

2022

COLLEGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



WESTMINSTER
SCHOOL



Dear College Pupils, Parents, Society Members, and Alumni,

It is with great pleasure that I am writing the welcome to the latest College Newsletter; something started by Dr Jonathan Katz, and later continued by Dr Frances Ramsey and Mark Feltham. The newsletter brought together House and School news with that of the College Society Committee and the Alumni.

The College Society Committee, alongside Dr Gareth Mann, had been keen to revive the Newsletter for some time, and we do hope you will enjoy this issue which perhaps is filled more with updates and reviews from the Society and Alumni than previous newsletters, but going forward we hope to find a balance.

We are thankful to all of you who contacted us to send your news or wrote articles to publish. We would also like to thank the Westminster School Alumni team and Elizabeth Wells, the archivist, for helping us spread the word and sending through images and updates.

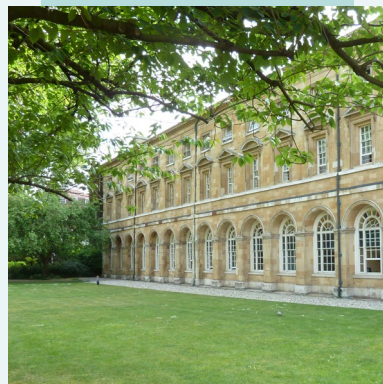
Finally, we should be glad if you would pass this newsletter to other friends and OWs who might be interested in the news of the House and/or in becoming members of the College Society. We hope to be holding events (including a few AGMs) in the next school year, including our annual dinner and lecture.

Do let us know if you have any feedback or wish to be featured in future issues.

Kind regards

OLIVER GILLIE
Chairman, College Society

Collegesocietynewsletter@gmail.com



View of College from College Gardens

Vale Geraldine Brotherton!

Master of the Queen Scholars and former Captain of the QSS recall their fond memories of the recently retired College Matron (previously published in the Elizabethan)

GERALDINE ARRIVED AS Matron in College in 2005, in those hazy days of bliss when Tony Blair still occupied No. 10 and Frances Ramsey was in 3 Little Dean's Yard. Occupants of both houses have come and gone, but while Her Majesty is on her fourteenth Prime Minister, Geraldine is only on her third housemaster. No-one doubts that Matron could have seen off the current incumbent if she'd wished, but retirement beckoned to her summer palace in Purley, and that lawn doesn't mow itself. She leaves with our love and all our good wishes – and that's especially true of the 130-odd Queen's Scholars who, in her time, have been looked after with that special, Bradford-instilled combination of deep maternal affection and sharp eye for errant clothing and dodgy hairstyles.

The School has changed substantially in Geraldine's time, but she has remained a reassuringly constant figure. Her pastoral care is truly maternal – the Scholars are treated as if they were her own children, and any of her colleagues understand the truth of that statement when they see her fret about the health or circumstances of one of her charges. Occasional trips to casualty are described with wry humour later, but at the point of crisis nothing could be more important to her. Seeing her in action at those times almost requires an Attenborough voice-over to describe the fierceness of her protective instinct.

More generally, she makes things work. That sounds like faint praise, but in College that is about the highest accolade possible. Geraldine is to be found dashing around the place, seeing to three tasks simultaneously – often (but not always) involving an aspect of College's plumbing, a birthday cake, and a tailoring detail on the Scholars' Abbey Dress. The job of Matron is grounded in these crucial practicalities, but in truth she goes way beyond them, and loves the ceremonial aspects of our link with the Abbey. Her Catholic faith is always there, even if it's not often mentioned, and she feels at home in churches and in the company of clergy. Entertaining the Dean in College was always done right: pizza for the masses, together with something more refined for the

guest of honour, and a nice drop of Claret. There is always a touch of class to events run by Geraldine.

Much as she gets stuck into work, she has an admirable talent for dropping it. Geraldine relishes a good trip. On the more functional end of the scale, she has taken countless trips to Alston with College, during which she has enjoyed teaching the pupils how to cook, how to get on with each other, and most importantly where to buy the best antiques. College's Alston slot has often coincided with the Cheltenham Races, and Mark Feltham recalls the use of code if they had to take a drive to a local bookie to pick up her winnings. A detour was necessary "to pick up Matron's gloves". The use of code was rendered superfluous by Geraldine returning to the minibus in triumph, waving wads of cash; and on her last Alston visit, in March, only days before lockdown began, all pretence was dropped and the winnings were spent on chips all round near Durham Cathedral.

Beyond Alston, she has taken many more trips which were some way beyond the expectations of her role. She has helped with the Lyke Wake Walk on multiple occasions, sometimes driving up her own camper van, and sleeping in it. More recently she even



welcomed a new, young, male staff member by accompanying him on a trip to Rome, where due to a 'mix up' they ended up having to share a bed for a night. Neither of them will forget that experience.

