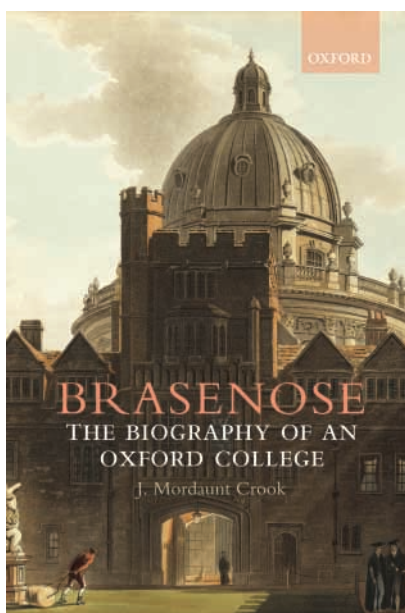


Brazen Notes

Issue 6

Spring 2008

AT LAST! A NEW HISTORY OF BNC



As part of the preparations for its Quincentenary, Brasenose has commissioned Joe Mordaunt Crook to write a new history of the College. Professor Crook was an undergraduate (1955-58), postgraduate (1958-61) and Visiting Fellow (1979-80) at BNC. He became a Supernumerary Fellow in 2002. Before that he had been Slade Professor and Waynflete Lecturer at Oxford, and Public Orator and Professor of Architectural History at London University. He became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1988, and was awarded a C.B.E. in 2002.

Brasenose was a hall before it was a college, and a lodging before it was a hall. Its origins can be traced back to the 13th century. It certainly existed as an independent university hall – on part of the present site – for at least 120 years before its re-foundation as a college in 1509. The new college had two founders: a Bishop (William Smith) and a lawyer (Richard Sutton). Both came from the North West of England, and the College has always been proud of its links with Lancashire and Cheshire. But over the centuries

Brasenose – or ‘BNC’ as it is usually known – has expanded its reputation world-wide.

This new publication from OUP will be the first full-scale history of the College, and it is timed to coincide with our Quincentenary. The scale of the book is impressive: nearly 600 pages long, with more than 100 plates and over 1,000 footnotes. Its production is handsome. And its scope is certainly ambitious: it relates the College to the University, and the University to the wider world of politics. Using archives, letters and diaries, it aims to re-create something of the variety and texture of academic life over a period of five centuries: the learning, the conversation, the sport; the intellectual milieu and financial context; the architecture inside and out; the food and drink, the quirks of personality, the little dramas and absurdities that make up the small change of corporate living.

Brasenose was the first Oxford college to admit undergraduates on a statutory basis; and the first of the men's colleges to decide to admit women. Its story is rich in personalities. From Walter Pater to William Golding; from Earl Haig to Archbishop Runcie; from Prince Obolenski to Colin Cowdrey; from Elias Ashmole and John Buchan to Michael Palin and David Cameron: Brasenose has never been short of characters. The originator of rugby football (William Webb Ellis), the inventor of bottled beer (Alexander Nowell), the lyricist of *Danny Boy* (Fred Weatherley), the father of political economy (Sir William Petty), the physicist who discovered the fuel cell (Sir William Grove), and the inventor of garden gnomes (Sir Charles Isham): all these were Brasenose people. Here Vincent's Club was founded. Here *Brideshead Revisited* was born: Sebastian was a Brasenose man. Here C.S. Lewis looked into a chapel wardrobe and emerged in the kingdom of Narnia.

For the first time, all these people, and hundreds more, are brought back to life, placed in the context of college history, and set against the wider world of university politics. This new history is very far from being a dull, institutional tale. It bubbles with anecdote and incident. It all adds up to collective biography on a formidable scale. Hence its title: *Brasenose. The Biography of an Oxford College*.

Publication is scheduled for late 2008. Details about how to order your copy will be available in the near future. Please keep checking the website for information.

Did you know...?

