Matthew Hill, Domestic Bursar, updates us on the building works happening on Old Cloisters and Deer Park.

As we near the end of the academic year, phase two of the Library Project, which began in September 2015, is almost complete.

Works have progressed well in Old Cloisters, with the original stone floor tiles now levelled off and re-laid and the windows refurbished. Movable partitions have been fitted to allow for greater flexibility of working space for students. The room was temporarily returned to normal use in time for Trinity Term.

In the Stocker Room basement, the new archive facility is largely complete. The staircase has been installed and the new boiler fitted. During the works, wall paintings from the 16th and 17th century were unexpectedly uncovered. The paintings are of a swirling pattern of flowers, and were totally unknown until now. They have been protected and established for the future.

The redesign of Deer Park is also nearing completion. Larger pathways and raised planting beds have been created and three new trees have been planted so far.

During the Deer Park project, a curved drain was discovered around five metres below the quad, it is thought to be the original well which served the medieval kitchen and, therefore, it pre-dates Deer Park itself.

The final phase of this project will start in mid-July 2016 with the refurbishment of the Upper Libraries. In mid-September a spiral stone staircase will be fitted, which will connect Cloisters to the Upper Library.

If all continues to run to schedule, the entire building and renovation project is due to be complete by the beginning of Trinity Term 2017.

As work continues on Deer Park, a medieval well is discovered which brought water to the College before Deer Park ever existed.

The work continues as new turf is laid on Deer Park. Also in view, one of the three new trees that has been planted.

16th-17th century wall paintings discovered during the creation of new archives space below the Stocker Room.

The project was entirely funded by generous donations from our Old Members. As well as larger gifts, the works have been made possible by supporters of the College generously donating to name chairs, desks and bookcases for the finished library, either in their own, or a loved one’s honour. Such naming opportunities are still available.

If you would like to enquire about naming a library chair, desk or bookcase then please email our Senior Development Officer, James Fletcher on james.fletcher@bnc.ox.ac.uk
Alumni News In Brief

Brasenose Two in Under 30

BNC was well represented in the 2016 EU Forbes 30 Under 30 list with two alumni named in the list of Europe’s brightest and best. Dr Matthew Cole (Eng Lit, 2004) was included in the Science & Healthcare category while Andi De Haas (Phil & Mod Lang, 2006) made the list in the Finance section.

Mentoring Success

In December 2015, recent BNC graduate Philip Rigby met with Paul McGrath (Law, 1991), partner at Withers LLP for some career advice. Philip said of his experience, ‘Meeting with Paul helped give me confidence going forward. The conversation we had was relaxed, honest and informal and, as Paul really understood the process I will be going through, the advice I received felt authentic and bespoke – the free coffee was an added bonus!’ Our alumni are really helping to shape the future for BNC students. To inquire about mentoring a student, please email development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk.

Some Observations on Undergraduate Admissions

A key number in Oxford admissions is 3,200: the total available places at Oxford for all courses. Of these 3,200 places, 107 are currently at Brasenose.

One thing that has remained unchanged is Oxford’s overall undergraduate quota. Gaining admission to Oxford has always been challenging but the ratio of applicants per place is now at a record high. Many of the most successful applicants have increased, driven in part by extra spending on education is higher – one of the many reasons why state school students now comprise 64% of both Brasenose and Oxford’s UK applicants.

BNC’s excellent Schools Officer Joe Organ, Brasenose Principal John Bowers QC, dispels some of the myths surrounding the Oxford admissions process and explains how the process really works.

The Real Oxford Admissions Process

• Every year since 1990, the number of applications to Oxford have DOUBLED in 26 year-on-year.
• Applications to Oxford University may appear more complex than other universities since candidates are invited to state a college preference, take admissions tests in most subjects, and also be interviewed. In consequence, Brasenose and the other colleges expend a lot of effort guiding prospective students through the process and connecting many myths.

Some of the particularly stubborn misconceptions:
• It is difficult if not impossible for state school students to get in because of ‘social privilege’, or for public school students to get in because of ‘social engineering’.
• The selectors are only looking for polished candidates.
• Applicants need to be good at training by their school or by a company at short notice.
• It is necessary to choose the college very carefully as schools have relationships with each one.

All of these contentions are nonsense.

There are no special agreements with schools. The main thrust of our outreach is to provide guidance to gifted students considering an Oxford application, and not to market Brasenose specifically.

To avoid wasteful duplication of effort, each college is assigned a region of the country it takes the lead in outreach work for the University as a whole. Brasenose focuses on North Yorkshire and West Berkshire. Under the leadership of our excellent Schools Officer Joe Organ, Brasenose contacts every school in our region regularly and makes a large number of visits to state schools in those areas. We also welcome students and teachers from a wide range of schools across the country to come and visit Brasenose.