Socially, Geraldine has always maintained a high-profile presence in the Common Room. She is enormous fun, with an uncanny ability

to engage every passer-by. She takes real delight in CR events, from dancing into the small hours at summer parties (including, on one occasion, with a seven-foot inflatable elephant), to karaoke at the Christmas party, to hosting delicious meals for the progressive supper, to an impromptu visit to a local pub at the end of term. Having a good time matters to her because it makes the hard work possible. She is also a

genuine team-player: ever willing to help a colleague out of a tight spot by covering a duty, stepping up to take a school trip late in the day, helping to welcome new Matrons, providing a sympathetic ear and giving wise advice over a cup of tea (or, more frequently, an ice-cold class of Sauvignon Blanc). She is generous with her time and her resources. So generous, in fact, that she even furnished CMCK's entire flat when he first moved in as Resident Tutor (without any furniture to his name), something he will be eternally grateful for. Geraldine is fond of telling her charges in College to "shape up or ship out", but in her own case she has done both, shaping us all up, often more than we immediately recognise, and shipping out in her own time, at the top of her game.

All of Geraldine's friends know that she loves a shady bar. In her past jobs on cruise ships and Laker Airways – and even, dare we now imagine it, on Expeditions – she got to know a fair few of them, and in retirement she deserves to add considerably to the tally. Floreat! ■

Chris Kingcombe and Gareth Mann

News in brief

COLLEGE ALUM NEWS

■ **PAUL CASTLE (1976-80)** continues to run communications at the Syngenta Foundation in Basel, Switzerland. He is also Vice-President of the local children's cancer foundation. After five Olympics, Paul has largely retired from international rowing commentary. However, he will be doing the 2022 European Championships in Munich. His son is a lawyer in the host city. Paul's latest eye-opener is volunteering at a foodbank. (Yes, rich Switzerland needs those, too).

■ **GREGORY DUNSTAN** retired as Dean of Armagh and Keeper of Armagh Robinson Library in October 2020, and continues to live in Armagh.

■ **THEO PETERSON**, member of the College Society committee, and wife Flossie, welcomed a baby boy, Jago, who is most definitely no longer a baby in Autumn 2022.

■ **SACHA MEHTA**, another Committee member, got married in Paris – see his story on page 8.

■ **DR JONATHAN KATZ**, Master of the Queen's Scholars 1987-2003, was elected The University of Oxford's Public Orator in 2016. You can watch the latest Encaenia (June 2021) here <https://youtu.be/NRYW7f4gBgo>



HOW I FOUND MYSELF TRANSLATING SOMETHING I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT

MY CAREER IN Classics teaching got off to a bad start: Eton's two-year probation ended with dismissal. Saved by Westminster's sudden need for a one-year sixth-form replacement, and then King's School, Canterbury's equally short-noticed requirement, I gradually got the idea; and ten years later found myself, to my great surprise, invited to compete for the position of head of Classics – at Eton. Luckily, and deservedly, the other competitor got the job.

Eventually, seven years after my first bid for that job at Bristol Grammar School, second time round I got stuck happily in, and would have gone right through to the twenty-four years I needed for a full pension; but then the headmaster came up with a new idea for his own glory: we were all to fill in reams of paper for the coming inspection, listing, week by week, exactly what we planned to teach over the year. That was something neither I nor my colleagues had ever found necessary, and I, at least, could never have done, so I retired three years early, to my own and my wife's relief.

A year of ease, dotted with odd bits of helping out at B.G.S. and two other Bristol schools, was followed by a new surprise: an invitation to act as Grammaticus to the University, as their annual cohorts of Latinists were arriving with good A levels, but without adequate grasp of grammar. That led on to second-year Greek, with the students, who had begun their Greek on arrival the year before, using the course Reading Greek. Taught as I had been, by Theo Zinn, to value the actual words of Greek authors as the prime beauty of the language, I was shocked to discover that it wasn't till November – i.e. about half way through their three-year course – that they had their very first piece of an author's unadulterated Greek put in front of them.

That led me, when next year I was given the first-year Greek beginners, to think hard

about how to educate these people Zinn-wise, from scratch. Dr. Günther Zuntz, I knew, had the same aim; but his book was both far too complicated, and out of print. My idea came: use proverbs, of which there were three massive old books in the University Library, as well as a little modern one. After three weeks of basic grammar, each time on paper printed and issued for them day by day, with pauses for practice, they met their first two- or three-word ancient Greek proverbs, before they had even seen or heard of a verb. Over the year this developed, first into proverbial sentences from e.g. Plato or a poet, and eventually some Aesop fables.

This was found acceptable enough, both by the students and by the colleague who took them over in their second year, to allow me to go on like this for two years more – though when I lent my book (actually a ring-binder, made up of the successive issues of paper in organised sections, and entitled Original Greek) to that colleague, and asked if he would consider approving it for publication, his reply was “No, David; it's too you”. We remained friendly, nevertheless; but then the axe came from others, who had decided that what really mattered was helping graduate students with their CVs, so they would do first year Greek.

A graduate Ancient History student, who wanted to keep up her Latin, had been recommended by her Professor to join the group I'd been running at home for years (and still am). She then I asked if I'd also do something like that for graduates in Greek: her Professor found some cash, and back I went once a week for some years more, till again the axe fell – no such doings any more. So back I went to that exceptionally humane Professor, wailing: “What can I do now?”. Quick as a flash, her editorial reply: “Translate the Novels of Justinian”. Once she had explained what they are, and I had found a really scholarly person to annotate it, we worked with C.U.P. for nine years, and they have published it (2018). ■

David Miller CC 1949–54; *The novels of Justinian: a complete annotated English translation is now available.*

The Last of the Khazars

Sacha Mehta recalls lessons with Dr Savaskan, who retired in 2019

WALKING INTO SINAN Savaskan's classroom on the top floor of the Manoukian Centre, it was often impossible to spot the man himself – perched deep in thought over some complex musical notation, shuffling through his archives, or, as was often the case, nowhere to be seen. It was less a classroom, and more the office of a university don, except that his, unlike theirs, was brightly lit and modern. Much like his music, I am told, though he rarely mentioned it to us, his College tutees.

