Welcome to the first issue of Floreat. This newsletter will be produced each term and we hope it will help to keep members and friends up to date on what is happening in College.

You may be alarmed to hear that the President of the College recently committed a murder and was shortly thereafter murdered himself. However, I do hope you will be equally relieved to hear that these heinous crimes did not occur in real life but in Lewis, the sequel to the TV series Inspector Morse, of which several scenes were filmed in the President's Lodgings and elsewhere around College. Photogenic Magdalen also appeared in two other popular films: Blue Blood, featuring two of our undergraduates, Charlie Ogilvie and Chris Kavanagh, striving for Varsity Boxing Blues, and The History Boys, Alan Bennett's story of northern grammar school boys applying to Oxbridge. In January 2007, a BBC2 film about the life of Tchaikovsky featured Magdalen undergraduate Alice Glover as the composer’s wife.

Our own, non-fictional, students did extremely well in examinations this year. Of those taking finals, 41% achieved First Class Honours Degrees—a College record. We were placed second in the 2007 Norrington Table of undergraduate rankings, just behind Merton College. Magdalen continues to move up the Norrington; in 2006 we were equal third, in 2005, we came fourth.

Academic excellence is our top priority at Magdalen, but we also take great pride in our students’ extra-curricular achievements. This year’s highlights must include the outstanding success of the Mens’ 1st VIII, who retained the Headship of the River for the fourth consecutive year – thus equalling the College record, set only once before, in 1895. The tension of watching our crew being hotly pursued by Pembroke each evening of Eights’ Week was extraordinary! Seven of the eight were new to the First Boat, making their achievement all the more impressive. Louis Rooney became the first Magdalen oarsman ever to row in the ‘Head of the River’ boat for four consecutive years. There were also many outstanding accomplishments in other sports. In athletics, we came second in Cuppers and there were superb performances for both the College and the University from our undergraduates, Frances Smithson and Martine Bomb. The College is also very proud that a Magdalen undergraduate, Luke Tryl, will be President of the Union for Michaelmas Term 2007.

“Exile” was the theme of a memorable Students’ Arts Week in May which culminated in a very entertaining presentation of Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard in a rather damp President’s Garden. There were several excellent music recitals in College and we were delighted to host some in the President’s Lodgings, including a superb violin recital from Venetia Jennings.

The College Choir has been in spectacular voice this year. An Anthem composed by our Informator Choristarum, Bill Ives, was sung in March at a Westminster Abbey Service marking the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, attended by the Queen, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

An architectural master-plan of our future needs for College buildings is currently being prepared. Highlights include a study centre with a new library, which will become our major construction project over the next few years. I look forward to letting you see further details of the proposals.

David Clary
Since its foundation in 1977, the Magdalen College Development Trust has played a central role in supporting the College. Mark Loveday is now Chairman of the Trust and took over from Antony Hichens at the Annual Meeting in November 2006. Antony worked tirelessly as Chairman of the Trust for seven years during a time in which Telethons, the Annual Fund, the Student Support Fund and Academic Fellowship Funds were all introduced very successfully. Roger Hutchins and Mary Ann Buckley, who worked in the Development Office and both recently retired, also played a very important role in these campaigns. We are extremely grateful to Antony, Roger and Mary Ann for all they have done for the College.

We now have a new team in the Development Office, with Marilyn Bowler (Alumni Relations), Hadrian Wise (Database Officer) and Sophie Young (Development Assistant) joining the Development Director, Liz Miller, and Saira Uppal (Annual Fund). I know they are all looking forward to meeting and communicating with as many members as possible in the years to come.

David Clary

Have you ever wondered what happens behind the high stone wall on the bounds of Magdalen along St. Cross Road? I recently had an extraordinary appointment with the tusk of an ancient woolly mammoth in the state-of-the-art laboratories which nestle behind the wall. Here, at the Oxford Conservation Consortium’s studio (OCC), ten Oxford Colleges are working together to conserve ancient books, documents and artefacts. The Centre is led by Director Jane Eagan, supported by a three-strong team.

