like to reiterate my gratitude to the College and these funding bodies for allowing me to conduct my research, without which I would not have been able to do so.



*Inside the Historical Research Reading Room*

# Principal's Blog Highlights

To read Principal John Bowers KC's blog in full, please visit [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/about-brasenose/princblog](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/about-brasenose/princblog)



## Trinity 2023

On Friday 5 May, the Vice Principal represented the College at a service in the University Church to give thanks for the imminent coronation of the King (our Chaplain was also there, officiating, and looking resplendent). The Chancellor gave a typically thoughtful and pungent address, another highlight of the service: he noted that the second Elizabethan Age was also one of decline of Britain's status in the world, at the close of which we find ourselves increasingly impacted by problems, political and environmental, which we have ourselves created. While these words sank in, the sun came out, and its rays, all too rarely seen this spring, slanted in through the high west window of the Nave, bathing the choir in a gentle luminescence as they sang the *Te Deum Laudamus*.

## Congratulations

We congratulate Professor Mike Dustin for his Fellowship of the Royal Society and Professor Alexander Betts on becoming the University's Local and Global Engagement Officer. Both are very singular achievements, and College is very proud of our association with them.



Professor Alexander Betts



Professor Mike Dustin

Congratulations also to **Diane Coyle (PPE, 1978)** who became a Dame, **Andrew Churchill (Chemistry, 1988)** – for his OBE and **Julia Nolan (Modern Languages, 1978)** for her OBE, all bestowed in the King's Birthday Honours List.

## Events

The Access and Admissions symposium event held in the Amersin Foundation Room on 3 May saw three fascinating talks by our recent graduate **Alice Wilcock (PPE, 2015)** of the Centre for Social Justice, Natasha Plaister a researcher at FFT Education Data Labs, and James Handscombe Executive Principal of Harris Westminster 6th Form. There was a spirited discussion afterwards.

I started term with a visit to Genoa between 19 and 21 April to lecture on the use of skeleton arguments in civil proceedings which you might think was a rather recondite topic but is in fact important in Italy because of the need to speed up proceedings. We were privileged to be taken round the Amico yacht refitting yard (one of the largest in the world) by our alumna, **Jessica Timberlake (Chemistry, 1992)**.

## Encaenia

We were privileged to host Simon Schama in College when he came to receive an honorary degree from the University at Encaenia which took place on 21 June. What a glittering list of those honoured,

including Lyce Doucet and Val McDermid. It is not widely known that Simon was a History Fellow at Brasenose before going to Harvard. Our wonderful Jonathan Katz as Public Orator delivered the tributes to all eight honorands in flawless Latin (with a little bit of Hebrew too) and then gave a wide ranging and well received Oration summarising the academic year (in flawless English) having been given permission by the Chancellor to speak in the vulgar language.

## Farewells

We said a fond farewell at High table on the Friday of Eighth Week to Professor Nicholas Purcell the Camden Professor of Ancient History, and to Dr Rowena Archer, our Supernumerary History Fellow. Of the former I said "His range in Ancient History is enormous, ranging from archaic Greece to late imperial Rome and beyond, and from the calendars of the Celts to the imperial customs posts for the spice and incense trade on the Red Sea." About Rowena, I described her "unparalleled care for the students, for the functioning of History teaching at the College, and for the wellbeing of her colleagues. Working alongside Rowena – particularly as we navigated through the difficulties presented by COVID – has been a real privilege and an education on what the model tutor should be like." We wish them both a happy retirement and hope to still see them regularly in College.



Professor Nicholas Purcell



Dr Rowena Archer

## Miscellany

We went to the Ruskin Art Show on 16 June and it was a real pleasure to see such a range of styles on show. Our Brasenose students did us proud.

Our Chapel was absolutely packed for the visit of Irene Tracey the new Vice Chancellor on 5 June. There was also a wonderful Finalists Service on 12 June.

## Lunchtime Roundtables

I have instituted regular lunchtime roundtable discussions for Fellows. On 26 April **John Simpson** spoke about his recent visits to Ukraine including an interview of President Zelensky. His insights as always were fascinating. Four weeks later we heard from **Temesgen Gebrehiwit** who is a graduate student with us. He hails from Eritrea and told us of his extraordinary escape through Kenya and Zambia. It is one of the most repressive regimes in the world. Conditions in the country are very difficult; compulsory army service can last for decades and there is no Parliament.



Temesgen Gebrehiwit  
Photo Isaac Shikapwasha

# Finding A Community At Brasenose

At the annual Alumni Dinner in September this year, outgoing President of the Brasenose Alumni Society, **Narmada Thiranagama (Modern History, 1996)**, gave a remarkable speech about her journey to Brasenose nearly 30 years ago. An extraordinary story, which led one academic to proclaim that it was the most moving speech he had heard in the Hall in 25 years.