Dr Savaskan to this day retains an intriguing mystery about him, with his accent we still cannot place, his mad scientist ways, and his relaxed, enthusiastic approach to the tutorial role. As we reached the end of our school lives it dawned upon us that our tutor was actually pretty famous, an award-winning contemporary classical composer to whom it made little difference whether we were getting stellar marks and reports in every possible subject, Gatings and SAPs for our nocturnal adventures, or (in my case) a mixture of encouragement and bemused incomprehension at our constantly changing university and subject choices.

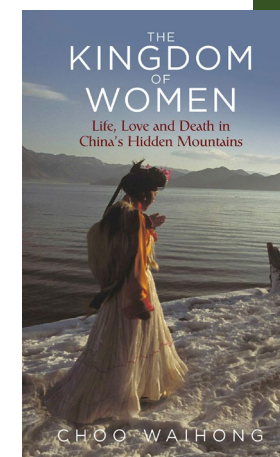
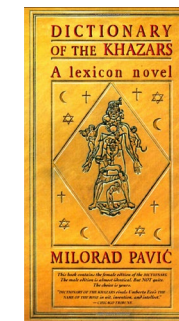
Indeed, rather than badgering us about our marks or academic progress, Dr Savaskan was prone to reminiscing about those who had come before us, the previous College elections he had guided to greatness. Often mentioned was one Gökmen, repeat winner of the geography prize in his day, who seemed to possess a Midas touch (and whom I would dearly love to meet – contact details welcome), as were the Jagger brothers – Jagger the Younger haunted the nightmares of one of our Election, but it was Jagger the Elder's goalpost-moving exploits that most animated Dr Savaskan.

From these and other tales, it was clear to us that our tutor valued eccentricity as much as success, and was happiest surrounded by Renaissance men and women like himself. Evening prep was a case in point – while certain tutors seemed constantly to be lurking and waiting for young scholars to step out of line (and no concessions were to be expected from them), Dr Savaskan tolerated our mildly

outlandish study enhancement techniques, such as the bouts of mid-prep cross-corridor fencing I often engaged in with my neighbour David. Although he never taught me, our tutor meetings, frantic searches all over the Manoukian centre for him, boarders' outings at the local Sri Lankan restaurant, halftime oranges at our staple dim sum haunt, and conversations about linguistics and geography (particularly the Khazars) remain highlights of my time in College.

Why the Khazars? As far as I can tell, the only time Dr Savaskan ever actually told me to do something was when he insisted that I read the Dictionary of the Khazars by Serbian writer Milorad Pavić. Reading this 'lexicon novel' was an unconventional and intriguing experience. The same can be said about our time with Dr Savaskan. ■

Sacha Datt Mehta CC 2007-2012
Written 6th and 11th June 2021



COLLEGE SOCIETY AWARD

EACH YEAR, an award (or awards) in the region of £300 are given to a scholar who applies to the College Society Committee for the funds for a worthy personal development cause. In previous years, we have awarded funds for travel to a music conservatoire, and for language lessons before travelling on a gap year.

In April 2022, the Committee granted two awards to 2021 Remove pupils, Liberty Osborne and Andrew Lee.

Ms Osborne applied for the award to help fund her travel to Yunnan in China to visit Mosuo tribe in 2022 in advance of starting a degree in Chinese at University. Having read *The Kingdom of Women* by Choo Waihong, an account of the author's time with the Mosuo tribe, one of the last matrilineal and matriarchal groups left in the world, with its culture and practices dating back centuries, left Liberty fascinated by a culture she had previously never heard of and eager

to travel across the world to see it first-hand. Far away from any airport and high in the mountains, the Kingdom of Women is difficult to get to, but, according to the accounts of Choo and others, very welcoming to visitors once you have made it.

Mr Lee made an application for funds to assist with the purchase of books on naval history, to undertake research on OWs in naval history and produce a written report to present to the School. During his time at Westminster, Andrew wondered how Westminster and College might tie in with Britain's rise to maritime dominance. The Royal Navy, which recruited its personnel from every section of society, would surely have drawn on those who graduated from Westminster, and hopes that his research can inspire future pupils.

We look forward to hearing from both Ms Osborne and Mr Lee on their adventures. ■

KING'S SCHOLARS ADMITTED TO WESTMINSTER AFTER SEVEN DECADES

For the first time since 1951, King's Scholars have been inducted into the college of St Peter, by the Dean of Westminster

AT A SERVICE on Friday 30 September, the School's 12 new Scholars joined the Abbey community by presenting their credentials to the Dean of Westminster. They are the latest in a long line of pupils to participate in a ceremony first recorded in 1542, receiving gowns as they were individually admitted, in Latin, by the Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle in front of the whole school community and family members.