Interest in the grounds of Magdalen as a Paleolithic site has recently been revived with the completed conservation of one of the College’s most venerable treasures, the impressively preserved remnant of the tusk of an adult mammoth, *Mammuthus primigenius*. At just over a metre long and 17 cm in diameter, it resembles a tree trunk with inner rings and a mottled, silver-birch-like surface. Until 1984 the tusk was thought to be around 10,000 years old, dating from the end of the last Ice Age. This year it has been reassessed and is now dated back to the second interglacial period, about 240,000 years ago.

The tusk was discovered in 1922 in the north-west corner of the Grove by a team of workmen who were clearing a drinking place for the deer. Unwittingly, they cut into the silty sands and gravels comprising the Summertown-Radley stage of the upper Thames Pleistocene succession. This silty deposit filled a channel cut by a relatively large and vigorous river, the proto-Cherwell, into a lower cold-climate gravel where the bones lay. Whilst excavating that gravel to spread on College paths, one keen-eyed labourer noticed that it appeared to contain pieces of ivory. The workers tested each fragment with a pickaxe and destroyed the first tusk. Days later, a second tusk was discovered ‘in situ’ and Robert Gunther, Magdalen’s Tutor in Natural Science (1894–1927), was alerted to the find. The tusk was excavated along with several molars and milk teeth and the lower jaw of a very young mammoth. The tusk will be displayed this autumn in the renovated Daubeny Building, 200 metres from where it was first discovered.

Magdalen is very fortunate to have such a fine specimen found on its own site. For full details of this and a myriad of other fascinating Magdalen objects and works of art, many of which were gifts to the College and are still unknown to most members, do look out for the new book *Hidden Magdalen* to be published in 2008.

Marilyn Bowler

The new Development Team

Mark Loveday presenting farewell gifts to Mary Ann Buckley at the Annual Alumni Dinner in June.
Arriving at the President’s Lodgings at one’s allotted time is not usually an appointment many undergraduates anticipate with a great deal of relish. Standing at that grand front door is inextricably associated with that inexorable and dreaded staple of Magdalen life, Collections, but this occasion was rather different. Despite the persistent rain doing all it could to convince me otherwise, it was finally the Summer Vac. I was no longer ensconced in the inimitable Waynflete, but in the rather more salubrious surroundings of Chaplain’s Quad and the academic rigmarole I had bravely faced over the last three terms had been rewarded with a far more exciting prospect—a chance to meet one of the world’s greatest living poets.

The latter is no casual, hyperbolic epithet: Seamus Heaney’s writings account for around two-thirds of all the poetry sold by living writers in the United Kingdom. Yet here, in the warm surroundings of the President’s living room, he could have been mistaken for anybody’s grandfather. His agreeable Irish tones and affecting humour made it easy to forget that I was in the presence of a man who had reached the acme of world literature: the Nobel Prize.

As he relaxed into the soft sofa with a cup of tea, I couldn’t help thinking how remarkable it was that Professor Heaney would give so generously of his time to roam through his memories of Magdalen with a first-year undergraduate. I reminded myself constantly that the friends he frequently mentioned, Terry Eagleton, Bernard O’Donoghue, et al., were the very same authorities whose essays I had been slavishly dissecting over the last few long months.

Professor Heaney’s tales of Magdalen days gone past emanated from the Lodgings, along the rain-spattered and echoing cloisters and into the Hall, where the evening was to culminate in the Magdalen Society’s Annual Alumni Dinner. Other voices gracing the occasion were many and eminent, with the top table alone accommodating both the Nobel Laureate, the President of College and the Prime Minister of a certain magical kingdom—actor Robert Hardy, most recently seen playing Cornelius Fudge in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.

The high, panelled walls reverberated with the voices of over 150 Old Members, recalling heady undergraduate days. Professor Heaney’s memories of Magdalen were not quite so distant, although quite possibly as heady, having ‘been involved with Magdalen in a super-numerary, non-stipendiary way’ during his tenure as Professor of Poetry from 1989 to 1994.

He told me he had felt himself drawn to Magdalen by the poetry crowd and by the hospitality of former President Tony Smith; a tradition which is, he avers, ably upheld by his successor. Therefore, despite allegiances to other colleges such as St. John’s, leaving him ‘embarrassingly over-fellowed’, it is to Magdalen that Professor Heaney and his wife Marie return. They do so with both a sense of fondness and, as he explained, a conviction that:

“I belonged within the ordinary life of the college, and having been part of that action once, I feel part of its on-goingness.”

