Welcome to the College Newsletter for 2017/18. This has been a very successful year for the College, with 13 candidates ordained deacon at Peterite, 11 PGCE students qualifying at teachers, and 29 students successfully completing graduate degrees or diplomas in Theology, Education, Oriental Studies and Byzantine Studies. We wish them all well as they leave us to pursue their future work.

This year has been one in which we have been able to celebrate the generosity of many donors to the College Appeal, and it was a particular pleasure to welcome back to the College, with 13 candidates ordained deacon at Peterite, 11 PGCE students qualifying at teachers, and 29 students successfully completing graduate degrees or diplomas in Theology, Education, Oriental Studies and Byzantine Studies. We wish them all well as they leave us to pursue their future work.

There is a lot going on at the College, for our current students and for our old members – I hope that this Newsletter will give you a taste of that, and encourage you to support us and keep in touch.

Editor: Rachel Makari
With many thanks to all contributors.

College staff list
Principal: The Revd Dr Robin Ward
Vice Principal: The Revd Canon James Lawson
Senior Tutor: Dr Mark Philpott
Tutor: Fr Mark Allen
Tutor: Mother Lucy Gardner
Librarian: Marjory Szurko
Tutor: Fr ‘Akma’ Adam
Senior Tutor: Dr Mark Philpott
Vice Principal: The Revd Dr Robin Ward
Principal: The Revd Canon Dr Robin Ward

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Editor:
By The Revd Canon Dr Robin Ward

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Staff news
National Lottery funding
By The Revd Dr Robin Ward

National Lottery funding
The College has been awarded a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Lottery Fund, following an application made in support of the heritage associated with the College’s former monastic site. The project will focus on the site’s First World War heritage, and involve local schools and

Save the dates!
• Friday 15th June 2018 – College Garden Party – all alumni, their guests and families are welcome.
• Friday 14th September 2018 – College Alumni Gaudy – all alumni and guests, and members of the 1876 Society welcome.
• Saturday 15th September 2018 – College Alumni Reunion – all alumni, their guests and families are welcome.

Fr Alex Garner & Roisin Callanan
Congratulations to...
• Fr Alex Garner (SSH 2012–15, and sometime President of the Common Room) and Roisin Callanan (SSH 2014–15) who married at the College on 19th Aug 2017 after meeting here during their ordination and PGCE training.
• The Venerable Peter Eagles (SSH 1986–9), recently retired as Archdeacon of the Army, on his appointment as Bishop of Sodor and Man
• Fr Martin Gough (SSH 1988–90) on his appointment as Chaplain of the Fleet and Archdeacon of the Navy.
Staff news (continued)

• We welcome Marjory Szurko who joins to take up the post of College Librarian. Marjory has previously held posts at both Oriel and Keble Colleges.

• Dr Sonia Gonzalez Delgado, SJE Arts Concert Manager, completed her doctorate (subject: History of Art-Musicology at the Universidad de Zaragoza. Title: Programming Early Iberian Keyboard Music. From Wanda Landowska to Santiago Kastner).

• Dr James Whitbourn takes up the post of Senior Research Fellow. Within the role, he will develop the College’s activities in residential education for external students, partnering international universities and music conservatories as well as working with Oxford University’s Department for Continuing Education. He will also take on wider responsibilities for the College’s student accommodation and facilities.

• August saw the departure of Fr Mark Landowska to Santiago Kastner (Iberian Keyboard Music. From Wanda Landowska to Santiago Kastner).

• Many of you will already be aware of Dr Rowell, who died on 22nd June at St Michael’s Croydon to help receive refugee children from Calais. We wish him the very best in his new role.

• The College also welcomed for the first time the Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, who were in residence for a weekend in August, and students from Westminster Choir College, Princeton, as they completed their fifth annual Choral Institute at Oxford and have enjoyed our continuing relationship with the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, which held its fourth annual summer school at the College in July.

Summer Programmes 2017

SSH hosted several successful residential academic courses in 2017, including new programmes in Choral Singing and Choral Composition offered by Oxford University’s Department for Continuing Education. The College also welcomed for the first time the Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, who were in residence for a weekend in August, and students from Xi’an Jiaotong and Donghua Universities, two of China’s most prestigious universities.

We have continued our partnership with Westminster Choir College, Princeton, as they completed their fifth annual Choral Institute at Oxford and have enjoyed our continuing relationship with the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, which held its fourth annual summer school at the College in July.

Legacy thanks

The College gives thanks for the great generosity of benefactors who have supported SSH through bequests in their wills over the last year. In total over £355,000 was gifted to the College via legacy gifts in the last twelve months.

