


Y in the Meadow

A new sculpture to mark the 550th Anniversary of the College

At Willow Meadow provides the setting for an impressive new art work by Mark Wallinger (right) that was commissioned to celebrate the College's 550th Anniversary. Two years in development, the sculpture Y was unveiled on St. Mary Magdalen's Day, 22nd July 2008. The artist says of his work: "The bifurcating forks or tines of Y are like the branches of the College's ancestral tree or the antlers of the College deer. The repeated figure references divining rods, typically cut from the trees found in Bat Willow Meadow, and the structure echoes the Gothic tracery which is present within the architecture of the College".



Mark Wallinger is best known for *Ecce Homo*, his life-sized sculpture of Jesus Christ that inaugurated the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square in 1999, and *State Britain*, his re-creation of Brian Haw's protest display outside parliament, which won the Turner Prize in 2007.

The commission has been supported by Arts Council England and the Henry Moore Foundation, with the generous assistance of Magalen member Roger Kay (1977) and his wife Izabella. 



Photograph: Sam Frost; Artist photograph: Marilyn Bowler

Coming soon – a new History of Magdalen College

And a special offer for members of Magdalen

The most important book to emerge from Magdalen College's flourishing publishing programme is a new history of the College, edited by Magdalen's senior historian, Laurence Brockliss. After many years' work, he and his team of Magdalen authors—including Emily Cockayne, Matthew d'Ancona, Robin Darwall-Smith, Christine Ferdinand, Gerald Harriss, Andrew Hegarty, Julian Lock, David Skinner, and Lucy Wooding—have produced a meticulously researched and very readable account of Magdalen College from its foundation in 1458 to the early twenty-first century.

Magdalen has a long, complicated, and fascinating

history, and it is fair to say that this is the first time that history has been comprehensively related. Brockliss' book is a big improvement on the only other history of the College ever written, H.A. Wilson's *Magdalen College*, published in 1899, and reprinted in 1998 when there was no obvious successor. The differences are immediately evident: the new history has more than three times the text of the nineteenth-century volume, and many more



President Routh

Photograph: John Gibbons Studios

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The President's Garden

Heather Clary describes the art and joy of creating a new garden at Magdalen

One of the things that makes Magdalen such a special place is its grounds and gardens. As a keen gardener I am always eager to get my hands dirty so I was fortunate that the President's Garden had potential for improvement, having been cleared of a number of old conifers just before we arrived three years ago. Working with the Head Gardener, Claire Shepherd, and her team, I have had a most enjoyable time creating and maintaining a newly planted garden.

The earliest references to a President's Garden occur on Ralph Agas' map (c.1578). This shows an extensive Garden that included orchards and a fish pond lying to the north of the Lodgings, reaching across what is now New Building and into the Grove deer park. Records suggest that this garden was well used by the first married President of the College, Laurence Humphrey (1561-1589), his wife and their 12 offspring. When construction of the New Building began in 1733 the President's Garden was lost and for the next 90 years, no records of a President's Garden exist.

In the 1820s, President Routh took advantage of the demolition of most of Magdalen Hall to include a large part of the site in the creation of a new President's Garden. Ordnance survey maps of 1880 show that it covered most of what is now St Swithun's Quad. Here was situated a very large walled vegetable garden, a vinery and three other glasshouses, as well as numerous flower beds intersected by winding paths. It was during President Bulley's time in the 1880s that the garden was reduced to the size it is today to allow for the building of St. Swithun's Quad.

My challenge in creating a new garden was to keep the stage used by the College's theatrical group *The Magdalen Players* without its imposing on the garden for the rest of the year. As many gardeners before me, I have been inspired by Gertrude Jekyll both in her use of shape and form, and



Photograph: The Great Tower seen from the President's Garden. R. Fenton (mid-19th century)



Photograph: The Great Tower seen from the President's Garden, July 2008. Heather Clary

particularly in her use of colour. I wanted there to be a lot of scent, places to sit and generally a softer shape to what was essentially a rectangle of grass.

