

Issue 37 | Michaelmas Term 2025



# Brazen *Notes*



# The Mystery Of The Founder's Bible

William Smyth, Bishop of Lincoln and one of the College's Founders, possessed a beautiful manuscript Bible, which has been at Brasenose since its foundation – but tantalizingly little is known about its origins.



Close-up showing one of the Bible's illuminated pages (Photo: JP Clough)

**Liz Kay, Brasenose Librarian:** I have always felt that the Founder's Bible was something special. It was shown to me soon after I arrived at Brasenose in 1999 and over the years many scholars have asked to see it. However, despite my own gut feeling about this sumptuous 13th century Parisian manuscript Bible, and the fact that so many researchers have perused its pages, it is only very recently that a scholar with the right knowledge and background asked to view some College manuscripts, one of which was the Bible. That scholar is our very own William Golding Junior Research Fellow, Dr Ana de Oliveira Dias. Ana suggests that the illumination in our Bible could originate from the renowned Parisian illuminators' workshop known as the Cholet Group; Dr Emily Guerry, 13th century Parisian art expert and academic at Christ Church also believes this may be the case. The Brasenose Bible was earlier assessed by Robert Branner, the eminent art historian at Columbia University, who identified

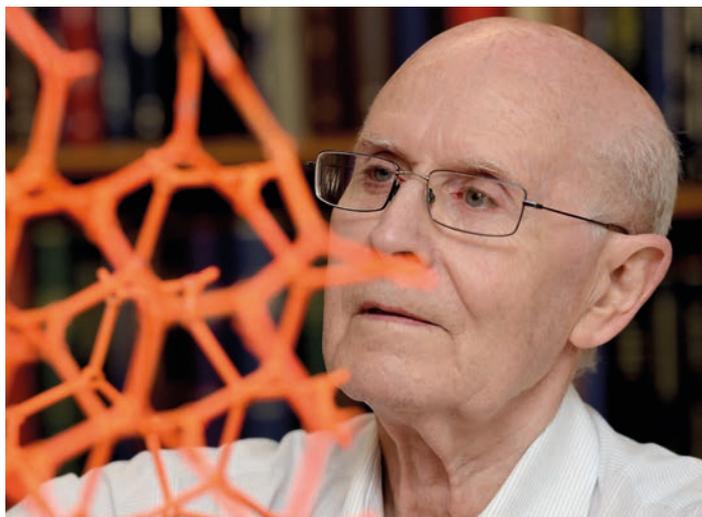
its Parisian origin and suggested a potential link to the Sainte-Chapelle group of illuminators. Yet no subsequent research has been undertaken.

Where does that leave us? We know that such a large and generously illuminated manuscript Bible would have been commissioned by someone of wealth and importance, but who this was remains a mystery.

The next step is to carry out provenance research. We are in the early stages of establishing how long this might take and seeking individuals who might be willing and able to take it on. Of course, the Bible has been at Brasenose since the Foundation of the College, and we are keen to discover more – who commissioned it, who owned it before William Smyth and how did he come to possess such a precious tome? Are the illuminations the work of the Cholet Group? We can't wait to unravel the mystery.

# Professor Richard Robson Wins The Nobel Prize In Chemistry For 2025

The Brasenose community is extremely proud to congratulate alumnus **Professor Richard Robson (Chemistry, 1955)** on being awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for 2025, along with Susumu Kitagawa and Omar Yaghi, 'for the development of metal-organic frameworks'.



Richard Robson: Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne, member of the Royal Society and Nobel Prize winner. (Photo: University of Melbourne – Paul Burston)

As the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences explains, Professor Robson, along with the other two Laureates, 'have created molecular constructions with large spaces through which gases and other chemicals can flow. These constructions, metal-organic frameworks, can be used

to harvest water from desert air, capture carbon dioxide, store toxic gases or catalyse chemical reactions... it is hoped that some of these may contribute to solving some of humankind's greatest challenges.'

'I have always felt deeply in debt to the College and that the man I have most admired in my life was my tutor at Brasenose, John Barltrop. He was the most intelligent, entertaining and kind of men.'

– Professor Richard Robson

Professor Robson took inspiration from the structure of a diamond, where each carbon atom connects to four others in a pyramid-like arrangement. Instead of carbon, he used copper ions and a molecule with four arms, each with a nitrile at the end. This is a chemical compound that is attracted to copper ions. When combined, these components produced a highly ordered and very spacious crystal.

'Metal-organic frameworks have enormous potential, bringing previously unforeseen opportunities for custom-made materials with new functions,' says Heiner Linke, Chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry.

Visit <https://www.nobelprize.org/> for further details.

Nobel Prize quotes © The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

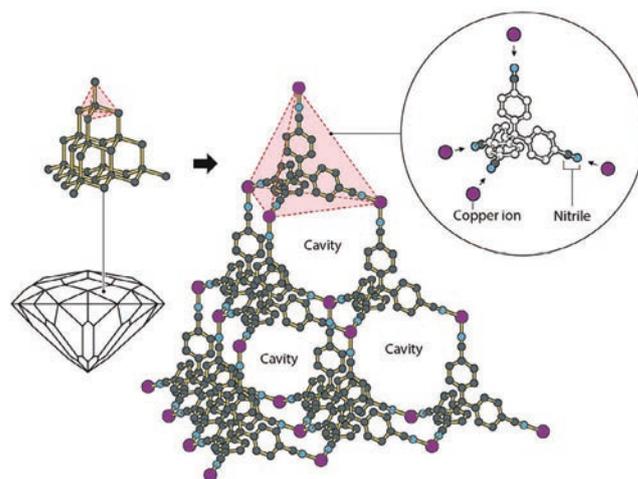


Image: ©Johan Jarnestad/The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences

## Other Nobel Prize winners at Brasenose

**Professor Michael Kosterlitz (Physics, 1966)** (Nobel Prize in Physics for 2016) was a graduate of (BNC's sister college) Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, and came up to Brasenose for a Physics DPhil in 1966.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences explained in 2016, 'This year's Laureates opened the door on an unknown world where matter can assume strange states. They have used advanced mathematical methods to study unusual phases, or states, of matter, such as superconductors, superfluids or thin magnetic films. Thanks to their pioneering work, the hunt is now on for new and exotic phases of matter...'

Brasenose Fellow Professor Chris Timpson said at the time: 'Professor Kosterlitz's work is a wonderful example of the emergence of simplicity of form and of mathematical beauty from what would seem to be the extraordinarily untameable complexity of the interactions of microscopic quantum matter'.

