Brasenose College was delighted to unveil its new Amersi Foundation Lecture Room in May 2019. The extended space will allow students to gather and learn, staff and Fellows to share ideas, and alumni and friends to visit and contribute to an ever-increasingly diverse and rich Brasenose education and experience.

Before the renovation, the College identified the need for an impressive space for events and teaching. The success of the “Principal’s Conversation” series – which has already showcased presidents, prime ministers, industry leaders and senior academics – demonstrated the need for a larger events space on the main College site. Similarly, our outreach work with prospective students and schools required more innovative spaces to capture the imagination of the young minds who visit us.

The extended and refurbished space was generously funded by the Amersi Foundation, through our alumnus and Honorary Fellow Mohamed Amersi (EMBA, 2014).

Previously known as Lecture Room XI, the original space was designed by TG Jackson. The renovation was a complex and multifaceted project involving heavy structural modifications, including the removal of a supporting wall and incorporation of the room behind – the old College Workshop (or the old “Small Lecture Room” depending how far you go back).

The architects, Berman Guedes Stretton, have fully refurbished the room, and their sensitive and skilful matching of the existing woodwork and room timbers means that the original late 19th century character has been preserved.

The new facilities installed however are anything but Victorian, with digital screens deftly concealed within panelling and an integrated sound system that allows the space to be easily adapted for use by both smaller groups and for larger lectures.

Suspended just below the timber roof structure is the affectionately named ‘raft’, which provides air circulation and temperature control. It also offers an impressive array of lighting options meaning the room can be converted from a lecture theatre to a reception room when needed.

Adorning the walls is the College’s new temporary art exhibition on loan from the Ingram Collection (see page 3). The installation of these contemporary art pieces adds a 21st century element to this Victorian-era building.

The Principal, John Bowers QC, said: “The College was delighted when Mohamed Amersi offered through his Foundation to refurbish Lecture Room XI. This is an excellent space where we can debate all sorts of issues. The whole community is incredibly grateful for his generosity. Thank you, Mohamed! The completion of the room significantly increases both the type and scale of event that the College is able to hold and we are extremely proud of it. We look forward to welcoming alumni back to visit our wonderful new space.”
News

This is where we share news from the College – and you! Whether it is an award, personal achievement, a new baby, job, or just an update on how you are getting on – we want to hear it! If you would like your news to be included in the next issue, go to www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/submissions or email us at development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk

Congratulations to Richard Cockram (Mathematics, 1962) on receiving a Distinguished Friend of Oxford (DFO) award for his outreach work in Cornwall. He received his award at a special ceremony hosted by University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor Professor Louise Richardson (pictured). Photo courtesy of John Cairns.

BNC on University Challenge

Brasenose competed on BBC’s University Challenge in October. They were in a first-round match against Imperial College London, who, unfortunately for us, proved to be one of the strongest teams in the competition. BNC fought a hard battle, but alas, like their alumni counterparts in December, were sent home after their first match. It was a valiant team effort nonetheless from Tucker Drew (Psychology, Philosophy & Linguistics, 2017), Oli Hanson (Mathematics, 2015), Allen Haugh (PPE, 2017) and Maud Mullan (Classics, 2016).

On 1st December 2019 Robert Cashmore (History, 2010) will become HM Government’s Head of Investment for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan, having spent the last four years working at the British Embassy in Riyadh as Head of Investment for Saudi Arabia. Robert’s new role will be based at the British Embassy in Dubai.

This is just a small selection of the news we received. If you cannot see your submission printed here, it may appear in the next edition of the Brazen Notes or Brazen Nose. Please note that Brasenose College reserves full editorial control over all its publications.

Andy Ford (History, 1984), writes: “I am finally completing my M(Res) in Medieval Studies at University of Reading this summer. At the tender age of 54, I will be starting my Doctorate (The Royal Forest Under Henry III) on a part-time basis in the autumn. Hopefully I will finish in time for my 60th birthday.”

Jim Ring (English, 1976)’s latest book, How the Navy Won the War has been shortlisted for the Mountbatten Award, the leading maritime literary prize. We Come Unseen, his previous work on the Royal Navy, was one of the first winners of the prize.

Madeleine Walker (Classics, 2013) graduated in 2018 with a masters’ degree in Contemporary Acting at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and has gone straight into work as an actor. After signing with an agent, she was cast as Delphi in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child. She will be performing this role at the Palace Theatre until May 2020.

Tom Beardsworth (PPE, 2011) writes: “I confess to sniggering a little in 2011 when Graeme Richardson, Brasenose’s then-Chaplain, told us Freshers assembled in Hall on our first day that approximately four among us would marry each other. He was way off – it is already somewhat higher. Anna Broadley (History & Economics, 2011) and I are the latest to furnish that statistic. We got married at All Saints Church, Fulham, on 31st August 2019 after meeting in the Brasenose JCR almost eight years earlier. Many Brasenose contemporaries were among our closest friends that joined us, including Will Round (PPE, 2011) who played the organ.”

