Christ Church Matters

Celebrating 40 years of Christ Church Picture Gallery...
Editorial

As another academic year draws to a close, Christ Church begins to welcome the many thousands of visitors who pass through its gates for summer schools, conferences and tours over the summer months. Once again we have news to report from across our unique foundation as college and Cathedral, from the epic win by four junior members on University Challenge to the installation of a beautifully crafted new fountain in the Cathedral cloisters. There are also details of all our forthcoming events.

One of the highlights of this Trinity 2008 edition of Christ Church Matters is an article to mark the 40th anniversary of the Picture Gallery. Despite being a relatively recent addition to the fabric of a Tudor college, the Picture Gallery has played an important role in the life of the House since it was opened by the Queen back in May 1968. On page two Jacqueline Thalmann, the current Curator, takes us on a tour of the gallery’s most remarkable design features, a structure that is ‘between fortified castle and playful orangery’ and one which has recently been awarded Grade II listed status.

On 19-21 September Oxford will once again play host to the collegiate Oxford Alumni Weekend. This year’s programme offers a huge variety of talks, tours, exhibitions, lectures and even a ‘Family Programme’ catering for children. If you would like to request a brochure, or book online, then please visit www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk for more details. We hope to see many old members at the Association Dinner on 20 September, which has been scheduled to coincide with the Oxford Alumni Weekend. A booking form is provided in the magazine for the Association Dinner and for the Rugby Gaudy taking place on 30 September.

Whether you wish to attend one of our regular events, dine at High Table and catch up with your old tutors or simply pop by to show your family around the haunts of your undergraduate days, we are here to help make the arrangements for you and look forward to welcoming you back to the House sometime soon.

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The curious incident of the dog in the night... One Monday night in July 1713, Richard Jenkinson visited the privy in Peckwater Quad, and heard a dog whining somewhere nearby. 18th century Oxford nights must have been just as noisy as they are today, and Jenkinson, who had been at Christ Church for nine years and lived in Oxford as a child, took no notice at all. John Wainwright, a young graduate heading, in later life, for the Exchequer in Ireland, also heard noises when he spent a penny that evening. He assumed that someone out in the lane was suffering the effects of too much beer from the Bear and, equally unconcerned, went back to his room to sleep. Another undergraduate, staggering across the quad before turning in around 11pm, was petrified by the strange sounds issuing forth from the ‘house of office’, and fled to another privy somewhere else in college.

Three days later, someone commented to Thomas Terry, canon and tutor to scores of young men during his life-time at the House, that Francis Bayly was missing. Bayly was apparently a rather insignificant young man, a commoner from Ludlow who was in his third year at Christ Church. It was a habit of his to disappear occasionally for a day or two, so no-one had taken much notice of his absence. There were far more important things to worry about; a new dean, George Smalridge was being installed that week, and there were innumerable preparations in hand. The absence of one undergraduate, especially one who often went AWOL, was a long way down the list of priorities. Three days later, though, people were beginning to worry, and a search-party was put together.

People were questioned, and a witness said that he had seen Bayly, in his nightgown, heading towards the Peckwater privy around nine on the Monday evening. It slowly began to dawn that no-one had seen him since. Bayly, only eighteen, was found completely smothered having fallen backwards into the pit beneath the privy seats. Speculation was rife: Bayly was a renowned drinker, said some, and must have been several sheets to the wind. Nonsense, said others, he was a moderate young man who must just have fallen asleep, with disastrous consequences. Canon Stratford, always one to make helpful remarks after the event, announced that, in his opinion, the privy seats were too big and had no backs, and he had often commented to this effect. Canon Terry was in a state of the “utmost affliction” at the loss of a pupil in such distressing circumstances, and the affair can have done little to encourage Smalridge as he stepped into the inauspicious shoes of Francis Atterbury. But there was no dog in the night...
It is probably not insignificant that it was in the year 1968, arguably the most dramatic year in post-war history, that Christ Church Picture Gallery opened its doors to the public. On the 2nd May 1968 Her Majesty the Queen, Visitor of the House, inaugurated the Picture Gallery and Blue Boar Quad, both designed by the architect team Powell and Moya. Subsequently, from 6th May 1968, Christ Church’s important Old Master collection was open to the wider public. The aim was to improve access to such art treasures in the heart of Oxford and by doing so to enhance the collection’s significance and international reputation as an educational tool and academic resource.

Christ Church has a long history of art. Its outstanding art collection, which had previously been housed and displayed in the Lower Library, had steadily grown since its beginnings in 1765, the year General John Guise bequeathed around 1,800 Old Master drawings and 200 Old Master paintings to the House. When more book-space was needed it became a matter of urgency to find adequate housing for the works of art. Among several suggestions – the most problematic was perhaps the idea to add a gallery on top of the new Blue Boar building – was the plan to build a dedicated art gallery. The plot for it was found in the Dean’s back garden. Charles (later Lord) Forte generously funded the project, and Powell and Moya started to design the building after being given the commission in January 1963.

Perhaps it is best at this stage to address the difficulties with the building so that I can then sing my eulogy without interruption. Yes, there are problems with the structure, and as the forthcoming catalogue for the 40th anniversary exhibition will show, everyone who has worked in the Picture Gallery has experienced some kind of drama involving the building – mainly concerning water. There was the ‘production’ of protective water-hats for paintings, the carrying of sandbags, the mopping and drying of floors. We all became nervous as soon as the weather forecast started predicting rain, and last year when the water was rising my nights grew sleepless – after all, the gallery is a subterranean construction. Nothing dramatic happened, but after a workshop by English Heritage in Kenwood House with the uplifting title Surviving Disaster, I rushed out to buy an ‘acqua vac’ which I thought to be the most useful object to survive a disaster. It has still not been in use after the Clerk of Works re-asphalted and re-insulated the last of the weak points in the roof.
last year. I may also add that that these are not problems unique to Powell and Moya’s building, for even the oldest museums struggle with the elements, as has been seen in the Uffizi in Florence and the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden.

The building we now have - Christ Church Picture Gallery - is arguably the most modest and unassuming of purpose-built galleries and offers one of the most congenial display spaces for the collection it contains. Contrary to most modern and contemporary museums it does not want to outshine the art, but enhance it.

The brief for the Picture Gallery building imposed severe restrictions on its design. The allocated plot was limited on the east by the wall separating Christ Church property from Corpus Christi, and on the south and the west by a number of large historic trees (including the Cheshire Cat Tree). The allocated space as a whole was nestled between the Deanery, Library, Cathedral and a Georgian building with students’ and tutors’ rooms. Thus access was only possible through already existing houses or private gardens. The height of the new gallery was also determined by its location. It must not obstruct the view, and so needed to be lower than the surrounding structures; it also must not impinge on the light levels of the rooms in the Canterbury building. In short, the Gallery had to blend into the existing historic environment as if it was not there and indeed, from the outside, it is invisible.

As with so many of Oxford’s most exciting features, it is unassuming and hidden from the public gaze. It plays with the symbolism of the world of Alice in Wonderland. The rabbit-hole to the Picture Gallery is the entrance to an eighteenth-century accommodation block (Canterbury 4) which does not differ from the other staircase entrances. Visitors have to take a ‘plunge’ when they choose to go down the steps into the basement where they have to pass through a short tunnel under the Georgian structure to emerge in the Picture Gallery.

Already at the entrance desk the airiness of the construction betrays its partly subterranean nature. The L-shaped building encloses a quadrangle that is completed by the old Corpus Christi wall in the east and the Georgian Canterbury block in the north. The Gallery sides to that quadrangle, or the cloister as it is called, are glazed. At this early point in the building the architects’ ideas for the Picture Gallery already reveal themselves. It is a structure between fortified castle and playful orangery, built with a love for precision and detail which is visually embodied in the subtle interplay of different materials. The grey concrete with the warm beige of the Portland stone, the brass and the glass, in some parts of the Gallery accentuated with wood, are the building materials which also act as ornament. The

“It plays with the symbolism of the world of Alice in Wonderland”
The corridor/cloister becomes an intercessory space between the outside (the garden) and the inside (the collection).