What will help candidates to succeed is wide reading, a facsimile with their subject, an interest in the world, general intellectual curiosity, the ability to think for themselves and a clear desire to study at Oxford. A sophisticated approach and potential are the keys which are most likely to unlock the door.

Admissions is thus based solely upon academic merit and our aim is to attract and recruit from those who we think will get the most from the unique opportunities offered by the very rigorous academic life of the University. This means those who are ready and keen to work hard and are excited by intellectual challenges. We are looking for students who will genuinely enjoy the course and thrive on it.

We stress that the interview is only one part of the selection process. A common misconception is that the interview is all-important. We take into account information on the UCAS form (especially contextualised exam performance) for final selection as well as shortlisting.

I was at a grammar school which became a comprehensive when I was in the sixth form. Few people even thought of applying to Oxford from my school. I am now passionate about encouraging people from all backgrounds to consider applying.

We welcome any potential student with open arms to come and see the University and talk to current students, who are indeed our best ambassadors.

The Theatre for their matriculation ceremony.
Undergraduate, Polly Calver is the current President of the Ellesmere Society. She captured up with past Presidents: Christopher Moss (1968), David Zeffman (1977), and Paolo Santi (2003) to hear their memories of Brasenose and of the Ellesmere. She also discovers how the art of building a career in law might have changed over the years.

PC: What’s your most distinctive memory from your time at Brasenose?

PS (2003): It’s hard to pick one, as there are quite a few. Finishing finals looms pretty large. Also, playing lawn bowls on Old Quad with the tutors after finals, and having dinner in Hall. We spent lots of time hanging around the JCR there. I realise there was this arcade machine where you could play table tennis. I bet that’s gone now.

PC: It’s still there, but I think the quiz machine is more popular.

DZ (1977): My memories of BNC are a montage: there’s one that jumps out: about a trip to the Isle of Wight after finals; punting and making lifelong friends.

CM (1968): It’s there: one that jumps out about a month after finals. I got a very frightening letter from the college demanding that I return for a viva. There’s one that jumps out: about a trip to the Isle of Wight after finals; punting and making lifelong friends.

CM (1968): There was a list in the Lodge and my name was just close enough so I didn’t have to interview after all!

CM (1968): I think the worst thing I’ve experienced so far as a lawyer, and what is the worst?

PS (2003): The worst thing I’d say is that these days it’s necessary to engage with the job market before you graduate. And I think it’s good to be mindful of that there are other professions out there. It’s quite easy to be a student lawyer to get pigeon-holed into the legal profession, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but I’d say have a look at other areas and keep your options open. It’s a great profession to end up working in, but quite easy to end up in a legal bubble - be aware that there are other opportunities out there.

DZ (1977): That’s a really difficult question - not least because it would be a bit weird graduating a year after my son! The only thing I can say is that nowadays I don’t think you can really drift into law in the way that I did and you have to make sure you’re really focused and organised.

UC: And do you think you’d do anything differently if you were graduating this year?

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The first meeting of the Ellesmere Society was held in Hilary Term 1922. The Society was named the Ellesmere, though it was agreed to name the society after a Brasenose alumna, as Oriel firmly admitted they had no candidate of the eminence of the Brasenose Lord Chancellor’. The Brasenose Lord Chancellor they spoke of was Thomas Egerton, who entered Brasenose in 1556. On 21 July 1603 he was created Baron Ellesmere and shortly afterwards appointed Lord Chancellor.

The Brazen Nose records that ‘the first meeting of the Ellesmere took the form of an inaugural dinner, which was held early in the Hilary term, and was followed by a moot, a mock trial which achieved a surprisingly high standard of impromptu humour, and finally a brilliant paper, on the Judicial Tempesta, by M. John Burchall’. Over the years the society has attracted many notable guest speakers, whilst law tutors and Fellows have been actively involved from its very beginnings. On 26 October 1946 Sir George Baker spoke on the Nuremburg trials, at which he had served as Assistant Adjutant General on the British War Crimes Executive. One prominent member of the Society, Lord Scarman, was a member of the Ellesmere on more than one occasion and in 1947 he presided over a moot on dangerous animals. In 1966 the annual dinner was attended by Mrs Justice Lane, the first woman High Court Judge, though women had not been admitted as members of the Ellesmere until 1976. As well as Stallybrass, two other Brasenose Principals were involved with the Society. From the 1960s to the 1970s, Barry Nicholas was described as ‘a guiding spirit’ and in 1966, H. L. A. Hart, whilst Oxford Professor of jurisprudence, spoke on ‘Intention and Punishment’ and returned in 1979 to deliver an address on Jeremy Bentham.