On 1st December 2019 Robert Cashmore (History, 2010) will become HM Government’s Head of Investment for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan, having spent the last four years working at the British Embassy in Riyadh as Head of Investment for Saudi Arabia. Robert’s new role will be based at the British Embassy in Dubai.

Here’s wishing many happy returns to Valliath Nair (History, 1940) (top) and Brian Robinson (Botany, 1938) (right – photo courtesy of Dave Lewis, Somerset Live), who both recently celebrated their 100th birthdays – we hope you both had fantastic days!
Installation of a God of the Forge

by Dr Simon Smith, Senior Tutor

Brasenose installed a sculpture by noted artist Sir Eduardo Paolozzi in Old Quad this Autumn. The work is a God of the Forge, titled ‘Portrait of the Artist’ (1988). Its body represents Hephaestus (Vulcan): god of blacksmiths, metalworking, carpenters, craftsmen, artisans, sculptors, metallurgy, fire, and volcanoes. The head is that of the artist. It stands 150cm tall and weighs 150kg. God of the Forge is part of the Ingram Collection of 20th century British art that is being lent to the College for the year 2019-20 (Ed: see box below for more information on this).

It was a complex 3-day operation that involved several departments of Brasenose who worked together on the project.

Day 1
Delivery of the God of the Forge. A suitable, secure ground-floor holding area was identified and a security plan drawn up that calibrated risk, taking into account the fact that (at the time of writing) the Blenheim gold WC gang remain at large...

Day 2
Jo Baring (History, 1996), Curator of the Ingram Collection, and Robyn Salt (Fine Art, 2016) deployed a cardboard maquette to assess the best orientation of the sculpture (below).

The intended site in Old Quad selected by Jo and Dr Ian Kiaer, Tutorial Fellow in Fine Art & Curator of Pictures proved problematic after University Parks detected a hidden underground cable. Porters, IT and the Workshop joined with Crown Fine Art and University Parks in assessing whether installation could go ahead as planned.

After a CT scan and the digging of an exploratory trench, site A was abandoned and an alternative plot chosen.

Day 3
God of the Forge was wheeled out of the secure zone and attached to a hoist apparatus permitting the final stages of installation to be carried out. Unfortunately, complications arose in securing the god to the base with steel pins due to risk of lightning strike. The installation was temporarily called off for safety reasons.

Day 4
The second attempt at installation was completed successfully, aided by much improved sunny weather. We welcome Brasenose’s newest recruit!

The base area was excavated and 300kg of concrete laid. With the assistance of Bradley Johnson (Medicine, 2016) Robyn turned the first sod of earth (above).

The Ingram Collection at BNC

Principal John Bowers QC comments: “We are thrilled to have several exhibits from the Ingram Collection, which was brought together by Christopher Ingram and is curated by our alumna Jo Baring (History, 1996). The biggest waves have been made by the exquisite God of the Forge, entitled ‘Portrait of the Artist’, by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, which is in a prominent position in Old Quad. Its body represents Hephaestus, god inter alia of blacksmiths and metalworking. Other items (as seen in this box) are on display in the Amersi Foundation Lecture Room, the Platnauer Room and the staircase down from the Rotunda. In due course we will hold an event to explain the background to this wonderful Collection.”

Editor’s note: This is not the first statue to be erected on Old Quad – turn to page 5 for a report from the Archives about the statue of Samson that stood there between 1727-1881.
Debbie Hall has worked as a scout at Brasenose for a quarter of a century. And a lot has changed in those 25 years, both in the College and in Debbie’s own life, she tells journalist Olivia Gordon.

I meet Debbie over cuppas in the housekeepers’ room, a tiny den at the end of a maze of service corridors. She tells me that when she first came to Brasenose for an interview, having heard from a friend who worked at the College that there were jobs going for scouts, it was with her mum. Both were given jobs starting the very next day.

The job was a new challenge for Debbie, who had spent the previous decade recovering from a serious car crash.

37 years ago, when her son Anthony was eight months old, Debbie got into a car with her son’s father – who was no longer her partner – and he drove them to buy fish and chips near Debbie’s home in Cowley. She had no idea that he had been drinking. Just as he drove around a corner, a tyre burst, he lost control of the car and they hit a brick wall. ‘I can’t remember much,’ Debbie says today. ‘I can just remember lying in a pool of blood and trying to say “I can’t see”.’

Fortunately, it was a doctor’s house they had hit. But while Debbie’s ex-partner escaped with a few scratches, for Debbie the accident was life-changing. She had been flung through the car’s windscreen, and as well as sustaining injuries from the impact, she was blinded in one eye. ‘I was just given a tabard and I was put into one of the lecture rooms and told: “There’s the cleaning bucket, there’s the mop, get on with it!”’ Born and bred in Oxford and from a family who have lived in the city for generations, Debbie had never had any dealings before with the University, and had never done cleaning work apart from a Saturday job cleaning floors at BMW with big machines, having previously worked in an office and shop.