It has been an honour to be the President of the Alumni Society. The Alumni Committee has welcomed me, helped me and befriended me, as has the society at large when we've met. As have the staff – just as they did when I was an undergraduate, they've been unfailingly kind and generous. Last week a member of staff asked me if I was a new Fellow, to my delight. I can have no higher aspiration now.

I will start with a confession: I never thought I'd be standing up here. No one is more surprised than me. I never even really thought about applying to Oxford.

I applied and sat the entrance exam because my teachers asked me to fill in a form on a Friday and bring it back on Monday. I filled in everything except the college I was applying to and my teacher told me to put Brasenose as my top choice.

When I got here for the interview, I was so convinced I didn't want to get in that I packed my bag and left it outside the interview room so that as soon as it was over, I could get the bus to London.

But I walked out a changed person. I enjoyed my interview so much that I remember thinking, "is this what Brasenose is like? Maybe I do want to go here after all!"

And so it proved! For me it meant three years to read, think and write in peace. Especially because when I was getting ready to leave home my father told me something he'd kept a secret. That we were on a terrorist hit list.

Scotland Yard had asked him to tell me since I was leaving home and I would no longer be under their protection. But I felt safer in Oxford, if guilty at leaving my father and little sister behind in danger. I was convinced they'd never be able to get past the Porters' Lodge.

Brasenose was a haven – but I was conscious that for most of my peers it was a springboard into life, which they were just discovering. They were stretching out into the world – I wanted to retreat.

I had already seen too much of the world and my broken past was imprinted with the deep indents of history. I was born in Sri Lanka where my Tamil mother and Sinhalese father got married privately in a friend's house, while communal riots raged outside.

I wasn't able to go to school for months at a time. We were bombed at night and shelled during the day. Our house was searched regularly, I was interrogated by armed men many times. My parents were deeply principled people with great political and personal integrity. This meant we were the enemy of the army and militant groups alike.

I didn't have school and I didn't have electricity, but I did have thousands of books in my home – from Dostoevsky to Dickens,



Narmada Thiranagama

Maupassant to Eliot, Tolstoy to Austen, Chekov to Lorca, Shakespeare to Stendhal. I read them all! Like Brasenose they had not been conceived with me in mind – I had never been the intended audience. But they had room for me. I didn't think I'd have a long life. So I read books, for all the lives and experiences I'd never have or know.

I read my way into an invisible community of learning, crossing a bridge conjured out of the thick air that hung as we waited for the bombers to arrive – a bridge that carried me through the trauma of war, my mother's assassination by terrorists, becoming a child refugee – all the way into this beautiful place.

My peers were exotic to me – no doubt I was the same to them. I was from state school, I was very poor and I'd lived through unsettling events – none of these things were good socially! I didn't make an effort to join in the social life of the College. I thought – all I need is books, not people – yes, I was a silly young person then. Friendship found me here. They cared for me without me asking, they offered love and kindness when I didn't look for it, I became drawn into the community of this College without realising.

The Catholic socialist activist Dorothy Day wrote, *"we cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet too, even with a crust where there is companionship. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community. It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on"*.

Because companionship found me here in Brasenose and it happened without me realising. It is companionship that is at the heart of a learning that roots you into a deeper wisdom. This is a lesson that can only come with experience and not just through books.

What better illustration could there be, of this, than our gathering today. We start as students and then enter a community that sustains us throughout our lives. We grow into it, we don't leave it. There's a place at the table even for those who don't look for it.

There was for me.

Find out more about the Brasenose Alumni Society here: <https://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/bnc-society>

# Your News



Photo: GBMRT

In October 2022, **Zoe Woodroffe (Chemistry, 2001)** travelled to Stawell, Australia as a member of the Great Britain Match Rifle Team. She and the team competed in the Australian individual match rifle championships, and then successfully retained the Woomera trophy, beating Australia with a record match score of 1764.170v ex 1800.360v. This was the second

cap for Zoe having made her team debut in 2019 when the match was held at Bisley. Former Oxford University Rifle Club (OURC) members Derek Lowe and Mike Buchanan were Vice Captain and reserve respectively.

**Chris Durrant (Modern History, 1963)** has published his 3rd novel, *Twilight in the Forest*. The book follows a family in 1950s Kenya, when the country was in the throes of the Mau Mau Emergency, and traces the effects these extraordinary events had on ordinary people.