Did you know that there are 59 people buried under the former Hulme Common Room? The room was originally an open cloister to provide shelter from the weather for those attending Chapel or taking exercise. It was used as the College burial ground for 85 years, the last recorded burial being in 1754. In 1807 the area was turned into College rooms.

Welcome...



...to the Hilary 2008 edition of *Brazen Notes*. We are at the end of yet another busy and eventful term at BNC. I hope you will enjoy reading our news in the following pages.

The University is in a time of change, following the Vice-Chancellor Dr John Hood's decision to step down at the end of his five-year term. The committee responsible for nominating a successor to Dr Hood are tasked with identifying a candidate by the end of next term. We hope that whoever the University selects will be able to continue the many good things begun by Dr Hood and lead Oxford forward as a globally significant institution.

Looking back on this term, there are a great many things to report. We welcomed back Tony Courakis, Fellow and Tutor in Economics, following his service as Greek Ambassador to the OECD. In January, we were pleased to see many of our youngest alumni at their first Gaudy. Our catering and Hall staff continue to shine: events this term have included the Scholars and Exhibitors Dinner, the Chinese New Year Dinner, and two additions to the calendar, the Sports Dinner and the Arts and Societies Dinner, which gave us the opportunity to celebrate our students' achievements in these fields. One such achievement deserves special mention: our Women's Second VIII achieved Blades in Torpids, the first crew to do so during my time as Principal, and I would like to offer my particular congratulations to them.

The Tanner Lectures were held at the Said Business School on 20-21 February. Professor Simon Deakin FBA, Robert Monks Professor of Corporate Governance at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, gave the lectures, which were very well received. We are already looking forward to our 500th anniversary Tanner Lectures in 2009.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all those alumni who have donated to our Annual Fund. We are delighted that your gifts have made it possible for us to offer more support to our students, and to plan improvements to our facilities. It is heartening to see that so many of you have chosen to give back to BNC, and I hope that many more will join in as we move forward towards the next 500 years of this great institution.

Roger Cashmore

Roger Cashmore, Principal

Nose! Nose! Nose!

Harry Ford, author of this year's winning Ale Verse, reports on the evening:

About three times a day I make it my custom to arrange all the chairs in my room in a semicircle, lock the door and draw the curtains across my well-mullioned windows. Then I bow, cough twice, and reel off some inspired ditty for the enraptured audience of my imagination. So as soon as that testy old lady, Shrovetide, came along, and as soon as the Dean allowed the possibility of propitiation with satirical verse-offerings, 'Ho! Ho!' I said to myself, 'that's for me.'

What a wonderful evening it is, and every year it gets better. After crêpes sugar-bestrewn and citric, a hush fell over the hall. Our floppy-haired Chaplain, Graeme, stepped up to be master of ceremonies. And under the approving gaze of Sir Richard and Good Bishop Smyth in their respective portraits, we proceeded to re-enact the time-honoured rituals.

This year the programme was superb. It began with a nod to Lord Windlesham (sitting in the portrait behind my head) and his fondness for whisky, but it built up into a rousing celebration of our present Principal's appetite for wine and walking: 'He walks and walks for Brasenose/He circles more and more:/He's flexing calves and muscles—/It's what his legs are for' (to the tune of *Stand up, stand up for Jesus*). One of Andrew Sillett's entries, 'Happy Brasenose to you', didn't make it into the booklet because the Dean held that it was not only inane but also one year too early.

Now, from the earliest days the verses were presented by the Butler, often with a 'spice-bowl' of ale or a 'plumb cake,' and it is fitting that the glory of the evening went to our head butler, William. The Spanish quatrains he teaches me at breakfast inspired my verse, so I dedicated a stanza and raised a toast to Señor Guillermo, the brilliant butler of Brasenose College and a number one if ever there was one. Cheers.



Ale Verse

"They tried to make me go to Lincoln"
(As sung by the rare flower of politeness, Miss Amy Winehouse)

They tried to make me go to Lincoln
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!
Yes, it's not bad, but you'd have to be mad –
I chose Nose! Nose! Nose!
They're all really weird: they have no Principal and
no beard
Their rector tried to make me go to Lincoln
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!