She started working from 7.30am-10.30am, then I worked my way up to 11:30am, and they finally gave me a staircase. Staircase 14 was the first staircase I had.’ She worked her way up to deputy housekeeper, overseeing the team of 20, and says: ‘I’ve just seen so much change. We’ve got new buildings, we’ve got the Rotunda, we’ve got all the new servery.’

Working life has evolved too, of course. At Brasenose 25 years ago, the induction of a scout was very different from today. Back then, says Debbie, ‘you had no training with chemicals, when you first came. Today everyone is trained with high standards of cleaning.’

The strangest thing Debbie has seen in a Brasenose room was many years ago in Staircase 14: ‘one student had a rabbit in there, and one had a big tropical fish tank. I went in there and thought “Oh my God.” Obviously, we had to report that. Don’t get me wrong, they looked nice in the room, but you can’t have them.’

Most students are reasonably tidy, although she says girls can be messier than boys, and she remembers another room on Staircase 14 years ago ‘where I literally couldn’t open the door, you just couldn’t see the floor.’ Mostly though, Debbie’s experience of students and Fellows has been very positive. Today, scouting in Staircase 9 and Stamford House, she says: ‘I’ve got a tremendous lot of lovely students.’
She gets to know her students quite well – many away from home for the first time tend to see her as a motherly figure. She says: ‘I think it’s nice to have a good relationship with your students, because I think then they do appreciate you. A lot of my students, if they see me cleaning the showers on the landing, they’ll say “Good morning, Debbie.”’ When students thank you for cleaning their rooms, ‘it gives you a little boost’.

She tries to make admissions candidates feel comfortable, too, asking them how it’s going and reassuring them the tutors are nice. In 2016, Debbie reduced her hours – she has many commitments looking after her elderly parents, as well as her own health. In September the College celebrated her 25th year of work with a party and flowers – a highlight of Debbie’s time at Brasenose.

Oxford colleges have gradually become part of Debbie’s family’s life as well as her own. Anthony is now 37 and has been Assistant Steward at Queen’s College since the age of 18 – having started his career at Brasenose aged 14, earning pocket money by waiting in the dining hall after school. To Debbie’s great happiness, he got married last year – in Worcester College, where his wife works in the Development Office. Debbie’s sister is buttery manager of Wadham. And after 45 years in the car factory, Debbie’s father went to work at All Souls.

Today Debbie’s wish is for health, for her and her loved ones. ‘I’ve been through quite a lot really, but I just say don’t give up,’ she says. Working at Brasenose has been a constant in her life and she is grateful for the support her colleagues have given her over the years. ‘I couldn’t imagine not working here. I’m part of the family.’

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**Five things you never knew about Debbie Hall**

- She loves gardening, especially growing flowers. Her favourites are begonias and pansies.
- She enjoys holidays abroad, and usually goes to Tenerife or Gran Canaria in the winter.
- Her first dance at her wedding to Kevin was to ‘Cherish’ by Kool and the Gang.
- She has raised more than £3,500 for the blind running her two half-marathons.
- She’s a big fan of the Inspector Morse spin-off show Lewis, and when Kevin Whately filmed at Brasenose, she had her picture taken with him – then the following day he sat next to her at breakfast in the dining hall, a moment she will always remember.

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**From the Archives**

The Statue of Samson

by Georgie Edwards, College Archivist (right)

For the first 100 years of the College’s existence, the Brasenose buildings consisted of just one quadrangle (Old Quad). Built in the early 16th century, the Quadrangle was only two storeys high, with the Hall and Tower at their present heights. The Chapel was in the south west corner, and opposite this was the principal’s Lodgings occupied most of the east side, including part of the Tower.

By the 17th century, more space was needed as student numbers grew, and Old Quad was extended to include a third storey. We know from David Loggan’s engraving of the College of 1675 that a knot garden existed where the grassed quad now stands and that in October 1727 this garden was substituted for a grassed quad with a statue. The Antiquarian, Thomas Hearne (1678-1735), recorded the fact with great indignation. He said that the garden was ‘the only one of that kind then remaining in Oxford’ and that it ‘was a delightful & pleasant Shade in Summer Time. This is done purely to turn it into a Grass Plot, & to erect some silly Statue there.’ The ‘silly statue’ in question was known in the College from the beginning as ‘Cain and Abel’, although subsequently it was identified as a copy of a work by John of Bologna depicting Samson slaying a Philistine; a version in marble can still be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The College’s copy was purchased in London and brought to Oxford by barge. It was removed in 1881, having been decorated and adorned by students on many occasions. The final straw for its removal seems to have come in March 1881 (the following from a blog post by [Dr Llewelyn Morgan, Vice-Principal & Fellow in Classics](http://blogs.bnc.ox.ac.uk/2009/03/21/antiquarian-statues/)):

