



Worcester
College
Record
2008

featuring the Orchestra playing Bach's D minor Double Violin Concerto and pieces by Bartok alongside a selection of works sung by the Chorus, while Hilary ended with the Provost's Concert, belatedly in celebration of his birthday, featuring Finzi's Introit and a Birthday Ode by Purcell, amongst other works. Meanwhile, the culminating project of Trinity was the Society's production of Handel's pastoral opera *Acis and Galatea* on the Nuffield Lawn, which builds on the success of the opera given last summer. In addition to their regular services, the college choir travelled outside of Oxford, giving Christmas concerts in Buxton, at the invitation of the Buxton Choral Society, and in Poole, at The Lighthouse. The choir also spent ninth week recording a CD of sacred music by living British composers in Keble College Chapel. The Worcester Fragments, an all-male early music group led by David Kennerley, gave a very successful concert of sixteenth-century English and French motets and madrigals at the parish church of Kintbury, where they have been invited for the second year running.

The cultural zenith of the year was reached, with considerable help from our indefatigable Arts Rep, Jo Hunter, in the form of a new and improved Arts Week. There was salsa dancing, a cappella and hot chocolate in the cloisters and silent films in the bar. We were also graced with a raucous farce in the College Chapel, *Donkeys' Years* by Michael Frayn, the first of two major theatrical offerings from Toby Pitts Tucker this year. The other, *The Tempest*, disturbed Nuffield lawn from its verdant serenity and transformed it into Prospero's Island, pregnant with menace and darkness, in a spectacular promenade performance that was both risky and exciting. I am sure there were some who were sceptical that a show where the audience would have to walk around would actually work, but the nature of Shakespeare's play leant itself perfectly to the form. The stunning image of the aged protagonist standing in the middle of a circle of fire torches as the darkness descended on the gardens and he delivered his final speech, is one that will live long in the memory.

An account of all the JCR's efforts this year wouldn't be complete without mentioning the Commemoration Ball and its Committee, led ably by Nick Waddell. Their endless hours of hard work produced a dazzling night of entertainment and we all owe them a huge debt of gratitude for their selfless commitment.

On a personal note, it has been an honour to be President of the JCR for this academic year and I owe a huge amount of thanks to the MCR, the SCR and all College staff. They have been there every step of the way to offer advice and guidance. Of course, the Provost himself has been a constant source of erudition, good humour and support and the College is certainly far healthier for his continuing efforts. I pass on the baton with

both joy and sadness to my successor, David Barclay, whose admirable qualities and affable nature should ensure the fate of the JCR is in good hands for the following year.

At a time when Worcester is experiencing a great deal of change, with the opening of the new staircase 224 and the redevelopment of the 'goldfish bowl' just two recent examples, the spirit and ethos of the College remains the same as it always has: as 'everything changes, nothing is extinguished'.

Maanas Jain
JCR President 2007/8

MCR REPORT

A large intake of wonderfully friendly graduate students and a fabulously hardworking committee have made 2007/8 a lively and successful year for the MCR at Worcester. Since that is the period for which the MCR Committee is elected, this report will cover the year from Trinity Term 2007 to Hilary Term 2008, which was the extent of my very happy year as President.

Commencing in Trinity Term, the new committee was able to oversee the arrival of new furniture and fittings for the MCR which were the fruit of careful planning and lengthy negotiations by the previous committee. Our thanks go to my predecessor Tom Marshall and his colleagues for their hard work in this area. Installing the new sofas and rugs, we took the opportunity to rearrange the common room somewhat, turning the upstairs lounge into a TV room and expanding sitting and standing space in the bar downstairs, as well as making changes to the bar itself. The new furniture and layout proved extremely popular and are probably partly responsible for our members' increased use of the MCR facilities this year. Much remains to be done, and the 2008/9 committee has already begun making the MCR an even more welcoming space.