There have, throughout its history, been slight lulls in the activity of the Ellesmere but today mooting and law societies thrive in Oxford. From mooting to debating, performance and reception of character relates to contemporary ideas of psychology, social structure and motivation. It will span a wide range of genres from late-Victorian melodrama through to early socialist dramas and expressionist theatre, but also musical comedy, farce and the play of ideas. How have you found this year’s cohort of undergraduates to teach?

This year’s intake has been a pleasure to teach. They are wonderfully energetic – I often find myself calling time on their debates rather than encouraging them to happen. Keeping a one-hour seminar to two and a half hours is proving a real challenge.

I think that shows that Brasenose English students are now, as ever, above all in love with their subject – it’s bursting out of them. As Tutors, our job is to nurture their intellectual curiosity, but so much of the students’ intellectual growth happens outside tutorials; through the conversations they have among themselves. All we can do is to make sure that their enthusiasm is focused in the most productive way.

Once, after a particularly long summer of working hard to finish articles, I got back to College wondering what it was going to get the energy from to teach. It was then that I ran into one of the new starters. He burst out with such enthusiasm, it was like plugging into the National Grid! It’s above all what keeps me going and makes teaching a joy, when the hours get really long and I’m flagging.

I am recharged by my students’ enthusiasm and energy.

What has been your impression of alumni events in College?

I love going to Gaudy. Often by the time a year group come back for their first Gaudy, they have had time to settle into their careers and are thriving. They have gone through those difficult years, new graduates and have started to set their own pace. They are safe in harbour – they are wise, and know their own priorities and what they value. They are hugely impressed and proud of what they’ve achieved, and I love hearing about their partnerships, children and plans. Essentially they are more themselves – though they almost never look different at all!

You can see that the love of their subject is still as vibrant as ever. I went to a Gaudy recently and found out that the English cohort were running a book club over email and got just as heated in their discussions of books as they ever did in my classes.

One of my favourite alumni events was the panel on women in the media that was part of the 40 Years of Women at Brasenose celebrations last year. Seeing ex-students on the panel and how successful they have become since Brasenose is awe-inspiring; successful not only in their careers, but in the changes they have made to the world.

I can’t claim credit for what my students have gone on to achieve, but I like to think that at Brasenose they were encouraged to find and believe in their own voice. My job is to help strengthen that voice – which can sound easy, but often involves challenging, testing, proving it like metal to make it stronger.

Have you seen many changes during your years at BNC?

One of the funny things that I have observed is that students are no longer afraid to be overtly studious. In former years, there was pressure on brilliant students to achieve a first while being seen in the bar. The art was to be successful without being seen to work for it – to be able to be entertaining, and party every subject topic outside your own work, to be as brilliant as possible, while appearing to be very laid back. That could make for wonderful debates down the bar, but could also put a huge extra burden on ambitious students. Whereas now, it is taken as a matter of course that you have to work very hard to do a degree at Brasenose. There is no shame in spending your days in the library in order to keep up – or indeed, combining sports, arts, travel, politics and all the other fantastic things; our students do, together with overtly hard graft. You don’t choose to do a degree at Oxford unless you are prepared to work twice as hard as at many other universities.

How would you sum up the atmosphere at Brasenose?

There is a real sense of community. The peer support network is incredibly active and all stems from the JCR – they look after each other.

One of my favourite times of the year is the Arts Week. It marks the beginning of summer – when everyone is more themselves - though they almost never look different at all!

Brasenose is a small College and students are no longer afraid to be overtly studious. There is no shame in spending your days in the library in order to keep up – or indeed, combining sports, arts, travel, politics and all the other fantastic things; our students do, together with overtly hard graft. You don’t choose to do a degree at Oxford unless you are prepared to work twice as hard as at many other universities.
The George Walker Bursary

Comedian, writer and Brasenose alumnus, Michael Palin (1962), paid the College a visit in February with the family of George Walker (1962), Palin’s friend and contemporary at BNC who sadly passed away last year. Mr Palin has recently set up a bursary to support an undergraduate in honour of his life-long friend and to give others an opportunity to benefit from an education at Brasenose.

George Walker and I were contemporaries, reading Modern History at Brasenose between 1962 and 1965. We became good friends, sharing digs together in our second year. He was well-read and enthusiastic, his company always lively and stimulating. Though performing was not his thing, he had a great sense of humour and was a valuable sounding board not only for matters of Modern History, but also for the comedy and drama which was becoming an increasingly significant part of my life at Oxford.

We remained friends after we went down, meeting occasionally but always in touch via letters and eventually emails. George made his mark on the international scene long before I became a television traveller, when he moved to Strasbourg to begin a lifetime’s work for the Council of Europe. He was involved closely in regulating sports, setting up the World Anti-Doping Agency, finding ways to deal with the problems of football hooliganism, and how sports could be financed through the European Union.