> “On 9th March 1881, the ‘bump supper’ celebration of a Brasenose success on the river turned ugly. ‘In the flickering light of bonfires,’ recalled L.R. Farnell, the scholar of Greek religion, ‘could be seen the figures of some two hundred young men bounding and leaping high . . . and passing from lucid light into deep shadow alternately; and the leaping was accompanied by terrifying yells and the most fantastic music ever devised by savages standing on the verge of culture.’ Finally, the undergraduates turned their attentions to a statue that had stood in the middle of Old Quad lawn for 150 years, and defaced it with indelible paint. It and its obscene graffiti were quietly despatched to a scrapyard soon after.

The target of their drunken assault, whether or not those Victorian hoorays were aware of it, was an appropriate one. Although universally known as Cain and Abel, the statue was in fact a copy of a Renaissance image of Samson slaying a Philistine. Walter Pater, a Fellow of the College, found some consolation in the sight of these Brasenose athletes (‘like panthers,’ he had described them) leaping naked over bonfires. But the presence of the arch-aesthete in Oxford’s heartiest College during its most philistine phase throws up manifold anomalies: the mind boggles, for example, at the notion of Pater tutoring the future Earl Haig. On the matter of the statue’s destruction, Pater was defensive. If we can believe Edmund Gosse, it was ‘almost the only thing that ever ruffled him’: on mention of the statue, ‘Pater would sit up in a moment, and say, with great acidity, “It was totally devoid of merit, no doubt.”’

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**Five things you never knew about Debbie Hall**

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• Her first dance at her wedding to Kevin was to ‘Cherish’ by Kool and the Gang.
• She has raised more than £3,500 for the blind running her two half-marathons.
• She’s a big fan of the Inspector Morse spin-off show Lewis, and when Kevin Whately filmed at Brasenose, she had her picture taken with him – then the following day he sat next to her at breakfast in the dining hall, a moment she will always remember.
The Principal’s Blog

BNC’s Principal, John Bowers QC, keeps a blog of his thoughts and impressions of Oxford College life. We have gathered some snippets from the last few months to give you an insight into Brasenose’s daily running. Read the full blog here: [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/about-brasenose/princblog](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/about-brasenose/princblog)

May 2019

We are delighted that our excellent Greenland Library was favoured with three architectural awards on 23rd May. It is a magnificent space and a great tribute to the excellent team who designed it and those who implemented the design. The craftsmanship is uniformly superb. We thank again the generous funders of the project: Duncan Greenland (PPE, 1966) James Del Favero (Engineering Science, 1978) and Gerald Smith (Philosophy, 1984). We are very proud of our Library, and our students love it, but it is wonderful to have the quality of the project recognised by such an illustrious body.

On 29th May, I addressed the resplendent blazers at their pre-Eights breakfast in the Shackleton Room. I spoke of our successes on the River over the 19th century. The College for example rowed at their pre-Eights breakfast in the Shackleton Room. I spoke of our successes on the River over the 19th century. The College for example rowed so well as head of the river on thirty consecutive nights in 1852-5 and in two of those years (1852 and 1853) held the headship simultaneously in both Eights and Torpids. Remarkably, five of the stars of the boats in these years became priests.

On 30th May, Ascension Day, there was the annual ‘Beating of the Bounds’ around the College. This long-established custom demarcates parish boundaries by parishioners with sticks striking boundary stones and marking them with chalk. A building may not be constructed across parish boundaries and it was necessary to know who was in each parish for the purpose of the Poor Laws. The day commenced with Morning Prayer in Chapel, and then there was a procession from St Mary the Virgin, which arrived in College at the High Street gate (which is not normally open) to mark the boundary of their parish with that of St Michael at the North Gate (boundary stones are next to Broadgates and staircase 4).

At noon, Andy Talbot, the Head Porter, opened the door to Lincoln College, allowing Brasenose folk to partake of Lincoln’s penitential Ivy Beer al fresco. Coins are then thrown from the top of the front Tower at Lincoln which are scooped up by school children. It is a really moving and evocative ceremony.

On 31st May, there were three events with Kenneth Lonergan in conversation. I discussed his early life and whether he preferred film or theatre, and in particular his films and the play *The Starry Messenger*, which opened in the West End of London last week. He answered all of the questions with grace and good humour. He spoke of working with Casey Affleck and his lack of interest in Oscar ceremonies. He explained why he cast his wife in *Margaret* and why he casts himself in most of his films.

He was the first Frankland Visitor and was unforgettable.