**William Golding (English, 1930)** (Nobel Prize in Literature for 1983) originally started reading Natural Sciences when he came up to Brasenose, but realised that he had a much greater interest in literature and transferred to an English degree course.

His writing debut in 1934 was a poetry collection entitled *Poems*, and his most famous work *Lord of the Flies* was published in 1954. He was awarded his Nobel Prize in Literature, 'for his novels which, with the perspicuity of realistic narrative art and the diversity and universality of myth, illuminate the human condition in the world of today'.

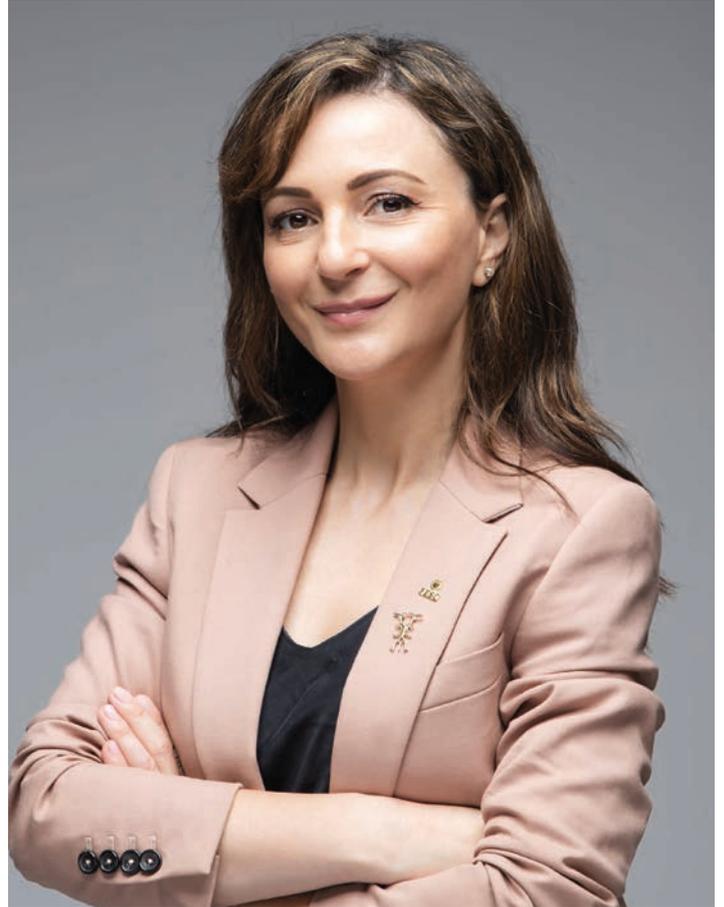
# Medicine: Professor Samira Lakhal-Littleton

**Professor Lakhal-Littleton** is a Tutorial Fellow in Medicine and Professor of Cell Physiology, and leads the teaching of Preclinical Medicine at Brasenose. Her research focuses on iron deficiency.

When one hears the term iron deficiency, the first thought that springs to mind is anaemia. True, anaemia is one of the consequences of iron deficiency, but it is often the last one. There are many more that we are just beginning to understand. Indeed, iron is used for much more than making haemoglobin. We need iron to activate many of the enzymes in the mitochondria that help fuel cell functions, like cardiac contraction, and protein synthesis. We need iron to make myelin, the sheath that protects our neurons and helps the transmission of nerves impulses. With this in mind, it is astonishing that, to this day, we only look for iron deficiency if we suspect a patient of having anaemia.

My research aims to uncover the wider pathological consequences of iron deficiency, and to reshape how it is diagnosed and treated in the clinical setting. For example, my team and I discovered that iron deficiency in the cardiac muscle is sufficient to impair the heart's contractility and cause heart failure, even when haemoglobin levels are normal. This discovery helped explain epidemiological observations that iron deficiency increases the risk of de novo heart failure and worsens existing disease. It follows from these discoveries that we should seek to measure cardiac iron deficiency and ensure that iron supplements can correct it. However, clinicians do not yet have the tools to do this. Clinicians measure iron levels in the circulation, but these correlate poorly with iron levels in the tissues where iron is actually needed. Clinicians give iron supplements and can see that circulating iron levels increase, but do not know if this increase corrects iron deficiency in the tissues.

Part of the work that we do in my lab is to develop the tools necessary to enable clinicians to diagnose and treat tissue iron deficiency, in the heart and elsewhere. For example, we are looking to adapt magnetic resonance imaging MRI to enable imaging of cardiac iron levels. Because iron has magnetic properties, it can influence some of MRI parameters. Currently, MRI is good at detecting iron excess but is not sensitive enough to detect iron deficiency. We are working on ways to overcome this limitation. Another line of work is exploring whether current iron supplements, all designed and developed to treat anaemia, can in fact also correct iron deficiency



in tissues. Recently we discovered that the leading intravenous iron drug does deliver iron to the heart. We are working on understanding the long-term consequences of this delivery.

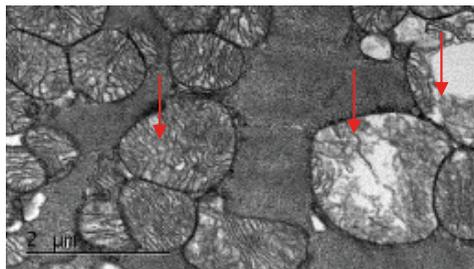
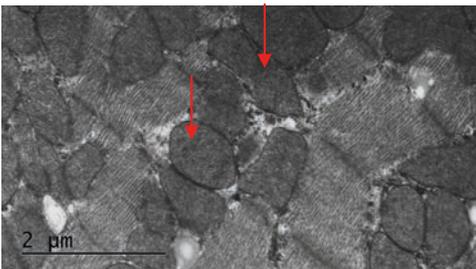
My team and I are translational scientists. This means we take fundamental aspects of iron biology and map them onto actionable clinical needs. Translational research is incredibly rewarding, because it harnesses basic knowledge for patient benefit. It requires breadth of knowledge, versatility of technical expertise, and importantly the

ability to communicate effectively with basic scientists, clinicians and patients. At Brasenose, we encourage our Medicine students to think like translational scientists. Many of the students I teach visit my lab to observe experiments being done, or to perform their own research projects. Many also go on to undertake a DPhil as a first step towards a clinician scientist career.

There are so many debilitating conditions that we do not understand and hence cannot treat. That is why translational research is more important than ever.

