

the brick

THE NEWSLETTER FOR KEBLE ALUMNI

issue 15 • hilary term 1999

YEAR GROUPS INITIATIVE GATHERS MOMENTUM

Old Members representing no less than forty post-War matriculation years returned to College on 20 March for a conference about year groups. From Arthur Kirby ('45) to Emma Giddings ('94), they joined the Warden and Roger Boden and Isla Smith of the Development Office for a very full day of analysis and discussion. At least four gave up seats at Twickenham to be there!

The aim of the conference was to consider the College's plans for year groups. Peter Rawlins ('69)

opened the debate by challenging the meeting to define the primary purpose of year groups. The working definition that emerged was:

to build, among all members of the College, a durable interest in and commitment to Keble, so as to enrich the life of the College community as a whole

The year group idea has its origins in the US, where the 'Class of ...' has long been the core element of alumni programmes. Andrew Arends ('80), who went from PPE at Keble to an MBA at Harvard, described the US practice;



'Straighten up at the back!' The year group organizers at Keble for the Conference.

Chris Knight ('64) then examined the many differences between Oxford and that other Cambridge (Massachusetts). The conclusion was that we should adapt rather than adopt.

After nearly three hours of discussions covering strategy, information management, year group events and fundraising, the conference split into four working parties, led by David Etherington ('73), Symon Elliott ('75), Philip Dunne ('77) and Barbara Wood ('79). They were asked to consider what the initiative might achieve in one, two, five and ten years. By the time all had

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reported back the walls of the Griffiths Room were festooned with torn-off flip-chart pages advocating everything from Quinquennial Reunions and Millenium Balls to lifetime email addresses and a Keble 'Who's Who'.

The immediate challenge is to produce year group newsletters, in which the organizers will report to all members of their year about the conclusions reached at the Conference, and circulate news of contemporaries based on returned questionnaires. The aim is to write to everyone by the end of June at the latest.

Summing up the proceedings, the Warden expressed her delight at the tremendous commitment and enthusiasm shown by the year group organizers. It was, she said, a very long term project, but we had made a splendid start.

If you would like to be involved in the running of your year group please contact your year group organizer or Isla Smith, The Development Office, Keble College, Oxford OX1 3PG; telephone (01865) 272794; fax (01865) 272735; email isla.smith@keble.oxford.ac.uk

THE ACCESS DEBATE - YOUR LETTERS

In issue 14, we published an article, *Barriers to Entry*, about Oxbridge selection processes. Here, the editor, Kathryn Schofield, surveys the range of opinions offered by readers.

The issue most often raised was that of the interview as the means of selection. Anthony Stanton ('67, PGCE, now Headmaster of a girls' Grammar School in Kent) puts the case for the prosecution: *'We find entry to Oxbridge to be a lottery which seldom produces what we judge to be the "right" results in terms of our most intellectually able and interesting candidates getting Oxbridge places... Admissions tutors are a moving scene, as, apparently, are the whims of other specialist interviewers... The partiality of the selection process is summed up by my recent conversation with the Warden of another Oxford college: "You see, the advantage of the collegiate admissions system is that the dons involved in the one-to-one teaching can personally select those students they feel they would like to be teaching next year."' This, Stanton concludes, 'smacks horribly of choosing students to gratify the teachers, rather than setting out to serve the needs of the students and of society'.*

David Williams-Thomas ('59, Law) has a similar observation but reaches a different conclusion *'Do not completely debunk the college interviewing practices—mine was bizarre—but we all knew that this was the game... the confidence to stand up to pompous dons is a life skill, which school should teach!'* Nicholas Byrne ('61, Geography) sees no attractions at all in a fairer system: *'The dreary meritocracy you advocate will have about as much charisma as that soulless ARCO edifice which now peers vacantly across the Fellows' Garden.'* And Dr Ronald Clarke ('37, Chemistry) warns us *'not to fall into any educational egalitarian trap—some elitism is essential'.*