June 2019

On 4th June we attended the Brasenose Society President’s Summer Party in the magical setting of The Charterhouse in Charterhouse Square. I have passed the building many times but have never been into it. It is so old that it makes Brasenose look positively modern by comparison! We had a brilliant guided tour by Stephen Green (Classics, 1962) and Dudley Green (Classics, 1954), two alumni who now live in The Charterhouse. There were over one hundred people at the drinks party afterwards which Sir Paul Silk (Classics, 1970) (President of the Society) and I addressed. I emphasised how much we regard alumni as part of our extended Brasenose Family.

We really worked Kenneth hard during the two days he visited us, plying him with questions about his work from all parts of the College. On 30th May – just after he arrived – he spoke at a round table event organised by the JCR. Kenneth spoke about his films and plays especially *Margaret* (which was twice screened in the JCR earlier in the week) and the Oscar-winning *Manchester by the Sea*.

On 31st May, there were three events with Kenneth in College. He first spoke to English students in the study of Professor Simon Palfrey, Fellow in English, about his career, and then we held an SCR lunch where our Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow Rebecca Abrams led the questioning. Later on, I asked the questions at a fascinating Principal’s Conversation. I discussed his early life and whether he preferred film or theatre, and in particular his films and the play *The Starry Messenger*, which opened in the West End of London last week. He answered all of the questions with grace and good humour. He spoke of working with Casey Affleck and his lack of interest in Oscar ceremonies. He explained why he cast his wife in *Margaret* and why he casts himself in most of his films.

He was the first Frankland Visitor and was unforgettable.

Students enjoying Ivy Beer at Lincoln College on Ascension Day

Kenneth Lonergan in conversation

The BNC Society President’s Summer Party
On 7th June, the Amersi Foundation Lecture Room was packed for the visit of the President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Julius Maada Bio, which we co-hosted with the African Studies Centre. He brought with him the Attorney General and the Ministers of Finance, Agriculture and Tourism. They were in the UK for an Economic meeting on the previous day in London and the Trooping of the Colour on the following day. He has been President of Sierra Leone since 4th April 2018. He is a retired Brigadier General in the Sierra Leonian Army and he was the military Head of State of Sierra Leone from 16th January 1996 to 29th March 1996 under a military junta government. The President is part way through a PhD in International Relations at Bradford University, but probably has little time for that now!

He first addressed a lunch for Fellows where he answered questions. Following that, he spoke to around 130 about the challenges faced by his country, which is one of the world’s poorest but is keen to develop. A consistent strand of the speech was that the West (in particular its media) did not understand Africa. The President also emphasised his desire to stamp out corruption (which he said had been rampant under the predecessor regime) and to extend free education to all. He has set up an independent commission of inquiry focused on corrupt officials from past administrations, with the aim of recovering money that was pilfered from public funds, and using it toward the new development goals.

He stressed that he wanted trade rather than aid. There was a lively Q&A and many members of the Sierra Leonian diaspora asked questions. He spoke about his decision during the civil war to meet the rebel leader. It was a great opportunity to hear about his life, which is one of the world’s poorest but is keen to develop. He spoke of the enormous amount of genome data which can now be processed, even compared to a few years ago, and the future which may be synthetic genomics. He also touched on some of the sensitive ethical issues which arise if there is a right of everyone to have their data. I want to thank Mehroz for taking the initiative in asking a great friend of the College and of mine.

As usual the JCR Garden Party on 20th June was an excellent event providing a great opportunity for staff and students to socialise together. After heavy rain the sun came out for the event. The following week on 25th June, the HCR party was held in the Hall (due to the threat of rain), and enjoyed by all who attended.

We congratulate those alumni who received an honour in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List: Graeme Biggar (History, 1993), lately Director, Office for Security and Counter Terrorism, Home Office; a CBE for services to National Security; Charles Beckford (Classics, 1982), Director, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: OBE (Diplomatic and Overseas List) for services to National Security; Richard Jay (PPE, 1965): BEM for services to Young People and Music in Northern Ireland; and Brig. Michael Reade (Clinical Medicine, 1999) Member (AM) in the Military Division – Australia for exceptional performance of duty as the Director of Clinical Services of the 2nd General Health Battalion and Professor for Military Medicine and Surgery.

We are very sad to note the passing of our Honorary Fellow Martin Feldstein (Economics, 1961). He was a most remarkable economist. I enjoyed the conversations I had with him in College. He had a long and careful stewardship of the National Bureau of Economic Research which celebrates its centenary next year. It is based between Harvard and MIT, and draws on not just both of those august institutions, but nowadays a vast international network. They host workshops and conferences, and publish books and working papers. The working paper series is now 26,000 strong.