The sense of being but one part of a greater whole permeated the entire evening and provided a central theme of the Guest of Honour’s speech. Using an example from his current work-in-progress, a translation of Book VI of Virgil’s Aeneid, he spoke of how the members gathered could be described, as indeed Aeneas often was, as ‘pius’. More often translated as ‘pious’ or ‘dutiful’, Professor Heaney himself has plumped for ‘devoted’, which, he suggested, brings a sense of something being ‘fond, free and familial’. In his explanation of this ‘pius’ nature, Professor Heaney drew upon Magdalen’s ‘pius’ nature, Professor Heaney drew upon Magdalen’s majestic grounds, lending them a Shakespearean air in his speech when he said:

‘In our room overlooking the Deer Park, we experienced sounds and sweet airs that gave delight and hurt not, sounds not just of the choir in the chapel in the evening or the choir on the tower on May Morning, but the choir’s voices every morning when we awoke, coming from the practice room below us like an angelic alarm call, making every Magdalen wake-up and lie-in magical!"

Professor Heaney has used Shakespeare’s line, ‘sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not’ to describe poetry before. During our pre-prandial chat he had, in characteristically modest fashion, talked of poetry being ‘a magical extra’, and yet, he was equally keen to emphasise the inherent danger of someone in his position being seen as ‘a bit of an adornment’, be it either in the role of public-speaker or of poet.

Quoting Gerard Manley Hopkins, he insisted he had always been wary of engaging in things ‘not belonging to my profession’. This fear was countered by a return to his northern Irish roots and his use of the dialect term ‘throughotherness’. This, he explained, was to be taken in its most positive sense, to suggest the interweaving or co-mingling of the strands of poet, professor or public speaker into something both applicable and grounded—a very Irish term with a strongly geographical sense, a sense heightened by his family home in County Wicklow. He explained how the most important dates of his life had revolved around the purchase, sale and repurchase of this retreat—a place without any modern forms of communication and a place where he is deeply inspired to write.

So for Professor Heaney, a sense of place is crucial to both his experiences of writing and of visiting Oxford. His advice to a young undergraduate was to ‘go out into the world and experience all that I could’. Exactly the kind of red flag that one might expect a genial Irishman to wave in front of a nineteen year old? Perhaps—and yet he also impressed upon me that there would come a time in life when it would behove me ‘to retreat back from it all’.

I know how he would espouse the value of returning to somewhere both familiar, yet constantly beguiling—be it for himself and Marie to County Wicklow or, as for so many members who had made their way this very evening, from every corner of the world, back to the intimate and inspiring precincts and passageways of Magdalen.

Christopher Hook

FLOREAT MAGDALENA • MICHAELMAS 2007
Events for members

17 October
Cocktail reception hosted by Luke Johnson at the Hellenic Centre in London. RSVP to marilyn.bowler@magd.ox.ac.uk or tel: (0)1865 276082.

15 November
Chocolate Tasting hosted by Magdalen Society Committee member, James Cronin, at his Islington chocolaterie; details will be sent to members by email.

Save the date in 2008

8 March
Anniversary Event: Waynflete Symposium on Molecular Biology

29 March
Gaudy for Year Groups 1967-70

4-5 April
University Reunion at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York

5 April
Anniversary Dinner at the Racquet and Tennis Club, New York

26 April
Anniversary Event: Waynflete Symposium on Magdalen Nobel Scientists

3 May
Anniversary Event: Waynflete Symposium on Anthropology

24 May
Anniversary Event: Waynflete Symposium on Mathematics

7 June
Anniversary Event: Waynflete Symposium on Music

28 June
Anniversary Garden Party preceded by a Benefactors’ reception and lunch with the President

5 July
Gaudy for Year Groups 1971-73

6 September
Subject Gaudy: Modern Languages

20 September
Magdalen Society Annual Alumni Dinner

20-21 September
University Reunion Weekend

27 September
Gaudy for Year Groups 1980-82

1 November
Magdalen College Boat Club 150th Anniversary Dinner

Details of how to book these events will be included in the Record.