Healthy mitochondria

Dysfunctional mitochondria



Electron microscopy images of cardiac myocytes (the contractile cells of the heart). Left panel shows a heart with sufficient iron levels. Right panel shows an iron-deficient heart

*Mitochondria images: adapted from Lakhal-Littleton S et al, Elife. 2016 Nov 29;5:e19804.doi: 10.7554/eLife.19804*

# Graduate Study At Brasenose

## The Heffernan-Sinclair Graduate Scholarship

This year's Heffernan Sinclair Scholar **Sofia Lubiana** explains her journey from Ukraine to the UK, and how this scholarship has supported her MPhil in Economics.

I am now a first-year MPhil student in Economics at Brasenose College, but the journey to this point was anything but straightforward.

My academic path began in 2020 at V.N. Karazin National University in Kharkiv, Ukraine, where I studied the International Economic Relations course. The programme focused heavily on diplomacy and politics, but I soon realised that my genuine interest lay in pure economics.

I had never seriously imagined studying abroad. No one in my circle had done so, and the idea felt far beyond reach – financially and emotionally. Then, in February 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine changed everything. My nineteenth birthday fell on 26 February, the third day of the war.

My parents and I left our apartment after hours of explosions rattled the building. We spent that freezing night in an unheated concrete shelter. Planes roared overhead as we huddled under piles of blankets.

That night, unable to sleep, I began writing an application essay to a "random university," to keep hope alive. The essay itself was rough, but the act of writing it reminded me that the war, though it had shattered daily life, could not take away my drive to learn. It was the moment I truly understood my main priorities and aspirations.

A few months later, I evacuated to the UK. In July, I learned about the Student Finance England system and applied to study the subject I truly loved. Because it was late in the cycle, I entered through clearing and found a place at the University of Essex for a foundation year. After five weeks, the Economics department allowed me to skip straight into the BSc programme.

That first year was demanding: grappling with academic English, balancing studies with a part-time job, and coping with constant anxiety for my family, who remained in Kharkiv amid bombing and drone attacks. Yet, I persevered and graduated with a first-class BSc in Economics. My final project examined the factors distinguishing countries that have successfully achieved sustainability from those that have struggled. In the long term, I am particularly interested in understanding how nations recover from catastrophic events, including natural disasters and wars. This research is driven by a deeply personal motivation: to identify practical and effective economic solutions that can help address Ukraine's pressing challenges and support its long-term reconstruction and resilience.



Sofia Lubiana (Photo: JP Clough)

As I begin my MPhil in Economics at Oxford, I'm exploring various topics and enjoying discovering new areas of the discipline. The College community and the breadth of the programme make it a perfect place to learn and grow.

The scholarship that supports my Oxford studies has truly been nothing less than a miracle – one of those rare chances you may receive only once in a lifetime. If someone had told me five years ago that people would see me as deserving of such an opportunity, I would have laughed with tears in my eyes. In fact, when the email arrived, I did just that – and so did my family.

I thank Brasenose College's donors for the Oxford-Heffernan Sinclair Graduate Scholarship. Your work is impossible to measure in numbers: it changes lives and, in many ways, the world. I will do my best to live up to the faith you have placed in me and honour this extraordinary chance – thank you.

### The Heffernan Sinclair Scholarship

One of the late Professor Peter Sinclair's wishes in his lifetime was to establish a Graduate scholarship in Economics at Brasenose; a fully endowed fund that would allow bright graduate students to excel in the area – an award to be given in perpetuity.

Peter originally began the fund in 2017; after he passed away in 2020, his former students from around the globe came together to fulfil the remainder of the scholarship. Peter's wishes were made a reality through the kindness of those that knew him; a reflection of the kindness he showed to so many. The Scholarship is awarded to a student accepted by the University for the two-year MPhil in Economics or comparable two-year programme in Advanced Economics with a single student receiving the full award for the two year duration.



Professor Peter Sinclair

# Space Ageing

Brasenose postgraduate student **Ariana Soares Dias Portela** has been fascinated by the mysteries of space since a very young age, and then later became interested in science on Earth, and the workings of cells. Now through her DPhil in Molecular and Cellular Medicine, she combines both of these interests in an unusual and pioneering project at the Oxford Space Innovation Lab, and the International Space Station.



SIL team leader Professor Ghada Alsaleh (left) and Brasenose DPhil student Ariana Soares Dias Portela (right) (Photo:JP Clough)

The connection between musculoskeletal sciences, ageing and space research may not be immediately obvious, but it all makes perfect sense at the Oxford Space Innovation Lab (SIL). Part of the Botnar Institute of Musculoskeletal Sciences at Oxford's Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences (NDORMS), the lab is dedicated to studying the effects of space micro gravity on the ageing process, and is the first of its kind in the UK.

According to Associate Professor and team leader Prof. Ghada Alsaleh, the project '...seeks to uncover how ageing progresses under microgravity conditions, and to test if these conditions could speed up the study of ageing processes that take much longer to observe on Earth – by conducting this research on the International Space Station (ISS), we hope to gain insights that could lead to breakthroughs in understanding and treating age-related diseases.'

Ariana explains the process further, 'Using cutting-edge tools like organoids, 3D printing, and mechanical stress testing, we're trying to understand how ageing works at the cellular level. The goal is to find ways to slow down age-related health issues, whether you're on Earth or up in Space.'

The project involved preparing a batch of miniature, simplified versions of human tissue ('organoids') that were launched from the Kennedy Space centre (Florida). The experiments are contained in a Science Cube (a custom 3D-printed box, connected with the necessary monitoring and control equipment), designed by ICECUBES space application services to fit into an allotted bay within the ISS laboratory. The samples remained in orbit for one month during which time the SIL team in Oxford were able to monitor the organoids via a live link to the Space Station, and could also control some of the conditions within the sample box.

After the samples had been returned to earth, two of Ariana's colleagues, Declan Moran and Vincent Gauthier, collected them from NASA in Florida, and these samples are now undergoing analysis to measure the ageing markers and senescence.



Monitoring the orbit of the International Space Station; the view from the ISS; a view of the organoid samples as they appeared in orbit during the experiment (Photo:JP Clough)



International Space Station  
(Photo: NASA, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

*Brazen Notes* caught up with Ariana to find out more about the team's results and conclusions.