Bill Groves ('61, Geology), whose responsibilities at a Sixth Form College in the West Midlands include preparing

Oxbridge candidates, suggests that *'the interview is now approached with great trepidation'*. He agrees that the majority of interviewers are *'friendly, sensitive, and supportive'*, and finds Keble's approach to be such, but suggests that tales of horrendous interviews, and of the many stages at which one can fail, seemingly *'without trial'*, are the most off-putting for prospective applicants. He points out what damage can be done to a school's perception of the process if a student returns *'devastated by interviews given by people who seem to have little empathy or understanding of the state system, let alone the worries of a student who may be the first in his or her family to even think of Higher Education'*. And, like Anthony Stanton, he worries about the lottery element, citing the case of one of his best students, with a broad GCSE profile made up of A and A* grades, who was rejected from Oxford without even being called to interview: *'When the only applicant from the college not to be called... is one of your strongest, it gives out the wrong messages to other students.'*

Generally, only those who are considered academically gifted by their teachers apply to Oxbridge. A clutch of A grades would be expected by an interviewer. Professor David Taylor ('44, Chemistry) doesn't think the interview adds anything to the selection process and offers a radical alternative: *'The best method for choosing future Oxford students would be by ballot among those academically qualified.'* Anthony Stanton doesn't go that far, but does advocate an end to *'the system of application to Colleges... one of the most antiquated elements contributing to the Oxford myth'*. But against this, Professor Taylor does recognize a *'certain something'* that makes Oxford—and Keble—special: *'It was not the technical quality of the education... It was not the tutorial system—though this can be excellent, there is no law that says it has to*

be, and it is not always... It was something in the atmosphere, connected with the college system, one met and talked each day with so many different sorts of people, both students and staff, and one hopes, learned from them all.' If, as I believe, this is still the case, then the interview system must be getting something right. The low dropout rate, despite great pressure, and the fact that a



state or private educational background ceases to matter once students embark on a degree course, suggest that this is good for the student in the end.

Those who brave the interview face a selection process working on many levels. Access and potential are rarely denied in the beginning. Many correspondents, however, feel that state school applicants are at a disadvantage because of the differences in preparation they receive, and their schools' comparative ignorance about the process. The advantages of private schools—more money for facilities, more time for extra tuition, and what Stanton calls *'the conspiratorial cosy-ing-up*

process between Oxbridge colleges and the private schools'—are neatly summed up by Andrew Bunbury ('62, Theology): 'My (public school) sixth-form years did little to increase my ability... However, the school knew how to get pupils into Oxbridge and I was extremely lucky.'

Ronald Clarke thinks that luck has little to do with it: in

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that part of the perpetuation of the Oxford 'myth' derives, according to contributors, from state school teachers themselves. Bill Groves suggests: 'There is a great deal of prejudice and misconception among both staff and students in the state sector, which is not the fault of Oxford, and should be addressed by the schools themselves.'

Several cite the importance of teachers' influence, particularly those teachers who have been through Oxbridge. Professor Taylor believes the influence of schoolteachers is crucial: 'I used to carry out a survey among my students as to what had brought them to the university, and the influence of teachers was always a major factor.' He suggests that one reason for the relatively low numbers of state school applicants is that state schools nowadays have very few Oxbridge educated teachers. Andrew Bunbury wonders 'whether the current independent-state ratio of undergraduates reflects the educational background of the tutors responsible for deciding on admission'.

How can the University help to correct the confused and conflicting information circulating in some state schools? Several correspondents advocate a targeted campaign to attract state school entrants. As mentioned in the original article, such a campaign already exists, though the reaction of contributors appears to suggest that may not be working or well-known. I can identify several problems with the *Target Schools* plan as I volunteered for it myself. It is organized by the Students' Union and has no well-defined relationship with individual colleges. It relies on student volunteers, and there are occasions when none can be found. Volunteers are asked to give short presentations to groups of pupils interested in Oxbridge entry in two or more state schools in their area, but it

is often difficult to find time to fit in a *Target Schools* session which suits both student and pupils.