The glass wall on the left, which miraculously carries the weight of the upward moving ceiling with the help of three slender concrete columns, is structured with vertical brass beams. They intersect the glass panes which allow light to flow in from the garden. The glass front grows as the corridor stretches and rises from the basement to the ground-level. These features allow the impression of a cooling cloister – and as in a monastery it is closed to the outside gaze. On the right side of the corridor, on the other hand, the fortress character of the building has been emphasised – two doorways with sliding metal-barred gates and Portland stone door-surrounds open into the rooms which house the major part of the paintings.

The first opening leads into an intimate sky-lit room for the smaller panels of the early Italian Masters (the Primitive Gallery, named after the traditional term for early Italian artists – the primitivi). The room, initially painted white, has red walls now. Interestingly, this not only enhances the splendour of the gilded paintings, but also accentuates the fortress-like architecture. The second opening further down the corridor leads into the Main Gallery with the larger sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings. Annibale Carracci’s Butcher’s Shop and Van Dyck’s Continence of Scipio occupy prominent places. The low-hung wooden ceiling in the middle of this room is supported by four concrete columns and surrounded by sloping sky-lights which allow the walls to be subtly lit. Back in the airy corridor steps lead up to the ground-floor level. Only the glass wall now separates the Gallery interior from the lawn outside.

The ground-floor level is almost exclusively dedicated to the drawings in the collection. The Drawings Gallery - Christ Church Picture Gallery can rightly claim to be one of the most inspiring twentieth-century spaces in Oxford.
40 years of Christ Church Picture Gallery

Still one of Oxford’s best kept secrets

A catalogue is being published to accompany the 40th anniversary celebrations of Christ Church Picture Gallery. The celebrations will combine two celebratory exhibitions—one of Old Master drawings selected by the Gallery’s previous Assistant Curators, and the other documenting the history of Powell and Mason’s prize-winning purpose-built art museum at the back of the Dean’s garden.

The catalogue is unique among exhibition catalogues, because it contains essays by a group of art historians, united through Christ Church Picture Gallery, contributing reminiscences of their tenure here, rather than academic essays from their field of research. At a time of growing interest in art, museums and the history of collections, these accounts are enlightening and entertaining. The individual essays are followed by a personal choice by each contributor of drawings from Christ Church’s collection. Included are such outstanding works as The Archer by an anonymous French artist of around 1400; the Deposition by Pontormo, Leonardo da Vinci’s Grotesque Head, Verrocchio’s Head of a Woman, which Christopher Butler recently described as the most beautiful thing in the possession of Christ Church; the idiosyncratic Jacone; the recently acquired Giaquinto - as well as Tintoretto, Raphael, Michelangelo, Bernini, and many more.

The contributors to this project, listed in chronological order of their employment in the Picture Gallery, are:

Jacqueline Thalmann (2003 – ) current Curator of the Picture Gallery at Christ Church, Oxford.

As the Dean says in his foreword to the catalogue, the gallery is worth celebrating! We hope therefore that you will make time this summer to come and visit.

The beautifully produced catalogue (original price £19.95) can be purchased at a discounted rate of £14.95 at the Picture Gallery for the duration of the exhibition.
One of the House’s treasures is its world famous cathedral choir and here is a rare opportunity for the informed enthusiast and amateur music lover alike to join an exciting journey through half a millennium of English church music! This event will appeal to all who wish to learn more about an intriguing national musical heritage.

Most of England’s greatest composers have been associated with the Church. As early as the 1520s John Taverner was writing glorious polyphonic music for the pre-Reformation liturgy. A generation later, under the patronage of Elizabeth I and James I, there was a flowering of Church music for the newly reformed services, producing masterpieces by composers like Byrd, Tallis, Weelkes and Gibbons.

The Baroque was in full swing by the end of the 17th century. The church music of Purcell epitomized the new theatrical style with a strong Italian flavour. Handel, initially successful as a composer of Italian opera transferred his energetic dramatic style to the oratorio and anthem and became a naturalized Englishman. Until the mid 19th century, church musicians struggled in his shadow and musical standards in Cathedrals declined.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution famous figures such as S.S. Wesley and then Parry and Stanford spearheaded an exciting revival. The glories of the 16th century have been matched in the 20th century, with Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Walton and Britten all composing extensively for the Church. And the future looks bright, as so many contemporary composers are drawn to this powerful source of creativity.

There is no better place to explore this wonderful tradition than in Christ Church. Our Cathedral Choir was an integral part of Cardinal Wolsey’s early 16th century foundation, in which he set out to display opulence and extravagance in the institution’s music just as in its buildings. Then, as today, the choir’s task was to ‘sing the offices’ daily in the Cathedral and John Taverner was appointed as the first Master of Choristers in 1526.

The quality of music in those pre-Reformation days is evident from the complexity of the part books handed down to us from that period.

A succession of fine musicians has led this tradition across the centuries including Crotch and Ouseley in the 19th century and Harris and Walton in the 20th.

Today’s Choir under the direction of Stephen Darlington, expresses a range and quality of music comparable with that envisaged at the foundation, and has received widespread recognition and praise. For all its pedigree Christ

Cathedral Voices across Half a Millennium 10 – 14 September 2008
Church Cathedral Choir – ‘one of the finest choirs on Earth’ (Channel 4) is renowned for the youthfulness of sound and its adventurous programming.

The programme is led by Stephen Darlington, Director of Music, and presenters include Howard Goodall, Dean Christopher Lewis, Professor Jonathan Cross and other specialist speakers from Oxford and beyond. It also offers an opportunity to explore our unique musical, religious and collegiate institution. The Evensong and Gala Concert programmes present gems from the repertoire of English liturgical music over the past 500 years.

An award-winning gargoyle design for the Bodleian Library; a Christmas carol; a hand-knitted scarf; an oil-painted canvas fully five feet by three feet; and a first novel (author aged eleven): what these have in common is that they are all from the creative output of boys at Christ Church Cathedral School. It is widely felt that, nation-wide, much has been lost in the drive for better standards of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. We are fortunate at Christ Church Cathedral School to have the freedom of curriculum planning that enables us both to properly address the academic development of our pupils and to expose them to a wide range of activity in order to stimulate creativity and imagination. Whilst we frequently refer to these pursuits as “extra-curricular” to differentiate them from timetabled subjects they are not all, properly speaking, “outside” the curriculum. Modern research into the very different ways of learning found amongst children worldwide – the explanation of the concept of emotional intelligence, for example – has re-emphasised the necessity to view time spent on these activities as absolutely essential, not as a desirable “luxury” once the academic work has been done.

Dig a little deeper into the creative examples given at the start of this piece and their educational significance is even clearer. The gargoyle design – well that was inspired by the reading of Jerome K Jerome’s “Three Men in a Boat”; the carol arose out of the experience (and acquired skills) of being a chorister; the scarf was knitted as part of a weekly club activity called “Life Skills”; the inspiration behind the canvas was the gospel accounts of the Annunciation; and the enterprising novelist distributed his novel in chapters over the internet in return for a modest charge. In other words none of these acts of creation happened in isolation: they were part of a breadth of experience that is essential if children are to grow up well-rounded individuals and not merely auxiliary troops in the league-table wars.

Not that the boys necessarily see it this way. Ask any of them why they spend time and effort on extra-curricular activity and they will say, “Because it’s fun!”
For those who ever doubted that life at Christ Church bears more than a passing resemblance to the Barchester Chronicles, the sight, earlier this year, of an author by the name of Trollope in the Cathedral pulpit would have provided plenty of food for thought! The occasion was our annual service of Candlemas on Sunday 3rd February when the Cathedral played host to the Mulberry Bush School from Standlake, a special needs school for children with extreme social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children from the Mulberry Bush led in the procession at the start of the service carrying candles to mark the 60th Anniversary of the founding of their remarkable school, and Joanna Trollope and Douglas Hurd read lessons. The Cathedral looked heavenly and the choir sang like angels, but it will be the memory of those enthralled young people carrying their candles, lights of the world, that will live longest in the memory.