It has certainly been a year of great activity in the MCR community, with high levels of participation in numerous events that included both old favourites and new additions. Trinity Term 2007 brought the annual test of every new MCR committee, the Garden Party. Thanks to an almost supernatural improvement in the weather – our kind host, the Provost, evidently has useful contacts of a standing far loftier than the upper echelons of Oxford – the afternoon was beautiful. As a result, a huge number of guests enjoyed the customary champagne, Pimm's and strawberries to the full, as well as croquet, boules and music from the

Magdalen Swing Band and Out of the Blue¹. In the same term we also enjoyed a BBQ in the Fellows' Garden, which was enjoyed by all in spite of the MCR President's un-Australian display of barbecuing ineptitude. Over the summer, our numbers began to dwindle but research students continued to slave in their libraries and laboratories. In an effort to promote life beyond the thesis, the MCR committee organised the occasional pub night and even offered a punting subsidy to members who chose to tempt fate and take to the rivers; this offer was taken up by only a few lucky punters before the arrival of Noah's Flood in July.

At the beginning of the new academic year, the committee aimed to welcome our new members to Worcester as soon and as warmly as possible. To this end, informal drinks evenings were held to welcome early arrivals in the week before 0th. Then, following the usual welcome brunch, Dan and Dan-el, the MCR's most social Social Secretaries in recent memory, let fly with a veritable whirlwind of parties and events. The timetable for Freshers' Week itself included everything from bowling and ice-skating to clubbing, a quiz night and a College Parents' Dinner replete with a cappella interruption. It was as lively as it was exhausting, and proved emblematic of the show that was to be put on by 'the two Dans' throughout their tenure.

The warm atmosphere – and large numbers – that dominated those events was a testament to the enthusiastic and sociable group of graduates that had joined us. Their enthusiasm continued as Michaelmas Term went on, leading to the first completely sold out Graduate Dining Club on record, with wine supplied by the MCR. Our long-suffering Hall Manager eventually recovered, as did our long-suffering MCR budget, under the hawk-like eye of treasurer Andrew Valentine. Attendance at events remained high throughout the year, even as various additions were made to the usual calendar. A weekly bar night was re-introduced with great success, partly thanks to the two-person roster introduced to help the social secretaries, but mostly thanks to the tunes on Dan-el's ipod. The customary bop in the College bar following MCR guest dinners was revised to include live jazz and a comedy night, while a band night and an open mic night, both held in conjunction with the JCR, were hugely popular. Subsidised pizza and wine helped make the weekly DVD evenings more of a fixture, and Hilary Term brought the second ever MCR Parents/Family Dinner, with a drinks reception kindly hosted by the Provost. The year was filled out with more cocktail nights, College bar tours, exchange dinners, graduate dining nights and curries than you could swing a duck at. It was

¹ The President modestly omits to mention that he is himself a member of this prize-winning a cappella group. (Ed.)

a pleasure to watch as this year's MCR group became one of the most close-knit in Oxford.

Administratively, the MCR took a number of positive steps this year. Worcester was represented in various university-wide forums, from training workshops and MCR Presidents' meetings convened by OUSU to the termly Proctors' and Assessor's meeting. Within College, the MCR broadened its associate membership requirements to include all fourth-year (research) undergraduate students. This proved a popular offer and we were pleased to welcome quite a number of fourth-years to various MCR events – not least, our cocktail parties and Tuesday bar nights! Several of our graduate members approached me with concerns about their accommodation, which were raised and resolved within the College's Joint Committee system; I am grateful to my successor Kit Senior for continuing this work in Trinity Term. For the first time, MCR 'stash' was ordered and, thanks to the secretarial skills of Sarah Cochrane, by the end of Hilary Term many MCR members could be seen happily modelling our very own hoodies, polo shirts and fleeces all over Oxford. Finally, the MCR Constitution was revised in some detail and the new document was ratified both by the College's Governing Body and by our members at the Annual General Meeting. Thanks to the hard work of Jim Whitehead and Sarah Cochrane, our constitution now represents much more closely the manner in which the MCR and its committee presently function.