With the assistance of the Magdalen garden team and equipped with ropes, cans of spray paint and spades, we marked out and re-shaped the borders, created new flower beds and began the first set of new

planting in 2006 of shrubs, bulbs, herbaceous plants and roses. Many of the roses which are now flourishing have names which relate to the College such as *Falstaff* (Fastolf), *Gallica officinalis* (the red rose of Lancaster), *Alba Maxima* (the white rose of York), *Mary Magdalene* (with the Cambridge spelling) and

Winchester Cathedral, the closest link in the world of roses to the College's founder, William Waynflete. The garden would not be complete without the flower most associated with Magdalen, the *Lilium longiflorum*. Not only are lilies represented on a rose arbour specially commissioned for the Garden, but the real plants are now growing successfully in pots having so far escaped the ravages of the larvae of the dreaded scarlet lily beetle.

I wanted the garden to be especially attractive at the beginning of summer and also in the early autumn to coincide with Gaudies, performances of plays and garden parties. This seems to have worked well, so that this year's staging of Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* not only had a highly scented, mauve backdrop of *Wisteria sinensis* in its prime but the footlights were complemented by the first flowering of the yellow iris *Golden Planet*.

Thanks to Claire Shepherd and her team, the garden is beginning to mature. The odd straying frisbee flying over the wall (often followed by an undergraduate who thinks he or she has not been spotted) has fortunately failed to have the same damaging impact as the fox that slept on the *euphorbia* for several nights this spring or the birds that decided to remove all the buds from the *dianthus*.

This year the smaller walled section of the President's Garden will be redesigned. I look forward to inviting you to see the results in the years to come. **Heather Clary**

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illustrations, including hundreds in black-and-white and dozens in colour, as well as maps and graphs. Wilson's book stopped with the new statutes in 1857; more than half of Brockliss' is devoted to the period 1860-2005, so it will include the very first account of the College's recent past. Magdalen's extensive archives and numerous other sources have been mined for accurate informa-

tion on the College's finances, the changing character of its membership, its political fortunes and misfortunes, the development of Magdalen music, and the growth of an important academic library. The main narrative is supported by a glossary, appendices, and a detailed index.

The College is enthusiastically committed to the project, and wants to make

it widely accessible, especially to members past and present. Therefore Magdalen has subsidized a discounted, pre-publication price for members only.

Until 15th September members can order copies of the book at a special 50% discounted pre-publication price of £45. Email: marilyn.evans@magd.ox.ac.uk or tel: +44 (0) 1865 276052



Photograph: Tom Wild



A Wilde Affair at Magdalen

This year, the Magdalen Players' traditional summer garden show was Oscar Wilde's glitzy, scandal-filled classic, *An Ideal Husband*. In the beautiful surroundings of the President's Garden (and with considerable help from probably the best week of weather ever recorded in May), the Irish playwright's tale of what-goes-around-comes-around was received enthusiastically by night after night of sell-out audiences. The play's humour is memorably droll, and Wilde is at his epigrammatic best in the exchanges between devil-may-care socialite Lord Goring and his weary butler Phipps:

Lord Goring [taking out old buttonhole]:

You see, Phipps, fashion is what one wears oneself. What is unfashionable is what other people wear.

Phipps: Yes, my lord.

[...]

Lord Goring: Other people are quite dreadful. The only possible society is oneself.

Phipps: Yes, my lord.


Lord Goring: To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance, Phipps.

Phipps: Yes, my lord.

These one-liners, though, are balanced by serious drama, as rising political star Robert Chiltern comes close to losing his marriage over a revealed secret from the past. Wilde was a student at Magdalen during the 1870s, so the play seemed especially suited to commemorate the 550th anniversary of the College. For the same reason, a black-tie gala performance was held on the last night of the run, which included champagne, canapés and a speech by Wilde's great-grandson and Magdalen alumnus, Lucien Holland (1997). No one wants to say it was a work of ideal husbandry – but, then again, it probably was.

Clare Bucknell (2007), Producer 



The 550th Anniversary Garden Party on Saturday 28th June was attended by over 2,600 fellows, students, members and their guests. New Building's Lawn provided the perfect venue for a giant tea party where friends and families relaxed and chatted in the summer sunshine. Jugglers and clowns delighted a large audience of children and their parents on St Swithun's Lawn. The programme also included chauffeured punts, tower climbs, organ recitals and an exhibition of the College's treasures, including the original Foundation Charter of the College. As the afternoon drew to a close, the choir sang in Cloisters and at 6.00 pm the bells of the Great Tower chimed out a joyful Quarter Peel to mark the conclusion of a highly successful and very memorable Anniversary Garden Party. 