550th Anniversary

It is the 550th Anniversary of the Foundation of College in 2008 and details of many events we are holding will be included in the 2007 mailing of the College Record. The events will include Waynflete Symposia on different academic subjects to be held on Saturday afternoons throughout 2008, a special Evensong on the anniversary of our foundation charter on 12th June 2008 and a commissioned requiem from Bill Ives for All Souls Day on 3rd November. Our 550th Garden Party of 28th June will be a special highlight to which all members and their families will be invited. There will also be a special dinner in New York on 5th April 2008. Several publications will mark the Anniversary, including a new book on the history of the College and another on the hidden treasures of Magdalen. We look forward to welcoming back to the College as many members as possible to the wide variety of events planned for 2008. Please go to the Magdalen College website, www.magd.ox.ac.uk, to update your contact details and receive the latest information on events by email.

David Clary

Marilyn Bowler and Judith Hibbert

At the end of April, the Society had an “away” weekend in Chester, its first in the North West. The Society was enormously grateful to our man on the spot, Dr John Browne (1966) and his wife Christie, and to Professor Glyn Turton (1963), former Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Chester, who not only made all the practical arrangements but also recruited an excellent list of speakers.

We kicked off on the Saturday with an informal lunch in the quirky Albion Inn, a shrine to the First World War nestling below the City walls. We were then treated to an erudite tour of St Werburgh’s Cathedral by—who better—Ian Dunn, its Custos and former County Archivist. A leisurely riverboat cruise took us for tea in the afternoon sunshine in the Brownes’ gardens on the banks of the Dee, from where we enjoyed the glorious views back to the City. Later that evening we assembled for dinner in the opulent council chamber of the Victorian Gothic Town Hall where our guest speaker was Jeremy Taylor, Chief Executive of Cheshire County Council.

Despite the generous quantities of excellent wine, chosen by the oenophile Brownes, virtually the whole group reconvened on Sunday for a walking tour of the Roman and Medieval City walls conducted by Diana Dunn, a Medievalist at Chester University, conveniently married to the afore-mentioned Custos. We completed the circuit just as the rain came down and fell gratefully into the Albion for lunch.

At the end of July, members of Magdalen were invited to visit their ‘country cousins’ at Magdalen College, Cambridge. The trip was organised courtesy of President Clary’s own close ties with Magdalen, where he became a Fellow in Chemistry in 1983 and Senior Tutor six years later.

In his eloquent post-lunch speech—a jeu d’esprit on Magdalen’s extra ‘e’—Dr Edmund Marshall, of the Magdalen Society Committee, thanked the Master of Magdalen, Duncan Robinson, for an educationally enlightening talk on the history of the charming red brick College of St Mary Magdalene, founded as a Benedictine Monastery on the banks of the River Cam in 1428. Frequently referred to as ‘the village’, given its mix of College buildings, gardens and streets of housing in various architectural styles, the College has a congenial and intimate atmosphere.

The day included a visit to the extraordinary Pepys Library, which houses the eminent diarrist’s complete collection of 3,000 volumes in twelve stately, late 17th-century oak bookcases. Edmund left his fellow guests in no doubt about the meaning of the additional ‘e’ in Magdalen since the College had provided an exceedingly enjoyable experience for its visitors. Magdalen College will be hosting a return visit for Magdalen members in 2009.
The Magdalen Society is now represented as a group on 'Facebook'. Launched on 29th June, the group has grown to over 300 members in just two months and continues to mushroom. This web resource provides an excellent opportunity for alumni to maintain a list of Magdalen friends and to exchange information, in particular, about the Magdalen Society and its activities.

Facebook
www.oxford.facebook.com

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An evening for chocoholics

On Thursday 15th November James Cronin, of the Magdalen Society Committee, will be hosting a Chocolate Tasting for members at his chocolaterie, Paul A Young Fine Chocolates, in Islington. It recently won “Best new Chocolate shop” in the Academy of Chocolate’s 2007 World Chocolate Awards.

Find out about the history and processes involved in the manufacture of chocolate and taste at least 10 different couvertures, including rare, origin and single estate chocolate. There will be an opportunity to see around the kitchens and ask questions of Paul, the master chocolatier.