The eight Fifth Form boys – who won their places through taking the School's famous Challenge examinations – and four Sixth Form girls join College, the original School House that dates back to Queen Elizabeth I, after whom the scholarships were originally named. The new pupils had been Queen's Scholars for just five days, before the accession of King Charles III, at which moment they and the other 36 Scholars all became King's Scholars. Unlike in other schools and university colleges, it is Westminster tradition to change the name of the Scholars between King and Queen to reflect the current monarch.

King's Scholars play a unique role in the life of Westminster School, being part of Elizabeth I's Royal Foundation of the College of St Peter, which encompasses both Westminster School and Westminster Abbey. They attend certain Abbey services, and have other ceremonial duties to perform in connection with the Abbey and the Crown. Notably, they have historically had a role in the monarch's coronation. The monarch retains the position of Visitor at the School, and Westminster has a long history of royal visits and patronage.

Following the return of the title King's Scholars, Sylvie (Remove, CC), Captain of the King's Scholars said: "To be called King's Scholars sounded a little peculiar to all of us at first, I think. We were so accustomed to being the Queen's Scholars. It has obviously been 70 years since there were King's Scholars at Westminster, and it's nice to think there are female King's Scholars now for the first time; and, as Captain, it is unusual to be Captain of both the King's Scholars and Queen's Scholars during the same year. It is an extraordinary experience."

She added "It has been surprising to me how much you do appreciate the history of being a Scholar at Westminster. There are the traditions, such as wearing gowns and attending weekly Compline in Abbey by candlelight, and there is the general feeling of being part of something. Life in College as a boarder, though, is very similar to in other Houses. Plenty of time is spent in the common room and the kitchen; and it is great to live in the heart of the School. The sense of longevity of being a King's Scholar and feeling connected to the Abbey and the history of our role is unlike any other in the School."



The new King's Scholars in Little Deans Yard



The King's Scholars in Westminster Abbey and by the statue of Elizabeth I in Little Dean's Yard



The newly elected King's Scholars reflected on the special privilege of being inducted into college

■ **VINCENT (FIFTH FORM, CC):** "It's an incredible feeling, to be a part of this deep royal tradition hundreds of years old which I would never have expected a year ago. At times it feels rather surreal, if I'm honest, especially now that we are the first King's Scholars in 70 years. That being said, usually I just feel like the average schoolboy joining secondary school, and I'm excited to see what lies ahead at this school."

■ **JEREMY (FIFTH FORM, CC):** "It obviously feels surreal to be where I am given the extraordinary circumstances in which we find ourselves. In addition to my experience so far with traditions such as Compline, I have the odd yet thrilling sensation that we as a cohort are part of a historical sequence of events. Hopefully I may live up to the expectations that such a privilege will demand."

■ **TEJ (FIFTH FORM, CC):** "I am happy with being a King's Scholar and grateful to be in this position."

■ **CHENGXIANG (FIFTH FORM, CC):** "As a King's Scholar, I feel lucky to be such an integral part of the British culture and history"

■ **EMIR (FIFTH FORM, CC):** "I feel most privileged to be a King's Scholar: it comes with responsibilities, but also ultimately brings me pride. One of the best things that come with the scholarship is, without doubt, the tradition. I particularly enjoy Compline, a weekly event in St Faith's Chapel, and I am looking forward to the Remembrance Sunday Eucharist. The prestige of being part of this institution is simply surreal."

■ **MOAHNISHAN (FIFTH FORM, CC):** "I feel proud to have achieved such a feat and I feel as if the hard work and sleepless nights I sacrificed for the Challenge paid off."

■ **AARAV (FIFTH FORM, CC):** "I feel like being a King's Scholar comes with many opportunities, and we get to be a part of a traditional history. It is exciting, there is something new to take part in almost every week, and we get offered many privileges."

■ **CHERYL (SIXTH FORM, CC):** "It's an honour – to be a part of a tradition dating back to Elizabeth I and to be so intimately connected to the Abbey, not to mention being in College, with the loveliest people, matron's cakes and chess as a pastime."

■ **LOUISA (SIXTH FORM, CC):** "I feel excited and particularly honoured. It feels amazing continuing traditions that have been performed for such a long time. Having that special connection to the Abbey is something incredible."

■ **IRA (SIXTH FORM, CC):** "At a time like this, there is a real palpable connection between the School and Westminster Abbey, which makes it all so much special."

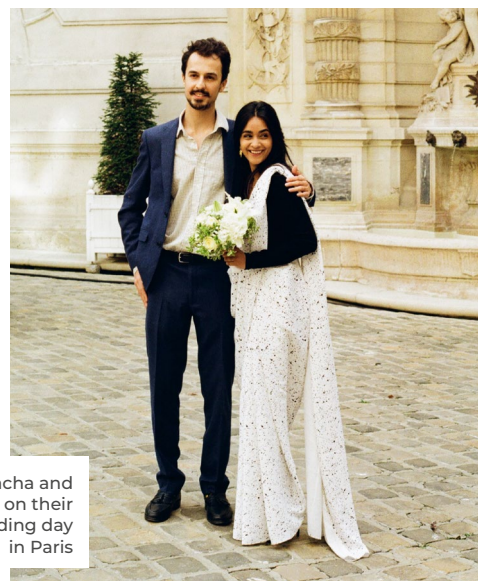
■ **INGRID (SIXTH FORM, CC):** "It is very exciting to be a King's Scholar and be part of this school legacy. It is something very profound to become a King's Scholar, especially in light of the recent events. It feels like being part of something bigger than any of us." ■

Love in the Time of Corona

Sacha Mehta explains how Brexit and Covid led him to his wife

I OWE MY marriage to Brexit. It's a fact I don't take much pride in, but had Britain not voted to leave the EU, my bosses would not have sent me to Paris to continue trading with our European clients, and I would never have met my wife Saman, then a Master's student at Sciences Po. Within weeks of arriving at Gare du Nord and sampling the nearby dosas, I had been introduced by a mutual Delhi-based friend at an Argentinian bar, where I was, by all accounts, joyously bellowing in Spanish at a waitress whose Spanish-accented French I had mistaken for the language of Cervantes itself.