**With a pioneering experiment such as this, did you have to develop new techniques in order to prepare the samples for their space mission?**

Yes, we had to develop new techniques for this project. Specifically, we created organoid models to mimic all the different cell types in human synovial tissue and optimised methods to keep the samples viable in microgravity aboard the ISS. These approaches allow us to study ageing and osteoarthritis in space in a way that wasn't possible before.

**How did you and the team find the experience of collaborating with NASA?**

Collaborating with NASA has been an incredible experience. It challenged us scientifically and helped us develop skills in communication, organisation, and teamwork, while navigating the logistics of a space mission. It has been a unique and inspiring opportunity for both professional and scientific growth.

**With the experiment involving many different stages and several agencies involved, did the process go according to plan? Did you have to make any adjustments due to unexpected factors?**

We had to adjust a few details here and there, certain deadlines and plans, but at the end of the day, we had a successful launch and return which is what matters the most.

**Which parameters were you able to monitor and control during the period that the samples were in orbit?**

While the samples were on the ISS, our team set up a platform that allowed us to monitor and control key parameters throughout the mission. Together, we tracked the temperature inside the science cube 24/7 and could take live images of the samples in orbit.

**What happened after the samples were returned to Earth?**

After the samples returned to Earth we processed them for many different multiomics approaches, which is something that is still ongoing.

**After analysis, were the findings as you would have expected? Are you able to share the insights of what has been discovered through this experiment?**

Unfortunately, I still don't have an answer for this question, since the analysis is still ongoing. This kind of thorough testing and analysis with many different approaches takes time and need to be performed carefully and mindfully.

**What will be the next phase of this project – will you be sending more samples to the ISS, and if so, what do you hope to achieve?**

The first launch was just the start of a beautiful journey in ageing research having space as a platform. Hopefully we will do more launches within the next few years, keep your eyes open! Our main goal is to be able to study ageing in an accelerated way, to better understand certain diseases at a deeper level and do it faster than on Earth. Hopefully, space will provide us the insights that we are looking for.



Ariana Soares Dias Portela showing the samples as they appeared whilst in orbit  
(Photo: JP Clough)

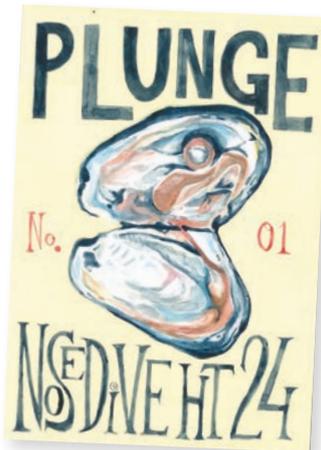
# NoseDive Magazine

2024 saw the launch of a new student arts magazine at Brasenose: *NoseDive*. **Chloe Smith** and **Imogen Edmundson** resurrected the name of a previous College publication and created something new, with a unique look and a fresh approach. **Emily Yates** and **Lillian Tagg** took on the mantle of editorship for the magazine's next phase.

## What first gave you the idea to (re)launch *NoseDive* magazine?

**Chloe Smith:** The previous Arts Rep knew that years ago there had been a magazine called *Nosedive*, so we set about finding its editors but failed. We kept the name – it's terrific – but started our own magazine in Hilary 2024. We didn't know specific Brasenose magazines had existed earlier on, but were very interested to see previous College magazines in the Archive.

**Imogen Edmundson:** It seemed obvious to me that College needed an arts magazine; Brasenose has a reputation for its arts scene, particularly its Arts Week, and I knew so many covertly creative people within College, but there was no consistent platform to showcase all of this creative talent. *NoseDive* hung around as a name purely from our hearing it at an Arts Committee meeting, but we had, at that point, little sense of what the previous incarnation had involved. *NoseDive* emerged



as its own original entity and was received with more warmth than either Chloe or I could have ever anticipated.

## The 'handmade collage' approach gives *NoseDive* a fantastically distinctive look. Was it always the intention to create the magazine this way?

**Imogen:** I am very proud of the unique 'handmade' look of *NoseDive*, but it was purely the result of a lack of resources. When Chloe and I began, we had no way to access software like InDesign and so we created the first edition using scissors, glue, printers and scanner, and good old Microsoft Word. The team at Holywell Press were kind enough to make the magazine functionally print-ready, and have generously continued to do so for all later editions. Though born out of necessity, this method of creating the magazine turned out to be very true to its spirit. We wanted *NoseDive* to be a non-intimidating entryway into Oxford publications, and the handmade method felt



Imogen Edmundson and Chloe Smith (Photo: JP Clough)



Emily Yates and Lillian Tagg (Photo: JP Clough)

like the epitome of doing great things with whatever resources were easily available. Our handmaking was, I think, one of the reasons our alumni edition *Weave* turned out to be such an effective and meaningful edition. We wanted to honour and celebrate the typically female 'crafts' of sewing, knitting, crochet, lacemaking, weaving etc. – all very involved and labour-intensive – and were able to do so with our very own intricate, handmade creation.

### How do you decide on the theme for each edition?

**Chloe:** For the first ever edition, *Plunge*, we wanted it to refer to *NoseDive* as a name, to our plunge into magazine world, and how it might feel for *NoseDive* contributors. *Chrysalis* took the same name as that year's Arts Week theme. *Weave* was chosen carefully (by our friend) to incorporate ideas of community, community across time, and traditionally women's arts/crafts. I'm always amazed by how much one word conjures.

**Lillian Tagg:** When it comes to the themes, one thing always in the back of my mind is 'will this be annoying to write over and over again in loads of different fonts?', but of course other things come into play, like how it exists as a standalone word? Is it easy to draw from creatively? Is it accessible? Has it been done before by previous Oxford publications? And somewhat selfishly for me, can I make art to go along with different interpretations of the theme? This can mean anything from texture and colour to physical medium and ways of making. It's also a little seasonal and it has to work with the feeling of each term. For example, *Consume* came about after a long winter and emerged in a stormy, wet spring, *Wander* was in anticipation of a sunny and peaceful summer in nature, and *Trace* is being formed in a nostalgic, crisp autumn.

**Emily Yates:** We usually brainstorm as a team, trying to settle on a single word, most often a verb. A verb works well because it opens things up: it suggests movement and possibility, giving contributors the freedom to interpret the theme through action, imagery, or emotion, rather than pinning them down to something too literal. At the same time, we're always thinking about how the theme will translate visually, since *NoseDive* is as much about its artwork as it is about the writing. A theme like *Wander*, for instance, instantly suggested flowing, organic visuals and a natural palette, while still leaving room for submissions that 'wandered' more conceptually.