Contributors point to other factors which threaten Oxford's standing. Those in education point out that some students who are capable of Oxbridge entry do not apply because the degree courses in their subject are antiquated and inflexible. Anthony Stanton notes that 'there are very few combined subject courses offered, nor scope for even a limited amount of sideways excursion into other areas'. There is even, according to Ronald Clarke, the problem of Oxford 'letting the side down' in the media—'the scruffy, oickish, yoboish, nerdish appearance of many of the students on the TV programme *University Challenge*... does not differ much from whatever university they come'.

Although the issue of finance is raised in the correspondence, there seems little opposition to the introduction of tuition fees for students. Terry Downs ('69, PPE), seems positively to welcome them: 'I don't feel that the issue at Oxford is how many underprivileged, non-paying students can be admitted but rather how many privileged, brilliant students from all over the world could be admitted... There should be a tighter selection at Oxford, based on intelligence, scholarship and capacity to pay the full fees, so as to ensure that Oxford will face the 21st century with the money it needs.' He, in common with several other correspondents, fears that if Oxford becomes apologetic about what it stands for it will lose ground to its international competitors. David Williams-Thomas sums it up: 'Do not be afraid of excellence, or ashamed of it. Be proud of it.'

Many thanks for your letters, all of which have been copied to Edwin Peel, Tutor for Admissions. He assures us that, whilst it would be impossible for him (or indeed anyone else) to agree with every comment, he has taken careful note of all of them.



order to give state school applicants a better chance, state education should be improved. 'All the recent tables of education achievement show a marked average superiority (of public school pupils) over state school pupils, so it is not surprising that their proportion in number is so high at Oxbridge.' Andrew Bunbury fears 'the situation may actually be worse than the statistics show because of the practice of categorizing students by the last school that they attended rather than the kind of school where they had most of their education'. He suggests it is misleading to categorize student who, at age 16, move from independent schools to maintained Sixth Form Colleges as 'state school products'.

THE KEBLE SUMMER BALL: SATURDAY, 26 JUNE 1999

For those who remember the great Keble Balls of the past, little need be said except that 1999's extravaganza will trump them all. For those who don't—you must have had an incredible time!

So who has been booked and who is nearly booked? A celebratedly sexy and entertaining band is being lined up for the Liddon Quad Main Stage; comedian Al Murray, making headlines and raking in positive reviews with his current national tour, is scheduled to perform along with fellow stand-up Noel Fielding; glamorous and avant-garde DJ crew Miss Money Penny's, plus outrageously flamboyant dancers, are confirmed to play in the Pusey Quad Dance Arena; and food and drink of almost inconceivable quality and inexhaustible quantity will be available, free, all night. Alongside all this will be jazz bands, the Oxford Philharmonic, a gallimaufry of other DJs, funfair rides, strolling entertainers, a steel drum orchestra, a casino, bars serving everything from a perfect pint of Guinness to some of the most elaborate and mouth-watering cocktails imaginable, and of course the optional sit-down feast in Oxford's most spectacular Hall.

There are only 1700 tickets and they are selling fast— £65 non-dining, £85 with legendary five-course meal. Applications from Old Members are especially welcome, and to prove it a £5 discount is being offered.

Ticket enquiries to: The Keble Ball Committee, Keble College, Oxford, OX1 3PG. Email: ball-tickets@keble.oxford.ac.uk or call Sophie Lovett (treasurer): 0468 200 645

The official website has been getting more hits than Elvis. Take a look at <http://www.keble.ox.ac.uk/ball99/>

And finally, a message for (Old Members now working for companies who might be

sponsors: If you would like to have your company's name associated with Oxford University's most glamorous summer event, please get in touch with any of the committee at the above address, or email ball-sponsorship@keble.oxford.ac.uk.