**Nicholas Bradbury (Theology, 1968)** sent us this photo from the latest Staircase XV reunion in College, organised jointly with **Chris Lowe (PPE, 1968)**, and reminds us how it all began: 'We originally went for dinner at the start of their first term in 1968 and got to know each other. 25 years later we had a reunion dinner with Bert Pennylarter (our scout) as Guest of Honour. We stayed in our old rooms. Repeated for 40th and 50th anniversaries, and we had the 55th on September 9th 2023 with a champagne reception in the Old Library, (excellent) dinner in the Medieval Kitchen (overseen by Penny and Nicky) and dessert in the SCR. We hope to hold out till our 60th!' **Roger Gill (Modern Languages, 1968)** previously wrote an article about the origins of the 1968 Staircase XV reunions in the Michaelmas 2018 edition of *Brazen Notes*.

In June, 1972 Year Rep **George Fisher (Physics, 1972)** arranged another excursion with some of his cohort, this time on an Oxford punting trip. They had a great time on the river and followed this up with lunch at the Cherwell Boat House. We understand that nobody fell in, though there may have been some close calls. George plans to arrange more 1972 get-togethers in the future.



Photo (starting at the near end of the table, and circulating anti-clockwise):

**George Fisher (Physics, 1972), George Adam (Chemistry, 1972), [Judith Adam],**

**Ian Pirks (Mathematics, 1972), Kevin Lewis (Chemistry, 1972), [Sue Griffiths], Gareth Griffiths (Mathematics, 1972), Robin Lane (Chemistry, 1972).**



Two other Year Reps also arranged get-togethers in London for their respective cohorts over the summer months: **Miles Overton (Geography, 2015)** arranged a gathering of 2015 matriculands in Regent's Park in June, with around 25 people across a mix of different friendship

groups. **Rosie Duthie (Jurisprudence, 2016)** arranged a party for her 2016 contemporaries, with more than 30 people up on the communal roof terrace of her apartment. Rosie explains 'On Saturday 19 August 2022, Matriculation Year 2016 descended on Angel, Islington for their first year-wide reunion. Having graduated just months before the first Covid lockdowns, this was the first time many of us had the chance to catch-up since Brasenose. The sun was shining for a full afternoon of drinks, and we found so much to catch-up on that we continued into the evening with dinner and a trip to the local pub.'



From left to right: **George Jones (History & Modern Languages, 1968), Alan Dean (Physics, 1967), James Applebee (son of Rick Applebee (Modern Languages, 1968) - deceased), John Laurence Pearce (Modern History, 1968), Roger Gill (Modern Languages, 1968), Ulrike Yeomans, Andy Yeomans (Modern Languages, 1968), Nicholas Bradbury**

**(Theology, 1968) (rear), Michael Mayer (Physics, 1967), Brian Roebuck (Mathematics, 1968), Stephen Slade (English, 1968), Chris Lowe (PPE, 1968), Tony Besgrove (Natural Sciences, 1968).**

**David Clare (1984)** writes: "My contemporaries may remember me as the obsessive film buff forever shooting off to some screen or other and organizing the film society that began at Brasenose, as it happens. Well, a lifelong ambition to create my own online film guide has at last seen the light of day in a form I would consider worthy of the dream. That at least, some might find useful, and, I would myself aver, comes at the subject with an academic's eye." Find out more: [www.cinefileonline.co.uk](http://www.cinefileonline.co.uk)

**Jules Boardman (English, 1966)** returned in June to his school, Rugby, to attend the bicentenary celebrations of the invention of Rugby Union by **William Webb Ellis (Rugby School, BNC, 1825)**. According to legend Webb Ellis "with a fine disregard for the rules of football...first took the ball in his arms and ran with it" in 1823. Jules is pictured with his personalised commemoration cap and with a modern legend of the sport, Jonny Wilkinson, fly half for the England team that won the Webb Ellis Rugby World Cup in 2003.



Congratulations to **Jemma Young (PGCE, 2016)** whose daughter, Lorena Autumn, was born on the 21st August 2021. Five weeks early but healthy and happy!

At the end of Summer we sadly had to say goodbye to Director of Music Christian

Wilson after eight years at Brasenose – we wish him all the very best in his new role. Taking over on musical duties from Michaelmas Term, we are very happy to welcome new Director of Music Polina Sosnina. Polina is currently Associate Organist and Director of the Junior Choir at St Martin-in-the-Fields, which she joined

### **David Clark (1970) The Aftermath /**

**Binsey Walk:** The day following the BNC Alumni Society Annual Dinner, ten pilgrims of all faiths and none including Chaplain Revd David Sheen set off from Brasenose where C S Lewis had been inspired to create *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, to the Church of St Margaret of Antioch in Binsey, whose churchyard contains The Treacle Well from *Alice in Wonderland*. The story of the well is no less wonderful than Lewis Carroll's story. St Frideswide, Patron Saint of Oxford had been pursued by a Saxon Prince Algar who was struck blind for his temerity. Frideswide distraught at the affliction to her rejected lover prayed to St Margaret, struck the ground and out sprang water which she used to cure the Prince's blindness.