Outside, in the cloister, we have been witnessing the creation of a new fountain. A gift by Mr Robert Sandell, an old member of the House, it was dedicated by the Dean on June 19th, and marks, for visitors to the College, the threshold of the Cathedral’s sacred space. The fountain has been designed by the sculptor Gary Breeze to stand on a stone pavement shaped in the form of a cross of Lorraine. At one time a stone square stood in this position in the cloister, the foundations, it is thought, of a Tudor belfry built by Cardinal Wolsey in the 1520s. These original pieces of stone were discovered when the Oxford Archaeological Unit excavated the cloister garth in the summer of 1985 in an attempt to discover the true nature of the structure. In the process an ancient Saxon burial ground was unearthed containing bodies which may well date back as far as the late 8th century. This puts them within a generation or so of the traditional date for the life of St Frideswide, the patron saint of Oxford, whose Saxon Minster (the first church built in the city) once stood on the site of the Cathedral. To such an ancient and significant site we now welcome our new fountain, and look forward to the intriguing prospect of its future use for al fresco christenings. The Christ Church Chronicles? Now there’s an idea Joanna!
Notes from the Deanery

Christ Church and Oval House

There we all were, watching an adaptation of Eugène Ionesco’s ‘The Bald Soprano’ which is outlandish, surreal and therefore hard to do. The occasion was part of a ‘Friends’ night at Oval House at the end of January and a good large group from Christ Church were fed (Jerk Chicken), watered and entertained. Absurdism can only be done well with aplomb, and was.

The most impressive part was talking to the young actors from South London afterwards and discovering what a difference it makes to their lives. That sounds general and something of a cliché, but each example is powerful and different.

Oval House was founded by Christ Church graduates in the 1930s in order to encourage self-determination among inner-city young people. In many ways it had a classic ‘university settlement’ style: outward bound and other healthy activities for the people of Kennington. That did good work, but what was remarkable was the development of ideas in the 1960s, when there was a shift to the dramatic arts with an emphasis on wide participation and experiment. The project transformed itself and continued to blossom. Oval House has helped innumerable people and produced many well-known actors of whom Pierce Brosnan and Tim Roth are the most frequently mentioned.

Recently there have been further examples of its creativity and the theatre is now full of excitement, some of it so far out as to be way beyond my reach. Yet the original aim of supporting self-determination survives. And the original name also continues with the persistence of a cardinal’s hat: when we wade through the official stuff at the AGM, it bears the solemn title ‘Christ Church (Oxford) United Clubs Ltd’.

If you look at the website (www.ovalhouse.com) you will see material on performances, summer schools, exhibitions and youth arts workshops and you will get something of the many flavours of the place. What you will see less of are the exciting plans for the future; Oval House may even move to Brixton to continue its work on a larger site.

This piece for Christ Church Matters is not an appeal for money. It aims to give information which may be of interest to current members and old members of the House. It comes, however, with a request of a somewhat different kind. There are a number of members of Christ Church who give a little time and energy to being involved in Oval House. If you would like to explore that possibility, please get in touch with me or indeed with Deborah Bestwick at Oval House. Skill at treading the boards is not necessary… You will enjoy it.

deborah.bestwick@ovalhouse.com

The most impressive part was talking to the young actors… and discovering what a difference it makes to their lives.

Deborah Bestwick
Christopher Butler
A tribute from his former students

Christopher Butler joined Christ Church in 1964 (goodness, I was two), and retired this June. He doesn’t seem to be the retiring sort, being always so engaged in the life of the college, the lives of his students, and the lives of books (which often seemed literally alive in his room, stacked teeteringly high and barely contained in slithering piles). I know that there will be events to formally mention and thank Christopher for forty-four years of his work and that this is just a brief, introductory paragraph to others by his former students. Generations of us have been changed immeasurably by Christopher’s intellectual and human generosity, his pleasure in people, life, art in all forms but literature in particular. Tom Quad will feel a lot bigger and barer without his rooms to go to.

Looking back it strikes me now that we were very privileged to regularly get a whole hour with Chris, to explore his brain, even if it frequently made mine hurt.

Chris Butler was not only a great tutor, he was, and still is, a great bloke.

Even though 18 years have passed since I first nervously pushed open the door to his lovely room in Tom Quad, many of his observations and comments stay with me in vivid detail.

Every time I hear Bob Dylan I think of Chris telling me that the musician’s lyrics were the closest thing to great poetry you could find in music. But that they could never be classed as truly great because they rhymed.

As a young northern lefty without any of the intellectual building blocks required to support my views, he destroyed Marxism for me in about three minutes of utter brilliance. His damning conclusion, “it’s just so bloody boring”, remains my final thought on the matter.

In 1993, with my finals drawing close, I went to see Chris for a bit of a catch up on some long forgotten subject. Early in the hour we started discussing the mind-body debate, only remembering to return to the subject of the tutorial as the bell in Tom Tower chimed for me to leave. He was just too interesting to confine the conversation to that week’s book.

A couple of quick memories. A lovely summer lunch at his family home with my fellow English students, which made Oxford life seem languid and lovely in a way I thought was long gone. And
arriving nervously at the Dean’s Collections only to have Chris say such kind words that I skipped down to the bar for a celebratory pint.

Looking back it strikes me now that we were very privileged to regularly get a whole hour with Chris, to explore his brain, even if it frequently made mine hurt. But more than the intellectual insight he provided, it’s the fun I remember, and that great booming laugh that made you bloody pleased to be there with the man.

Enjoy your retirement, Chris, and I feel a pang of sympathy for the future generations of students who shall miss out.

Pipe smoke; the smell of freshly brewed coffee; new books, a slew of them every week, piled on a low table – these were the essential constituents of Christopher Butler’s rooms in Tom Quad. Visits, up that short flight of stairs, required your knowing – well in advance – your stuff: that you’d done your reading and had something to say. Yet Christopher was a relaxed, encyclopaedic teacher, allowing his pupils to think they knew much more than they did. He lost patience with me only once, when I invented a pathetic excuse for not having completed an essay on Wuthering Heights. I tried comprehensively to make up for this in my last year by working hard for him on Critical Theory, my specialist option and a topic Christopher knew his way round like the rest of us know our own homes: but I was an erratic scholar. This did not prevent his offering me, as that year’s Schools’ dinner came to an end, a private sentence – just some simple words – of genuine encouragement about what I might do in life. Aged 47, I’m still trying to follow his suggestion.

**Scarlett Baron**
Senior Scholar

It might be a platitude that I wouldn’t be where I am now without Chris and all he’s done for me over the years, but it’s nonetheless entirely and utterly true. But more to the point it would have been far less fun on the way. The sheer joy of it, the delight of ideas, reading, exploration, art... life, really. Right from the start, I don’t know how, Chris managed to turn that terrifying wealth of books which lay four-deep on every shelf and every available inch of floor not into a barrier or a challenge but into a promise of pleasure, the sense that life was too short when there was so much to discover and enjoy. So thank you, Chris, I’ll be forever in your debt. I’m loving it and I owe you.

**Sos Eltis**
(1984)

Before you ask, the answer is YES!

There have been lamentations in Oxford’s student newspapers this week. Tutors, apparently, impose a cruel and unusual punishment. By forced labour, their undergraduates must produce two essays in the first week of term. Indeed. After the Long Vacation, doesn’t a chickabiddy thinker need to
spend at least 12.5% of the term settling in—not writing?

In the autumn of 1991, I had no regrets about staying up all night to finish my novice Oxford essay, on ‘Some aspects of death in Jane Eyre’. I would have been content to work straight through three nights per week, if that was the cost of admittance to Christopher Butler’s rooms. For over that threshold, it was clear that literature is an awfully big adventure.