DIARY

Sunday 25 April

Trinity Term starts.

St Mark's Day Service: 5.30 p.m. in the Chapel. Sermon by the Rt Revd Rowan Williams, Bishop of Monmouth. All welcome.

Friday 7 May

Eric Abbott Memorial Lecture: 5.30 p.m. in the Chapel.

'Who is to judge? The role of the Judiciary in ethical issues.' given by the Rt Hon. Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss. All welcome.

Saturday 22 May

MA Degree Day: for those who matriculated in 1991. The first ever MA Degree Day for a single year group. There are fewer than ten places left, so if you came up in '91 and have yet to book, contact Isla Smith on (01865) 272794 or isla.smith@keble.oxford.ac.uk now.

Saturday 29 May

Last Day of Eights Week.

Garden Party from 3.30–5.00 p.m. Open to all Old Members and their guests. For tickets (£7 per person) please write to the Bursar, Keble College, Oxford, OX1 3PG.

Keble Rowing Society AGM and Dinner. Invitations will be sent to members of the Society in April. If you are not a



member but would like to join, or if you are a member but have not received your invitation by 1 May, please contact Isla Smith in the Development Office on (01865) 272794 or isla.smith@keble.oxford.ac.uk.

Saturday 19 June

Full Term ends.

Saturday 26 June

Keble Ball. See opposite for details.

Wednesday 14 July

Sydney Dinner. The Warden, in Australia for a conference, will host a dinner for Old Members.

Friday 16 July

Keble Association AGM: 5.00 p.m. in the Pusey Room (Annual Report and accounts enclosed) to be followed by...

The Keble Summer Dinner: 7.15 p.m. in Hall. Open to all Old Members and their partners. See enclosed booking form for details.

Sunday 18 July

◀ *Family Day:* noon till 5.00 p.m. Open to all Old Members and their families—especially those with young children. See enclosed booking form for details.

Friday 24 September

Gaudy for Old Members who matriculated in the years 1945–54. Invitations will be sent out in June.

DEGREE DAYS

Following the success of the BA Degree Ceremony for 1998 finalists (see *the brick* Michaelmas '98 and *Oxford Today* Hilary '99) and the popularity of the planned MA Degree Day for 1991 matriculands this coming May, the College is planning to repeat the experiments next academic year. 1999 finalists will graduate in a ceremony on Friday, 1 October and 1992 matriculands on Saturday, 22 May 2000. Invitations to the latter MA Degree Day will be sent early in the New Year.

COMPETITION CORNER

For this issue we invited Robin Wilson, Senior College Lecturer in Mathematics to set a couple of brain-teasers. We are most grateful to him for the following:

The 10-digit number *abcdefghij* contains each of the digits 0–9 once only, and has the following properties:

the 1-digit number *a* is divisible by 1
the 2-digit number *ab* is divisible by 2
the 3-digit number is divisible by 3

...

the 10-digit number *abcdefghij* is divisible by 10

What is the number?

Pamela Potter's pease porridge is putrid provided that Pablo Picasso painted potted palms. Either Pablo Picasso painted potted palms, or Peter Piper did not pick a peck of pickled peppers. There are two possibilities: either Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers or else it is impossible that both Pablo Picasso did not paint potted palms and that Pamela Potter's pease porridge is not putrid.

Is Pamela Potter's pease porridge putrid? If so, why? If not, why not?

[Adapted from 'Mathematics' by B. Averbach and O. Chein, Freeman, 1961.]

Solutions, please, to
The Development Office,
Keble College,
Oxford
OX1 3PG

to arrive no later than 1 May. The first correct answer to both puzzles to be drawn from the hat will win the customary prize of dinner for two at High Table.

SPORT

Varsity Ski Trip, 1998



The 76th Varsity Ski Trip and Races took place during the first two weeks of the Christmas vacation at Val d'Isère. Keble was able to muster a good number of skiers, with six JCR and two MCR members skiing, plus one snowboarder.