On the way there George Balkwill (of the Alumni Office) showed us the fabulous new Frewin development, built over the site of the rediscovered St Mary's College. Crossing Port Meadow we came to the Medley Bridge and crossed to the other side of the Thames passing the Medley boat yard. Shortly afterwards the road branches towards Binsey village and a few minutes further is the Church of St Margaret. David Sheen recited Psalm 84:

as Organ Scholar in 2018. She recently graduated with a distinction from the Royal College of Music, and has previously held organ scholarships at Temple Church and the London Oratory, as well as the Director of Music post at St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Brentwood.



Left to right: Marilyn Clark, **Amanda Pullinger (1984), David Clark (1970), Alexandra Marks (1977), David Bradbury (1982), Drusilla Gabbott (1982), Ian Gregory (PPE, 1982)**

*"As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools."*

After an excellent lunch at The Perch Inn, the rain duly came and covered the land in pools.

Our thanks to our Chaplain and to the The Revd Clare Sykes, Rector, The Osney Benefice, whose team have done such excellent work in keeping the Binsey Church and Churchyard open and in such good condition.

## Academic Highlights

- Congratulations to Tutorial Fellow in Engineering Science, Professor Harvey Burd on receiving the title of Full Professor in the University's Recognition of Distinction Awards 2023.
- Engineering Tutor Prof. Perla Maiolino has been invited to provide a demonstration in a Royal Institution Christmas Lecture – look out for more details at [www.rigb.org](http://www.rigb.org)
- Welcome to new Tutorial Fellow and Associate Professor of Experimental Psychology Dejan Draschkow. Professor Draschkow received an Early Career Excellent Teacher Award in 2021 under

the Medical Science's Division's Teaching Excellence Awards scheme. Recently he has been working on an online campaign, along with his Department of Experimental Psychology colleague Dr Sage Boettcher, on the topic of 'The Brains Behind Your Breakfast'. In a short video they examine the 'cognitive orchestra' of complex mechanisms at work inside the human brain when we perform tasks, from everyday activities such as making breakfast, to more complex endeavours such as the work of skilled craftspeople

or athletes. *Watch the video and find out more: [bit.ly/BreakfastBrains](https://bit.ly/BreakfastBrains)*

- Welcome also to Fellow and Associate Professor in Comparative Politics, Katerina Tertychnaya. Professor Tertychnaya was previously an Associate Professor of Comparative Politics at University College London. Her research interests include public opinion, protests, and authoritarian politics, and her research has appeared in the *American Political Science Review* and the *Journal of Politics*, among others. *More at: <https://katerinatertychnaya.com/>*

# Save The Date

## Forthcoming Events

### Brasenose Alumni Society Monthly Drinks in London

From 6.30pm on the first Tuesday of the month.

The Red Lion, 23 Crown Passage, St James', London, SW1Y 6PP

Please do join us to reconnect with old friends. As always, all alumni and their guests are welcome!

No booking or tickets required, just turn up...

6 February 2024    5 March 2024

2 April 2024        7 May 2024

Go to [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events) for an up-to-date list of our upcoming events, and to register.

Please note that any new alumni accounts will need to be verified (during normal College working hours) before making event bookings via the online service.

To update your contact details using our online alumni community, visit our alumni pages at: [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni) and follow the 'Update your information' link.

### 2024 Gaudies

#### Gaudy for 2006-2007

Friday 15 March 2024

#### Gaudy for 1963-1966

Friday 21 June 2024

#### Gaudy for 1983-1985

Friday 27 September 2024

### Alumni Garden Party

Sunday 28 July 2024

### Jubilee Lunches

#### Diamond Jubilee Lunch for matriculation years 1964 and earlier

Wednesday 27 March 2024

#### Golden Jubilee Lunch for matriculation years 1965-1974

Friday 12 April 2024

Bookings for these events will open a couple of months before the event dates.

## Recent Events



The Brasenose Alumni Garden Party, July 2023



Gaudy for 1980-82, June 2023



Gaudy for 1980-82, June 2023



Gaudy for 1996-97, September 2023



Gaudy for 1980-82, June 2023



Three Brasenose Alumni Society Presidents:  
(L-R) Jane Johnson (2023-24), Amanda Pullinger (2020-22), Narmada Thiranagama (2022-23), Annual Dinner 2023




## Call for College Memories!

Have you stumbled across any BNC gems recently that you'd like to donate to the Archives? We'd love to see! Please do get in touch to let us know what you've found at [archives@bnc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:archives@bnc.ox.ac.uk).

### Contact Us

Alumni Relations and Development Office  
Brasenose College  
Radcliffe Square  
Oxford  
OX1 4AJ  
Tel: +44 (0)1865 287275  
Email: [development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk)

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