### Do you receive more submissions than you can include in each edition?

**Imogen:** We wanted *NoseDive* to be an approachable entryway into submitting to and working on student magazines at Oxford, and so decided that, though we would offer edits to work submitted, we would never reject a piece of work. With the growing success of *NoseDive*, this resolution became increasingly difficult to honour. Even with the generous support of (across various editions) the Brazen Arts fund, the King's Hall Trust for the Arts, and (exclusively for *Weave*) the Brasenose Alumni Society, we have a limited budget – the more pages we have in a particular edition, the fewer copies we can afford to print.

**Lillian:** It's always a very slow trickle of works being submitted at first, until there's a mad rush towards the deadline.

**Emily:** Because *NoseDive* is all about celebrating creativity in its many forms, we don't reject submissions, but the main challenge is length: sometimes we receive a brilliant poem or story that's too long for the magazine's page limit. In those cases, we either run an edited version in print and post the full version on our website, or make it an online exclusive. Personally, I've cut my own work from the magazine

to make space for student submissions; it's far more important, to me, that others see their work in print. There's something uniquely exciting about holding your own words or artwork in a physical magazine, and I want as many people as possible to have that experience.

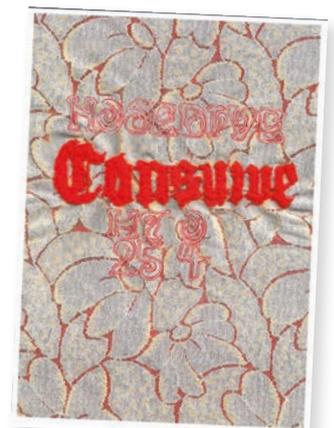
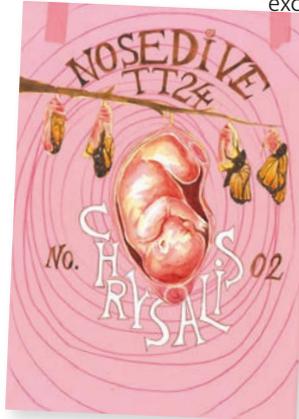
### Do you find that people reveal surprising sides of their character by submitting pieces that you wouldn't have expected from them?

**Chloe:** I find it so exciting to receive the art people produce. I'm mostly just thrilled they feel comfortable to share what they make with us, and we always want to celebrate it. It can be very daunting writing or making something and sending it to someone. We tried as much as possible to be inclusive with no assessment, meaning that all submissions are published in some form. It makes me feel proud to receive such exciting stuff and almost giddy that we're the ones to open the email! I just love to be in a college where talented people explore their talents and interests, and are able to share it with others. It was fabulous to create a platform for that to happen, it really felt like community.

### Do submissions tend to be from students reading particular subjects?

**Emily:** It definitely varies year by year. In my cohort, surprisingly few English students (apart from me!) have been involved, even though the year above, led by Imogen and Chloe as editors, were incredibly active and set a great precedent. Thankfully, the second years have really picked up that baton and contributed some stunning poetry and prose. We've had wonderful work from mathematicians, physicists, chemists, and even PPEists! It just shows that creativity at Brasenose isn't confined to the humanities. No matter their subject, *NoseDive* gives students the chance to experiment with creativity in ways their academic work doesn't often make room for.

**Lillian:** We do of course get many submissions from humanities students, but the work I often find myself enjoying the most comes from STEM, Maths or PPE students. For me, I think this is because I am often engaging creatively with Art and English students, and I find other ways of approaching a project or moving through a piece really refreshing. It's also part of the reason I think projects like *NoseDive* are so valuable to our College community; it creates a space for students of all disciplines to have



an artistic outlet. Very often they are also quite witty, or manage to reach a depth emotionally which many Art students can only dream of.

**The magazine has been very well received, and became part of the '50 years of Women at BNC' celebrations along with author Sarah Vaughan and many prominent figures – that must have felt like quite an accolade?**

**Imogen:** *NoseDive's* presence in College's '50 Years of Women at Brasenose' celebrations was incredibly exciting, and very fulfilling. Seeing how well the magazine had been received and embraced by Brasenose's current student body gave me such a sense of community, and seeing it received so warmly by Brasenose alumni only increased this feeling. We are so grateful for the wealth of support we received from the alumni society, additional individual donors, **Drusilla Gabbott (English, 1982)** and **Jane Johnson (English, 1987)**, and Gauri Verma in the Development Office. More than anything, I am so grateful to have been trusted by alumni to do justice to the work they submitted, and also to **Jessie Burton (English & Mod Langs, 2000)** for agreeing to be interviewed for the edition. It's been so wonderful to see continued interest and celebration of *Weave*, it was an edition very



close to mine and Chloe's hearts, and it has certainly been celebrated more thoroughly and by many more people than we could have anticipated. I did not imagine it would gain nearly as much attention as it did when Chloe and I were sat in Brasenose Library last November, cutting and sticking into the early hours of the morning.

**Chloe:** It's been amazing to work with the BNC Alumni Committee. I'm so grateful to them and everyone involved who together made that edition and celebrations so joyous and wide reaching. I learned so much from them about running the magazine, and specifically dealing with the business aspects. It absolutely felt like *Weave*, working together on a project that celebrates Brasenose and all of its people, past and future. Their excitement about *NoseDive* has made me feel really proud about our achievements. Thank you to all of Brasenose (staff, students, alumni) who made *NoseDive* feel manageable and possible, and valued it as a worthwhile project.

Brasenose is extremely special. Without knowing that there would be funding from somewhere, and that the College deeply valued supporting arts and community projects, *NoseDive* could never have existed. At BNC, people want to make art and people in their community want to support and engage with it. It's the best!!!

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Thoughts from Izzy Smith, creator of the original *Nosedive* magazine (2017):

**How did you find the experience of setting up *Nosedive* – was it challenging to get it off the ground, and was there much support?**

Setting up *Nosedive* was really exciting – I'd never led such a collaborative project before. It definitely took a lot of work to raise awareness of the magazine among potential contributors, edit the pieces once they were submitted, design and lay out the magazine, and then run launch nights; for the first two editions I was doing all of that myself, before I got a team together. However, I found I had a lot of support among the other Brasenose students. The original *Nosedive* was focussed around diversity and equality, and I found that a lot of people were really interested in exploring topics relating to systemic inequalities. My friends were also really supportive with helping to run events and share the word. I was the mental health rep on the JCR diversity and equality committee at the time, so I also had the support of the chair and the rest of the committee, and I was able to use some of the committee budget to print the magazine and to arrange events like magazine launches and collaborative poetry and collage nights.