Our thanks to James for organising this event. More information will be sent by email to members in September.
http://www.paulayoung.co.uk
Shaking with nerves, I discovered Addison’s Walk in the half-hour before my first interview, attempting to attain some semblance of control. The cool breeze through the December branches and placidly grazing deer worked their magic and I emerged, twenty minutes later, calmer and relaxed enough to perform adequately in the interview I have since wiped from my memory. Four months later, I shepherded my entire family along the walk in a flush of triumph, exhibiting the spot that seemed to epitomise all I loved best about Magdalen, and which had, I felt, been partly responsible for my place.

Yet what is it that makes Addison’s Walk so special? In the past year, I have gone there to jog, to laugh with my friends and to cry alone. I’ve guided members of the public along it to watch a production of *The Canterbury Tales* in the Fellows’ Garden and I’ve waved at my friends punting on the Cherwell alongside. Originally known as the Water Walks, in the 19th century they were named after Magdalen Fellow, essayist, poet and statesman, Joseph Addison (1672-1719) - a fitting monument for a man who wrote in the *Spectator* about the importance of nature in landscape gardening. The Walk itself offers nature as a retreat from the movement and noise of the High Street so close by.

Perhaps this gives a clue to the Walk’s appeal: as an island, it is literally removed from the rest of Oxford, offering an oasis of calm and peace, distinct and separate even from the rest of the college. Between the Cherwell on one side and Holywell Mill Stream on the other, it is prone to flooding – as it has this summer, when the entirety of the water meadows was submerged, giving the appearance of a vast and rather beautiful lake. A controversial 1801 blueprint by Humphrey Repton planned to flood the meadows; in today’s volatile climate, Repton’s dream is frequently, if fleetingly, fulfilled.

It is not only the Walk’s seclusion which endears it to me, nor its ability to retain its beauty despite the ravages of the weather. The first time I became aware of it was in a tiny, paint-splattered bathroom in a rented flat. I was reading *De Profundis*, Wilde’s prison missive to Bosie, and came across the striking passage below left. Immediately I wanted to experience that bird-haunted walk, where one of my heroes formulated what was to become part of his life's philosophy. He was not the only one – a walk around Addison’s helped crystallise C. S. Lewis’ own Christian convictions. Strolling there one September night in 1931, deep in discussion with fellow Inklings, J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson, they were interrupted, as Lewis later recalled, by ‘a rush of wind which came so suddenly on the still, warm evening… that we thought it was raining. We held our breath…’

In seeking solace for my interview nerves, I had clearly stumbled upon a unique place for inspiration and contemplation. But the writers who frequented the walk did not all use it solely for life-changing decisions. In 1947, Dylan Thomas spent some months in Holywell Ford, where he trespassed upon the kindness of its then incumbents, A.J.P. Taylor and his wife Margaret, regularly drinking upwards of fifteen pints a day. Addison’s was doubtless the scene of many a sobering amble; Thomas was only to quit the Ford when Margaret Taylor provided him with another house elsewhere.

Perhaps this is what gives Addison’s its great appeal? Yes, it is an area of seclusion and natural beauty, but it also a place where great writers and thinkers, scientists and politicians, have trodden the damp earth. According to Dr Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, Magdalen’s Junior Dean of Arts and Tutor in English, “Addison’s is one of those odd but magical places in Oxford, where you can be completely on your own, while preserving a ghostly sense that you are in company, as your footsteps fall into the invisible traces left by the thousands that came this way before you and lay trails for the thousands yet to come”.

Emma Whipday
What is DNA Nanotechnology?

DNA is a wonderful building material. We use its double helix as a girder to build new structures that are no bigger than a typical protein molecule (about a millionth of an inch), like the tetrahedron illustrated. DNA is a linear polymer made by stringing together ‘bases’ from an alphabet of four—adenine, cytosine, guanine and thymine. DNA molecules with complementary base sequences can wrap around each other to form the double helix (A binds to T and C binds to G). The unique ability of complementary sequences to recognise and bind to each other allows us to design DNA molecules that will assemble in a predictable way. Having designed our components (and having paid to have them synthesized), we mix them together. It is rather like building a model by selecting Lego bricks, shaking them up in a bag and hoping that when the bag is opened the model will fall out. Fortunately, it often works.