On 28th June, students from the matriculation years 2002 and 2003 returned to College for a very successful Gaudy. The Vice-Principal’s claim that marking exams was “way harder” than sitting exams was not sympathetically received, but it was otherwise an excellent evening. Particularly memorable was Fatema Orjela née Dawoodbhail (jurisprudence, 2002)’s account of a terrifying scuba-diving accident that was still nothing compared to Finals (and, it follows, marking Finals).
The College is deeply saddened to announce the death of John Gardner, Fellow and Tutor in Law from 1991 to 1996. After election to a Prize Fellowship at All Souls College, he became a tutorial fellow at Brasenose. He became Professor of Jurisprudence in 2000 at the age of just 35, taking the chair previously held by former Brasenose Principal, Herbert Hart. He spoke superbly at our first Great Brasenose Lawyers event in 2016, celebrating the life of H L A Hart. John moved to a Senior Research Fellowship at All Souls College. He is the second person (in modern times) to be appointed to the highest court without having been a full-time Judge, the other being Lord Sumption. This is a remarkable and much deserved achievement.

Brasenose celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon Mission by recalling Brasenose’s role in the project. In 1839 Sir William Robert Grove (Classics, 1829) invented the gas voltaic cell. If an electric current is passed through water, the water is split into oxygen and hydrogen. Grove’s experiment reversed the reaction to generate an electric current. A century later, Tom Bacon developed this basic idea to create a viable fuel cell to supply astronauts with electricity and water. As various news outlets have pointed out, Bacon’s refinement of Grove’s invention was praised by President Nixon as being integral to the Apollo project.

Sir William Grove, who lived between 1811 and 1896, devised another type of fuel cell that was deployed in the early US telegraph network. He was appointed the first Professor of Experimental Philosophy at the London Institution in 1841, yet was a true polymath, having read Classics and also being called to the Bar by Lincoln’s Inn. His interest in early photographic technologies led him to speculate on how photographic evidence would affect legal proceedings in later centuries.

On 18th July, I attended the Rare Rising Stars awards ceremony at the House of Commons celebrating the achievements of outstanding Black British University students. Target Oxbridge, with which Brasenose was a true polymath, having read Classics and also being called to the Bar by Lincoln’s Inn. His interest in early photographic technologies led him to speculate on how photographic evidence would affect legal proceedings in later centuries.

On 15th July I visited to Downing Street to meet our alumnus Sheridan Westlake (PPE, 1993), who worked there under both David Cameron and Theresa May as a Special Adviser to the Prime Minister (Political Policy).

We are all thrilled at the appointment of alumnus and Honorary Fellow Professor Andrew Burrows QC (Jurisprudence, 1975) to the Supreme Court. He is Professor of the Law of England and Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College. He is the only second person (in modern times) to be appointed to the highest court without having been a full-time Judge, the other being Lord Sumption. This is a remarkable and much deserved achievement.

On 13th July, amongst some twelve graduands were two golden oldies (if they do not mind my so saying): Niall Robinson (Physics, 1981), now based in Monaco, and Peter Berg (Chemistry, 1956) from Canterbury, who gave an elegant vote of thanks at the lunch. Niall and his “team” brought an array of classic cars with them, which were beautifully parked in the Square.
On 4th August, we held the Alumni Garden Party in a marquee on New Quad. Many children attended to be entertained by a magician, crayons – and my speech! It was a muggy but not sunny day. It was great to see so many families attend, sometimes with three generations. Attendees travelled from as far afield as Lincolnshire, New York, Surrey and Sussex.

We are thrilled that Professor Eamonn Gaffney, Tutorial Fellow in Applied Mathematics, has received a Recognition of Distinction from the University and that our alum Ravi Gurumurthy (History, 1995) has become the Chief Executive of NESTA, having just finished as Head of Innovation at the International Rescue Council in New York (where I had tea with him in July).

September 2019

I love going to different parts of the UK (as well as abroad) to meet alumni. On 4th September, the train took me to Leeds and on the following day to Birmingham, where there were very spirited dinners in good restaurants.

There was a good attendance for our first Media Networking and Panel Discussion event on 11th September, kindly hosted by Ed Shedd (Classics, 1985) at his offices at Deloitte in London. I chaired a panel discussing such issues as media bias and recent media coverage of Brexit with four alumni: Chris Evans (English, 1986), editor of The Telegraph; Victoria Fea (English, 1989), co-founder of Blue Jar Pictures, formerly ITV’s Senior Drama Commissioner; Robin Oakley (History, 1960), European Political Editor at CNN International 2000-2008; Political Editor at the BBC, 1992-2000; and Ed himself, who is North West Europe Technology, Media & Telecommunications Lead Partner at Deloitte. It was particularly gratifying to see the age range in the audience and the questions reflected this. There was a positive message that this is a golden age for television (especially drama).

At the University’s Meeting Minds alumni weekend between 20th–22nd September, I went to the two talks from Brasenose speakers. Prof Charles Hulme, William Golding Senior Research Fellow, talked about Early Years Language Interventions. It was good to see that the first three questions came from Brasenose folk. Dr Llewelyn Morgan, Vice-Principal & Fellow in Classics, later spoke on Tracing Alexander’s Footsteps in Indus Valley, which mainly chronicled his fascinating visit to the SWAT region this summer.