Fast forward a year and a bit and a certain virus had taken the world by storm. With lockdown looming we decided to move in together – the litmus test. By this time, I already had a sneaking suspicion that there was something different about Saman. After all, I had taken her on a psychologically gruelling 4-hour hike in the Swiss Jura to my mum's ancestral village, culminating in a tour of my cow- and pigeon-breeding great-uncle's bird coop – and she actually enjoyed it. Add to that our ongoing culinary rivalry, with each of us insisting on



Sacha and Saman on their wedding day in Paris

cooking our family's rendition of saag gosht (lamb and spinach curry), and I had the feeling this was a different kind of relationship.

As surgical masks were put on, the streets became deserted and remote working software was put to the test (for those of us lucky to be able to #WFH), down came my GCSE artwork and old school photos, and up went the South Asian pop art of Maria Qamar and the photography of Sarah Bahbah. In the outside world more radical change was being demanded. In the wake of George Floyd's murder and the anti-Muslim Delhi pogrom, Saman and I were brought together by our shared revulsion at such cruelty and violence and the systems which had created it, and we lent our support to the much-needed relief work being done and the movements demanding justice. We constantly read and debated, with some lockdown highlights including Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Akala's *Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire*, and (on a slightly lighter note) Julie Barlow and Jean-Benoît Nadeau's *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*.

It didn't take long for me to propose to Saman, but French bureaucracy and the unusual circumstances meant that a scarcity of appointments at the town hall was matched by an oversupply of forms to fill. The engagement ring I'd dutifully bought (on my mum's and sister's advice) from an English jeweller never turned up, and was replaced by a Japanese-French fusion piece. And then on 10th October 2020, a week or so before the post-summer lockdown, we were married in the palatial Mairie du 8e arrondissement, watched over by two small groups of family and friends (one Zoom-based, the other masked and in person). And then? Champagne at the Musée de la Vie romantique, a late lunch at Le Bon Georges, and months of companionship. Decades more to come. ■

Sacha Datt Mehta

Written 13th June 2021

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With lockdown looming we decided to move in together – the litmus test
”



Celebrating women in College

2019 saw the College Society Committee host the unveiling of the portrait of the first two cohorts of female Queen Scholars. First admitted to College in 2017/8, the Committee wished to commemorate the event by commissioning a portrait of all eight female QSSs by then, current Westminster pupil, Lucy Li.

The portrait includes the following inscription:

τελοῦσιν (ἡμῖν ἡδονή 'στιν ἡ γέλως)
νῦν εἰσακούεις εἰς δόμον κόρων κόραι.

Look at the letters QSS, reflect on what they mean.

It's only right that girls can now be Scholars of the Queen.

The epigram was written by Charles Low (QS 1967-72; Common Room 1983-2015) for the 2016 Election Dinner: the year in which it was announced that female scholars would be joining the house. The literal translation of the epigram is:

Is it a joy or a source of laughter for us? You now hear that girls will belong to the boys' house.

The underlined syllables in Greek (the puns) are pronounced girls now as QSS...hooray! ■

Review of College Society Spring Lecture 2019

Theo Peterson recalls the novelist and critic Adam Mars Jones speaking about his time at Westminster

14TH MAY 2019



Adam Mars Jones
CC 1967-1973

On 14th May 2019 College Society members and guests were treated to a riotous Spring Lecture given by the writer and former QS Adam Mars-Jones.

Adam's peripatetic account of his time in College, where he started in 1967, was full of scandalous anecdote and lively historical detail. His recollection that Masters still needed the permission of the Headmaster to marry illustrated how much had changed since his time, as did mention of the matron, a doppelganger for Tippi Hedren, with whom he exchanged notes via his laundry and who gave him a key to her flat so he could watch TV during break. But the portrait he painted of Westminster in the 60's was immediately recognisable even to the younger members present as a world of carefully cultivated diffidence, arcane slang – to be “gutty”, or excessively keen, being the greatest sin of all – and baffling traditions, including the captaincy of the entirely fictitious school boxing team that changed hands periodically for the princely sum of five shillings.

Adam described himself as precocious but a late developer, who left the school choir out of concern that the high notes would interfere with the onset of puberty. Limitations imposed ‘by him not on him’ meant his literary, cultural and sexual awakening took place only gradually over his teenage years. The theatres and concert halls of London were there to be sampled but Adam – put off opera by the audible gearing of a descending swan in a performance of Parsifal – was content with the simple pleasures of Friday afternoon activities: cooking, photography or ‘old ladies’ (social work in the local community). The gay sex scene was in his recollection – rounded out by jocular contributions

from the audience – more innocent and restrained than the straight. Classics rather than English was the focus at first, ‘for no very good reason’ as Adam put it, and he achieved a top result in his Greek A-Level partly thanks to being forced to memorise great reams of vocabulary as punishment for a moment of weakness with a Liddell & Scott dictionary during an unseen translation.