Now to step back and explain a little. In the Trinidad of the 1970s and 1980s—newly post-Independence, well pre-Internet—where I grew up, it was bloody impossible to lay hands on a decent selection of books. Yet I was comparatively lucky. On family holidays to print-rich territories, we were able to acquire new reading stock. Carefully we damaged it: bending, staining, signing, stamping: so that the Customs officials checking suitcases for imported stuff could participate in the fiction that these books were what we had taken out of the country with us to, ah, read in those long English summer evenings when ice cream stands and the sights of Hyde Park failed to entertain. My family, too, had been readers for generations (spurred on, perhaps, by the imperial official who registered my Sanskrit-trained great-grandfather as ‘illiterate’). Cousins, often much older, had passed down odd volumes. So my brother and I played Biggles on our Port of Spain swing set, and I read Daphne du Maurier during the gothic darkness of hurricane-season, no-electricity downpours. No wonder I had a fit of weeping on first being taken into Foyles and seeing that it was possible to have all three volumes of a trilogy available on one shelf, not just, say, volume II plus the exercise of inventing one’s own beginning and ending.

Then there were the so-called libraries. In my Trinidadian Preparatory school and Convent school, these were similar. A hundred years of discards, mostly ungrouped and uncensored, from better-off local families, mouldered genteelly, like the brass- and termite musical instruments that tended to moulder nearby. So in the same week a nine-year-old could take out a set of plot summaries of the most lurid nineteenth-century operas (yes, make up your own idea of the music) and T.H. White’s Sword in the Stone. Final and most formidable among these libraries was my grandfather’s. It occupied a long room on the ground floor of his house, past his maid’s quarters, parrot cages, lotus pond and cow dung oven. It was windowless, airless, blue-carpeted, ventilated by two ancient air conditioning units that threatened to explode. Woods exotic to Trinidad, carved into lecterns, supported gigantic editions of Sanskrit texts swathed in yards of saffron silk. Leather armchairs swallowed the reader. There was a cane sword, a replica skull; the Rajput weapon belonging to an ancestor; and, in a safe at the further end of the room, my great-grandmother’s ashes, waiting to be conveyed to the Ganges when next my grandfather had time for a ceremonial expedition across the black water to India. This library was the original of those which V.S. Naipaul, my grandfather’s nephew, gave in caricatural form to various of his arriviste characters. Unlike Naipaul’s characters’ collections, here the books were well selected, the pages cut, and the texts annotated. But what of the sign my grandfather had placed on the door, to deter borrowers? “BEFORE YOU ASK, THE ANSWER IS NO.”

There was a culture shock when I stepped over Christopher Butler’s threshold. It was the shock of familiarity. That smell! Leather, paper, ink, wood, gently warmed by their proximity to each other, by human handling and breath. That light! The curious, semi-golden darkness that books seem to give off. I knew where I was. I was among reading. The pursuit of reading and writing itself seemed here to have taken physical form. There were piles of books, labyrinths of them, sea stacks, coral formations, more organic than warehoused. To enter was almost like stepping into an allegorical palace.
Exotic subversions

In the course of the nineteenth century, France built up a colonial empire second only to Britain’s. The literary tradition in which it dealt with its colonial ‘Other’ is frequently understood in terms of Edward Said’s description of Orientalism as both a Western projection and a ‘will to govern’ over the Orient. Jennifer Yee’s book argues that it is necessary to nuance Said’s vision of exotic literature as a textual assertion of Western dominance. Key literary works by Chateaubriand, Hugo, Flaubert, and the early French modernist Victor Segalen, are examined to look at the variety of ways in which exoticism functions subversively throughout the ‘long’ nineteenth century. These works of literature elude simple categorisation, offering glimpses of colonial resistance, a critique of imperialist hegemony, or a blurring of the boundaries between the Self and the Other. They also reflect a new Romantic sensibility to languages, and explore the presence of foreign languages in dialogue with French, in ways that upset views of literary language as normative and centralizing. Their preoccupation with problems of identity, their critique of modes of power and knowledge, and their refusal to see language as universal and transparent, are all aspects that make them direct precursors of recent postcolonial literature.

Jennifer Yee
French Tutor
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Exotic Subversions can be purchased via Oxbow Books at their website: www.oxbowbooks.com

Christopher would sink deeper amidst the books. His long form curved as if hammocked by the darkness of hundreds of essays still unwritten or unmarked, or as if parenthetical to the voice of the undergraduate reading the weekly essay aloud. If he had been visible when one entered the room, he was sure to disappear. I felt urged to write as well as possible. I sometimes made up what I was reading, departing altogether from what I had written. If only I could make the listener in the shadows chuckle or snort or object, the great crest of hair might rocket up, catching the book-light, and sharp dialogue begin. And if I were forced to defend myself or summarize an argument on the spot? Success. The vanishing spell had been reversed.

It is working with Christopher that has left me with the belief that reading out loud is crucial to a good education. There is no creative discipline like taking a very deep breath indeed and embarking on your ill-made paragraph while faced with a stack of (oh! so delicately and deeply achieved) Henry James and the proud, half-eaten sandwich atop them. Remember thou art mortal; remember thou needst much practice in punctuation.

Christopher’s reading lists were wonders to receive, consisting as they did of many, many surnames. These were authors of primary texts. It is a shame if today’s students consider themselves burdened by the exigencies of their course. What a sense of possibility there was in a term with Christopher! His generosity and erudition meant that he let us write (within reason) on anyone and anything we wished. He was well able to cope with peculiar choices and interdisciplinary artistic interests, while bracketing us within a sense of movement and era. We ourselves, not being considered difficult or odd, did not find it in us to blame our dear dead and living authors. There were the very few exceptions: the book, or author, Christopher would absolutely refuse to touch. This never prevented us from writing on these topics: another tutor would be found. Before you ask, the answer is Yes.

Endless fun and endless adventures, past and future composing each other — this is the sense carried from conversations with Christopher Butler. Let us wish him the continuance of pleasure.
The Oxford University North American Reunion was held during the weekend of April 4th to 6th. Among a myriad of lunches, cocktails, dinners and lectures, which included talks by both the University Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor, Christ Church held its by now traditional two major events for old members. The first of these, made possible by the kind support of Bill Broadbent, was a delightful lunch in the elegant surroundings of the Racquet and Tennis Club in New York City, which has the distinction of housing not just one, but two real tennis courts. The Dean, Christopher Lewis, hosted the occasion which was intended as an expression of gratitude to major donors. Attendees ranged from the youngest who matriculated in 2006 to two gentlemen who matriculated in the 1930’s. The Dean gave a brief talk to bring everyone up to date and answered questions from the guests. It was great to hear that the House was doing well in its academic accomplishments, crowned by the nationally televised achievement of winning University Challenge in a convincing win over Sheffield in the final. That other pillar of House life, the Boat Club, has also had a good year with strong results in 2007 Torpids, as well as having four members in the 2008 University Blue Boat.
On the Saturday night, American Friends of Christ Church President, Peter Paine, hosted a dinner at the Anglers’ Club in the Wall Street area. Guests dined surrounded by eclectic pieces of fly fishing memorabilia, ranging from pictures of salmon or trout in various stages of capture, to fishing rods and trout flies. Attendees from Christ Church included the Dean and Mrs. Lewis, David Hine, and a team from the Development Office. Among the 50+ guests, including many spouses, were various members of the Campaign Board as well as old members from more than one generation who had not just attended the House themselves, but whose children were also members. This delightful occasion lasted long into the evening and was characterized by animated conversation and the pleasure of meeting old friends and colleagues.

The Development team were able to feel well satisfied with the weekend. Between the Dean, David Hine and themselves they visited 35 old members individually and came away with commitments of over $500,000. All of us are very grateful to old members for their support of the Library restoration, the Charles Stuart Studentship and the Blue Boar renovation project. We all look forward to the next of these reunions, to be held in two years time.