**You had a great variety of different contributors to the magazine – were people generally keen to get involved?**

Yes, I was really pleased with the variety of topics that we were able to cover, and the range of different life experiences and views among our contributors. We looked at diversity and equality through a broad lens, so we had contributors writing about everything ranging from how black students are treated at Oxford, to personal experiences of sexual violence and how that ties into systemic sexism, to self-discovery and acceptance of being bisexual. People also wrote film reviews and poetry, and created visual art. I found that people were really interested in exploring these issues, whether through coming together for events to create art and poetry with other people, or through writing or making art in their own time to share through the

magazine. Often people would approach me to pitch pieces after I put out calls for contributors in the JCR Facebook group. Sometimes, if I knew that someone was knowledgeable on a certain topic, or we'd had an interesting conversation about something relevant, I would encourage them to create something. Something I was proud of was that people who didn't usually write or create art for other student publications ended up contributing to *Nosedive*, and building their confidence with expressing their thoughts and ideas.

**How was *Nosedive* distributed at the time? Did it exist as a printed edition, or was it electronic only?**

*Nosedive* was mainly distributed in print. I would host magazine launches where people could come to socialise, discuss and pick up a free copy of the new edition. Any copies left would be put in the JCR for people to take. I've still got my copies of *Nosedive* on my bookshelf, and they're a fond memento of my undergrad days. Later, when I had brought a team together, another student Yoojin Lee created a website, where all three editions are still available to view (link below).

**What do you think of the latest incarnation, *NoseDive*?**

I'm happy to see that student magazines at Brasenose are still going strong. Reading the introductions to the editions that the editors have written makes me particularly nostalgic, remembering the hard work, fun and collaboration of putting a student magazine together, and it's really fun that the name I chose all those years ago is going strong. I also really love the handmade aesthetic. I've really enjoyed reading and looking at the pieces that the current Brasenose students have created.

***Nosedive* (from 2017): [brasenosedive.wixsite.com/nosedive](https://brasenosedive.wixsite.com/nosedive)**

***NoseDive* (from 2024-2025): [brasenose.wixsite.com/nose-dive](https://brasenose.wixsite.com/nose-dive)**



# Thank You For An Incredible Giving Day

## Total: £134,516.98

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2025 BNC Giving Day such a triumph – every penny will go towards supporting Brasenose students to success in the coming year.

Together we raised £134,516.98 which will go towards funding all areas of student support, from book grants to emergency financial assistance, living costs to equipment and travel grants. In addition, donations helped College clubs and societies, allowing students to really make the most out of their time here at Brasenose.

We particularly thank those who provided the funds to make the challenges throughout the 36 hours of Giving Day so successful.

Giving Day is not just a chance to raise funds for the College, but it is also a celebration of your time as a student here; a chance to reflect and share memories of formative years in the pursuit of education and learning.

Every gift raised goes directly to nurturing academic excellence in our students,

"I had a very happy time at Brasenose. It was a tremendous opportunity for which I am so thankful and grateful. I hope others will be as lucky as I was to have had the opportunity to learn and develop there."

– Giles Beach (Animal Physiology, 1967)

providing life-changing experiences, and enriching the lives of the remarkable young people who call Brasenose home today. Financial assistance grants go towards buying essential equipment or books, travel expenses, or any other unexpected costs. This means that students are supported throughout their time at Brasenose, so they can study, collaborate and thrive. We aim to broaden horizons, not just academically but also socially and we want all students to have a life-changing experience when living and learning here.

It is only with the generosity of the BNC community past and present that Brasenose can continue to deliver the excellence of an education by tutorial. Only with you, can the College provide the world-renowned teaching we are all so lucky to have experienced.



"Wishing you all the best this Giving Day. May you continue to help realise the dreams and ambitions of current and future generations as you have done for so many of us fortunate enough to have passed through your halls."

– Alexander Zalocosta  
(Economics & Management, 1998)

As the JCR President, I am writing on behalf of all students here at Brasenose, to thank you for supporting us. It has been incredibly moving to see so many people donating to Giving Day.

Brasenose has been my home for the last two years and I have had so many opportunities. Every day, I get to access the world-class teaching at Brasenose – my tutors are prominent researchers in their own right and I get to learn so much from them.

— Rory, JCR President

If you would still like to donate, please visit [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/donate](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/donate)



# Student Blog: Leaving Brasenose

All good things must come to an end, including time spent studying at Brasenose. Graduating student **Erin Bridgewater (History, 2021)** shares some of her thoughts about leaving the College that she's called home for the past four years.

Leaving Brasenose feels almost the same as arriving did: terribly daunting, incredibly exciting and completely unknown. Now, four years and two degrees later, I feel just as uncertain as I dip my toes into the ocean of life-after-graduation. But I also feel prepared and confident that my time at Brasenose has given me the skills, qualities and friends needed to give this whole 'adulthood' malarky a really good go.

I don't believe that anybody comes to Oxford feeling ready; I imagine many of us don't even as we say our 'see-you-laters' to the city's cobbled streets on graduation day. I clearly wasn't ready to say mine last academic year and so applied to stick around at Brasenose to study my MSt in Global and Imperial History. My master's research, which picked up on threads I had explored in my undergraduate dissertation, explored themes of decolonisation, political repression and state-building in post-colonial Cameroon throughout the 1960s.

Cameroon had been a German colony until the First World War when the country divided by the League of Nations into two territories to be administered as trusteeships by Britain and France. In my undergraduate research, I had explored how this colonial dynamic shaped the Cameroonian war of decolonisation in an international context during the 1950s and I was eager to explore Cameroon's history further at the post-graduate level.

I truly believe that there's no better place to study history than at Brasenose. It has exceptionally supportive tutors and an amazing College librarian who's always willing to add material to our already extensive history and politics library. As both an undergraduate and post-graduate student, I have benefitted from the generous financial support provided by both Brasenose and the History Faculty which has allowed me to pursue my academic interests without the worry of financial limitations. I gratefully received funding to undertake two research trips to France where I collected archival material in Paris and Aix-en-Provence. Additionally, I enjoyed taking French courses at the University Language Centre, both paid for by the faculty and College, and which have been invaluable to my personal, academic and professional development.