Refuge welcome work

Students from the College joined Fr Tim Pike at St. Michael’s Croydon to help receive refugee children from Calais arriving at the Home Office immigration centre at Lunar House.

Established in 1876, the core mission of St Stephen’s House is to train priests in the Anglican tradition of the Church of England. However, since 2003, the College has welcomed a range of other students, pursuing post-graduate qualifications across subjects including theology, philosophy and teaching. Here, two recent leavers share their different experiences of life at St Stephen’s House, and how it measured up to their expectations.

Prior to SSH...

EM: Having completed a PhD in History at the University of Sydney, I was working doing capacity building at a university in Cambodia when I decided that I wanted to know more about education and particularly higher education.

MW: Before training for ordained ministry, I taught Mathematics, mainly to GCSE and A level students who had been predicted low/ poor grades in their mock examinations. My job was to enable them and bring out the very best in their abilities so that they could get better grades at their final GCSE/ A Level exams and proceed to college or university. I loved my job. I sense that equipping, enabling and encouraging people is my vocation. I am married and we have a 10-year-old daughter.

Why SSH?

EM: I was allocated to SSH by the University along with a large number of other MSc Education students. All my course teaching and learning was run entirely in the Department, rather than the College.

MW: I knew people who had studied at SSH including Bishop Martin [Warner] my sponsoring bishop. I made a direct application to the College.

What did you know about SSH before you arrived?

EM: Like many of the Department of Education students here, I had never heard of St Stephen’s House. I had some trepidation about living in a religious college and one that took only a small number of students.

MW: I was very much aware of the college’s ethos with regards to its discipline to the daily offices and the daily Mass. I had also been informed that no college did Solemn Mass like SSH.

Name: Elizabeth Miller
From: Sydney, Australia
Course: MSc Education
(Higher Education)

NAME: Martha Weatherill
From: Eastbourne, UK
Course: Durham Common Awards in Theology, Ministry and Mission

Please do share any alumni news with us for inclusion in future issues – alumni@ssho.ox.ac.uk

St Stephen’s House News 2017/2018
Elizabeth: A day in the life

5:45 am: Rowing practice on the river. Race back to SSH for a (well deserved) cooked breakfast.
9:00 am: I didn't buy a bike so it was a 30 minute walk to the department. Classes were three days a week and started at 9:30.
11.00 am: Morning tea at The Department of Education – also a social place.
1.00 pm: Back to SSH for lunch. I opted for college lunches several times a week.
3.00 pm: When they say you’re ‘reading for a degree’ at Oxford, they’re not joking. Afternoons were spent doing the required reading for my classes and doing reading for assessments.
7.00 pm: Dinner at the college was one of the social highlights of my day. One of the best things about a college the size of SSH is that you never have to worry if you’ll know anyone in the dining hall. Thursday night formal dinners were fantastic: the food was great, everyone dressed up for the evening, and the fun continued afterwards in the Common Room.
8.00 pm: While some evenings were spent doing yet more reading, others were more relaxed (depending on how close essay deadlines were...). Oxford is full of fantastic pubs, live music and plays, and it’s not hard to corral friends from the college or my classes to attend with my family – my daughter likes dressing up. I also found all the staff very helpful and supportive.

How did you perceive the college measure up to the reality of life here?

EM: The college was far livelier than I imagined. It was very welcoming, and had a good vibe into of ordinance and other students. It was more social than I had expected (which was excellent!) and very supportive.
MW: I was not disappointed, for me worshipping God in the beauty of holiness is the core of my Christian discipleship and vocation and I had the privilege and opportunity to share in this worship. Being among the discipline of the office and Mass are gifts that I hope will see me through all of ministry.

One of the highlights of the term is the black tie dinner which I would attend with my family – my daughter likes dressing up. I also found all the staff very helpful and supportive.

Worst aspect?

EM: Getting to Trinity term and realising that I could have made more of the time here. I was hesitant at first about getting involved in the social life of the college and so when spring arrived and we spent glorious Sunday afternoons sitting in the cloister gardens I was already nostalgic about my limited time here and wishing I had more than a year.
MW: I struggled a little with my academics because I had no previous theological background. However, with the support of the academic staff, I gained confidence in my studies. Although optional, I am currently furthering my studies to CA BA as part of my IME Phase 2.

What did you do in your spare time whilst at SSH?

EM: I rowed and rowed some more. I was also the college representative for my stream of the MSc. Beyond that I spent a lot of time exploring Oxford and Britain.
MW: During my spare time, I had meals and drinks with other colleagues, visited other Oxford colleges and Chapels, and went sightseeing with my family.

What advice would you give to a prospective student considering SSH?