Performance al fresco

For those lucky enough to have that sought-after ticket or invitation, strolling through the grounds to enjoy a chilled drink under the trees and an enchanting performance can be a highlight of the summer.

Are you thinking of Glyndebourne?

As it happens, the sought-after ticket in South London is for the annual Oval House Theatre performance in Kennington Park!

Every year we work with 35 or more young people, pushing them to limits they didn’t know they had, both in skills and imagination, and creating magical, surprising spectacle in-between Brixton and Elephant and Castle.

Using the natural features of the park as our stage and auditorium, audiences in previous years have been startled by walls that walk and talk, towering and terrifying puppets emerging from the trees, explosions and showers, and characters flying through the air.

The Summer School is a challenge: the young people, aged 13-17, must attend every day, all day, for 4 weeks, and they work with a professional team to develop theatre which extends their ideas of what the arts can be. This year, for the first time, sections of the performance will be directed by our Trainee Directors – young people who have worked with Oval House as apprentices over the past year to turn their former experience as participants into professional leadership roles. This is a typical example of how Oval House works within the most disadvantaged areas of London to build skills, community cohesion and confidence amongst young people, skills that will stay with them for life, whatever future they choose for themselves.

This year 4 Grimm Tales will focus on four lesser-known Grimm’s tales – fairy tales with a psychological undertow to make you shiver, however warm the evening.

To help (if you would like to sponsor a place for a child to attend, or if your company would like to sponsor the performances) – or just find out more about Oval House, please contact Valerie Boulet on +44 (0)20 7735 2869 or Valerie.boulet@ovalhouse.com.
Earlier this year four members of the House made history by reaching the final of University Challenge and cantering to victory against a strong Sheffield University team. We hear from two of our star team members, Charles Markland and Susannah Darby, about the experience of taking part in the television show and what it was like to meet Jeremy Paxman in the flesh.

Sitting on the train going up to Manchester for the first match, it seemed amazing that only two months earlier Max had approached me outside the Hall to suggest that I try out for the University Challenge team. With great rapidity a team had been finalised and an audition quiz submitted, and we had somehow convinced the producers that we had ‘the right stuff’ for national television.

Over a lunch in the Granada canteen, we caught our first glimpse of Mr. Paxman tucking into his cottage pie: tall, imposing, and more greying than on TV. Soon enough we were whisked through to the studio, with the inevitable frisson from seeing your own name on the contestant panels. Unlike on TV, however, Jeremy is very affable towards the contestants, wishing good luck before, and congratulations or commiserations afterwards – but less so towards the studio staff. Unless you make a terrible gaffe, or directly antagonise him, you can evade his stinging barbs. After trouncing Homerton, Cambridge and then struggling to triumph over Nottingham, we had four months’ break before the next filming. Two days in December at Granada blurred into a single reminiscence of frantic buzzing, muted conferring and applause, as Warwick, Manchester and, finally, Sheffield came before us. There is no sweeter sound than the gong when your team is ahead. A chat in the green room with Joan Bakewell, and back on the train. Job done – and only three months until we could share our success with everyone else!

Our journey to University Challenge victory was an epic year long saga. It began in the dark days of Hilary last year. Max sent out an email inviting anyone wanting to be on the team to watch the programme. I didn’t realise University Challenge was so widely watched, but people from my neighbours to my dad’s colleagues and rugby team-mates have seen me on the programme. I feel immensely privileged to have been a part of such a successful team. 

University Challenge triumph

Christ Church 220
Sheffield 170

Alex Bubb (2005)
Charles Markland (2003)
Max Kaufman (2005)
Susannah Darby (2006)

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Progress Report:

Blue Boar Quad

The restoration, renovation and extension of Blue Boar Quad are as much a challenge as the building project completed by Powell and Moya in 1968. The site is highly constrained and, above all, access from Blue Boar Lane is problematic. Along with access, the other expected ‘a’ problem has been archaeology: interesting remains of the medieval city wall have been carefully catalogued, but the expected delay had to be borne by the programme. Asbestos was expected and a detailed survey carried out to inform scheduling decisions; but the discovery of asbestos in the northern ‘medieval’ wall came as something of a surprise. What had been a gateway into Blue Boar Yard, before the new building went up, was filled in cleverly to look indistinguishable from the medieval wall either side of it. The technique, when building this type of wall, is to ensure that the stone façade remains as vertical as possible. To do this invisible small ‘slips’ are used to prop the stones in place. Clearly what was to hand when the stonemasons were at work, were numerous ‘slips’ of asbestos...

The building is Listed II* and has been treated with great respect for its architectural distinction. Finding double-glazed window units which satisfy the requirements of English Heritage took time, but the result is a beautifully detailed profile with a delicate frame, remarkably similar to the original windows.

The steel and timber structure for the new rooms on the former roof terraces is now in place, as is the massive steel frame of the lecture theatre; the steels had to be lowered by crane through the roof and bedded into ‘floating’ footings. Now that the form of the theatre is visible, and the seating chosen, it isn’t difficult to envisage what a fine space this will be. The fixtures and finishings – wood flooring, ‘broken’ white emulsion, floor-to-ceiling glazed doors – will add further fine materials to Powell and Moya’s original choices, most notable the light-coloured fossilised Portland stone which clads the building.

The design team has worked hard to reschedule building work and their trades so as to minimise delays. We may be behind by a few weeks but there is still time. As far as the budget goes, £10,000,000, it looks very likely that this will not be exceeded.

Stylish seating for new lecture theatre

Christ Church has chosen a stylish, hard-wearing chair for the 130-seat lecture theatre. It has a strong form which will provide elegant interest to the minimalism of the modernist aesthetic of the building. Made by Race Furniture, the company has provided similar installations for major venues throughout Europe including the Royal Opera House, Copenhagen, the Perth Concert Hall, and lecture theatre seating for the London School of Economics.

The Christ Church Annual Fund will be asking for individual sponsorship of the 120 seats in the auditorium, with commemorative plaques to mark the contribution of each donor. These will be offered as part of the 2008/09 campaign; but any old members or friends who would like to register an interest now, can do so by contacting the Development Office (development.office@chch.ox.ac.uk) guaranteeing first refusal when the plans are finalised.

Belinda Jack
Senior Censor

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Christ Church through a lens...

above: Junior and old members at the Commemoration Ball in June.
photograph: Ralph Williamson

below: The Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire at the Territorial Army Centenary Service held in Christ Church Cathedral on 26 April 2008.
photograph: The 2008 Encaenia ceremony
photograph: KT Bruce

right: The 2008 Encaenia ceremony
photograph: KT Bruce

right: Clive Driskill-Smith and Stephen Darlington receive a standing ovation following the Cathedral Choir’s performance at St Nicholas’ Church, Leipzig in June.
photograph: KT Bruce

far right: Old members attend a Gaudy for 1963-66 Matriculates also in June 2008.
photograph: Ralph Williamson

left: Christ Church in the snow – April 2008.

below: The Christ Church Women’s Boat at the 2008 Eights Week.
photograph: ‘High Table laid up for the Gala Banquet – part of the Christ Church Special Interest Weekend in March 2008.
photograph: KT Bruce

right: Junior and old members at the Commemoration Ball in June.
photograph: Ralph Williamson

below: The Christ Church Women’s Boat at the 2008 Eights Week.
photograph: ‘High Table laid up for the Gala Banquet – part of the Christ Church Special Interest Weekend in March 2008.
photograph: KT Bruce
Editorial

The subject came up at the Sports supper that old members are not clear about the different roles of the Alumni & Development Office and the Christ Church Association, and how each of them can help all members of the House. As is so often the case, communication is key and we need to work on ours still further. Various suggestions for improvements were made at the supper. If you have any specific ideas, please let us know and we will add them to the mix.