The discovery of James Joyce in Ashburnham Library helped to steer Adam down the path towards writing, followed by a spell in Perugia after school and the eventual decision to change his degree at Cambridge to English for Part II. Adam

“
Adam was candid that in his view imagination is a muscle that has to be worked on rather than an innate well of creativity
”

was candid that in his view imagination is a muscle that has to be worked on rather than an innate well of creativity, and that one can teach very well things that one cannot do oneself – in his case writing poetry, where by coming at things from different angles he helped his students find their voice. In piano-playing too – a lifelong pleasure despite a school piano teacher who avoided playing the hard bits – Adam's advice was to play something the audience would not have heard before so that the odd missed note would go unnoticed.

It was this ability to seek out the unexpected and find a different way of doing things that set Adam up for his latest and greatest triumph – victory in a recent special edition of University Challenge. The key, as he confided, was not intellectual superiority but psychological dominance. This he established first by wandering the halls of BBC Television Centre carrying a small golden axe (the team's mascot), and second by wearing a jacket that gave him a resemblance to Ming the Merciless. It was a suitably splendid image on which to end a very enjoyable lecture. ■

While the past few years have been quiet due to the pandemic, the Society was very active towards the end of the 2010s.

College Spring Lectures

Three very interesting spring lectures 2017-19, started with Tom Richardson (CC 1954-59) the former UK Ambassador to Italy (1996-2000) and the UK's Deputy Representative to the UN (1989-1994) giving his insights on the diplomatic circuit and current issues on the international scene. Very well attended by alumni and current College pupils, we were treated to a historical masterclass on world politics of the late twentieth century –

something that continued at the speaker's dinner.

The following year, we had our first female speaker, Dr Tina Beaconsfield, see the next page for more details and how Dr Beaconsfield overcame obstacles to become a renowned physician. Finally, 2019, saw Adam Mars-Jones, award-winning novelist and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, gracing the Lecture Room with his time at Westminster and accompanying shenanigans.

Touring the Abbey

2019 also saw a successful tour of the Henry V Chapel and the Triforium Galleries at Westminster Abbey lead by the then, Dean of Westminster, the Very Reverend Dr John Hall, in July 2019. It was a lovely trip and a great privilege to be able to access the Henry V Chapel and walk up the chapel steps to see the Abbey below.



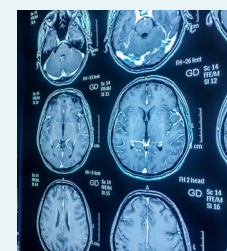
The tour group before entering the Abbey



COLLEGE SOCIETY DINNER Finally, 2019 was wrapped up with a joint dinner with Wren's alumni in College Hall, followed by drinks at the Blue Boar. ■

College Society Lecture 2016

Arda Egghayan reviews the lecture from Society's first female speaker, Dr Beaconsfield
27TH APRIL 2016



Dr Tina Beaconsfield
CC 1975-77

The College Society welcomed their first female speaker to give the 2016 Spring lecture, College Alumna Dr Tina Beaconsfield, 1975-77. A consultant radiologist, Dr Beaconsfield was born deaf as a result of maternal mumps, although it was only when she was a year old and failed to react to a nearby explosion that her parents realised that this was the case.

Dr Beaconsfield began her talk with a short review of the history of deaf people, going back as far as 1000 BC where deaf people were not allowed to have property or marry, to the time of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle who believed that deaf people could not be educated and that people who could not be educated should be thrown to the lions, to more recent times when the deaf were sent to asylums. It was only with the Benedictine monks in the later medieval period, with their vow of silence and the development of body and sign language to communicate that deaf people began a slow entry into the hearing society.

Dr Beaconsfield recounted her early childhood, where she was taught to lip read by a professional lip-reader for the police, and then how to speak by a French elocution teacher who more commonly worked with opera singers. She explained how it took several years to learn how to keep her tongue down to allow air to flow through her throat and make sounds, and then to work on her pitch and intonation to avoid a monotone speech pattern. One story recalled being given a copper collar (embroidered no less) to wear around her neck to try to ensure that her voice box reverberated at the correct position. Her speech education continued under the illustrious Sir John Gieguld (OW – of course) and Paul Schofield, highlighting how the intonation of even a simple 'how are you?' can change its meaning, and how understanding facial expression can help decide which 'how are you?' was meant.

At 13, Dr Beaconsfield went to her first hearing school, Goldolphin and Latymer, but the large class and teachers speaking whilst at the blackboard was not easy to deal with. Dr Beaconsfield asked her parents to find a school with smaller classes, and this is how she came to Westminster

school. Dr Rae, the then headmaster set an entrance exam of sorts, with Dr Beaconsfield being taught one-on-one on a subject she knew nothing, and then if she received more than 80% she would be accepted by the school. She ended up learning some chemistry and of course got high enough grades to start.

