The Fellowship: Interviewed

As part of a series of interviews with our Fellowship, Professor Chris McKenna, Fellow in Management Studies at Brasenose, Reader in Business History and Strategy at Said Business School and winner of the prestigious Harold F. Williamson Prize, sat down with Richard Lofthouse, editor of Oxford Today, to share thoughts from his forthcoming history of white-collar crime.

Anyone astonished by American scammer Bernie Madoff’s Ponzi scheme, recently dramatised in various TV treatments, the collapse of US utility giant Enron back in 2001, or more recently the VW emissions-rigging scandal and LIBOR banking disgrace, will immediately be drawn to the research of Chris McKenna.

The inaugural Fellow of Management at Brasenose since 2000, McKenna is currently researching the history of white-collar crime, which will form the basis of a new book.

He says that he has uncovered several central themes, one of them that there is a tendency of even highly intelligent people to connive in an enterprise that apparently benefits them even though it might not feel ‘right’ – such as Madoff’s Ponzi scheme. “People thought they were ‘in on it’, when in fact they were the victims of it.”

He has also developed the premise that a new industry or sector in business is invariably followed by scandal, because criminals exploit the absence of regulation common to new sectors. Cyber fraud falls squarely into that bracket, and we are living through its natural emergence right now.

McKenna is planning a narrative that will begin with the origins of the South Sea Bubble in the 17th century and cover various types of white-collar crime right up to the present. Examples will be comparative and international, with a bias towards the dominant capitalist (and scandal-prone) American and British economies. One of the deeper themes of McKenna’s book, Partners in Crime, is the broad continuity between the crimes committed and the novel forms of crime that follow because of the unintended consequence of regulation. “This is a sequence of behaviour that you encounter, again, and again,” he notes, citing as an example the first use of a ‘tax haven’, in Bermuda, in the 1930s in order to minimize American taxes in the aftermath of the Ivar Kreuger scandal, the infamous Swedish ‘Match King’ whose global empire collapsed in the Great Depression.

McKenna’s interest in white-collar crime stems partly from his multi-prize winning book, The World’s Newest Profession: Management Consulting in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge University Press, 2006). A central theme of that book was the role of banking regulation in spawning a vast, highly paid, white-collar elite that emerged from accountancy to create the quasi-profession of management consulting – in the 1930s, the 1950s, and again in the 1990s and beyond. If we can conceive, as McKenna does, of management consulting as much as a product of ‘regulatory politics [than] as a permanent feature of the knowledge economy’, then it helps to explain why consultants – many drawn from Ivy League and Oxbridge universities – have remained uneasy about their status.

Undergraduates lured by banking or consulting, yet queasy about ‘what it means’, could do worse than read McKenna’s book. They might emerge with a different goal, namely, to be a manager in a real business.

Professor Chris McKenna is Brasenose College’s inaugural Tutorial Fellow in Management Studies, and Reader in business history and strategy, Said Business School. His wife Dr. Mara Keire is a teaching and research fellow at Oxford’s Rothermere American Institute, and they have an eight-year old son, Nat.

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Thank you BNC

My wife (Sibabhan) and I would like to say a big “thank you” to staff at BNC who made a special birthday weekend with fifty friends such a memorable experience in August. My special thanks go to Neil as coordinator, Martin in Hall, Carol in the Lodge and Julie in the Bar. And to the Boat Club for letting us stir away the days in a delightfully wobbly eight! It was great to see the wonder on family and friends’ faces as they enjoyed both the special surroundings and wonderful hospitality practiced at the BNC. They will always remember their own version of Ale Verses. I can thoroughly recommend BNC as a great venue for family gatherings!

John Prag (Classics, 1966) has completed the editing of The Story of Alderley: Living with the Edge, published in January 2016. It marked the culmination of twenty years’ work by the Alderley Edge Landscape Project. Among the book’s 34 contributors was another Brasenose man, John Pellard (Geology, 1955), who wrote the section on Alderley’s two archosaurs.

Stephen Day (jurisprudence, 1966) has for some time been the longest serving District Judge at the Magistrates Courts and, in October 2016, will have completed 25 years in that post.

Simon Mawer (Zoology, 1967) has recently had his tenth novel, Tymptope, published. It was Waterstones’ Novel of the Month for March 2016 and went on to win the 2016 Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction.

James Flynn, QC (jurisprudence, 1974) had a pamphlet of his poetry published in June 2016—entitled, Among at the Capital. Mr Flynn has donated a copy of his work to the College library.