EM: You really will get out what you put in. Don’t be put off by the different courses and departments people are involved in – as soon as you throw yourself into college life you’ll realise those differences are easily traversed and in fact, make for an incredibly rewarding experience. Try out different extra-curricular activities, go to lots of formal dinners and in fact, make for an incredibly rewarding experience. Try out different extra-curricular activities, go to lots of formal dinners and in fact, make for an incredibly rewarding experience. Try out different extra-curricular activities, go to lots of formal dinners and invite your friends, and make sure you go to at least one ball while you’re in Oxford.
MW: No hard sell – just look for where God is at the moment and work there. I am often reminded of Staggers when I am at the Cathedral’s Evensong – same quality. I am at the Cathedral’s Evensong – same quality.

Martha: A day in the life

7.00 am: Quiet prayer.
7.30 am: Morning Prayer. Which I had an opportunity to officiate as part of my training.
8.00 am: Daily Mass.
8.30 am: Breakfast (families are welcome).
9.00 am–1.00 pm: Lectures (at SSH).
1.00 pm: Very nice lunch provided by the kitchen staff. Families welcome.
1.15 pm: Group Placement (at primary schools in Oxford with a clear focus on our commitment to the catholic mission and a sense of camaraderie).
3.00 pm: Rest/Study.
4.00 pm: Time with family and friends in Mobley Close gardens the College’s accommodation for students living with partners/families.

5.00 pm: Work on essays. I also had an opportunity to officiate as part of my training. Living in a cathedral city, I am often reminded of Staggers when I am at the Cathedral’s Evensong – same quality.
6.30 pm–7.00 pm: Drinks in Common Room (all welcome).
7.00 pm–9.00 pm: Formal Dinner with family, friends and colleagues. An opportunity to dress up and relax after a very busy week.
10.00 pm: Work on essays.
11.00 pm: Bed after locking up and ensuring that the college was secure at night, very useful training in my current curacy.
Fundraising Update

NEW: Parish Giving Initiative
As many of you will know, the College’s campaign to establish an endowment fund remains the core fundraising priority and we continue to work towards our ultimate goal of £2.5 million. This year we are launching a new initiative to encourage parish giving. We are asking all ordained alumni, their parishioners, churchwardens and PCC members, to consider raising funds for the College’s Endowment Fund within their parishes. This might be through a regular annual collection, or by raising the £1,876 to join the College’s society for all alumni and friends, The 1876 Society. Securing an endowment is vital to the long-term future of the College, and will ensure the core focus of teaching and learning here at St Stephen’s House is maintained in perpetuity. We do hope you will consider taking on the challenge!

The 1876 Society
One year on from its launch, this initiative has been well supported, with over 50 donors joining the Society, many at the £10 per month membership rate. This represents a significant increase in the number of people giving regularly to the College and the cumulative impact of this type of regular giving is extremely valuable. We are grateful to those who have joined and supported The 1876 Society. Please do consider joining, if you have not already done so. To join: alumni@ssho.ox.ac.uk

Westminster Abbey event
Earlier this year, the Dean of Westminster, the Very Revd John Hall, hosted an event at Westminster Abbey in support of the College, providing us with an opportunity to thank the College’s major donors, as well as families of some of the legators that have played such a key part in philanthropic giving over the last year or so. It was also a chance for us to further knowledge and awareness of the College amongst future potential supporters, and we were joined by guests from across the world, including those from the US, Australia and Armenia.

Legacy giving campaign
The vocational work undertaken by the vast majority of our alumni means that legacy giving is often the most significant way in which many old members are able to support St Stephen’s House, and indeed it is one of the College’s largest sources of philanthropic income. This year we are launching a new legacy campaign to raise awareness of the impact that this type of philanthropy has on the College and its ability to continue in its work. Please do take a moment to consider whether this is something you might be able to support. We do appreciate that your Will is an entirely private matter, but it is extremely helpful if you feel able to share any plans to make a bequest to the College. It will also help us to invite you to join us for a small lunch, hosted by The Principal, for all legacy donors later in the year.

For more information relating to our fundraising efforts, please email development@ssho.ox.ac.uk

Obituary
The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell
With the death of Bishop Geoffrey on the morning of Trinity Sunday 2017 after a short illness, St Stephen’s House lost not only one who had served on its House Council since 1986 (Chairman from 2004–2011), but one whose faith as an Anglican Catholic, his scholarship, ecumenical contacts and pastoral concern for others did much to support the work of the College.

It was during his long ministry as Chaplain of Keble College that Bishop Geoffrey joined the House Council, bringing a useful link with the University Faculty of Theology. He later became Chairman of the Governors of Pusey House, further strengthening the links between the two institutions, though perhaps not as closely as he would have wished.