Following last edition’s feature on old members involved in sport, we asked Tony Pastor (1990), a sports producer for ITV, to give us a behind the scenes insight into the boat race. Read all about it on page 22.

We are always looking for ideas for old member events. The Candlelit Christmas evening at Waddesdon was a good example of how we can piggy-back on a public event. By holding a private event became special to us. If you feel member events. The Candlelit Christmas evening at Waddesdon was a good example of how we can piggy-back on a public event. By holding a private event became special to us. If you feel you could host an event for old members we would love to hear from you.

As the former co-editor of Christ Church Matters, Professor Christopher Butler, retires, it seems fitting to have as our main feature old members involved in art. Not just a pillar of the English faculty, Christopher has been heavily involved with the teaching of Fine Art in college. In the feature we hear from four old members involved in art from different perspectives: creating it; displaying it; studying it; and selling it.

Your chance to say farewell to Christopher will be at the Association Dinner on 20th September. If you bring along your copy of Christ Church, Oxford; a Portrait of the House you may even get him to sign it before he steps down. And, as you may have heard me say before, there are a couple of copies still available to buy from the Alumni and Development Office! The alumni weekend and the Association dinner should be good events and so we hope to see you there, with or without your copy of the Christ Church Portrait.

Fiona Holdsworth (1981), Editor
fiona.holdsworth@btopenworld.com

Shakespeare

Jeremy Lemmon (1954) has spent a lifetime teaching, lecturing, directing and writing on Shakespeare, he was one of the group advising on the design of the reconstructed Globe theatre on London’s Bankside; among the never-ending flow of books and articles about Shakespeare, his new account stands out, not least for its succinctness. Its 200 pages take the reader through Shakespeare’s life, his work, the professional, social and political background to his times and the topography of Tudor London and Stratford. In dealing with the lacunae in Shakespeare’s notoriously ill-documented life, the author makes well-argued guesses as to what Will and his family might have been up to.

His book illuminates the precariousness of the theatrical profession in the 16th and 17th centuries, where the livelihoods – in some cases the lives – of actors and playwrights were at the mercy not only of the paying public, but the paranoid Tudor regime. In view of the continual outbreaks of antipathy from city fathers, Puritans and professional rivals, Shakespeare perhaps deserves to be remembered almost as much for his ability to survive and leave a substantial estate to his heirs as for his literary genius.

Lemmon interweaves the biographical strand with explanations of how the plays and poetry came to be written and produced, drawing clearly documented inferences as to why Shakespeare may have written particular scenes or portrayed individual characters in the way he did. Benedick, for instance, in Much Ado about Nothing is plausibly argued to have been written with a certain well-upholstered (but sadly anonymous) actor in mind (today, Simon Russell Beale, perhaps, rather than Nicholas le Prevost would get Shakespeare’s nod). The Comedy of Errors – short, clever, modelled on Roman comedy – seems to have been just the job for a private Christmas performance at Grays Inn, where the young gentlemen were celebrating the end of their education, a rowdy occasion marked by thongs and tumults, crowds and outrages, dancing and revelling with gentlewomen (sound familiar?).

A chronology of the plays, a time-line of the poet’s life and suggested further reading add to the book’s usefulness.

A chronology of the plays, a time-line of the poet’s life and suggested further reading add to the book’s usefulness. Ideal for any thoughtful sixth-former, the book ought to appeal to readers of any age – although this elderly reviewer would cheerfully lop the publishers’ ears for setting the additional marginal notes (covering topics from ‘Blank verse’ to the derivation of Imogen’) in barely legible pink.

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This issue we hear from four old members involved in the art world as they reflect on their time at the House and their subsequent careers.

**RUPERT LEGGE (1969)**

In retrospect, reading chemistry was a somewhat bizarre choice for me as it has had little direct bearing on my subsequent career. I followed chemistry with a year writing a thesis in the philosophy of science – a subject that I was told by my tutor real scientists only read in the bath.

While up, I pursued my interest in the arts. Together with Mark Powell-Jones, who is now director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, I persuaded the Arts Council to finance the first ever student-organised event at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford. It was called POPA at MOMA and featured Pioneers of Participatory Art. It also briefly featured distinguished Fellows of All Souls bouncing up and down on inflatables.


My legal training led me into the art world. Sellers of works of art often get a raw deal in the increasingly complex international art market. Decisions such as where and when to sell and whether to sell by auction, private treaty or through negotiation to a museum can be crucial to the financial success of a sale, yet impartial advice is hard to come by. The tax position can also strongly influence the final result. Our firm, Timothy Sammons Ltd, works out of London and New York. Our job as agents is simply to obtain the best possible deal for our clients both from the art market and the tax perspective.

It is a joy to be working in an area that really interests me especially when the art market is going through such a dynamic phase.

**KATE TEALE (1981)**

I knew from the age of eleven that I wanted to be an artist but, inspired by brilliant English teachers, I came to Christ Church to study English rather than go to art school.

Christ Church’s role in my becoming an artist was both practical and inspirational. Had I had tutors who focused on dates – or spelling! – I would not have lasted. Both my two main tutors, Christopher Butler and Peter Conrad, were broadly and passionately interested in the arts beyond literature, and provided invaluable inspiration.

Practically, Dean Eric Heaton, prompted by Christopher Butler, found a grant to help me go to art school after Christ Church. Christopher’s encouragement has lasted long beyond my graduation. He is still my best critic, and his brilliant wife Gillian joined in last February when they visited my studio in New York. Christopher’s enthusiastic commitment to the development of the whole student/person saved me aged 19/20 and has been an inspiration for my own teaching. Peter Conrad’s intense relationship with artists of the past made me understand the vital communication that happens through the arts, as well as something of what the artist’s life might be like. While studying literature I realized that I wanted to BE the person making art, or failing with honour in the attempt.

In 1995 I came to New York to do an MFA in Painting (City of New York University, Hunter College), and stayed. Despite rising prices and the migration of artists out of the centre, New York continues to be an inspirational place to work, with a vast and varied art scene. I am a painter and feel a strong connection with British artists such as Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, Jenny Saville. (It is easier to look at than describe my work: www.kateteale.net). I exhibit here and around the U.S, and just found out that I am a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow in Painting for 2008! There is more interest in ‘figurative’ work now than when I arrived, with artists like Neo Rauch, Lisa Yuskavage and John Currin enlivening the scene. Drawing is an important part of what I do. Time spent assisting at Christ Church Picture Gallery also fed this love. I was able to handle Michelangelo drawings! I teach drawing part-time to Foundation students at Parsons School of Design and Pratt Institute: income, and a great contrast to hours alone in the studio.
HELEN DOREY (1982)

When I came up to the House in 1982 to study Modern History I knew that I wanted to work with history in some way probably in a museum. In those days (in fact until very recently) Oxford did not offer an undergraduate degree in History of Art. However, I was able to do a Special Subject in English Architecture 1660-1720 with the great Sir Howard Colvin, who died just a few months ago, and to study art and society in the early Italian Renaissance.

I had a wonderful time at Oxford and I have never regretted for a moment my choice of subject, which gave me a breadth of basic knowledge and a rigour of approach which has proved very valuable. I had great fun and made lifelong friends – despite my initial terror when told by WES Thomas on the telephone the 'good news' that I had won a place followed by the 'bad news' that I would be the only woman amongst the 16 historians in my year! My only problem with the Oxford system came when I visited the Careers Service to discuss my future and mentioned 'museum work' – to be met with barely suppressed astonishment that I could imagine that they could advise on such a dilettante profession!

Thrown back on my own resources I found a unique Diploma course in London, based at the V&A and run by a formidable former student of Sir Anthony Blunt, Erica O'Donnell. Her 'Study Centre' course, which provided an intensive lecture-based training in not just the history of painting, sculpture and architecture but also the decorative arts (furniture, textiles etc.). It is renowned in Museum circles for having produced many of the senior Curators & Directors of national institutions.