Tony Tyler (jurisprudence, 1974) retired in September 2016 from IACR after five years as its Director General. He and his wife, Charlotte will be returning to live in Hong Kong, and plan to spend their summers in Provence. Tony has joined the board of BOC Aviation, and will take up other non-executive directorships in due course.

Alexander Wolf (jurisprudence, 1997) was in February 2015, elected Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg (Hamburgische Bürgerschaft).

Rambaut Fairley (jurisprudence, 1995) and Mairi Fairley, née McGuiness (Chemistry, 2003) are pleased to announce the birth of their daughters Rachel Hilde and Emma Mary on 22nd July 2016.

Charlie Henniker (English, 2004) is in the process of producing a feature film, which is currently in the development stage. Since graduating from BNC he has worked in various capacities for BBC Worldwide, as well as publishing essays on cinema and producing a viral hit called “Gap Yah.”

Jessica Henniker’s YouTube video, “Gap Yah” which parodies Burn young globe-trotters

This issue of The Brazen Notes is focused on celebrating and sharing your news, and we have been inundated with fantastic contributions! If you would like to be included in the next issue, email us at development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk.

Your News is continued on page 4
Here are two snapshots of Brasenose in the late 1950s and early 1960s with a punting theme. If you have memories to share from other eras, we’d love to hear from you!

Three Men in a Punt: Trinity Term 1959

By Clive Stott (Chemistry, 1957)

Whose idea it was, I don’t remember. I only know that it was the one who had to pay for it all. Rodenick, Mike and I had been punting on the Cherwell many times before – past Addison’s Walk and Parson’s Pleasure, and on May Mornings to Music: Meadow for a picnic, breakfast and Scottish dancing. The Scottish Society was said then to be the most popular society in Oxford, and the sound of Rodenick’s bagpipes on those occasions still lingers in the memory. But the musical accompaniment to this venture was to be of a different quality. We were going to hire a punt at Magdalen Bridge in the evening, and make our way upstream, far beyond the town, to hear the dawn chorus. I had never heard a dawn chorus, unless it were the one on Magdalen Tower, and wasn’t sure what to expect, but I was promised that flocks of birds would assemble in the early hours and sing for our delight.

And so after dinner we made our way to the boathouse, chose our punt and set out. Don’t ask me who of the three of us was punting, because I don’t remember and I’m sure we each took our turn. I do recall that the trees, bending over the river, seemed to create Rupert Brooke’s “funnel of green gloom” (although that was over a different stream and in another place). I know that Rodenick was punting when we left Magdalen and entered the straight stretch by the Parks, because he suddenly lost the pole, and we had to paddle back to reclaim it. His only response to our ironic comments was, “I saw a kingfisher” in the half-light, that was hard to believe.

Then we were passing Lady Margaret Hall. I was at that time quite unaware of what fate had in store for me there, and Cherwell Boathouse, before the river turned across the fields, under Monty Fen and past the Victoria Arms. It was not quite closing time, but we felt no need to pause there because we had brought refreshments with us, and several bottles lay safely in the punt. I say safely, because on a previous occasion, a hot afternoon, Mike had had the idea of tying bottles together and trailing them in the water behind us to keep them cool; when he came to retrieve them, he had the rope, but the bottles had gone.

We continued our lazy way upstream. A full moon had just risen, and cast a low light on the twin arches of the Northern Bypass Bridge which we approached. This is as far as we had ever been, but the birds were not performing for some hours yet, and we continued under the bridge and set course for the Cherwell. We had been told that as far as it was possible to take a punt, and indeed the stream became noticeably narrower and shallower as we went on, until at last we heard the sound of the weir and decided to have our late supper and turn back to Water Eaton Manor, where we waited for the chorus to begin.

“All the air a solemn stillness holds” – it seemed that the air was holding a solemn stillness (or was versicolour) for a long time, with not even a droning beetle or moping owl to relieve the silence, until at last a solitary blackbird raised its voice – and then another, and another. We listened for half an hour or so as the chorus grew. Was it worth the venture? Yes, although now my memory is of remembering, not of the experience itself. We were six miles from Magdalen Bridge and needed to return the punt quickly. We made maximum speed downstream and, so I imagined, avoided reproof for keeping it out all night. Vain hope! I don’t remember whether I caught up with sleep when I got back to College, but I know that later that morning there was a knock at my door and someone from the boathouse demanding a ten shilling fine for my misadventure. I paid with a good grace.

