

Fun or Historic BNC Facts along the route

By David Bradbury (1981), Drusilla Gabbott (1982) with original guidance by Georgie Edwards, BNC Archivist

The Tower of London: Brasenose Martyrs

During Elizabethan times at least three BNC Catholic Priests were imprisoned and tortured in The Tower.

George Nichols was at Brasenose around 1564 and then became a teacher at **St Pauls**. He was imprisoned in The Tower in the late 1580s and was one of the four 'Holywell' Martyrs hanged drawn and quartered at Holywell Gallows in 1589

Robert Nutter born at Burnley Lancashire entered BNC in 1564 or 1565 and was committed to The Tower with his brother, also a priest, on 2 February 1584. The authorities hoped he would lead them to Catholic safe houses He remained in the pit forty-seven days, wearing irons for forty-three days, and was twice subjected to the tortures of "The scavenger's daughter" (below).



Nutter was transported to France on 21 January 1585, with twenty other priests aboard the *Mary Martin* of Colchester, from Tower Wharf, and was eventually executed in 1600 in Lancaster when he unwisely returned to England.

John Shert from Macclesfield attended Brasenose around 1566. He too was a London schoolmaster. He went to Douai to study Catholicism then served two years in Catholic 'missions' in Cheshire and London before his arrest and imprisonment in The Tower on July 14, 1581. He was condemned of conspiring against the crown in Rheims and Rome and hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn on May 28, 1582.

Also imprisoned in The Tower for a time was **Bishop John Williams of Lincoln** (1582-1650), later Archbishop of York. He was chaplain to that doyen of Brasenose lawyers, Lord Ellesmere, before following in his footsteps as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal after the disgrace of Francis Bacon, despite not being a lawyer himself. As Bishop of Lincoln, he was *ex-officio* Visitor of Brasenose and as such took a role in the admin of the college, for example in June 1627 when the Fellows asked for

(and got) his permission to leave a fellowship vacant for six months to help cover a financial shortfall caused by another fellow having died without settling his battels.

Bishop Williams later fell foul of Charles I and Archbishop Laud for not being strict enough against the Puritans and was imprisoned in The Tower till the recalled Parliament forced his release in 1640. This run-in did not stop him being promoted to the see of York in 1641.



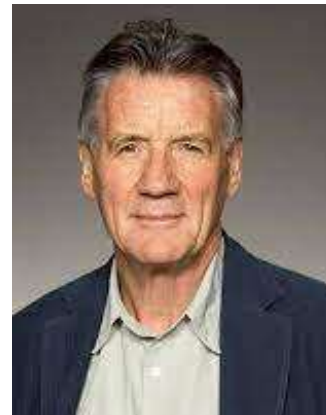
Globe Theatre

The replica of the Globe built by Sam Wanamaker stands close to the site of the original (which was a little further inland and slightly further to the east). The present replica was the first thatched building allowed in London after fire regulations were tightened following the Great Fire of 1666, and so replicates Burbage's original Globe of 1599, which was also thatched. However, in 1613 this building burned down when a stage effect involving a cannon went wrong and set fire to the thatching during a performance of *Henry VIII*. Fortunately, everyone was able to get out largely unharmed, apart from one individual who "had his breeches set on fire, that would perhaps have broyled him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident wit, put it out with a bottle of ale". One hopes the unnamed man with the singed breeches was suitably grateful to former Brasenose principal **Alexander Nowell**, credited in Fuller's *Worthies of England* with inventing bottled beer. The rebuilt Globe – which stood until pulled down shortly after Parliament ordered the playhouses closed in 1642 – not surprisingly had a tiled roof instead.

Spot the mistake!

The courtyard of The Globe features the names of prominent donors. Among them two comedy giants, **Michael Palin** and John Cleese.

What might be considered one of fundraising's most embarrassing typos is actually a jape. John Cleese agreed to donate funds to the Globe, but only on condition that the theatre should mis-spell the name of his friend and one time comedy partner. The flagstones are visible during normal opening hours through the grand gates. So, pop away from the walk and find our famous Alum there, looking out for the typo.



If anyone feels similarly inspired to mis-immortalise a chum on a College monument apply to Dr Liz Miller who currently has many opportunities at Frewin.