After completing my post-graduate studies I joined Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the home of one of England's greatest architects and I think the most evocative and extraordinary of all the national collections – and the supreme example in the world of the House-Museum. I tell anxious students asking for careers advice that I would not have got my job if I hadn't had a CSE in Grade C typing but my Oxford Special Subject in English Architecture did me no disservice! I joined the Soane thinking I would stay perhaps a year. More than 22 years later I am still there and now Deputy Director and Inspectress. Working at the Soane has given me wonderful opportunities to do research, write, travel, project manage complex building restoration projects and learn about the conservation of works of art. I have the privilege of working in a building full of treasures from Hogarth paintings to mummified cats and I can honestly say that I have never had a day when I have dreaded the thought of going to work. I still feel very close to the House and Christ Church alumni are always welcome at the Soane (please email me in advance in hdorey@soane.org.uk).

CATHARINE STORY (1987)

When I look back at my time at Oxford, I can't recognise myself. I just marvel at how one's mind and personality can develop.

I'd been a shy teenager, obsessed with old films and Post-Impressionism. School had been hard. Artistic brains didn't fit the curriculum and my conservative background put academic tarnish above integrating with modern life. Christ Church combined with the Ruskin School of Art seemed the best way to achieve respect and remain safely in the past, while still making pictures.

When I arrived at the Ruskin, all the artists who'd liked my work had left. It was the 80s, figurative painting was mostly a joke and the art boom was yet to create a demand for every artistic practice. I wanted to paint landscapes, but the dominant tutors liked minimalism.

With no language skills to defend my work, I hid in the Ashmolean and drew the sculptures. Soon I was adopted by one of the curators, Dr Nicholas Penny. When the Ruskin tutors tried to expel me, he and dear Christopher Butler fought for drawing on my behalf. Stuck in the middle of a political war, I went under.

I couldn't access real creativity... I was too afraid to look at my experience of life.

In retrospect I was as rigid and closed as the tutors. I couldn't access real creativity, as I was too afraid to look at my experience of life. With my back against the wall, I became a reactionary stereotype, a Renaissance romantic. By the second year I could only see the beauty of nature. I stayed in college, drawing moths and watching barn owls, trying to make the perfect picture, one that would show I was good enough. Nothing ever was, and my work dried up.

As soon as I left I began to learn the value of different artistic movements, how vertical stripes are as relevant as paintings of shrews. I love going back to Oxford now. Although I'm sad I wasn't a confident teenager, I feel proud of my survival skills. Christ Church gave me my most loyal friends, and taught me that nature heals in difficult times. Most importantly, I learnt that romantic nostalgia is a luxury often rooted in paranoia, and no good for creativity.

Now the real work has begun. Twenty years later I'm back at school, doing my MA at another ancient place, the Royal Academy. It's going very well. You see forty years of dark material is actually a godsend for an artist. www.catherinestory.com
On 15th November around 35 old members and their partners enjoyed a magical Candlelit Christmas evening at Waddesdon Manor, laid on for us by Simon Offen, the Association Chairman. The house sparkled with Christmas promise and inside an enchanting array of ballerinas greeted us. Each room was decorated as part of a Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale with ballerinas dancing out the tales. My favourite was The Little Mermaid, followed by The Little Matchstick Girl, but the princess on top of piles of mattresses in the highest bed you have ever seen, remains imprinted on my memory. After the tour of the house we had supper. The food was superb, the venue delightful and we spent a happy and relaxed time chatting with other old members. I was instantly in the Christmas mood after that evening and in fact it was so wonderful that I returned with my children the following night.

“What will you do if one of the boats sinks?” someone asked me, just before the start of last year’s University Boat Race. And of course the honest answer would have been: “Rejoice.” But after all, nothing grabs the public imagination like a sinking, provided the rescue boats are to hand and injuries are no more serious than a good ducking in the chilly Thames.

In fact, the truth is we’d much rather have a really tight race with a neck and neck finish, but frankly if that’s not possible, a grand tear up with clashing in the white water beyond Hammersmith Bridge would come a good second.

Planning the Boat Race takes months, part of it taken up with bribing the local councils along the river to allow cameras into advantageous spots.

At more than four miles and 374 yards, the Boat Race course requires the biggest outside broadcast in the country. It takes four directors and 37 cameras to take the crews from Putney to Mortlake in around 18 minutes, plus two helicopters and some of the most advanced hard environment equipment in the business. However, since ITV took over the contract in 2005 it no longer takes miles of cable, thanks to a state of the art digital wireless system.

One of the issues with producing a complicated annual event is practice. Nobody wants their first go at producing the event to be the race itself. The solution is to rehearse the entire show the day before, with a couple of decent rowing crews supplied by London schools.

The night before the race, I talk to both race crews in the elegant wood panelled rooms of one of the lovely old Boat Houses near Putney Bridge.

“Our on-board microphones could be live at any point during the race,” I tell the rowers, “so bear it in mind.”

In 2006, a minute or so into the race, ITV commentator Peter Drury told the viewers it was time to listen in on the Oxford crew and more particularly their cox. Our soundman nervously lifted a fader.

“Let’s f**k them!” screamed the cox, to the astonishment of seven million people watching at home. Is that how these well educated young men speak, the nation wondered collectively? Well, it is on Boat Race day.
The Development and Alumni Office, with the support of the Ch. Ch. Association, held a small gathering of past and present members at the House on May 2nd, to discuss the creation of a network of Sports’ Representatives, and more Old Members’ Sports clubs. The meeting was held over dinner in the Friend room and proved extremely useful in many ways.

Jon Carley explained how the Boat Club has developed over the past 15 years. He gave some excellent advice as to what each sport could do to set up a club, to encourage social events and to help present students achieve even greater excellence. He explained that no network can be created without that all important database and how a small committee of active people is needed to share the work of organisation. The resources and experience of the Development Office needs to be used, with ideas and plans funnelled through them. Depth has to be given to the club through a membership composed of many year groups. From his experience, small informal events are often more successful than big ones. And we should piggy back existing occasions, such as Varsity matches, to invite members along for a reunion.

We agreed that the JCR Sports representatives should become a year representative for their year, just as so many careers representatives do. Each sport then needs to create a small committee of dedicated people covering a number of years. The Chairman of the Association is also looking for a member to join the main Committee to champion all this work.

The question arose as to how we could help the students’ sports clubs at Christ Church. Support comes in many guises. Encouragement from the tow path or touch line is always appreciated. Some might help with coaching. Others might be able to offer sponsorship for a club, or an individual who, as a blue perhaps, has exceptional costs to cover. Some might contribute to a sporting annual fund, a specific project, piece of equipment, kit, or even a celebration of a success.

If you are reading this, and are interested in joining our plans to help Christ Church sport, please contact Emma Sinden with your details, ideas, and what you might be prepared to do. The Office and the Association will start by creating a better sporting database. So if you were the Captain of a College team why not send Emma your details and help contact all your team members? Let us know if you would like to be on the guiding committee for a particular sport, or if you would like to be the Sports Rep. on the Association Committee?

And please remember that this is as much about socialising as excellence and financial support. Indeed many of you will be pleased to hear that our first new club was christened at the meeting. Nick Holroyd agreed to lead a Wine Club. (A sport?!) It needs a name, and it needs members, but we have already agreed that the first meeting will be this Autumn! Get in touch!

Simon Offen
Christ Church Association Chairman

...this is as much about socialising as excellence and financial support.
We are delighted to invite all our old members and their family and friends back to Oxford this September for the second Oxford Alumni Weekend. This year’s theme is ‘Global Oxford’ and there will be over 100 individual sessions on offer ranging from academic talks, gallery and museum tours, debates, dinners and a special ‘Family Programme’ with activities suitable for children aged from six upwards. The full programme of events is available to view online at www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk or you may request a brochure on the website if you prefer to have a copy posted to you.