Recollections of the River

By Michael Ball (Natural Sciences, 1956)

Our boat was the long narrow ‘C’ shaped punt which we had always expected to be called the ‘BNC punt’, but which did not have the name engraved on it. I suppose that this omission was due to my over eager enthusiasm for punting, and the consequent feelings that I must have had over his B.Litt. in BNC. At first, he refused, because the date clashed with the University Law Society dinner, which he was booked to attend, and there would be no time to change into his formal dress after punting. Either I was over-persuasive, or his conscience troubled him, and he decided to help, taking the risk of punting in his DJ. On the afternoon concerned, he and I were controlling the punt. We had dropped off our guests in the Parks, and were returning the punt to Magdalen Bridge, which involved negotiating the rivers. For reasons I did not understand at the time, and have failed to comprehend subsequently, the punt swelled out from its shape, and swept me all in his glory into the river. My feelings were a complex mixture of guilt and concern, with some mirth with which I ruthlesslessly suppressed. I have withheld his name, because I don’t think I have spoken to him since, do not wish to embarrass him and have no idea what his consequent feelings about me were and are!

As well as the punting trip described by Clive Stott, I once travelled almost to blow on the Cherwell, but on this occasion, walking on the ice. It was one afternoon during the appallingly cold winter of 1963. I was a research student in the Clarendon. I am not sure whose idea it was, but I and two other researchers, Mike Wellwood and Gervole Sheepd, both of Jesus, rang each other on the inter-lab phone system, and decided to have a walk. We headed into the Parks and accessed the Cherwell at Parson’s Pleasure, and set out walking north. We had no idea of how far we intended to travel, and had started without much thought or any map, food or preparations of any kind, not even telling anyone where we were. In the event, we just kept walking. It was a magical experience. As dusk fell, the leaves and twigs of overhanging bushes and trees, and the dead wild flower stalks and seedheads became coated before our eyes with a thicker and thicker layer of hoar frost, an experience of great beauty. We continued walking until we could hear running water, and an occasional cracking sound from the ice, so we scrambled on to the bank – it was dark now, and we really had no idea of exactly where we were, and of course, there was no one to ask. I remember we started to follow a railway line, then down on to a road, and by now by luck than judgement ended in Headington where we consumed enormous ‘Try-up’ meals at a transport cafe, before catching a bus back to Oxford. An impulsive expedition, which caught a unique opportunity, and has remained an abiding cherished memory of my time in Oxford.
Photo Gallery

Trinity Term and the long vacation were packed full of alumni events. Here is a small selection of the pictures we took.

Go to our Flickr site to see the full photo albums:
www.flickr.com/photos/bnc_members

This year’s 1504 Society party was held at Middle Temple in London and was a celebration of the College’s most generous donors.

Alumni brought friends and family to College in July for a wonderful afternoon of children’s entertainments, music, afternoon tea and close-up magic. We can’t wait for next year!

The cast of Beatles tribute act, Let it Be, visited BNC in June 2016 to re-create the famous shot in Principal Sir Noel Hall’s lodgings in 1964. The 2016 photo features current Principal, John Bowers QC.

June saw 2001-2002 matriculants return to College for their Gaudy, what a wonderful reunion!

We are sad to announce that Peter Batterley (Engineering Science, 1938), pictured here meeting the Principal, passed away soon after the dinner. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

Part of the Oxford Alumni Weekend in September, the Brasenose Society hosted their Annual Dinner.

We are sad to announce that Peter Batterley (Engineering Science, 1938), pictured here meeting the Principal, passed away soon after the dinner. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

In September we welcomed back 2008-2009 matriculants for their very first Gaudy. Stay in touch and we hope to see you back in College soon for another alumni event!
Save the Date!

Forthcoming Alumni Events in College

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

**Golden Jubilee Lunch** for those who matriculated between 1958 and 1967, guests welcome
Friday 31 March 2017

**Diamond Jubilee Lunch** for those who matriculated in 1957 and before, guests welcome
Friday 5 May 2017

**Gaudy** for those who matriculated between 1977 and 1979
Friday 23 June 2017

**Brasenose Garden Party**, All alumni and their family and friends are welcome
Sunday 30 July 2017

**BNC Society Annual Dinner**, All alumni and their guests welcome
Saturday 16 September 2017

**Gaudy** for those who matriculated between 1988 and 1989
Friday 22 September 2017

Invitations to the events listed will be sent to the relevant year groups by post or email around three months in advance.

To update your contact details using our online alumni community, visit our alumni pages at: [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni)

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Contact Us

The Alumni Relations & Development Office is always keen to welcome Brasenose Members back 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, just before the Library. Our usual office hours are 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

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Once a member of BNC, always a member of BNC