At the end of the first week, inter-collegiate Cuppers took place on the Stade des Slaloms, originally built

for the Olympics. Keble raised two racing teams of three men each. There was also a snowboarding competition in which Mark Nunn competed in College colours. Then, towards the end of the second week, the Varsity Matches were held on the World Cup course at La Daille. Two Keble members raced for the dark blues, but the overall result went to Cambridge.

Women's Rugby

After a creditable performance in the inter-college tournament last term, Keble Women's rugby team found success in Cuppers. Reinforced by the presence of this term's CMRS* students, Keble were beaten in the final after knocking out some of Oxford's more established women's teams. The first match against Jesus resulted in a tentative draw but Keble triumphed in the rematch, winning 20–15. The team (under the captaincy of JCR President Prem Ahluwalia) then went on to annihilate Lady Margaret Hall 35–0.

Miles Norris, a second-year Geographer who, with Huw Gildon, coached the squad, was recently awarded a trophy and cheque for £150 by the Oxford Sports Council as 'the person contributing most to their sport in Oxford and the surrounding region'.

*For readers unfamiliar with the initials, CMRS is the Centre for Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies, which runs courses in Oxford for US students in their Junior Year. It has been associated with Keble since 1989.

Cuppers Swimming

Men's team captain, Tim Daley, reports on a remarkable upset.

Keble entered one of the smallest teams, selected only one day before the Cuppers contest. It mattered little. Every member of the team cruised to places in the final, despite competition from a large contingent of Blues swimmers and one former Olympian.

First to explode from the blocks was Blues swimmer Shelby Paul in the 50 metres Fly. She destroyed the opposition in the subsequent final, and in the 50 metres Freestyle, before being joined in the 50 metres Backstroke by Yuko Takigawa. Both made the final and Shelby came second to the Blue's number one.

The biggest shock of the tournament was in the men's breaststroke as unknown Tim Sayer obliterated two Blues swimmers to take first place. Guy Collender also fought bravely into the final. Tim's spectacular performance earned him a place in the Varsity team.

In the Butterfly, John Ward (who had earned fifth place in the Backstroke) and Tim Daley both made the final despite significant competition and scored highly. In the Freestyle, Tim took on the Blues Sprinter in an exciting and well-fought race that took them far ahead of the opposition but saw Tim placed second.



Cuppers victors

In the two relays the four men stood alone. Having won both races, and beaten surprised Blues competition, the team was understandably upset when news came that they had been placed 2nd in both by an anonymous touch judge. But when the final results were in Keble, despite strong opposition and

some curious judging, were overall Cuppers winners. Women's captain Shelby Paul said after the victory 'we're very proud of the way the team bonded so well at such short notice and feel that this win truly reflects the Keble spirit'.

Keble man launches University's newest sport



Oxford University baseball made its debut in February when the Oxford Kings played the Cambridge Monarchs and Oxford Brookes in a friendly tournament. Oxford beat Cambridge 13–10 but Brookes put both to shame, beating Oxford 6–1 and Cambridge 14–0.

The Oxford side found the fast pitching of Brookes captain Mikio Miyazaki challenging. Oxford's pitcher Taylor Umlauf played tactically, keeping an eye on the bases and turning to throw to a baseman when the opposition strayed too far. But Oxford suffered from too many infield errors which Brookes exploited by stealing bases and scoring. Raj Shekhat scored Oxford's only run, dashing home from second base when the opposition missed a double play opportunity.

The match against Cambridge proved more exciting. Keble captain Santo Bains, who founded the club, threw

many strikes, and credit for the victory goes to him. The first inning saw Oxford take the lead. However, Cambridge scored in the top of the second, only to see another Keble man, Andrew Nelson, in the most exciting play of the match, reply with a ball slammed low and deep into the centre field, two bases loaded. With two runs batted in, Nelson, secure on second base, ran for

a third, sliding onto the home plate just as the catcher tagged him out.