Photographs: Banu Ahtam and Donald Whitte



Great Apes and Religion: Anthropologists Tackle the Big Questions



Robin Dunbar (right) and Harvey Whitehouse.
Photograph: Tom Wild

Let it not be said that anthropology is a narrow discipline, as some anthropologists examine Neanderthal crania whilst others examine contemporary media. Within this broad discipline, some aim at a better understanding of the particularities of place, culture, and history. Others aim at addressing questions about human uniqueness in the animal world and the commonalities human beings in all cultures may share as a result of our evolutionary heritage.

At the Waynflete Symposium on Anthropology on 3rd May, the third Symposium held at Magdalen to celebrate the College's 550th Anniversary, the focus was certainly on the big questions. After an enthusiastic introduction from Dr Clare Harris, Magdalen Tutorial Fellow in Anthropology, a full auditorium of students, fellows, alumni, and guests, including Sir David Attenborough, was treated to a pair of outstanding presentations on ambitious topics by two of Magdalen's newest Professorial Fellows, Robin Dunbar and Harvey Whitehouse.

Professor Dunbar's lecture, entitled *'Why humans are not just great apes'*, addressed the enduring question of human uniqueness. Professor Dunbar called attention to the common heritage that human beings share with other great apes but also argued that humans alone, through religion and storytelling, participate in a virtual life of the mind. His lecture focused on why and how such a virtual life of the mind has evolved.

Regarding *why*, Professor Dunbar considered the problem of cooperation within communities. What allows primates to live together without disintegrating under the pressure of 'free-riders', group members who enjoy the benefits of group membership

without paying the costs? For most primates, the problem of cooperation is solved through social grooming, which has been shown to stimulate the flow of endorphins, chemicals which create a sense of well-being and camaraderie. Humans, however, live in much larger groups. For grooming to solve the problem of cooperation in humans, we should have to spend well over half of our waking hours grooming one another.

How, then, do human beings solve the problem of cooperation? Professor Dunbar argued that, through the development of language and 'theory-of-mind' (a term from developmental psychology referring to the capacity to think about the mental states of others), human beings use humour, communal religious ritual and storytelling to stimulate the release of endorphins and bring about bonding within human groups. Our uniqueness then lies in our stories, rituals, and jokes, which exist in order to bind us together in cooperative groups when social grooming is no longer enough.

Professor Whitehouse's lecture, entitled *'Explaining Religion'*, addressed the long-standing question why human beings practise religion. His lecture outlined how the 'Explaining Religion' or EXREL project, a three-year international research effort involving 14 universities and funded by the European Commission, will attempt to solve this puzzle.

While many scholars, including such giants as Marx, Freud, Durkheim, and Tylor, have attempted to explain the existence of religion, Professor Whitehouse argued that all suffered from the problem of attempting to boil religion down to one monolithic process and that all such 'magic bullet' explanations, when rendered precise and testable, have failed. Professor Whitehouse outlined how the EXREL project will carve a new path forward in the explanation of religion by abandoning magic-bullet explanations, fractionating religion into specific patterns of thought and behaviour (including beliefs in supernatural agents,

creationism, and the afterlife), and utilizing the cognitive sciences in order to explain these patterns. For example, rather than explaining creationism through individuals' exposure to explicit stories such as the Genesis myth, Professor Whitehouse argued that findings from developmental psychology lead us to conclude that humans are intuitive creationists and that this explains why so many stories like Genesis exist in the first place.

While he described how current findings can offer tentative explanations for many of the specific patterns, Professor Whitehouse also noted how the EXREL project will attempt to explain how socio-cultural environments can result in the emphasis of different patterns. For example, creationist discourses are relatively rare in some traditions, such as many Afro-Brazilian possession cults, but very prominent in others, including many branches of American Christianity. Furthermore, Professor Whitehouse outlined how the EXREL project will attempt to predict the future dynamics of religious traditions around the world, based on knowledge of both the psychological mechanisms and socio-cultural environments involved.

These two presentations by eminent scholars on challenging subjects not only thrilled the audience and stimulated a spirited question-and-answer session, but also showed that addressing anthropology's big questions is alive and well at Magdalen as it celebrates its 550th year.