A happy feature of Council meetings, especially after his appointment as Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, was Bishop Geoffrey’s suggestions as to who might provide professional help to the College; a property developer or architect. He had been in conversation with just such a person at an airport. Networking for Bishop Geoffrey was not so much for his own self-interest but to enable others be more effective in their ministry. He also brought the College ecumenical links, especially with the various orthodox Churches with which he had such close links.

The hundreds who packed into Chichester Cathedral for his Funeral Requiem were there not just to pay tribute to a scholar Bishop, but to commend to God one whom they regarded as a friend. Bishop Geoffrey showed great kindness and courtesy towards others. His genial personality enabled him to be a gifted pastor. As chair of the House Council, even the more ‘truculent’ members were listened to with interest and usually good humour!

Bishop Geoffrey stood firm in his belief that the Anglican Communion was part of the Catholic Church. His scholarship, ecumenical contacts and his endless travelling meant that the air he breathed was that of the universal Church. He worked tirelessly for the reunion of that church, in faith, life and sacramental communion. His example has much to offer both those preparing for ordination and those ordained.

By Bishop Alan Chesters, Chairman of the House Council 1992–2003
The BENSON Scholarship

The Fellowship of St John (UK) Trust Association administers the charities once associated with the Cowley Fathers, the monastic order that established the site on which the College now sits. The Trust funds the Benson Scholarship, which enables ordination candidates in need of special funding to pursue their studies. This year’s Benson Scholar, Sam Maginnis, writes about his experiences...

My blank stare was probably answer enough for The Principal when he asked me whether I had heard of the Benson Scholarship. It was May 2016, and we were sitting in the familiar surroundings of the chapel at Pusey House where I had been living and working as a chapel intern for the previous nine months, though it had been 18 months since I had begun my vocational journey in earnest and taken a career break from legal London. I had arranged this meeting with Fr Robin because I had recently been informed that my sponsoring diocese would not send me to a Bishops’ Advisory Panel until after that summer, meaning that I would be unable to commence ordination training until at least September 2017. This left me wondering how I could occupy my time after Pusey House in a way that added some new and useful experience whilst justifying putting my legal career on hold for a third year. I felt rather stuck, and indeed was left considering whether it was wise for me to continue exploring my vocation to priesthood at this point in my life.

It was then that Fr Robin approached me with one final option. He explained the purpose of the Benson Scholarship: to enable unfunded students who intended to offer themselves for ordination the opportunity to undertake full-time study, and suggested that I would be a suitable candidate.

I leapt at the chance – my academic interest in Christian theology had been growing steadily since I had returned to faith and I knew this could open up further interesting avenues to me even if I were not eventually recommended for training. We agreed that I should apply for the Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Theology at Oxford, a one-year foundation course designed for non-theology graduates to enable them to go on to postgraduate study, with the intention that the Benson Scholarship would cover my course fees if I was accepted. My nomination was successful, and I was pleased to learn from Fr Robin that not only would the scholarship cover my course fees but the trustees had decided to award me some money towards maintenance costs as well.

This still left a noticeable shortfall in my living expenses, but after a couple of successful grant applications to other charitable bodies I had made up the required amount and was ready to return to Oxford as a student once more.

The PGDip is a curious beast, in that it is classified as a postgraduate course but is taught alongside the undergraduate theology degree, with PGDip and FHS students attending the same lectures and tutorials and sitting the same three-hour exam papers in Trinity Term. Having previously studied jurisprudence as an undergraduate at Magdalen College, I was accustomed to this method of teaching, though in the intervening years I had forgotten just how intense it is! Over the course of the year I read for three papers – Old Testament, the Gospels, and Patristics – and attended three tutorials per fortnight in the first two terms, writing essays and taking copious notes as I went. Alongside this I attended language classes in New Testament Greek three days a week, carried on my work at Pusey House in the role of Assistant Sacristan, and fulfilled a long-held ambition by winning a choral bursary with Exeter College choir. It really was the Oxford undergraduate experience all over again – lots of reading and writing and arguing, balanced with extracurricular fun and some good dinners to boot. And within all of that I had the chance to engage critically and on a deep level with the Scriptures and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, helping me towards a greater understanding and appreciation of my own beliefs and those of the wider Church.

I am pleased to say that I gained a Distinction overall in my exams for the PGDip and have been accepted onto Oxford’s Master in Theology (MTh) programme, which will form the academic part of my priestly formation at the College over the next two years. Having begun my vocational journey with no formal theological qualifications, advanced scholarship will now form an integral part of my training and I hope of my future ministry. This would have been impossible for me without the Benson Scholarship, and in giving particular thanks to the Fellowship of St John (UK) Trust Association for their support I am also mindful of all those individuals and organisations who have given generously over the years for the encouragement of vocations and the continuing Life and mission of the Church of England.