St Paul's

From the Millennium Bridge there is a splendid view of the current St Paul's Cathedral, built by Sir Christopher Wren to replace the medieval building destroyed

in the Great Fire of 1666. Among the former Deans of the old cathedral are **Alexander Nowell** (dean 1561-1602), who needs no introduction here, and John Donne (dean 1621-31). Donne was not a Brasenose man, having studied at Hart Hall, Oxford, before moving on to Cambridge, but he was for a while secretary to Lord Ellesmere. Alas, this brought him into contact with Anne More of Loseley Park near Guildford, who was the niece of Ellesmere's second wife. The couple fell in love, eloped and were married clandestinely – which resulted in not only Donne's dismissal but his imprisonment for a time.

Meanwhile, in 1590 during his time as Dean of St Paul's, Nowell found that a property in Carter Lane, right next to his own house, that he had leased out had been sub-let cheaply to an unsuitable tenant who had turned it into an alehouse. The patrons were causing a nuisance at his back gate where they "*doo usuallie unloade them selves of all their drinke taken in the said taverne*" and disturbed his servants by their "*outcries, filthye and blasphemous words*". He wrote for legal advice to his good friend Sir Thomas Egerton, the future Lord Ellesmere, but we don't know whether the latter was able to help!

Gabriel's Wharf

On the other side of the river, opposite Gabriel's Wharf, are the Temple Gardens, beyond which lie two of the inns of court, the Inner Temple and the Middle Temple. Too many Brasenose lawyers have been members of these bodies to list, but former members of the Inner Temple include one of our co-founders, **Sir Richard Sutton** (1460-1524), while our current Principal, **John Bowers QC**, is a bencher at the Middle Temple.

Just west of the Middle Temple (to its left as you view it) and running up to the Strand once stood Essex House, the London residence of the Earl of Essex. He used this as his headquarters for his doomed uprising in 1601. He held four Privy Councillors hostage here – including Sir Thomas Egerton, the future **Lord Ellesmere** – while he marched east into the City in an attempt to get the mob to rise on his side, but when this failed he returned by boat to find that his last bargaining counter, his distinguished hostages had already been released. Soon afterwards he surrendered and was taken to The Tower to await his trial and execution for treason.

On Oxford ground: land owned by Oxford Colleges

Brasenose did own property and church livings across the London area, though unfortunately nothing directly near the South Bank.

The closest property owned by Brasenose was across the river, on the Strand, the **White Hart Inn** (between 1514-1673).

However, for much of this section of the South Bank walk (College St etc) you'll find yourself walking on or near land once owned – and maybe still owned - by our near neighbour Jesus College, and endowed by Elizabeth 1.

Waterloo Bridge

Waterloo Bridge was opened in 1817, named after Wellington's famous victory a couple of years earlier. Among those forming part of Wellington's army in both the

Peninsula and Waterloo campaigns was the **Revd Samuel Briscall** (1778-1848), at one time a Fellow of Brasenose, who was appointed as an army chaplain during the Peninsular War, partly to help combat the spread of Methodism among the ranks.

Born in Cheshire, he matriculated in 1797 aged 19. He was awarded his BA in 1801, and later that year was awarded a Hulme Exhibition. He became a Fellow in 1803 and took his MA in 1804. He arrived in Portugal in 1808, was invalided home in 1811 but returned to the army in 1813. His motive for going might have been partly financial, for he seems earlier to have had problems with debt but reckoned he could put by £100 a year while with army (he was still getting his college stipend as well as army pay and wrote to the Bursar to get it remitted via Messrs Hopkinsons, his army agents). His work he describes as “duty to the troops, attendance on the sick & wounded & on criminals” — in other words on soldiers condemned to hang for looting. Described by Wellington as “an excellent young man”, nonetheless when he became Wellington’s domestic chaplain in 1814, he was warned by his employer to keep his sermons short: “Briscall, say as much as you like in five and twenty minutes. I shall not stay longer.” Late the same year he took his Bachelor of Divinity degree. By 1815 he was back with the army and attended the Duchess of Richmond’s famous ball a few days before the Battle of Waterloo.

After the war, he resigned his college fellowship in 1816, from which he had earlier been allowed leave of absence during his time with the army, and the same year became curate of Stratfield Saye, where Wellington had his country seat. Wellington made some further efforts with Lord Liverpool to get him clerical preferment, but these do not seem to have borne fruit. As late as 1847 he was still trying to claim arrears of army half-pay, he claimed to have been owed since 1818 from service in the army of occupation in France (“legal opinion adverse”, the National Archives catalogue says laconically).