Jonathan Lanman
DPhil Student in Anthropology



Sir David Attenborough and The President. Photograph: Tom Wild



An Interview with Oliver Taplin, Professor of Classics

On a June afternoon at the end of Trinity Term 2008, Classics and English finalist Rachel Lesser caught up with tutor Professor Taplin in his office in the New Building. On the eve of his retirement they discussed his 40 years as a fellow at Magdalen College and his plans for the future.



Oliver Taplin, 1968
Senior Common Room Photo Album.

Q *When did you come to Magdalen, and in what capacity?*

The 14th February 1968 was the day I was sworn in. I came first as a Research Fellow. I had a year away in America and a year in Bristol, before I started my Tutorial Fellowship in October 1973. So I have been teaching for 35 years.

Q *What are the most significant changes you have observed at Magdalen and Oxford generally during your time here?*

In the University as a whole one of the most positive and obvious changes has been the huge increase in the proportion of women – it used to be a predominantly male outfit, which tolerated women on the edge. Having women in the College – it must be getting on now for 50% – has changed the whole feel of the place. It has changed its intellectual nature just as much as it has changed its social nature.

Q *How has it changed its intellectual nature?*

There's less complacency, there's less competitiveness for its own sake, and there's a better, rounded intellectual sense in the place, to put it very crudely. A second, more academic shift, has been the increasing importance of what you might call inter-disciplinarity. I've always been interested in other literatures beside classical literature, and I've always been interested in theatre. More recently I've been able to incorporate performance and theatre studies much more in my interests than I used to be able to. And what we very roughly call 'Reception', instead of being a kind of marginal hobby, is now a significant part of the way we do things. People used to be pretty territorial: 'This is my subject, you keep out of it' used to be the attitude. 'And you, that's your subject, I won't try and interfere in that.' But now there's much more 'Well, how do our subjects interact? What have they got to offer to each other?' There's more tolerance.

Q *What have been your favourite aspects of being a don at Magdalen, and why have you chosen to stay here for your career?*

A leading advantage of being here has been my independence: I have no boss, I have no big-cheese professor whom I have to please. I'm not within a hierarchy; I have a very considerable autonomy. Also we do have

very, very good students here. It is a job that is dominated by undergraduate teaching, and the fact that the huge majority of the undergraduates are really bright and really well motivated is very important. Then this is a fantastic environment. Out of those 35 years, I've probably been here [in the New Building] for 25 of them, with Addison's Walk literally right outside my door, and all the greenery right outside my window. When I visit other universities, I cannot help contrasting their pokey little offices, with horrible views out of their windows, car parks or whatever. That is a very significant consideration.

Q *Have you had any run-ins with the herd of deer outside your window here?*

I do remember a time not very long ago when they were over on the other side of the river [in the water meadow], and it had rained heavily for two or three days, but people hadn't foreseen that it was going to flood. The staff came in one morning and the deer were in there up to their necks. It was at the time when we were having a terrible trouble in the press, because Gordon Brown had attacked us. And I suddenly saw in my mind, this horrible headline,

**'Dead Deer Float Past
the Houses of Parliament'** [laughs].

In fact, the garden staff – I came in at 8 o'clock in the morning and I saw this – managed to rescue every single one of them and get them back across the river.

Q *Who is the most interesting person you've encountered passing through Magdalen?*

I think I'd have to say Seamus Heaney. Magdalen was his base when he was Professor of Poetry. I used to go to all of his lectures, because he did just brilliant lectures. And we used to have drinks in the Eastgate Hotel afterwards, and that kind of thing. We've stayed in touch ever since. I see him in Dublin now and then, or he comes to Oxford. So he's remained a friend ever since he was here visiting. He's probably the most fascinating and charismatic person to have passed through.

Q *How have you most left your mark at Magdalen?*

I think what I would like to say I've managed

is to make Classics and related subjects of high standing in the college. It's not a dying subject, it's not a marginal subject, and it's not a subject that's only for public-school boys.

Q *What are your plans for this next period of your life?*

To some extent I will carry on doing what I do, thinking and writing about ancient Greek literature and about its reception in modern times, particularly its interaction with the theatre. I am thinking that I may write a book on 'Tragedy' or on 'Going to the theatre.'

I am very interested in the practice as well as the theory of translation. I really want to get down to doing my own translations, particularly of drama, and then it would be very important for me to try and get those translations performed. I am also thinking, for example, of doing an anthology of Greek poetry, the poetry of love and death. We'll just have to wait and see if I'll turn into a significant translator or not. I would actually like people to think of me maybe as they think of Richmond Lattimore, or Gilbert Murray, but we'll have to see.