They tried to make me go to Jesus
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!
Geoff, Dave, Anthony – our porters always keen
On their toes! toes! toes!
At the lodge in BNC, we sell no posh choir CD
They tried to sing to me at Lincoln
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!

They tried to make me go to Wadham
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!
Formal hall here is full of good cheer
The wine flows! flows! flows!
And William is a star! He's the best butler by far,
He could well be a professor
For all he knows! knows! knows!

They tried to make me go to Univ
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!
With two parties a night, I know Brasenose is right
I chose Nose! Nose! Nose!
Lecture Room Eleven is a Netball Drinking Heaven
They'd banned the Sirens from the Shackleton
(They wore no clothes! clothes! clothes!)

They tried to make me go to All Souls
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!
In the eerie light, it's frying tonight
The story goes! goes! goes!
Undergrads in the crypt, with their body parts all ripped
But it's alright they're all from Lincoln
Not from Nose! Nose! Nose!

They tried to make me go to Christ Church
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!
Our interviewees said Let us come please
We said Nose! Nose! Nose!
We took to see the Golden Compass but we kicked up
quite a rumpus
Booing Christ Church and cheering Brasenose
When the film shows Nose! Nose!

They tried to make me go to Corpus
But I said Nose! Nose! Nose!
Football's not their strength, their goalie's full length
On his nose! nose! nose!
Corpus and All Souls are equally bad at goals
But you are the weakest Lincoln
Goodbye from Nose! Nose! Nose!

They tried to make me go to Cambridge...
but I'd rather go to Rehab!

BNC Arts Week, 6-11 May 2008

JCR Arts Rep, Joe Zhang, writes:



This year will see some major changes come to the annual BNC Summer Arts Festival. It wouldn't be any exaggeration to say that our committee, composed mostly of first year Brasenose undergraduates, has been incredibly ambitious about maximizing the Festival's entertainment value, and increasing the range of arts that are to be showcased.

The first night will kick off with a huge, themed jazz concert, with an 'arts festival band' bringing together some of the University's finest musicians. Thursday night will feature a similarly styled classical concert, with an arts festival chamber orchestra and a fine soloist line up. Fine Art has seen a similar face-lift: we will have an arts gallery running in College continuously for the week, with various exhibitions of photography, painting, and sculpture.

Thespians will be glad to hear that expansion in other forms of the arts will not see the demise of drama by any means. We're putting on *The Importance of Being Earnest* and an all singing, all dancing Bollywood production, while a special double-bill of two-man plays (*Tom's a-Cold* and *The Zoo Story*) will showcase

the intricate relationships and stories that can be built around just two characters in a simple setting.

On top of all this, there will be many other things lined up, from exciting workshops (dance, circus) and 'ale-and-poetry' afternoons, to smaller concerts and open-air film screenings. And as an added treat, we'll have John Hegley, the unbelievably talented sell-out comedic poet coming to perform for us. We asked him to come last year but he was fully booked for 12 months... he slotted us in for this year's festival though!

As always, alumni are more than welcome to attend. There will be plenty of room at the large events, and the full schedule of walk-in events and plays happening on each day would make a day-trip worthwhile.

This year's festival will run from Tuesday 6 to Sunday 11 May. To request more event information, or to register interest in attending the festival, please email the director at joe.zhang@bnc.ox.ac.uk.



Re-launch of the Brasenose Society Mentoring Scheme

For Junior Members, leaving College to embark on a career can be a daunting prospect. The Brasenose Society Mentoring Scheme, established in 1999, and about to be re-launched, aims to provide these departing students with an opportunity to talk with alumni about their work (current or past), how they became involved in it, and the highs and lows of their choice of career.

Early impressions of the Scheme were that alumni had much useful experience to share with those just embarking on their careers. The list of alumni willing to share their experience in this way now includes about a hundred people, covering a wide span of ages and careers. In the hands of Mike Gill (Classics, 1968), the scheme is taking on a new lease of life and is about to be re-publicised to members of the JCR and HCR.