Royal Festival Hall area

The whole area around the RFH is the site of the 1951 Festival of Britain, of which the Hall is the only major surviving part. As part of the site, beyond Hungerford Bridge stood one of the Festival’s most distinctive features - **the Skylon**.



This narrow steel fleche stood 91 metres tall and was designed by **Powell and Moya**, who a few years later would go on to design staircases XVI-XVIII at Brasenose. The Skylon itself did not last – as soon as the Festival closed, it was sold to scrap merchants despite the protests of Powell, the architect. Some of its metal seems to have ended up as souvenir knives or wristwatches. There is still a restaurant named after it in the complex.¹

¹ <https://brasenosecollegelibrary.wordpress.com/2016/05/16/modern-architecture-at-brasenose/>

Embankment

Across the Thames from the riverfront alongside the National Theatre are the Victoria Embankment Gardens. This land was reclaimed from the Thames in the 19th century, but at the back of this stands the old watergate of the now otherwise vanished York House. Originally the London residence of the Archbishops of York, by the late 16th century it was normally the residence of successive Lord Chancellors, including **Lord Ellesmere**, who died there in 1617. After the dismissal from the office of Francis Bacon, the lease passed instead to James I's favourite the Duke of Buckingham, who built the watergate in about 1626-7.

Among his garden ornaments was a statue Charles I had been given during his trip to Madrid, of Sampson slaying a Philistine by the Italian sculptor Giambologna. This is now in the V&A, but it was widely copied, including one at Stowe; famously a version (normally known as "**Cain and Abel**") stood in the middle of Old Quad from early in the 18th century till it was taken down in the late 19th century.



The Houses of Parliament: BNC MPs and Lords

Across the Thames are the Houses of Parliament. We have produced two BNC Prime Ministers, **Henry Addington 1801-1804** and **David Cameron**, now an Honorary Fellow. The House of Lords currently houses BNC lords Camilla Cavendish, Baroness Cavendish of Little Venice, Lord Janvrin (former private secretary to The Queen) and Lord Vallance, both the latter are previous Presidents of the Brasenose Society. Recent MPs include Claire Perry, Julian Brazier and Stephen Dorrell. Mr Dorrell was on appointment the youngest MP or 'baby of the house'.

Lord Archer of Weston Super Mare and John Profumo are also alumni.

Lambeth

A short distance past County Hall and the end of the walk are Lambeth Palace and the former church of St Mary at Lambeth, now the Garden Museum. In the church are buried famous gardeners the two John Tradescants, father and son, who assembled the collection of curios known as 'Tradescant's Ark'. This they displayed to the public in their house in Lambeth.

The collection was acquired from the widow of the younger Tradescant by Brasenose man **Elias Ashmole** to form the nucleus of the future museum that bore his name, not that of the Tradescants.

A less distinguished resident of Lambeth was the notorious physician and astrologer Simon Forman (d. 1611). Completely self-taught, when he first moved to London, he found himself in trouble with the College of Physicians which had him arrested more than once for practising medicine without a license, but after Cambridge University gave him a licence in 1603, the College of Physicians was powerless. A few years after Forman's death, one Mrs Ann Turner was put on trial for the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury in The Tower of London. Quite irrelevant to the charge but further to blacken her reputation, it was alleged that after she was widowed, she went to Forman to get him to use magic spells to compel her lover **Sir Arthur Mainwaring** to marry her, various alleged magic items found at Forman's house being produced for the jury. Sir Arthur was the eldest of four brothers who all attended Brasenose, and he took his BA in 1598 and MA in 1601. After Brasenose he acted as a steward for Lord Ellesmere and also served as carver to Prince Henry, responsible for serving his food, as well as conducting his irregular relationship with Mrs Turner, seemingly with her husband's connivance (who even left money in his will for Sir Arthur to have a mourning ring). Thus, when some years later the Overbury case came under scrutiny, it is not surprising that investigating judge Sir Edward Coke noticed Prince Henry's carver had been living with a notorious poisoner at the time of the prince's sudden death in 1612. It was probably fortunate for Sir Arthur that the post-mortem had at the time ruled out poison, but he seems to have lived a quieter life after his lover was hanged for her part in the Overbury affair. Many of Forman's case notes survive because they were collected by Ashmole in later years (who according to John Evelyn was "addicted" to collecting astrological material); these notes reveal the extent to which Forman misused his hold over his female consultees by sleeping with many of them.