By Sam Maginnis

The Fellowship of St John (UK) Trust Association administers the charities once associated with the Cowley Fathers, the monastic order that established the site on which the College now sits. The Trust funds the Benson Scholarship, which enables ordination candidates in need of special funding to pursue their studies. This year’s Benson Scholar, Sam Maginnis, writes about his experiences...
I first met David when we were students together at the House. We overlapped by just one year before I went on to be ordained in 1965 and he in 1967. (David had been at Keble where he had taken Mods and Greats but rather more importantly had come under the influence of Austin Farrar the then Warden. I remember David well, though at that time not particularly close friends, nevertheless I recognised in him a real sense of vocation and deep spirituality as well as someone with real academic gifts. He studied for the Theology Schools when a student, and like me who at that time was completing my D.Phil, had also the whole gamut of General Ordination Examination (GOE) examinations to complete before ordination. He seemed to get on well with each and every student with his friendly personality and good sense of humour. At that time Derek Allen had only recently been appointed Principal and the House was still very much ordered in the quasi monastic way that Arthur Couratin had left it. I gather too that talking recently with David’s wife, Rosemary, to whom he was engaged, that she had to gain permission from Derek before visiting him of the House’s greater need of him at that stage. Thankfully he agreed.

It was just one year following my own very reluctant appointment as Principal of St Stephen’s House in 1974 (I had just completed four years in my first parish as Incumbent – some of the happiest days of my entire ordained life) that John Halliburton, the then Vice Principal, was appointed Principal of Chichester Theological College. I had little hesitation in identifying the person I most wanted as Vice Principal and the House was still very much ordered in the quasi monastic way that Arthur Couratin had left it. It was just one year following my own very reluctant appointment as Principal of St Stephen’s House in 1974 (I had just completed four years in my first parish as Incumbent – some of the happiest days of my entire ordained life) that John Halliburton, the then Vice Principal, was appointed Principal of Chichester Theological College. I had little hesitation in identifying the person I most wanted as Vice Principal and the House was still very much ordered in the quasi monastic way that Arthur Couratin had left it. I gather too that talking recently with David’s wife, Rosemary, to whom he was engaged, that she had to gain permission from Derek before visiting him of the House’s greater need of him at that stage. Thankfully he agreed.

By Bishop David Hope

He and Rosemary, together with their children Felicity and John, not to mention their dog Cléo – much loved and spoilt by successive students – moved into number nineteen Norham Gardens, the then site of the College. At that stage we were but three houses on either side of the road with the somewhat tunnel like chapel attached to number twenty and the then number sixteen. The arrival of students lived very much cheek by jowl. Both David and Rosemary and family seemed to settle in quickly to their new situation and circumstances and brought a lovely sense of ‘family’ to the House as a whole and where students were always welcome into their home. David’s arrival undoubtedly brought in particular a renewed sense of academic rigour and seriousness – though he himself would never admit it. He was highly regarded by students and his teaching of the Old Testament, and in particular to those studying also for the Schools, not only inspired students but brought about a substantial raising of standards. Together with his keen pastoral sense and obvious but unstated spiritual depth, once again applications began to rise and slowly we managed to climb out of the opprobrium in which the House had been cast by many, not least bishops and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands at the time.

In matters of discipline he had a lightness of touch but would never flinch from the necessary action. This was well illustrated when on one weekend night a party in a student’s room adjoining their rooms was beginning to get rather out of hand to the extent that he had to go and tell them to close down the noise. His first approach was ignored, his second appearance in his pyjamas close down the noise. His first approach was ignored, his second appearance in his pyjamas was rather more severe – one-way tickets even being threatened! The next morning it was put round that the Vice Principal had made an appearance in matching Rupert Bear pyjamas and slippers!

A person of huge integrity, his genial personality made him popular with students and had that much needed quality in exercising a ministry in such a context – a robust sense of humour and not least the absurd! He was never happier than relaxing with his pipe and a gin and tonic. I shall ever remain indebted to him, and Rosemary and their family as well, for having been prepared to move from Wales to Oxford given the precarious circumstances of the time. He was a hugely supportive colleague who became a close friend. His wise advice and pastoral care and sensitivity not only for students but also for myself as Principal made possible what otherwise might have been impossible.