Returning to more entertaining matters, our members this year have excelled themselves in – and on – a huge variety of fields. Leading from the front, our sports rep James 'Batman' Batstone played rugby league for Oxford and scored two tries as winger in the victorious Varsity team. Claudio Consul played Blues golf, winning both his matches in the team's nail-biting 8-7 defeat of Cambridge. Tim Squires and Dave Robinson both represented the university in football, while Tim joined Charlie Radcliffe in the juggernaut Worcester JCR side during its victorious Cuppers and league campaigns. Lucia Gibson competed in the Blues cross-country match, which was won by Oxford, and Vic Crawford played lacrosse for Oxford and was also a member of the Scotland squad. James Imber competed in the men's gymnastics Varsity team which defeated Cambridge in February. The MCR's own sports teams also had a strong year. Our football side, ably skippered by Chris McCabe, narrowly missed out on promotion in the league and were unlucky to be knocked out of Cuppers in the finals. And in Trinity Term 2007, the Worcester MCR followed the lead of numerous English counties and put an Australian in charge of its cricket team. Rob Lee led the graduates to victory over New College, which was followed by a match against the SCR in which the highlight was apparently the sandwiches. Meanwhile, a joint MCR-JCR

Ultimate Frisbee team won the Cuppers Plate Final and the Worcester MCR was also well represented in the often-overlooked sports of canoe polo and bridge (yes, bridge!), finishing runners-up in both of these fiercely fought Cuppers competitions.

It wasn't just with their boots and their paddles that the Worcester graduates excelled this year: when the dust settled on their extra-curricular pursuits, our members set about pushing back the boundaries of knowledge with equal vigour. Jim Whitehead even took enough time out from rowing in the college's first eight to publish a highly successful book on World of Warcraft programming. Sarah Pennant was awarded the Hobson Man Award for Clinical Excellence, and Olivia Murphy organised a two-day conference on Romanticism and War as part of 'Romantic Realignments 2007'. Dan-el Padilla Peralta, one half of our dynamic social secretariat, apparently hasn't let his studies slip because Stanford University have offered him a graduate scholarship to pursue a PhD, which has lured him back across the pond for next year. The hugely varied academic talents of MCR members were showcased in the Franks Society lectures, a great tradition that continued in 2007/8 under the warm and wise chairmanship of Luuk Huitink. Talks were delivered by Gregory Martin, Hermann Swart, Cindy Naumann, Henry Mead, Jason Mander and myself, on topics ranging from the music of Grieg to the science of consciousness, to ancient Rome and its children. These informal seminars represent a rare opportunity to see MCR colleagues talk at length about the subjects that make them tick, and there was a wealth of knowledge and rhetorical skill on display.

The great ship of the Worcester MCR and its nearly 200 passengers was crewed this year by a large and able team of volunteers who were always at hand to ensure she sailed smoothly. I was hugely fortunate to be joined on the committee by Sarah Cochrane as secretary, Andrew Valentine as treasurer, Dan Eziefula and Dan-el Padilla Peralta as social secretaries, Cristina Psomadakis as welfare representative, James Batstone as sports representative and Kjell Konis as IT officer. As the year went on, we were sad to bid farewell to Kjell after his many years of service to the MCR, but were joined by Rachel Friend and Chris Sugden as environment representatives and Helen Ward as OUSU representative. These superb people never shirked a single rostered responsibility and even made committee meetings enjoyable; it is their hard work that is largely responsible for the success we have enjoyed in the MCR this year, and so I offer each of them my heartfelt thanks on behalf of all our members.

Something that sets Worcester apart as a large College is its unusually strong sense of community, which is a quality that the highly international graduate body appreciates perhaps more than anyone else. I would like to

thank all those people within the College, from the porters to the gardeners to our fellow Worcesterians in the JCR, who have made that feeling a reality this year. In the members of my committee and of the MCR at large, I could not have asked for a more pleasant group of people to work with. Likewise the College staff, whom I have found happy to hear about the concerns and activities of graduate students. I would particularly like to thank the Provost and Dr Bradshaw, the Tutor for Graduates, as well as Cath Fraser who has made the position of Graduate Officer truly supportive and indispensable. Many MCR events rely heavily on the College's tireless catering staff and so we also owe very warm thanks to Stuart, Marion, Tony, Derek and the whole team.

Finally, it is my pleasure to wish the incoming committee, led by Kit Senior, all the very best for the coming year. I am sure that the insights Kit has gained from studying systems biology will prove invaluable for understanding all the intricate ecosystems and peculiar, organic hierarchies that make up an Oxford college. He is very well supported by a willing committee, as I was, and so I trust that Kit will enjoy getting to know this complex beast just as much as I have! And to all my fellow MCR members, especially those departing Oxford for the real world: remember your time at Worcester and treasure the friends you have made here. We share something special.

Jonathan Webb
MCR President 2007/8