Over the past four years, I've loved getting involved in all aspects of College life. On the topic of funding, I had a great time working as a student caller in the 2022 and 2025 Telethon campaigns. On both occasions, I appreciated the opportunity to get to know the community of Brasenose alumni and to give back to the funds



Erin Bridgewater on Radcliffe Square (Photo: Ed Routh)

without which my university experience would have looked vastly different. I've also had tremendous fun working DTB (Down The Bar) – a great way to earn a bit of pocket money with an inbuilt excuse to socialise! Brasenose is such a vibrant place with an awesome sense of community and active social scene. I've dipped my toes into pretty much all of it...though to varying degrees. I was a member (I use the term very loosely) of the netball club in first year, took part in the College team for the Oxford Town and Gown 10K twice, and I'm proud to be BNCFC's number one fan. My only regret from my time at Brasenose is that I didn't get involved in the College music scene sooner. I've loved singing in the College choir in my last year, reminding me how important music is for mind, body and soul. I had never sung Evensong repertoire before, but have found such value in trying something new and challenging. Our recent tour to Belgium was

an awesome experience, musically and socially...and performing in Brussels Cathedral was pretty cool!

As a girl from Barnsley, a mining-town in South Yorkshire, Oxford was a dream that didn't always feel possible. Even having managed to secure a place, I worried that I wouldn't fit in – that, although I'd managed to infiltrate Oxford's hallowed halls, it wasn't for people 'like me'. 'You can take the girl out of Yorkshire...' or something like that. Having spent four years successfully making this place a home, I feel very happy to have been proven wrong. It was poignant, then, to visit schools in Yorkshire, including my former sixth form, on Brasenose's annual Roadshow to deliver assemblies and workshops encouraging aspirational students to apply to Oxbridge. I also loved giving tours of College to visiting school groups and helping to organise the 2023 Open Days, mostly because I'm super proud of everything that Brasenose is.

So, how to measure my time at Brasenose? It's been four years, twelve academic terms, or 1,460 days. I've graduated twice and will be leaving with two degrees. It could be all the hours I spent in the library, or, more important, all those I spent out of it. The best unit probably isn't time or achievements, but memories and people. Getting here and leaving here can feel hard, uncertain and, at times, unreal but if I know anything at all, it's that Brasenose certainly makes it all worth it.



# Principal's Blog Highlights

To read Principal John Bowers KC's blog in full, please visit [www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/about-brasenose/princblog](http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/about-brasenose/princblog)

## Temple Bar

In support of Frewin Hall, we gathered at the Temple Bar for a special reception and dinner hosted by **Will Palin (English, 1990)**, Patron of the Frewin Hall Fundraising Campaign. The event was held to advocate for and encourage support for the rediscovery and transformation of Frewin Hall – one of Oxford's most fascinating yet often overlooked historic treasures. Guests also heard from **Tim Lee (Modern History, 1990)**, the architect leading the Frewin Project. If you would like to learn more about the project or explore ways to support it, please contact Begina Cox at [beginna.cox@bnc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:beginna.cox@bnc.ox.ac.uk)

## Arts Week

Our long-established student-led Arts Week saw a Pulitzer Prize Winner playwright talk to an Oscar winning director and playwright. Our Frankland Visitor Branden Jacobs Jenkins was in conversation with Kenneth Lonergan, our inaugural Frankland Visitor. They discussed the challenges of playwriting, their careers and what advice they would give to our students.



Arts Week chainmail making workshop (Photo: Ian Wallman)

This theme for this year's Arts Week was 'Revival'. The visuals included a tapestry crocheted banner, a hand carved stamp illuminated alphabet and many other paintings for advertisements and building the loosely medieval aesthetic. In the antechapel we held an Arts Week exhibition, which featured many of the visual artists and poets in the Brasenose community. Well done to Lillian Tagg and her team for putting on a great Arts Week.

## Amelia Gentleman

Amelia Gentleman was my guest for the final Principal's Conversation of the Academic Year. She is a Guardian journalist and she spoke of her work on exposing the

Windrush scandal in which many thousands of people who did not have proper papers were faced with deportation and in some cases detention. It was poignant that many of those affected had names like Winston, Gladstone and Nelson. She is a great inspiration to our numerous young journalists and gave a terrific talk about this shameful episode.

## Congratulations

Our congratulations go to alumna **Alexandra Marks (Jurisprudence, 1977)** who has been appointed Chair of the Parole Board.

## Organ recitals

Our interim Director of Music, Alex Flood, has introduced organ recitals every fortnight on a Thursday lunch time. Christian Wilson who used to be our Director of Music and is now at Keble College gave the first recital in week 2 and showed what a wonderful and versatile instrument it is (for which many thanks again to Margo and **Gerald Smith (Philosophy, 1984)** for enabling it). I look forward to the other concerts.

There was a full house for the Platnauer Concert on 31 October, Halloween.

This featured the acclaimed

Tippett Quartet joined by the pianist Emma Abbate to perform Beethoven's String Quartet No. 10 Op. 74 and the Schumann Piano Quintet in E flat major Op. 44. I reflected how much I will miss Oxford, sitting in the beautiful antechapel with its magnificent vaulted ceiling listening to world class musicians.

## Congratulations

I want to congratulate Lola Wendon for her success in Finals. She was the highest-graded First in her cohort in Fine Art and was awarded the Gibbs Prize as a result. In other good news, Dr Clinton Lau's excellent Biochemistry teaching has been recognised

by the Medical Sciences Division in the form of an early career teaching award.

Congratulations to our alumnus **Jason Coppel (Jurisprudence, 1987)** who has just been appointed a High Court Judge, bringing to five our representation on the High Court bench and higher.

Congratulations to our alumnus **David Szalay (English, 1992)** who won the Booker Prize this year. Bernard Richards taught him and tells me, 'At the last English reunion, in 2023, I asked him to send me his thoughts on the novel, to read out to the assembled participants, and he sent something very nice'. His novel *Flesh*, a rags-to-riches tale exploring class and power, was described as an 'extraordinary, singular novel' by chairman of the judges Roddy Doyle.

## James Bobin

**James Bobin (Modern History, 1990)** is this year's Frankland Visitor (our artist in residence). I conducted a Principal's Conversation with him on 5th November, and he told us of his fascinating career in film and TV. His work with Sacha Baron Cohen changed how we think of satire and parody. He gave some great hints for those in the audience who wish to get into films and TV.



## A Beautiful Gift

Thanks to **Ben Zeigler (English, 1992)** who recently sent this very lovely miniature portrait of William Cleaver (1742-1815) as a donation to the College Archive. Cleaver was Brasenose Principal from 1785-1809.