He relished his time at the heart of Europe, and was always exploring and sampling the continent, whilst building up an enviable wide knowledge of European history. He died of cancer, far too young, in the late autumn of 2014, shortly after our last meeting together in hospital in Strasbourg.

He loved his time at Brasenose, and relished all the opportunities offered by College and University life. My decision to set up a Bursary in his name was not only to recognise all the promise of a rich and busy life cut short, but also to perpetuate, in his memory and in his name, a chance for others to benefit from the College that meant so much to him. The George Walker Bursary is an investment in the talents of the future; talents that I hope will blossom into lives as active, energetic and beneficial as that of George himself.

Michael Palin (History, 1962)

Giving Back to BNC

Supporting student bursaries ensures that Brasenose can continue to attract the finest minds from around the globe, irrespective of financial background. Donations at every level, from regular gifts to the Annual Fund to fully endowed named bursaries, play their part in making sure that students have the greatest opportunities at BNC.

To find out more about donating to Brasenose, email development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk or visit http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/supporting-bnc

A Day in the Life… of the JCR President

Beth Jenkinson is a second year PPE student and the President of the JCR. We tagged along for her final day of Hilary Term; joining her for lectures, lunch in Hall and late night kebabs!

My daily morning commute from Frewin to College: the beautiful view walking onto Radcliffe Square.

8.30am
An extremely interesting lecture on political thought from Bentham to Weber, and a significantly smaller turn-out than usual – thanks to it being the last week of term!

9.00am
My friend, looking a bit too cheerful to be working hard in the library!

10.30am

2.00pm
A sunny afternoon run around Christ Church meadow.

3.00pm
The JCR spent the afternoon painting the hoarding around the building works on Deer Park, loads of people got stuck in!

Heading back to Frewin the scenic route via Hertford’s Bridge of Sighs.

5.00pm

6.00pm
Dinner with friends at the Chequers’ pub: enjoying a well-earned end of term pint.

8.00pm
With a friend at the drinks reception for the Spring Party in Hall.

11.00pm
No night out is complete without a stop off at Hassan’s (our beloved local kebab van) on the way home.
Alumni Events 2016

We have welcomed well over 500 alumni back to College over the past academic year. Here are a few snaps of some of those get-togethers.

See our Flickr site for the full events photo gallery:
www.flickr.com/photos/bnc_members

Part of the Oxford Alumni Weekend, in September 2015, the Brasenose Society’s Annual Dinner was a wonderful evening, bringing together BNC alumni of all eras.

In November 2015, we invited the oldest members of the college back for a special lunch to celebrate the anniversary of 60 years since leaving Brasenose.

In March 2016, Peter Sinclair spoke at our inaugural Breakfast with Brasenose event, hosted by C. Hoare & Co. bank in London.

1956-59 matriculands joined us for the first Gaudy of 2016, where old friendships were rekindled and a fantastic evening was had by all.

As part of the Principal’s Conversations series, John Bowers invited Simon Schama for a fascinating discussion in front of a huge audience of alumni, students and members of the public in the University Church.

In April we invited back those who matriculated between 1960 and 1966 to celebrate 50 years since leaving Brasenose. It was a very jolly occasion!
Contact Us

The Alumni Relations & Development Office offers a warm welcome to Brasenose Members returning to College. We are also pleased to be able to arrange Alumni Dining in Hall during term time for you and a guest and to assist you with booking College accommodation should you require it.

If you would like to visit us in the Development Office, we’re located on staircase VII/2, just before the Library. Our usual office hours are 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

The Alumni Relations & Development Office
Brasenose College
Oxford OX1 4AJ

Tel: +44(0)1865 287275
Email: development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk
Web: www.bnc.ox.ac.uk

Events Diary 2016/17

GAUDIES
Gaudy for those who matriculated in 2000 & 2001
Friday 24 June 2016

Gaudy for those who matriculated in 2008 & 2009
Friday 23 September 2016

Gaudy for those who matriculated between 1963 and 1966
Friday 17 March 2017

ALUMNI & GUEST EVENTS
Alumni Garden Party
Sunday 31 July 2016
Bring the family

BNC Society Annual Alumni Dinner
Saturday 17 September 2016
Guests welcome

Informal drinks at the Oxford and Cambridge Club
Saturday 17 September 2016
Guests welcome

DONOR EVENT
Alexander Nowell Circle Lunch (Legators)
Friday 18 November 2016

All events will be held in College unless stated otherwise. Invitations will be sent out in advance by post or email where appropriate.

For more information, contact us on:
+44 (0)1865 287275
development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk

Events Diary

You are always welcome back to Brasenose!