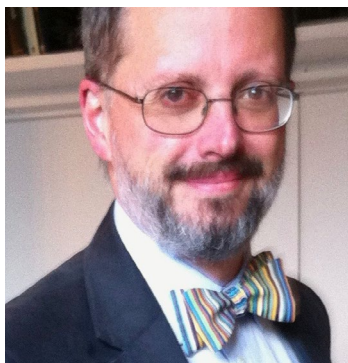
It was through Westminster school, and the Master of the QSS Jim Cogan in particular, that Dr Beaconsfield became confident in mixing with the hearing society – as well as with the boys! She also learnt the importance of how to study and not what to study, something which she said got her through medical school. Out of the eight medical schools she applied to, only one, St Mary's in Paddington accepted her. However, when Dr Beaconsfield went to meet with the head of the medical school, he explained that she would find the first lecture-heavy years difficult and that she should study a BSC in physiology, get a 2.2 and come back. This is what Dr Beaconsfield did, but when she went back with her 2.1 the new head of the medical school would not accept her. Rather than cry it off, Dr Beaconsfield realised that the Queen Mother was a patron of the school, and wrote to her to discuss this issue of acceptance, and three weeks

later Dr Beaconsfield was admitted to the medical school. And while the head of the school hoped she would fail, Dr Beaconsfield was well supported by her peers. Even when asked about her inability to hear a heart murmur in her final exams, she was not rattled and was able to train in every speciality of medicine apart from paediatrics, cardiology and psychology.

Dr Beaconsfield said that she has suffered some negative reactions and responses due to her deafness, although seldom from patients, but she has worked hard to make herself indispensable to the hospital where she works, having studied a niche speciality of nuclear radiology in addition to training junior doctors in radiology.

On a day of the Junior Doctors' strike, Dr Beaconsfield, reticent about doctors striking in general, came out for the doctors and had to leave us a little early to go and help with the later shifts. ■

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It was through Westminster school...that Dr Beaconsfield became confident in mixing with the hearing society
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Gregory Wilsdon

CC 1972-77

GREGORY WILSDON, who died on May 17th 2019 at the age of 59, was one of the most brilliant students of his year, first as top-ranking Queen's Scholar at Westminster School and then at Oxford, where he took a First in Greats in 1983 and won two of the most prestigious University prizes in Classics. He was also an attractive and charming personality, whose sharp, but also gentle and benevolent, humour and wide-ranging career will be remembered with warmth and admiration by those who were lucky enough to know him as colleague or companion, or both. Fellow Corpus Christi students of his era will remember his disarmingly boyish but precociously mature poise, his easy way of engaging with his tutors – ‘way ahead of his contemporaries,’ says one of his friends – and his colourful contributions to college and JCR affairs, including his urbane and stylish stewarding of ‘Square Table’, jewel of Corpus dining

clubs. According to one well-attested story, he once privileged his fellow diners with his own paté, which he called the ‘Cat’s Whiskers’, only to reveal after consumption that it was based on a well-known homophonic brand of pet food. The son of an emigrée Russian mother, Nina (née Brodiansky) and English father, Michael Wilsdon, who had been Nina’s pupil at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London, Gregory kept in touch with both sides of his family background. Major happy moments came when he met Kate (née Thomson) in 2000, and when they adopted their daughter Rita and brought her from Russia in 2009. The wedding in 2001 took place in Corpus, a cheering occasion musically marked on the bagpipes by Gregory’s former tutor Ewan Bowie, and unforgettably catered for by Gregory’s own culinary and oenotechnical genius. While enjoying many of the fine things of life (he was for example a devoted opera-lover, especially of Wagner, and made several trips to Bayreuth) he remained an excellent cook, even becoming a reviewer for the Good Food Guide, and his expert appreciation of wine bore fruit in one of his many business ideas, the ‘Kottabos Club’, which introduced its members (he was its self-styled ‘Arbiter Bibendi’) to sensibly priced bottles, ready for drinking with imaginatively matched recipes. One member calls to mind the combination of a Premier Cru Beaune with a Bacon Butty also of the first quality. Following a highly competitive selection

process in his last undergraduate year, after Finals Gregory went to work in London with the Boston Consulting Group.

Two years later he went to Stanford for graduate study; there, to the astonishment of all, he managed to distinguish himself simultaneously with excellent results in the MBA and in a demanding Classics MA. On returning to England he applied his talents and formidable energy to an intriguing range of business models and ventures, including his own management consulting firm, fresh fish retail outlets, delivery companies and others. But among these his crowning achievement coincided with a return to classical studies and teaching at Charterhouse, Westminster School, St Pauls’ Girls’ School and Westminster Abbey Choir School. Kate and Rita were the making of Gregory, and he of them, but his other ‘baby’ was the ‘Classics Academy’, a teaching organization that provided lessons in Latin, and later also Greek, to pupils from schools all over London that had no such teaching available. Gregory set up the Academy, after long and painstaking preparation, in 2004, and in its nearly fifteen successful years he and his colleagues introduced large numbers of boys and girls to classics (at one time there were close on eighty receiving tuition), many of them advancing to university and one or two even returning to help teach the next generation. It was a magnificent venture, one of the first of its kind just as some schools were only beginning to rediscover the value of classics. A gifted teacher,

Gregory was also the model of a professional, meticulous and conscientious administrator, and his pupils and teaching staff alike were uniquely well served by his high standards of care. Sadly he succumbed over these last years to the rare and devastating illness of ‘multiple system atrophy’, finally diagnosed after some earlier symptoms in 2016. Some memories and acute observations of his undergraduate years may be read in his contribution to Brian Harrison’s ‘Corpuscles’.