New volunteers for the Scheme are always welcome. The level of commitment required from mentors can be as low – or high – as they wish. It may well consist of only an occasional telephone call, but could extend to personal meetings or visits to College. If you would like to be added to the list of mentors, please contact Mike Gill at mgilm1@gmail.com.

More information about the Scheme will appear on the BNC website in due course, and we will be keeping a close eye on how the relaunched Scheme works. We look forward to reporting back to you in a future edition of the *Brazen Notes*.

Boris has left us



As his close friends from Oxford times, it is our desire to write about Boris Rotenberg, our great companion who suddenly left us following a tragic ski accident on 23 December 2007.

The 31 years of Boris's life were full of movement. On the professional side, Boris gradually moved from pure academia towards policy-oriented research. Lately, he was a scientific research fellow at the Seville-based Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTs), connected to the European Commission. With much passion, Boris co-edited the International Journal of Communications Law & Policy. Prior to Seville, Boris was a visiting fellow with the Yale ISP, a post-doctoral Global Emile Noël fellow at NYU Law, and a doctoral visiting scholar at Columbia Law. Boris was always fond of his Oxford times; he joined Brasenose College to earn a Magister Juris (LLM) degree (2000), just after obtaining a law degree from the University of Leuven in his home country of Belgium (1999). His Oxford studies were followed by a Ph.D. in law from the European University Institute in Florence (2005).

It is impossible to forget Boris.

Boris would instantly ignore any of his own plans, including those of the academic type, if a friend needed him, especially if this involved an adventure or a long discussion about some tangential extremely interesting subject, bordering on the mythical. What we will all miss the most is the incredible and contagious energy of Boris, who always believed that everything was possible. At Brasenose, Boris was the captain of the so-called second novice team in 1999, which he led with enormous vigour and passion. His recipe for coming first in his class for his Magister Juris (LLM) degree was to read everything that was not on the reading list, to integrate ideas from everywhere, and to spend nights walking in the streets of Oxford thinking.



Boris (front left) with his Brasenose rowing crew

Who knows what would have come next in Boris's life. Boris was fond of the South of Europe, having absorbed the Mediterranean culture during his times in Florence, Rome and Seville. But his interest in peoples and cultures also took him to several other places. Boris's definition of holidays was not to rest but to travel, alone or in company, for as long as possible, and to places such as Mongolia or South America. Not much planning and baggage are needed to disappear for weeks and surprise friends with post cards from exotic places. When he came back from Mongolia, he declared that these months had been productive because he had written his doctoral thesis in his mind while walking. It was hard to believe. And of course, music was important to Boris, who loved the brightness of a violin, or its nostalgia. Among his favourite composers were Vivaldi, Bach, and Brahms, but Boris also had a passion for some Tango music.

The day before his accident, his twin brother talked to him and found that "he was very bubbly, happy and was looking forward to skiing. We had a nice walk and we discussed about his future plans. He had been so happy at that time".

Perhaps this story about Boris is best ended with a quote from Wittgenstein: "Tell them I've had a wonderful life."

Alexandra & Martin Nel, Franz Dietrich, Mailys Gauffriau

J. G. Farrell, BNC 1956

On coming up to Brasenose in 1956, the author James Gordon Farrell almost immediately contracted polio, necessitating treatment in an iron lung, an experience which is generally reckoned to have led to his becoming a writer. Taking a degree in Modern Languages in 1960, he later won the Faber Prize with *Troubles* and the Booker Prize with *The Siege of Krishanpur*. In 1978 he published *The Singapore Grip*, completing his widely-praised Empire Trilogy, but his career was cut short by his early death in 1979. New editions of all three were recently published by the New York Review of Books.