Q *Well, I'll be looking for your translations in the bookstores.*

In five years time we should know.

Q *Do you have any insights to share with Magdalen students, fellows, or alumni?*

I do think that freedom is important, both for dons and for students, and I think that over-monitoring is a danger, saying that everything should fit a pattern, and saying that all the boxes should be ticked. That kind of a bureaucratic authoritarian perspective may be efficient, but it stifles individuality, it stifles adventurousness, it stifles thinking outside the box. So I hope that this place will be able to stay independent enough of outside monitoring to give people the elbow room and the air to be able to think laterally, to be able to be daring, to take some risks. And I think this College is quite good at saying 'we do the basic essentials well, and then we do something different as well, we do something that is more interesting, more unusual. We encourage the individual, we encourage the variety, and we don't expect people to conform.' I think that's good and I hope it will stay like that.



HOLD HER UP – HARD!!

Dominique Jackson looks back on an eventful year for MCWBC

As I hacked my way through the shoulder-high nettles and brambles along the Isis, armed with only a bicycle pump and a mobile phone, I asked myself how it was exactly that I had got myself into this predicament?

I cast my mind back to the sunny Saturday of Eights Week the previous May. Back on the crowded terrace of Magdalen Boat House, banner fluttering overhead, large Pimms in hand, I was wallowing in nostalgia for my own long-gone rowing days. I fell to chatting with MCWBC Captain Lauren Adair (2005), a fellow Linguist, and when asked, I offered my services – just to help with recruiting and perhaps a little coaching.

Yet here I was, six months on, edging along the boggy banks of the Isis at 6.45 a.m. on a damp November morning, shouting "Can you hear me, Magdalen? Think I'm nearly there!" A stiff breeze, implacable current and keen but novice crew, many of them on their first water outing, had combined to push the eight into the far bank, just below the Gut.

When I reached them, I saw immediately why no amount of backing down had manoeuvred the boat free. The bows were wedged firmly at a 15 degree angle in the branches of a large willow. With the problem identified, a combination of tapping and backing down soon had the boat reversing into the undergrowth and out into the stream.

Thankfully, there was no damage done, to the boat or to the rowers, although egos were bruised as passing crews contributed much perceptive advice: "Magdalen! You're not allowed to park up there!" Our distinctive lily blades can sometimes be a disadvantage.

Nevertheless, all but one of the 'tree crew' continued to row. Thanks to brilliant organization and coaching by Captain Chloë Strevens (2006), Vice Captains Sarah McCraw (2006) and Caroline Dixon (2006), assisted by James Solly (2004), we had a 35-strong squad ready to uphold MCBC honour at the Christchurch Regatta.

Sadly it was not to be: inclement weather led to its cancellation. However, a week earlier, two MCWBC crews put in a creditable performance and gained

valuable racing experience at Nephthys Regatta.

More bad weather blighted Hilary preparations with the Isis often closed and training restricted to the less picturesque surroundings of the gym. Our indefatigable coach Nic Thomas put the first VIII through their paces at Radley while Matthew Werley (2004) supervised as much water time as the seconds managed on the Isis.

Keenly aware of the 2007 anti-climax, when Torpids was cancelled outright, we watched weather forecasts and river levels anxiously. We were not disappointed. All those hours in the gym clearly paid off with both MCWBC crews bumping on each day to win Blades.

Buoyed by Bumps success, and encouraged by the Men, whose 1st VIII took the Headship in Torpids for the first time since 1937, MCBC started Trinity in fine form, with places in both crews keenly contested on long outings and in gym sessions.

In this, the 150th anniversary year of the Boat Club, it is heartening to see that MCBC traditions and friendships remain so vibrant. The 2nd VIII were thrilled when Dr Sandy Cavenagh (1948)

came all the way from his Brecon home to give us a pep talk at our last water outing ahead of Eights.

Sandy suggested that, although so much about competitive rowing had changed, certainly since his father, J. B. C. Cavenagh (1909), rowed at bow in the Magdalen 1st VIII in 1912 – the essential business of rowing for your College remains unchanged. Today's crews have to manage the same tensions, nerves and pressures as any Magdalen oarsmen would have felt, from no matter which era. Charles Cozens, a former MCBC captain of a later generation (1979), also gave up much valuable time to oversee W1 at Radley.