There was a joyous Gaudy on 13th September for the group which matriculated in 2012 and 2013. I knew most of them from my time as Principal, unlike Gaudies for earlier years. It was wonderful to see so many of them doing so well in their professions and the third sector in particular. The evening concluded with speeches by Rosie Thomas (PPE, 2012) and Richard Ng (PPE, 2013).

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We are delighted that Honorary Fellow Dominic Barton (Economics, 1984), lately Chief Executive of McKinsey, has become Canadian Ambassador to China, a job for which he is brilliantly qualified. He was appointed by Chrystia Freeland, the Foreign Minister of Canada, who by complete coincidence is married to one of our alums, Graham Bowley (Economics, 1991).

It is a shame to hear that Claire Perry (Geography, 1982) is stepping down as an MP. She has been a great friend of Brasenose and spoke at our Brexit debate three years ago. She is going on to become President of Cop26 in Glasgow.

The Times Higher Education Rankings has just announced that Oxford is the top ranked university in the world for the fourth consecutive year. While we are all fully aware of the fallibility of these rankings, we should celebrate this remarkable achievement.

It is with great sadness that I learned that alumnus Sir David Akers Jones (English, 1949) passed away in hospital on 30 September. He was heavily involved in many aspects of the history of Hong Kong. In particular, he was Chief Secretary of Hong Kong from 1985 to 1986, and then Acting Governor from 1986 to 1987.

David was at the heart of our Brasenose Hong Kong alumni community and also generously supported our Classics Fellowship, our Archives, and most recently, our archaeological dig in Italy. I visited him every year during our annual trip to Hong Kong – and just this March Suzanne and I met him at his home because he was not well enough to come into the centre. We had, as always, a fascinating discussion of Hong Kong politics although this was before the protests became violent (which must have caused him great anxiety).

He was a Distinguished Friend of Oxford University, a Member of the Vice Chancellor’s Circle, and an Honorary Fellow of BNC. Above all, he was a dedicated public servant and a wonderful Brasenose ambassador. Hong Kong simply won’t be the same without him.

15th October was a very busy one at the College. We had the pleasure of welcoming into College for lunch in the Medieval Kitchen Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for External Affairs. The lunch was arranged by our Fellow in Politics, Professor Andrea Ruggeri. In an informal but structured discussion with (primarily) International Relations professors, she gave a frank assessment of world affairs which I would love to share with you, but it was all conducted on Chatham House terms which means that I am unable to! I then attended her Cyril Foster lecture in the Department of Politics and International Relations at which she spoke publicly about the successes of EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (but nothing about Brexit).

Next on the list was the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire’s Annual Law Lecture in the Examination Schools building. This was given by Sir Alan Moses, a retired Court of Appeal Judge in front of whom I had appeared on several occasions (usually unsuccessfully!). He gave a stimulating tour d’hui on judicial review and then zoomed in on the recent decision of the Supreme Court in the Miller (No. 2) case about the prorogation of Parliament. His central thesis was that it was a false dichotomy to see law on one side of the equation and politics on the other and that this was why it was difficult to find the frontier between them.

At 5.30pm, alumnus John Bowis OBE (PPE, 1963) spoke to our PPE Society. John was MP for Battersea for ten years and a Minister in the Departments of Health and Transport and the Welsh Office. He later became an MEP for London. He spoke about lobbying and the differences between London and Brussels.

October 20 .advance the academic year and is open to all Fellows. This year the dinner was packed, as we said goodbye to several Fellows and hello to more.

I welcome everyone who is new to College. Freshers’ week is always a busy yet wonderful time. The Undergraduate and Graduate dinners and the drinks beforehand are excellent ways for me to meet (and to speak to) as many of the new students as possible. I am struck by the number of countries represented in both the Undergraduate and Graduate cohorts. I am also involved in academic induction for our new tutorial and research Fellows whom we warmly welcome.

*If I am grateful to the Vice-Principal for the note on the 1509 Society and June Gaudy which I was unfortunately unable to attend.*
We had the second of our Women’s 1974 Network events on 6th August at the Apple Tree pub in London, kindly hosted by Lucy Fenton (PPE, 1994) with a short speech from the Network’s founders, Amanda Holland (PPE, 1988) and Jane Johnson (English, 1987). The turnout was fantastic, and a brilliant evening was had by all.

BNCBC Dinner
by Peter Edmondson (Economics & Management, 2016)

Saturday 19th October saw a Boat Club Dinner take place in Hall.