In 2009, the 30th anniversary of his death, Cork University Press will publish *The Selected Letters of J.G. Farrell*, edited by Lavinia Greacen, who also wrote a biography of Farrell, *J.G. Farrell, the Making of a Writer*, published by Bloomsbury in 2000. Lavinia tells us that she has so far traced about 350 of Farrell's letters – but very few of these are from his time at BNC, a most important part of his life and his development as a writer.

Lavinia would be thrilled to receive news of any of Farrell's letters which are in the possession of his BNC contemporaries. Although original letters would be very welcome, and would in due course find themselves with his papers at Trinity College, Dublin, copies are just as acceptable and would be a great aid in ensuring that the book contains as thorough a reflection of Farrell's life and letters as possible. If you are able to help, please contact the Alumni Relations Office (development@bnc.ox.ac.uk or 01865 287275).

Update on the Archives

In the Autumn 2007 issue, we reported that, following a most generous donation from Sir David Akers-Jones (1949), we were looking forward to beginning work to preserve and restore BNC's archives. Sir David's gift will act as a most welcome kick-start to the project, enabling the collections to be cleaned and reboxed, and put into storage while the structural work to the archive store is carried out. We, like Sir David, are very excited about the project as it will ensure the preservation of BNC's important archives collection for future generations.

The College Archivist, Elizabeth Boardman, writes:

The current situation is that we are laying down the parameters of the work needed and seeking estimates. We will then have to establish a careful timetable for removing the material (which will be cleaned and boxed off-site), doing the remedial work to the store, and then returning the material. We are trying to create a controlled environment in a cellar which was dug out in 1664 underneath a building originally constructed in the early sixteenth century. This will be a very lengthy and expensive process and there are many difficulties to overcome. However, mould-free, clean, and dry archives will be worth the wait!



The Alexander Nowell Circle



The Alexander Nowell Circle is our society for alumni who have decided to leave a gift to BNC in their wills. Legacies are extremely important to Brasenose and in recent years have paid for establishing a Fellowship, refurbishing our 17th and 18th century book store, and providing more grants for students suffering financial hardship.

We hold an annual luncheon for legators so that we can show our appreciation for their generous bequests. This year, the luncheon will take place on 2 December at Goldsmiths' Hall in London. At last year's luncheon we were very glad to fill Lecture Room VII with legators and their guests, and we hope that we will be able to welcome even more of our legators to Goldsmiths' Hall this year.

Meet the new BNC Website www.bnc.ox.ac.uk



After several long months of hard work and patience, the redesigned Brasenose College website went live on Friday 15 February 2008. Many people at BNC have been involved with the creation of the new site and we hope it will be a useful tool for students, staff, alumni, conference guests, and visitors alike.

The new website has a modern design and includes a section devoted to alumni. Here you can find details of future College and Brasenose Society events, including the BNC500 celebrations. There are also pages about how to keep in touch with College, how to obtain a Brasenose e-mail address, and how you can help us to reinstate contact with 'lost' alumni.

Over the next few months we will be working on Phase Two of the website, adding more information, facilities, and photographs to make the site even more valuable to users. There will be news feeds, podcasts, iCalendars and on-line groups, and we are looking forward to launching a secure alumni portal where you will be able to reconnect with your fellow Nose Men and Women from around the globe.

We encourage you to visit the website when you are next surfing the web. Why not include it as a 'favourite' in your browser?

Alumni Dining

Alumni are invited to dine in Hall up to three times a year on Tuesdays and Sundays in full term. Sadly this invitation cannot be extended to guests.

Many alumni have already taken up their dining rights and it has been a great pleasure to us to welcome them back. We recommend that alumni book early as space is limited on each occasion and alumni dining's popularity is increasing!

If you wish to dine, please write to, telephone or email the Alumni Relations Office (01865 287275 or development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk) to enquire about dates. We look forward to seeing you.