During David’s time as Vice Principal, his father, Bishop Jack Thomas (then Bishop of Swansea and Brecon) came to preach at the House. His theme from the Epistle to the Hebrews was on Jesus Christ ‘the great high priest of our profession’. He focussed on two phrases in relation to Jesus – ‘Faithfulness to God’ and ‘Merciful to man’. I have never forgotten that sermon and if there was a fitting epitaph for David as priest, pastor, bishop and friend, I would unfailingly suggest those two phrases – ‘Faithful to God’ and ‘Merciful to all’. May he rest in peace.
The second round took the intrepid Staggers team to far-flung Lady Margaret Hall (LMH). It was another sunny afternoon and the Hammers’ international fan-base (visiting academic Prof. Peter Kraus) was out in full. Aldred and Crowley were once again the first to take up mallets against the foe. It was clear from the off that they were facing a highly-trained croquet-playing machine. Gone were the pleasantries and affable leniency regarding the rule book that had characterised the first round. The LMH pair won the toss and began by blocking the opening hoop, a dastardly play that set the tone for the rest of the afternoon. In a really quite impressive display of technical skill, Aldred succeeded in bashing the offending ball out of the way and placing his own ball in its place. It was then that things began to go downhill. The LMH captain actually managed to chip his ball over Aldred’s and through the hoop, before returning to knock his opponent’s ball into an adjacent flowerbed. The match took about twenty minutes, with Crowley barely off the starting line by the time that the LMH pair had completed the course. Box and Tuck faired a little better, displaying again their talent for team work, but despite a couple of Staggers’ surges, the LMH second pair continued to pull ahead. Ultimately the talent and practice put-in by the LMH team trumped the superior grooming and willing amateurishness displayed by the Hammers.

Despite being the smallest of the teams competing in Cuppers, and despite having indulged in virtually no practice, St Stephen’s House made a clear impression on this year’s competition. The Hammers of Heretics tore up the Dean’s garden at Christ Church, leaving their opponents marvelling at their skill, style, and manners. Whilst their run for this season ended in the grounds of LMH, the Hammers left the field with the sense of a job well done, and if there had been a prize for the Best Dressed Team, then Staggers would have taken home the trophy.

A surge of sporting enthusiasm at the College has led to the creation of a new rowing team and croquet squad. Here the croquet team captain, Sam Aldred, reports on progress this year.

The St Stephen’s House Croquet Team, known to their legions of fans as ‘The Hammers of Heretics’, burst onto the sporting scene in Trinity term 2017 and enjoyed a successful, if short, run tearing up lawns across Oxford.

The first round of the competition saw The Hammers drawn against Christ Church, one of the University’s great croquetting colleges. The Cuppers format requires the teams to play two matches per round, usually split across the colleges, but given the lack of facilities at Staggers, The Hammers made their way one glorious early summer afternoon to ‘The House’, seeking to dispatch their enemy in one fell swoop. The setting for this clash of croquet titans could not have been finer; the teams met on the Dean of Christ Church’s personal lawns, affording splendid views of the cathedral and out across the meadow.

Team captain Sam Aldred teamed up with fellow first year ordinand student Tom Crowley to play the first round. It was clear from the off that Aldred and Crowley were the superior pair, steadily gaining ground on their hapless opponents. The victory was short and sweet, with the Staggers pair finishing a full three hoops ahead of Christ Church, following which Crowley ran to a nearby bench to complete an overdue essay on pre-Nicene Trinitarian thought.

The second round was more of a nail-biter. The other Staggers pair was formed of Billy Hamilton-Box, another first year ordinand, and Sophy Tuck, an independent student studying early Church heresy. Despite facing a highly competent Christ Church pair, Box and Tuck played excellently as a team and won the victory they so richly deserved. Having smashed through the first round of the competition, The Hammers began their preparation for the next phase by ensuring that their trousers had a crease you could cut your finger on, and determining the perfect amount of gin to consume before a match. A little light stretching was undertaken in a concession to the hard-nosed sporting culture that we inhabit today.

The second round took the intrepid Staggers team to far-flung Lady Margaret Hall (LMH). It was another sunny afternoon and the Hammers’ international fan-base (visiting academic Prof. Peter Kraus) was out in full. Aldred and Crowley were once again the first to take up mallets against the foe. It was clear from the off that they were facing a highly-trained croquet-playing machine. Gone were the pleasantries and affable leniency regarding the rule book that had characterised the first round. The LMH pair won the toss and began by blocking the opening hoop, a dastardly play that set the tone for the rest of the afternoon. In a really quite impressive display of technical skill, Aldred succeeded in bashing the offending ball out of the way and placing his own ball in its place. It was then that things began to go downhill. The LMH captain actually managed to chip his ball over Aldred’s and through the hoop, before returning to knock his opponent’s ball into an adjacent flowerbed. The match took about twenty minutes, with Crowley barely off the starting line by the time that the LMH pair had completed the course. Box and Tuck faired a little better, displaying again their talent for team work, but despite a couple of Staggers’ surges, the LMH second pair continued to pull ahead. Ultimately the talent and practice put-in by the LMH team trumped the superior grooming and willing amateurishness displayed by the Hammers.