Whether it is the weather, the Pimms or approaching Long Vacation, it can seem all too easy to fall into a false sense of

security ahead of Eights. Both crews were justifiably confident and, when W2 narrowly failed to catch Regents Park on the first day, obliging them to row all the way over, I felt very guilty that I hadn't prepared them for this exhausting eventuality.

Yet, they were undaunted – they had done it once and could do it again. They went on to bump twice and were rather disappointed that their final bump was within 30 strokes, robbing them of a more challenging race. The 1st VIII, up among tough competition in the First Division, rowed over three times but bravely bumped Merton on the Friday, taking MCWBC to their highest ever position on the river.

More recently, six stalwarts joined a bunch of the boys on a charity row to London (see next page). Boat Club veterans Susannah Belcher (2001) and Kelly Perkins (1999), the latter 'on loan' from her Fellow's duties at Worcester, joined Alice Brennan



From left to right: Leila Gaafar (cox), Ben Harrop-Griffiths, Joe Abdalla, Henry Northern, Kizzie Fenner, Mark Haden, Susannah Belcher, Brett Tully, Alice Brennan. Photograph: Peter Nordberg

(2006) and Kizzie Fenner (2006) in the galley while Reesha Sodha (2005) and Leila Gaafar (2007) took turns in the cox seat.

Next year, 2009, marks the 30th anniversary of women's rowing at Magdalen. Plans are afoot for special events, celebrations and possibly even some rowing. Suggestions, particularly from old MCWBC members, will be welcomed by new women's Captain Hannah Caldwell (2007), and her deputy, Philippa Balestrieri (2007). We are always grateful for any encouragement, but special thanks must go this year to Senior Treasurer Mark Blandford-Baker and to the President and Mrs Clary for their unstinting, and often very vocal, support.

Floreat Magdalena!



Magdalen Rowers take on Isis to Westminster challenge for Charity

Photograph: Susannah Belcher

On August 3rd, a mixed MCBC crew completed a 190km row from the Isis to the Houses of Parliament, through 33 locks in 28 hours to raise more than £2,000 for CLIC Sargent, which supports children and young people with cancer. Finally at Westminster, the crew narrowly escaped being swamped just as the tide turned. The last leg back to Putney was consequently hard going but they made it back by lunchtime, aching, blistered but understandably exhilarated. The row was organized by outgoing and incoming MCBC Captains Mark Haden (2003) and Joe Abdalla (2007) as a gesture of support for boat club coaches Nic and Andy Thomas, whose infant son Morgan has been ill for several months and has been receiving treatment at Great Ormond Street Hospital. To find out more, please check out: www.justgiving.com/magdalenrowtoLondon.



Photograph: Monica Lee

Charity swim sets new British record

On 8th July Magdalen undergraduate Nicholas Berry (2004) joined two Oxford students Lennard Lee and Harry Fisher in a fundraising swim across the Straits of Gibraltar. Not only did they raise over £1,800 for the children's charity Variety Club, but the trio also set a new British record. Dealing with strong currents and dodging huge ships they crossed the Straits unaided in three hours and 38 minutes. The students faced even more adversity than usual, as they also had to contend with a pod of killer whales following them on the final stage of their swim. Duncan Goodhew, one of Britain's best-known Olympic athletes and a long-time supporter of the charity, acknowledged the extent of the students' success,

"This is an incredible achievement for them. To be able to swim 22 kilometres across open water in one of the most perilous stretches of sea in the world is a fantastic challenge in itself, let alone setting a new British record. The students displayed real drive in their training and were passionate about helping what is a truly worthy charity."

To find out more, please check out: www.justgiving.com/gibstraits.

Why Analyse Music?

The Waynflete Symposium on Music on 7th June was dedicated to exploring a fundamental (though hardly self-evident) question within the field of musicology: 'Why Analyse Music?' As a way of coming to grips with the experience of music, analysing music—the nuts-and-bolts approach to understanding musical structures—seems to demand a level of technical engagement far beyond the reach of most armchair listeners. Requiring technical jargon, access to an authoritative score and a historical grasp of how composers worked, music analysis has unfortunately come under fire for being either an hermetic discussion for specialists, or an ideological enterprise rooted in nineteenth-century German instrumental music.