A fee of £60 per person will secure you an Alumni Weekend Pass, which covers most lectures, tours and events in the programme. The Alumni Weekend Pass fee is £50 if you matriculated before 1958 and FREE for guests aged between 6 and 18. Some individual events may incur an additional charge, which is detailed on the booking form where applicable. The pass does not include the separate events taking place at Christ Church, including the Association Dinner.

Online booking for the 2008 Alumni Weekend is available now and will close on Friday 22nd August. To book you will need your Alumni Card number (which appears on your Card and on the cover sheet of Oxford Today). If you don’t have an Alumni Card or don’t know your number, please contact the Alumni Office on +44 (0)1865 611 610, email alumnicard@alumni.ox.ac.uk or fill in the online form at www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/get_your_card

Christopher Butler will be at the dinner and so it is an ideal opportunity for former pupils and those who know him to say farewell. Pre-dinner drinks will be served from 6.30pm and dinner in Hall at 7.15pm. Spouses and guests are most welcome.

The Christ Church Association Dinner has been scheduled for Saturday 20th September to coincide with the Alumni Weekend and we hope to see a great number of old members in attendance, whether they are signed up for the Alumni Weekend or not. Christopher Butler will be at the dinner and so it is an ideal opportunity for former pupils and those who know him to say farewell. Pre-dinner drinks will be served from 6.30pm and dinner in Hall at 7.15pm. Spouses and guests are most welcome.

The Christ Church Association AGM has also been scheduled for Saturday 20th September to coincide with the Alumni Weekend. Details of the time and venue will be available closer to the day.

Christ Church will have 45 rooms available on Saturday 20th September. Please visit the Alumni & Development pages of the Christ Church website (www.chch.ox.ac.uk) to download a booking form for accommodation and the Association Dinner or call +44 (0)1865 286 598 if you would like a copy posted to you.
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**LUXE 2008**

1 July – 21 October

**CHRIST CHURCH PICTURE GALLERY: TREASURE DRAWINGS – CHRIST CHURCH CURATORS’ BONANZA**

Christ Church

The care, knowledge and enthusiasm for the collection and its new building by previous and current curators have played a major part in establishing Christ Church Picture Gallery. This exhibition will show some of the major drawings of the collection seen through their eyes. The accompanying catalogue will give a personal and interesting view of the development of the Picture Gallery over the last four decades.

Opening times: Monday to Saturday 10:30 am – 5:30 pm – 4:30 pm; Sunday 4 – 5:30 pm

Contact: Picture Gallery +44 (0)1865 276 132 picturegallery@chch.ox.ac.uk

**SEPTEMBER 2008**

10 – 14 September

**CATHEDRAL VOICES ACROSS HALF A MILLENNIUM**

Christ Church

Join an exciting journey through half a millennium of English church music! This event will appeal to the informed enthusiast and amateur music lover alike, and to all who wish to learn more about an intriguing national musical heritage. Special rates are being offered to old members of the House.

Contact: Kerry Dingle, Conference and Events Assistant +44 (0)1865 286 503 & kerry.dingle@chch.ox.ac.uk

19 – 21 September

**GLOBAL OXFORD: OXFORD ALUMNI WEEKEND**

Oxford

We are delighted to invite all our old members and their family and friends back to Oxford this September for the second Oxford Alumni Weekend. This year’s theme is “Global Oxford” and there will be over 100 individual sessions on a range of topics from academic talks, gallery and museum tours, debates, dinners and a special ‘Family Programme’ with activities suitable for children aged from six upwards. The full programme of events is available to view online at www.chch.ox.ac.uk or if you may request a brochure on the website please prefer to have a copy posted to you.

Contact: Oxford Alumni Office +44 (0)1865 611 610

20 September

**CHURCH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION DINNER AND AGM**

Christ Church

The Oxford Alumni Association Dinner has been scheduled to coincide with the Alumni Weekend again this year and we hope to see a great number of old members in attendance. Spouses and guests are most welcome to accompany old members. A booking form is available at www.chch.ox.ac.uk on the Special Events page in the Alumni & Development section of the website. Parking and accommodation are available, but please note that we can only offer rooms on Saturday 20th September. The Christ Church Alumni Association AGM will take place in Lecture Room 2 at 3pm.

Contact: Emma Sinden, Alumni Relations Officer +44 (0)1865 286 533 emma.sinden@chch.ox.ac.uk

30 September

**RAPID CAUGY**

Christ Church

Members of the current Christ Church RFC invite all former players back to Christ Church for a splendid four course meal in Hall followed by drinks in the Buttery until midnight. A booking form is included with this edition of Christ Church Matters. The dress code is black tie and overnight accommodation is available.

Contact: Emma Sinden, Alumni Relations Officer +44 (0)1865 286 533 emma.sinden@chch.ox.ac.uk

**OCTOBER 2008**

2 October 2008


Contact: Margaret Hefson, Stewart’s Secretary +44 (0)1865 286 533 mheffson@chch.ox.ac.uk

11 October

**CHORAL WORKSHOP & CONCERT**

Organised by Christ Church Cathedral School Education Trust

Workshop 2 pm – 4pm, Concert 7.30pm

Christ Church Cathedral

This year the week to be rehearsed and performed are three Handel Coronation Anthems – Zadok the Priest, My heart is Inditing, The King shall come. These were used to make them safe and discussion of religion or politics was banned. The programmes are designed to be readily accessible to the enquiring visitor wishing to discover more on a topic of current or historic interest. The programmes are led by speakers of distinction in their fields, including Deford Tate. Participants will also experience facets of Christ Church not normally open to the day visitor. Guests will stay in college rooms, and numbers attending the Weekends are limited to preserve the friendly and convivial atmosphere which participants enjoy. The weekend concludes with a gala banquet in Hall. Special discounted rates will be offered to old members.

Contact: The Steward’s Office +44 (0)1865 286 662 specialinterest@chch.ox.ac.uk

**MARCH 2009**

14 March 2009

**FAMILY PROGRAMME LUNCHEON**

Christ Church

Lunchroom in Hall for parents of all current undergraduates.

Contact: Emma Sinden, Alumni Relations Officer +44 (0)1865 286 533 emma.sinden@chch.ox.ac.uk

26 – 29 March 2009

**SPECIAL INTEREST WEEKEND**

Christ Church

Each Spring Christ Church holds a Special Interest Weekend, open to all, with a choice of themes. As well as setting standards of sound scholarship, these programmes are designed to be readily accessible to the enquiring visitor wishing to discover more on a topic of current or historic interest. The programmes are led by speakers of distinction in their fields, including Deford Tate. Participants will also experience facets of Christ Church not normally open to the day visitor. Guests will stay in college rooms, and numbers attending the Weekends are limited to preserve the friendly and convivial atmosphere which participants enjoy. The weekend concludes with a gala banquet in Hall. Special discounted rates will be offered to old members.

Contact: The Steward’s Office +44 (0)1865 286 662 specialinterest@chch.ox.ac.uk

**Did you know there is a Christ Church Lodge?**

It’s called Arabes Christi; was founded in 1989 and draws its members entirely from those who have matriculated at the House. We meet and dine four times a year – three in London (a minute from Bank tube station) and once in Oxford (at the Queen’s Head). You have heard alarming stories of secrecy, oaths or corrupt practices within Masons; forget them, for they are no part of English Masonry, which probably started during the Civil War to bring together in a safe and friendly setting standards of sound scholarship, these programmes are led by speakers of distinction in their fields, including Deford Tate. Participants will also experience facets of Christ Church not normally open to the day visitor. Guests will stay in college rooms, and numbers attending the Weekends are limited to preserve the friendly and convivial atmosphere which participants enjoy. The weekend concludes with a gala banquet in Hall. Special discounted rates will be offered to old members.

Contact: The Steward’s Office +44 (0)1865 286 662 specialinterest@chch.ox.ac.uk

www.chch.ox.ac.uk

For news and more information about events, please visit our website www.chch.ox.ac.uk