Despite being the smallest of the teams competing in Cuppers, and despite having indulged in virtually no practice, St Stephen’s House made a clear impression on this year’s competition. The Hammers of Heretics tore up the Dean’s garden at Christ Church, leaving their opponents marvelling at their skill, style, and manners. Whilst their run for this season ended in the grounds of LMH, the Hammers left the field with the sense of a job well done, and if there had been a prize for the Best Dressed Team, then Staggers would have taken home the trophy.
When I manage to catch up with Fr James Lawson he apologises for having missed the original time we had arranged to speak. He explains that he is running late because he was comforting a parishioner; a mother whose son was shot four times as he tried to reach the refuge of Father James’s vicarage, pursued by a gunman working for a local dealer. Thankfully, he survived and his mother was at Mass that morning.

Many of the priests trained at St Stephen’s House work in parishes like the one in which Father James served in Hackney. They seem a world away from the peace of the former monastic buildings in which they received their formation. So how on earth does training at a place like St Stephen’s House prepare someone for the reality of the inner city?

I asked Father James, the College’s new Vice Principal and Charles Marriott Director of Pastoral Studies...

He answered: “I remember going to a vigil outside the mosque in Finsbury Park the night after the attack there last summer. The local priest had been busy all day dealing with a traumatized community and with visiting politicians and with the media. I hadn’t seen him since my appointment had been announced. When I asked him how he was doing, I was surprised when he congratulated me and said how thankful he was for the formation that he had received at SSH, and how it prepared him to cope with days like the one he’d just had.

Father James explained, “Father Ken Leech used to teach that any authentic priesthood has to come from an inner core of silence, a life hid with Christ in God. Only those who are at home with silence and darkness will be able to survive in, and minister to, the confusion and violence of the modern world. Otherwise, the danger is that we can become so compulsively busy that all we have left to communicate is our own exhaustion.”

“...And where better to discover a life hid with Christ in God than at a place like SSH where Father Ken himself trained for the priesthood? It’s a place where ordinands receive a disciplined formation that allows them to choose to learn to pray deeply. The practices of silence and recollection that Father Ken refers to are an essential part of the Tractarian tradition of the House.”

For Father James this spiritual discipline can teach priests trained at SSH more than just resilience. “Our programme must be: the greatest possible radiance in the world by virtue of the world by virtue of the closest possible following of Christ. Evelyn Underhill wrote that ‘God is the interesting thing about religion, and people are hungry for God. But only a priest whose life is soaked in prayer and sacrifice, and love can, by his own spirit of loving worship, help us to apprehend Him.’ This worship is the focus of our life together at St Stephen’s House, and this spirit is what we seek to communicate and to radiate.”

Thankfully, this is what SSH offers its ordinands, and will continue to do so with renewed vigour with the arrival of Father James as the College’s new Vice Principal.
A Perfect Fifth

There is celebration in the air at SJE Arts as the College’s music and arts venue launches the fifth season of its flagship International Piano Series. With more than forty successful performances in the series so far, and an ever-growing reputation, surely good reason to let fly a cork or two...

...And that’s exactly what we plan to do! Metaphorically at least, as world-leading Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt opens the Series in January with a programme of Bach, swiftly followed by some of the most interesting and talented pianists alive today.

The SJE Arts International Piano Series has become a well-known feature in the Oxford musical calendar, helping to attract a total of around 15,000 people to the venue since its launch in 2013.

Highlights of this year’s programme include a snapshot of the eccentric French composer Erik Satie in February, with music and extracts from his diaries; multi-talented Stephen Hough in March, and in April, the wonderfully charismatic Spanish pianist, Joaquín Achúcarro.

So, why make this the year to come along to one of our concerts?

SJE Arts’ Sally Doyle, gives us three reasons to do just that...

1. **Our Piano** – a superb Steinway D concert grand, in the prime of its life and benefiting from the superb acoustic in the church.

2. **Variety** – this year sees the most variety we have ever had in the Series. There’s something for everyone: piano with string orchestra, the violin, cello, piano combination of The Barbican Piano Trio, Imogen Cooper, plus Angela Hewitt’s performance is particularly special, being just one of just a handful of UK concerts she is performing this year.