Undergraduate tutorial teaching at its finest, however, thrives whenever students are equipped with a variety of analytical tools, and it is a testimony to the strengths of music education at Magdalen that this topic served to commemorate the College's 550th anniversary. Should anyone attending the Symposium have asked 'Well, why indeed analyse music?', the four speakers convincingly argued why it still matters as a meaningful form of engagement with musical experience.

Karol Berger (Stanford) opened the conference with a masterful discussion of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, one of the most over-analysed pieces of all time. In stark contrast with previous commentators (who typically focus on the opera's harmonic innovations), Berger meticulously demonstrated how Wagner recast Italian operatic conventions to lend structural cohesion to his drama.

Next up was Suzannah Clark (Merton), who immediately rephrased the Symposium's question as 'Why do I analyse music?' to introduce why she finds the music of Franz Schubert so challenging for traditional analytical methods. The overarching concern of Clark's work, in brief, is not to use analysis to understand Schubert anew, but to see how his music has overturned the prevailing theoretical commitments of analysts throughout the years.



Roderick Williams accompanied by Susie Allan
Photograph: Marilyn Bowler

Nowhere were the inadequacies of music analysis more transparently shown than in Professor Jonathan Cross' (Christ Church) analysis of the slow movement from 'Six Tempi for 10 instruments' (1957), written by the English composer Elisabeth Lutyens (1906-1983). Rather than using formal analysis to explain away every last detail of Lutyens's complex score, Cross (previously editor of the prestigious journal *music analysis*) suggested that even the most sophisticated analytical systems leave the sensual experience of listening unaccounted for.

Concluding the Symposium, Professor Laurence Dreyfus gave a lucid discussion of Gibbons' *In Nomine No.2* for viol quintet. Dreyfus' intimacy from performing this music (which over the years drew him into analysing the score) helped shed light on the tenacity with which Gibbons exhaustively pursued various compositional possibilities. Although only scratching the surface, Dreyfus provided a glimpse into the contrapuntal genius of Gibbons' mind.

In a fitting coda to the preceding talks, the day closed with a Lieder recital by the baritone Roderick Williams, who gave powerful readings of Schumann's *Liederkreis* and Brahms' *Vier ernste Gesänge*. In the end, Williams' commanding voice managed to seduce these structurally complex songs away from the trappings of intellectual abstraction and analysis, and back into the sensual realm of live performance.

Matthew Werley
Music post-graduate

Events for Members in 2008

Sat 6 September

Subject Gaudy: Modern Languages *
All Modern Linguists welcome

Sat 20 September

Anniversary Event: Waynflete Symposium on English Literature

Sat 20 September

Annual Alumni Dinner and Magdalen Society AGM *

Sat/Sun 20/21 September

University Reunion Weekend – for all Oxford alumni
See *Oxford Today* or www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk

Sat 27 September

Gaudy for Year Groups 1980–82. No guests *

Fri 3 October

Reception at the British Embassy in Washington DC, USA
All alumni welcome

Sat 1 November

Magdalen College Boat Club
150th Anniversary Dinner for Friends and Members of the MCBC and their guests *

Sat 22 November

Anniversary Event: Waynflete Symposium on Education, Faith and Citizenship

Hold the Date in 2009 . . .

Fri 30 January

New Year Dinner at the Oxford & Cambridge Club in London* All alumni welcome
Speaker: Dr Ralph Walker,
Vice-President of Magdalen College

Sat 18 April

Hacks' Dinner for members who are working in or retired from journalism and media

Invitations will be sent by post for events marked *.

All members and their guests are welcome at events unless marked otherwise.

If you would like to receive an invitation to the Anniversary Symposia please contact:

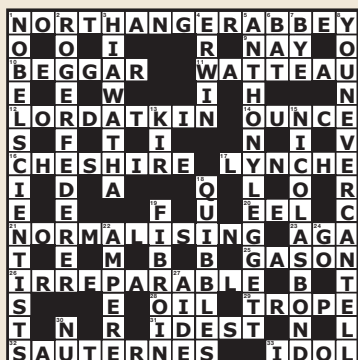
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SOLUTION The Floreat Crossword No. 3



Solution: No. 3 Timmy 2008

Congratulations to Kirsti Biggs (2007) who provided the first correct solution to the Floreat Crossword No.3.

The Floreat crossword will return in the next issue.