Mentioned in Despatches

- Dr Simon Palfrey, Fellow and Tutor in English, has co-written and published *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) with Dr Tiffany Stern of University College.
- Paula Carter (1978) has been appointed Channel 4's first Viewers' Editor.
- Michael O'Sullivan (1978) was awarded the C.M.G. for services to the British Council in the Queen's New Years Honours List 2008.
- The Right Hon Lord Robin Janvrin (1966) was awarded the Queen's Service Order for services to New Zealand as Private Secretary to the Queen in the New Year's Honours List of New Zealand 2008.
- Hugo Judd (1960) was awarded the Queen's Service Order for public services in the New Year's Honours List of New Zealand 2008.
- Dr Douglas Vernimmen, associate member of the HCR, has been enrolled as a Licentiate of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain.

Platnauer Concert

Nick Prozzillo, Graduate Director of Music, reports on the Platnauer Concert series which has brought many talented musicians and eager listeners through the doors of the BNC Chapel:

Formed in 2001 at the Royal College of Music, the Sacconi Quartet is rapidly gaining an enviable reputation as one of the outstanding quartets of their generation. Their Platnauer Concert in Brasenose on Sunday 24 January gave testimony to their ability to decode the musical notation with invincible perspicacity and sophistication, and engage in great musical rhetoric. What a great *ensemble!* Following a dramatic performance of Haydn's *String Quartet in C* (opus 54 no. 2), the Sacconi performed Ravel's much loved *String Quartet*. The Sacconi's style is highly discursive: attention to the details of works, without ever sacrificing direction or clarity (aptly demonstrated in the 'development' section of Ravel's Sonata where the composer intensifies the rhythmic activity forcing the instruments into an accelerating frenzy of repeated patterns). Filled to maximum seating capacity, Brasenose's Ante Chapel witnessed a great evening of music making. Several students also benefited from instrumental coaching with the Sacconi players earlier on in the day.

The next Platnauer Concert (11 May) will be given by pianist Emmanuel Despax and will celebrate the restoration of the chapel piano, a project carried out last summer thanks to donations from Robin Sharp (1953, Classics) and the Broadley Charitable Trust, and a grant from the Royal College of Music.

Contacts

Alumni Relations and Development Office, Brasenose College, Oxford OX1 4AJ. Tel: 01865 287275 development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk



Events 2008

Saturday 24 May – VIIIs Week Lunch
(12.30 for 1.00 pm)

Seating in Hall is now full for this event. If you would like to be added to the waiting list, or wish to reserve places in Lecture Room VII, please contact us.

Thursday 19 June (6.00-8.30 pm) –
President's Summer Party at The Old Bailey
(including tour at 6.00 pm)

This event is now fully booked. Please contact us if you would like to be added to the waiting list.

Saturday 20 September – Society AGM and
Annual Dinner, forming part of the
University's Alumni Weekend which runs
from 19-21 September (AGM 6.00 pm, then
dinner 7.00 for 7.30 pm)

Please visit www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk
for more details of the Alumni Weekend.



GAUDIES 2008

Matriculation years	1974-1976	20 June
Matriculation years	1983 -1984	12 September



We hope that many of our alumni will join us for the BNC500 celebration weekend taking place in Oxford between the 25 and 27 September 2009. The celebration weekend will coincide with the University's Alumni Weekend, which will include a wide variety of events, tours, lectures, and performances, details of which will be available in 2009 directly from the University. On Saturday 26 September, all Brasenose alumni will be invited to attend a Brasenose gala evening along with a guest. Although we are unable to take bookings at present, we will be sending out more details and booking forms later this year.

Meanwhile, alumni may wish to take advantage of the preferential room rates which we have secured with several Oxford hotels for the celebration weekend.

The Randolph Hotel 0844 8799 132

The Old Bank Hotel 01865 799 599

Linton Lodge 01865 553 461
(please quote reference Alumni09)

Paramount Oxford Hotel 01865 489 988

Malmaison Oxford 0845 3654 247

The Old Parsonage Hotel 01865 310 210

Please telephone the hotels directly to enquire about availability and rates. There are a limited number of rooms available at the BNC rate so early booking is recommended!