Seventy people from a whole range of eras attended; there were members of the first ever women’s crew to get blades for BNC back in the 1980s, a host of the 2013 blades-winning M1 crew and even two individuals celebrating the 50th anniversary of their Schools VIII. It was also great to see a number of former coaches there who clearly still have a strong affection for the club – even if they were in their Brookes blazers!

The evening started with a reception in Medieval Kitchen before we all moved into Hall for dinner. During dessert, guests were entertained (briefly) by speeches from James Roper (Mathematics, 2016) and Dan Brocklebank (PPE, 1995).

James, the cox from the 2019 Torpids blades crew, spoke about the story behind that success and the lessons the current squad could take from it. This was followed by Dan who started by congratulating the current committee on their levels of organisation and drive. He argued that the role of BNCBC goes far beyond the maintenance of some wonderful traditions, something which nearly tempted Vice-Principal Dr Llewelyn Morgan to his feet to add a few impromptu words on the role of sporting tradition dating back to classical times.

Instead, Dan firstly pointed out that participation in any sport, but perhaps particularly rowing due to its unique camaraderie, is a wonderful antidote to the surging mental health issues that are widely reported on today. He also pointed out that rowing at BNCBC offers a way to compound the effect of Brasenose’s renowned, and highly successful, student Access programme because it broadens the pool of people who actually have a chance to take up the sport of rowing. Historically this has tended to be limited to relatively privileged pockets of society. He reminded the audience that alumni will always be delighted to see bumps on the river but will be just as delighted to see Brasenose get a reputation for having the best novices training programme amongst Oxford colleges.

Thank you so much if you came along, the energy everyone brought made it a wonderfully enjoyable evening. It was great to meet so many new people who I can’t wait to speak to again.
Save the Date

Forthcoming Events in 2020

Principal’s Conversations:
Antonia Romeo (PPE, 1993)
5.30pm, Tuesday 4th February
Amersi Foundation Lecture Room, College
Free, guests welcome

Platnauer Concert
Gothic Voices
Friday 7th February
Free, no registration needed

Platnauer Concert
The English Viola with Sarah-Jane Bradley & John Lenehan
Friday 15th May
Free, no registration needed

Golden Jubilee Lunch for 1961-1970
12.30pm, Friday 17th April
College
£35 per person, guests welcome

Diamond Jubilee Lunch for 1960 & before
12.30pm, Friday 22nd May
College
£35 per person, guests welcome

LGBTQ+ Alumni Drinks & Talk
6.30pm, Thursday 20th February
RAF Club, Piccadilly, London
Free, guests welcome

Gaudy for 1990-1991
6.00pm, Friday 20th March
College
Free, £35 for accommodation for the night

Gaudy for 1994-1995
6.00pm, Friday 26th June
College
Free, £35 for accommodation for the night

Golden Jubilee Lunch for 1961-1970
5.30pm, Thursday 7th May
Amersi Foundation Lecture Room, College
Free, guests welcome

Gaudy for 1990-1991
6.00pm, Friday 20th March
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Free, guests welcome

Gaudy for 1994-1995
6.00pm, Friday 26th June
College
Free, £35 for accommodation for the night

Drinks at the O&C Club

Every month during the academic year, the Brasenose Society hosts after-work drinks for alumni at the Oxford and Cambridge Club on Pall Mall in London. All are welcome to attend, whether a member or not, with guests. Please note the dress code for the Club is Jacket and Tie/Business Wear (no trainers).

All O&C Drinks start from 6.30pm. The remaining dates for the academic year are:

- Tuesday 10th December
- Tuesday 7th January
- Tuesday 4th February
- Tuesday 3rd March
- Tuesday 7th April
- Tuesday 5th May

Go to [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events) for an up-to-date list of our upcoming events, and to register. 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)

Brasenose Knows…

We leave you with another brain-teaser from Professor Konstantin Ardakov, Tutorial Fellow in Mathematics at BNC. Email your answer and postal address to [development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk).

The first five successful entries will receive a (very) small prize! The answer will be published in the next issue, or you can email us for it if you can’t wait until then!

Question:

**Prove, without using a computer, that $2^{10} + 5^{12}$ is not prime.**

And the answer is... Issue 27’s answer was:

Let $S$ represent the value of the sum. For $n = 0, 1$ and 2, it is easy to calculate $S$ to be 0, 1 and 2 respectively. To evaluate $S$ for $n > 2$, first consider $f(x) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} (-1)^k \binom{n}{k} 2^{x-k}$. Then $f(x) = g(x)$ where $g(x) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} (-1)^k \binom{n}{k} e^{x-k}$, and $g(x) = (1 - e^1)^n$ by the binomial theorem. Therefore $f(x) = \frac{1}{n+1} (1 - e^1)^n$. Finally, $S = f(0) = 0$ for $n \geq 3$.

Once a Member of Brasenose, always a Member of Brasenose!

Alumni are welcome back to College at any time. Let us know if you would like to visit, and we will let the Lodge know to expect you.

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