Self-assembly is a natural strategy for construction on a molecular scale, but it is a technique that we are only just beginning to learn about. It is a multidisciplinary field. There is a great deal of physics in the rules of design for self-assembly, and even more physics to be studied in the structures that we make: the DNA tetrahedron has allowed us to measure the elastic response of DNA in compression for the first time. We have ongoing collaborations with chemists, computer scientists, biophysicists and biochemists. We are now exploring potential applications of DNA structures in drug delivery, and are using the energy released by DNA binding to drive molecular machinery. The remarkable properties of DNA that allow it to be used as both construction material and fuel could even lead to DNA-built and DNA-driven molecular assembly lines that mimic the molecular processes of the cell.

Andrew Turberfield

The Magdalen College Photography Competition 2007

The winning entries below and others will be on show at the next Magdalen Society event in London on Wednesday, 17th October. Luke Johnson and the President will be hosting a cocktail reception in the Hellenic Centre from 6.30-8.30 pm. Guests will be invited to vote for the overall winner, who will receive a prize of £200.

There is no charge for this event. Exhibits will be for sale on the night. To attend please RSVP to marilyn.bowler@magd.ox.ac.uk

Reviving the Withered Lilies

The Withered Lilies cricket team will be relaunched in Summer 2008 with games against the SCR, MCR, JCR and the Emeriti (a team of academics from other colleges). No great cricketing skill is required!

There will also be a dinner in College over the winter to generate interest. If you would like to come to the dinner and/or play for the Withered Lilies in Summer 2008 please contact either Nick Sayers at nick.sayers@lane.co.uk or John Claydon at john@claydon49.freeserve.co.uk.

Introducing ‘Addison’s Talk’

What are your views on this newsletter? Would you like to share an interesting or amusing story with other members? We welcome your letters for ‘Addison’s Talk’, a new feature in the next issue of Floreat.
The Inaugural Lunch of the Fastolf Society

The inaugural lunch of the Fastolf Society for all legators of the College and their partners was held on 7th July, a rare sunny day in the midst of one of the wettest summers in recent Magdalen history. The society is named after Sir John Fastolf, a career soldier of the Hundred Years War who died in 1459. Following a long and contentious dispute, the bulk of his estates finally accrued to Magdalen in 1483. After an excellent meal in Hall, the President welcomed the guests and illuminated the significance of the new Society with the story of two rather more recent legators than Fastolf himself.

Julia Fleet, who died in December 2005 aged 83, left a substantial legacy. Her connection to Magdalen came via her uncle, William Fleet, who came up to the College as our very first Rhodes Scholar in 1904. After graduating, he returned to the USA but after war was declared, he came back to the UK to join the army. He was gassed on the Western Front, but still found the courage to return to the fray where he was killed in 1918, leading his company in the Spring Offensive.

Some years later, William’s brother Reginald played a major role in the development of the widely used lubricant WD-40; Julia was his daughter. She visited College frequently and got to know several members of the College well, including Presidents Griffin and Smith and our present Physics Tutor, John Gregg. Her wonderful legacy has provided for a William Fleet Tutorial Fellowship in PPE and a Julia Fleet Tutorial Fellowship in Modern History. These will enhance forever the tutorial teaching in these subjects, something that we are very determined to do for many more subjects.

Another important recent legator, George Freeman (1913-2005), came up to Magdalen as a graduate student in chemistry in the dark days of 1940. He worked in the research group of Professor Howard Florey, the penicillin pioneer and Nobel prize winner, who first came to Magdalen as a Rhodes Scholar. George Freeman was Captain of Boats and graduated with a D Phil. He then had a distinguished career as a research chemist and became Head of Biochemistry at ICI. His legacy will endow a George Grosvenor Freeman Junior Research Fellowship in Science. This will allow an early-career scientist to start their own original research programme. The College has an excellent track record with such research fellowships, John Eccles, Peter Medawar and Tony Leggett among many others.

The Floreat Crossword

Many of the answers have a Magdalen theme. The solution will be printed in the next issue of ‘Floreat’. Hadrian Wise