Cambridge goes home to practise after this first meeting with Oxford. The next time the two teams meet will be at the inaugural Varsity match in June. With luck we shall, by then, have picked up a few more tips from our neighbours on Headington Hill.

Women's Football

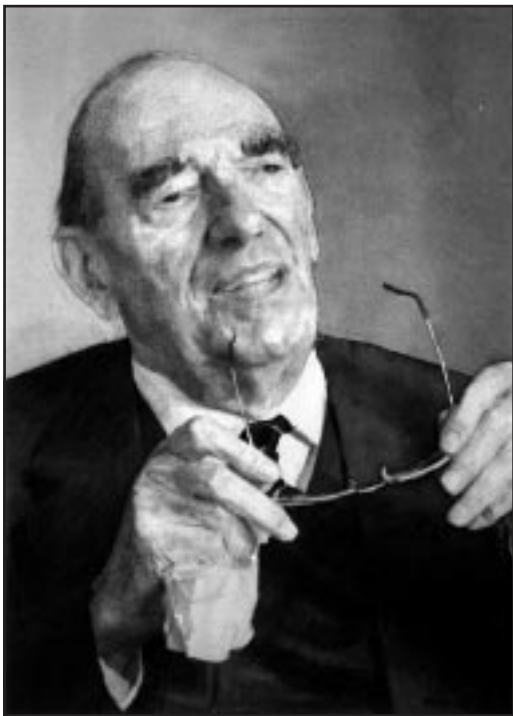
Women's football may still be one of the least pressurized sports at Keble, but the team is not without ambition or success. Most of last year's side are still involved, strengthened by some new talent. Currently in the second division, the women were drawn in the toughest Cuppers qualifying group which included 3 first division sides, but managed to qualify top of the group, winning a

memorable quarter finals place against Queens. League performances have been a little less consistent, ranging from a 9–0 victory to a 5–0 defeat.

Two players have won places on the Blues side and the team hopes to equal last years' performance in the Cuppers 5-a-side in Trinity, by finishing in the quarter finals or above.

PEOPLE

Gordon Smith



Gordon Smith, from a drawing by Bob Tulloch

Gordon Smith, Fellow and Tutor in Geography from 1957 until his retirement in 1983, died on 20 February after a long period of ill-health. Former pupils joined University colleagues and Gordon's family and friends in a moving funeral service in Keble Chapel. Andrew Goudie, Professor of Geography and himself a former pupil, gave the address, paying tribute to Gordon's qualities as geographer, teacher, University administrator (he was Senior Proctor in the late 60s when student revolt was at its height) and family man: 'He played a straight bat, he was an all-rounder, he was, to use an old-fashioned phrase, a good egg.'

The full text of Professor Goudie's address will be published in *The Record* 1999.

Keble Couples



By tradition Gaudies are strictly for members only (much to the chagrin of a sizeable minority, it must be said). Not a problem, however, for these couples, all of whom are Old Members. They came back for the Gaudy on 19 March, which, being for matriculation years 1976–80 included the first two years of mixed intake.

the brick

the brick is written, designed and produced by current Keble undergraduates and graduates, with the assistance of the Keble Development Office.

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John Davies

After five very busy and productive years, John Davies will preside and preach for the last time as Chaplain at the College Communion on Sunday 13 June. John's energetic and popular ministry has seen a remarkable range of guests speaking in Chapel, from the present



The Revd Dr John Davies

Archbishop of Canterbury and his immediate predecessor to Desmond Tutu and David Hare. And the Chapel Choir now routinely achieves exceptionally high standards, as evidenced in the two CDs already

released, and a third due for release later this year. Details of John's next appointment are not yet public, but, wherever he goes, he will carry the gratitude and good wishes of all sections of the Keble community.

There will be a party after dinner and Old Members are very welcome both at the Chapel service (at 5.30 p.m.) and at the party (dinner can be provided in Hall for those who wish—please contact the Development Office to book in).