Dr Jonathan Katz,
Master QSS 1987-2010



Remembering Peter Hall

from Westminster to US Circuit Judge

PETER HALL ARRIVED at College in September 1966 to become one of the first Americans seen at Westminster under a one-year exchange programme sponsored by the English-Speaking Union. As such, he was an unfamiliar quantity in the eyes of his Westminster peers,

perhaps more familiar with B Westerns than anything else American. Supposedly, one of the first questions put to him as he unpacked his suitcase was “Where is your six-gun?”, since it was generally assumed that all Americans packed a pistol wherever they went. Tall and broad-shouldered, blond and blue-eyed, he was the archetypal American... dropped into the unfamiliar cultural territory of a traditional British Public School at Westminster in the 1960s. The \$64,000 question was: would these different cultures clash or meld?

Peter won over his somewhat cynical College contemporaries with his friendliness and his willingness to participate and to make a contribution. He worked diligently at his studies and he had no hesitation about swinging cross-bat, baseball style, in House cricket matches if there was a chance to score for his team. Sometimes it worked and sometimes not, but the effort was what counted.

Peter was always up for a challenge, even in the holidays. On a gruelling 50-mile hike in the Welsh mountains, he more than carried his share of the camping gear, pitched in with all the chores, and kept spirits high with his liveliness and sense of humour. If he had to, I am sure that he would have carried his team over the finish line – a reflection of his commitment, his team spirit and his determination, not to mention his physique.

As a boarder far away from home, he would frequently be invited to visit his friends’ homes at exeat, where he would bowl

his host or hostess over with his all-American charm and his good manners. And Peter would return the hospitality when back in New England by inviting his former schoolmate to the family Christmas at the wonderfully named Top of the World Farm. There the outdoor life predominated, with two setters for company, as wood was chopped and gathered to feed the roaring fire and hearty New England meals filled the body with warmth and cheer amidst a welcoming gathering of Peter’s sisters, brother and parents. After a chilly day outdoors, the greatest pleasure was to quaff a Bourbon Old Fashioned or a Manhattan on the Rocks, rather generously mixed by Peter’s father, followed by a mouth-watering New England dinner cooked by Peter’s mother, all accompanied by the liveliest of family chatter.

After Westminster, Peter graduated with BA and Master’s degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, taught and mentored undergraduate students, and went on to take a law degree at Cornell Law School, where he graduated cum laude. Following a clerkship under Judge Albert Coffrin, Peter was appointed Assistant U.S. Attorney for Vermont, a post he held for eight years before making the move into private practice when he co-founded the Reiber, Kenlan, Schwiebert, Hall and Facey law firm in Rutland, Vermont in 1986.

But public service was Peter’s calling and in 2001 he was appointed U.S. Attorney for the District of Vermont. After three

busy and productive years, Peter was recognized by President George W Bush, who nominated him to become Federal Appellate Judge to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, a position confirmed by the US Senate in 2004.

In his 16½ years on the court, Peter served on three-judge panels in over 750 cases and wrote more than 150 opinions. In the words of his law clerks, “litigants considered him fair-minded, engaged, perceptive, and honest.” Peter left a lasting mark on the 60+ law clerks he worked with and mentored during his tenure.

Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont paid tribute to Peter: “In addition to being a highly respected jurist, Peter was a good friend. Vermont and the country are richer for his many years of service... Judge Hall’s tenure – as both judge and prosecutor – was noted for his fair and thoughtful approach to the law.” The Chief Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit declared that “Judge Hall was our beloved colleague... [who] distinguished himself as a thoughtful and humane jurist... Judge Hall was committed to public service and taught us all by his example.”

At Westminster, Peter proved to be a fine ambassador for the US, with his friendly, open approach, his integrity, and his humanity. In a personal way, he succeeded in connecting two cultures supposedly often divided by a common language.

Peter W. Hall died on 11 March 2021 at the age of 72.

John Crawshaw CC 1963-68

Keith MacLennan

CC 1954-59

KEITH WAS AN early victim of Covid-19. A member of his choir in Carlisle (in fact the cathedral choir) went to Italy very early in 2020 and came back with the virus. Singing is one of the best ways of spreading Covid, and both Keith and his partner caught it and both died of it.

Keith and I joined Stephen Lushington’s *Transitus A* in 1953. He moved to College in 1954 and I followed a year later. (The rules were different then!). He had a distinguished school career, playing the French Horn to a high standard, singing the demanding part of Josephine in HMS Pinafore and winning a scholarship to Corpus at Oxford.

We were good friends at school but since his unfortunate choice of university, we largely lost touch. But one day in 1955, I lacked Brasso to polish the buckles on my corps belt. I borrowed his in exchange for the largest size tin on the market in thirty years time. I honoured this undertaking (to his evident surprise), but we agreed to forget the Brasso in exchange for better wine with dinner.

After a double first at Oxford, Keith followed Walter Hamilton to Rugby where he had a distinguished career teaching Classics. He retired to Cumbria, where he maintained his interest in the classics and wrote and published books on Horace, Plautus and Virgil, five of which are still in print. He also continued to sing and fatefully joined the Carlisle cathedral choir. ■

Oliver Gillie CC 1955-1958

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