Gunboat Command: The Life of 'Hitch' – Lieutenant Commander Robert Hichens, DSO*, DSC** RNVR, (1909-1943).

By Antony Hichens. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Maritime, 2007. pp. xiv + 348. £25.00.

Emeritus Fellow Professor Richard Sheppard reviews the biography of Robert Hichens (1927), the most highly decorated RNVR officer in the Second World War.

Robert Hichens studied Law at Magdalen (1927) and like many of his undergraduate generation came from 'sturdy, solid, minor gentry'. His evolution from comfortably-off Cornish solicitor to acknowledged doyen of Coastal Forces and the most highly decorated RNVR (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve) officer of World War II was determined by nine factors: an intimacy with coastal waters acquired in small boats; a 'passion for fast cars' and their engines; a low-key patriotism that was fed by his love of the sea; a desire to 'avenge' the wrongs being perpetrated by the 'barbarian' Nazis; a concern to defend his family against 'Hitlerism'; a penchant for getting things done quickly, aggressively and flawlessly; an ability to command by firm example, with as little 'bawling-out' as possible; an independent-mindedness; and a will to overcome the fear of sudden death by 'daring the worst' and out-facing it (p. 266). The account consists of un-edited diary entries (1939-41), collateral material, extended passages from Robert's never-completed *We Fought Them in Gunboats* (1942-43, pub. 1944), and judicious commentary by the author, Robert's younger son (Magdalen 1956). For the non-specialist, the book is a gripping read, for Robert writes clearly and fluently, and combines vivid description with personal frank-

ness, compassion, analytical intelligence, excitement, sadness, outrage and even humour. For the historian, it has four great merits. First, it gives a stark account of the inaction of the Phoney War, when Robert served in mine-sweepers, and the chaos he encountered at Dunkirk. Secondly, it paints a highly unromantic picture of the boredom, discomfort and danger of life at sea in small MGBs. Thirdly, it charts Coastal Forces' three-year transformation from a poorly equipped, directionless side-show into a significant spearhead in the struggle for naval supremacy in home waters. Finally, it is deeply critical of the innate conservatism of the British naval hierarchy: their unwillingness to listen to and learn from those at the cutting edge. Robert, it seems, expended almost as much effort fighting the 'brass' as he did the Germans and the weather, and could do so with such effectiveness only because he was not a regular officer. All established hierarchies, whether military, educational or commercial, suffer from this systemic problem, especially in societies that are bedevilled by class. Which means that Antony Hichens' remarkable biography is also a timely parable of the human and material waste that occur when the arrogance of established power impedes rational and innovative thinking. ♥



Photograph: Dynamic Entertainment DEH

Film Update: Stephen Potts (1979) to write rowing sceney

In our last issue Stephen Potts discussed adapting Philip Pullman's Oxford-set novel *The Butterfly Tattoo* for the cinema. The film is to receive its world premiere in Holland in September, with screenings at subsequent festivals in New York and elsewhere.

Stephen is now working alongside producer colleagues Rik Visser and Jolies van Emburg on their next project. Another adaptation, it features centrally the sport most dear to Oxford hearts: rowing.

Bill Ives was awarded the degree of Doctor of Music from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, at Lambeth Palace on 1 July, in recognition of his significant contribution to church music, particularly as a composer and as Organist and Informator Choristarum at Magdalen College. In Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral on 17th May he also became a Fellow of the Royal School of Church Music 'in recognition of outstanding work as a liturgical composer and choral director'.



Photo: Bill Ives conducting the Summer Concert at Magdalen's 550th Anniversary Garden Party.



Photograph: Law Commission

Professor Elizabeth Cooke née Coppin (1980) has been appointed as Law Commissioner.

The Law Commission is an independent statutory body, formed in 1965 to keep the law of England and Wales under review and to recommend reform where needed. Professor Cooke will be responsible for property, family and trust-law projects. Her appointment runs for five years from 3rd July 2008.

Professor Cooke graduated from Magdalen with a first-class degree in Classics. She is Professor of Law at the University of Reading, also serving on the sub-law panel for the UK Universities' Research Assessment Exercise. From 2006 to 2008 she was Chair of the University of Reading Research Ethics Committee. She has recently chaired a research team funded by the Nuffield Foundation investigating community of property regimes. Her publications include *Land Law in 2006*, *The New Law of Land Registration, 2003*, and *The Modern Law of Estoppel in 2000*.

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