# Brazen News

In October 2024, US Marine college The Citadel in South Carolina honoured its former president, **Maj. Gen. John Grinalds (Geography, 1960)**, with a statue on its campus, some 20 years after he retired as president, a role he held from 1997 to 2005.

**Robert Likeman (Oriental Studies, 1960)** made contact with **Simon Blond (PPP, 1960)** who is also based in Australia, after an email exchange via Year Rep **Peter Sunderland (Engineering Science, 1960)**; the two of them arranged to meet, with Robert travelling 4300km from Brisbane to meet Simon in Perth, the same distance as between London and Beirut. Simon has recently published a book *Art, Agency and the Continued Assault on Authorship*, a copy of which he has donated to the BNC library.

**Victor Keegan (PPE, 1960)** has written six poetry books, and his two books on *Lost London* are about to be followed by a third.

**His Honour Alan Taylor (Jurisprudence, 1960)** reports from Devon that he and his wife Diana celebrated 61 years of marriage in August. Congratulations to them both.

**The Revd Jonathan Copus (Theology, 1963)** has been appointed as Interim Ministry Area Leader, West Radnor Ministry Area, Diocese of Swansea and Brecon.

Four 1965 alumni gathered in London on 7th November to celebrate the 60th anniversary of their matriculation. **John East (Jurisprudence, 1965)**, **Neil Morgan (PPE, 1965)**, **Patrick Neate (Modern History, 1965)** and **David Walsh (Modern History, 1965)** joined by three Vincent's Club members of the same vintage from other colleges.



1965 matriculands' lunch: Patrick Neate (left) and Neil Morgan (right) in the foreground, David Walsh with the BNC tie and John East at the back with poppy lapel badge.

On 4th – 7th July 2025, Brasenose Chapel Choir, led by Director of Music **Polina Sosnina**, went on tour to Belgium, giving three performances over the course of the weekend – they performed a challenging programme titled *Lux Aeterna: Songs of Light* and performed at three beautiful venues: Sint-Annakerk, Bruges; the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. Gudula, Brussels, and St. Martin's Cathedral, Ypres.



Brasenose Chapel Choir performing at the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. Gudula, Brussels (Photo: Jyothi Menon)

**Lloyd Jones (1986)** writes: 'After college I returned to the Met. Police mostly serving in Special Branch. I retired aged 49, after full service, from the senior management team of Sussex Police. I then qualified as a Solicitor, in the Private Client department of city law firm Allen & Overy. Subsequently, I entered into partnership with a colleague, doing litigation work before selling the business to a bigger competitor and finally retiring. I now split my time between the UK and France and am a treasurer and committee member of local societies.'

**Craig Lightbody (1989)** recently ended a 23-year career at Shell last year and has retrained as a maths teacher.

**Michael Evangeli (1989)** gave his inaugural professorial lecture at Royal Holloway University of London on 3rd June 2025 focused on his global HIV disclosure work. The lecture title was, 'One of my worst fears was that I would keep it all a secret and then die in silence: What sharing an HIV status tells us about us'.

**Katie Treadwell (2011)** writes: 'My husband and I were delighted to welcome our first child earlier this year. We're over the moon and besotted with her. She has already visited Brasenose, having attended her first garden party on the quad in early August!'

Year Rep **Miles Overton (Geography, 2015)** has passed on some happy news from his cohort: **Jasmine Rand (Molecular & Cell Biochemistry, 2015)** married **Conor McCleary (Economics & Management, 2013)** in a beautiful ceremony in Yorkshire on 5th July 2025.



The Oxford Commas in Edinburgh, BNC student Eeshaan Iyar front row, third from right (photo: Mimi Li)

Brasenose student **Eeshaan Iyar** performed at the Edinburgh Fringe with a capella group The Oxford Commas as part of their show 'Aca-demic Weapons' which interleaved fun, contemporary a cappella music with speeches that explored different aspects of Oxford student life, in a way that one audience member described as 'funny, entertaining and at times poignant'.

**Professor Elspeth Garman** (Emerita Fellow of Brasenose College) and Dr Nicola Laurieri (St. John's College alumnus) have co-written *Mathematics for Biosciences – from Theory to Worked Examples and Applications*. The textbook, edited by World Scientific Publishing Co., covers mathematical topics and worked examples aimed at first-year undergraduates studying a range of different Bioscience disciplines.

# Save The Date

## Forthcoming Events

### **Gaudy for 1988-1989 matriculands**

Friday 20 March 2026 | in College

### **Golden Jubilee Lunch**

Reunion lunch for alumni matriculated between 1967-1976

Friday 27 March 2026 | in College

### **Diamond Jubilee Lunch**

Reunion lunch for alumni matriculated in year 1967 and before

Friday 17 April 2026 | in College

### **Gaudy for 2000-2001 matriculands**

Friday 26 June 2026 | in College

### **BNC Alumni Society Annual Dinner**

Brasenose Alumni Society AGM and Annual Dinner

Saturday 19 September 2026 | in College

### **Gaudy for 2014-2015 matriculands**

Friday 25 September 2026 | in College

**Bookings for these events will open a couple of months before the event dates.**

Visit [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.

## Call For College Memories!

Have you stumbled across any BNC gems recently that you'd like to donate to the Archives? We'd love to see! Please do get in touch to let us know what you've found at [archives@bnc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:archives@bnc.ox.ac.uk).

### Contact Us

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Once a Member of Brasenose,  
Always a Member of Brasenose

## Recent Events

*Brasenose Freshers getting into the spirit of Matriculation Day 18 October 2025, with organisational encouragement from Head of Access and Retention, Dr Joe Organ.*



*James Flecker organised a Golfers' Reunion or 'Last Hurrah' in College, September 2025*



*Dr Bernard Richards' English Reunion, November 2025: Andy Rattue (1979), Bryan McGlinchy (1979), Bernard Richards, and Siobhan Harrison (1978)*



*Brasenose Alumni Society Drinks, London, November 2025*

### Join Us On Social Media

[www.instagram.com/brasenosecollege](http://www.instagram.com/brasenosecollege)

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# Remember Brasenose in your Will

Brasenose College would not exist without the generosity and vision of its benefactors.

Over the centuries, philanthropic gifts have supported our students, endowed our scholars and provided our buildings. Legacies are an important part of Brasenose's history and you can make them an important part of its future.

If you would like to discuss including a gift to Brasenose in your Will, please get in touch

**[donations@bnc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:donations@bnc.ox.ac.uk)**