3. **Alumni discount** – if that isn’t enough, we offer all College alumni a discount of 10% on International Piano Series concerts. Just quote ALUMNI when booking.

Sponsor a concert!

Why not make an occasion of your visit and pick your favourite performer to sponsor?

We offer packages that can be tailored to suit, including:

- Front row tickets for you & friends
- Complimentary drinks during the interval
- The possibility of hosting your own private pre-concert party in our beautiful cloister

Come along and see for yourselves! Alumni and friends are assured of a warm welcome at all our Series concerts; just let us know you expect to. To enquire about sponsorship, please email concerts@ssho.ox.ac.uk

A Semester at the Venerable English College, Rome

It is now almost a year since I went, along with my fellow ordinand Scott Coleman, to the Venerable English College in Rome, but I have no doubt the experience will stay with us both for much, much longer. We began our Italian adventures by spending a month studying the lingo in Tuscany, in San Giovanni in Valdarno. Suffice to say, our proximity to Florence, Sienna and numerous other towns was fully exploited! In September, we then returned to the English College (or ‘VEC’, as it is known) to join returning seminarians.

It is difficult to overstate the historical significance of the English College: founded as a hospice for medieval pilgrims, it has been the seminary in Rome for England and Wales since Pope Gregory XIII’s bull in 1579. The College boasts no fewer than 44 martyrs, and there remains a pride in this witness to the present day. Scott and I were privileged to attend a rich variety of lectures at the Angelicum, and were equally encouraged to take part fully in the life of the College, from the sacristy to the refectory. We were warmly welcomed throughout our time, not least also at the Anglican Centre, whose weekly Eucharist was the perfect place to meet Anglican clergy and pilgrims. It was also a joy to be involved with pastoral placements – I, for one, taught English to refugees on the outskirts of the city.

In our free time, we visited the innumerable churches, galleries and museums the Eternal City has to offer, not to mention the odd trattoria or bar here – just to keep up appearances, naturally. On free weekends, we could also visit the stunning Villa Palazzola, the seminary’s summer outpost (its garden balconies overlook Castel Gandolfo). Oh, and for 50th anniversary celebrations of the Anglican Centre, we met the Pope (twice), along with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and more princes, primates and plenipotentiaries than the Court Circular. All in all, then, not a bad way to spend one’s final term.

The Revd Nick Walters
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In each issue, we catch up with an alumnus to find out what they have gone on to do after leaving the College, and their memories of studying here.

Name: Peter Eagles
Age: 58
Studies undertaken at SSH: Ordination Training, Oxford Theology Degree, Oxford Cert. in Theology
Year of graduation: 1989
Undergraduate degree / other studies: Modern Languages (German and Russian), The School of Slavonic Studies and King’s College, London
Your current role: I have just completed my career as a Chaplain in the British Army, which has taken me to many different places in twenty-five years, with time spent in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Balkans and elsewhere. I am now preparing to move to the Isle of Man to engage in a new sphere of ministry as Bishop of Sodor and Man.

Describe a typical day in the Army
I’m not sure there was a typical day! A day in Afghanistan might begin with a helicopter flight at 3am, there would be as much activity at night as in daytime, and days merged into each other, delineated by events rather than by time. Thus it was so important to have a liturgical ‘time’ – a chance for the conductor to make music with a group of singers of extraordinary talent and generosity, and to learn what it means to be a human being. There is much to talk about this at supper but conversation breaks in time for more chant rehearsal. As sun sets, every seat in house is filled with choral song. SSH is the only college in Oxford with two such beautiful singing acoustics. Few even have one that measured; recruiting, training, and deploying clergy, caring for them, and elsewhere. I am now preparing to move to the Isle of Man to engage in a new sphere of ministry as Bishop of Sodor and Man.

Could you tell us about your time at SSH?
I was part of a very large intake in 1986, with a great breadth of individual personal experience. It was more gentle than I had anticipated: the structure of chapel and lectures was set, but around that there was so much time for conversation, discourse, social life. My three years were deeply fulfilling, and the Holy Week Retreat in my first year was decisive in my formation as a priest. There are contemporaries whom I see regularly, others whom I don’t see but remember often. We gathered for a 25-year reunion in 2014, and again as a smaller group in 2015 for the anniversary of priesthood.

Are there any particularly memorable experiences from your time at the College?
Opening the batting against Cuddesdon and Oscott. Snatching defeat from the jaws of victory in the theological college rugby Sevens at Oxford. The occasional bizarre liturgical experience: listening at Evening Prayer on 23rd February one year to ‘the account of the Smyrtymrod of Mollycarp of Parma’ as the sherry wrought its magic…

Where do you see the College’s future?
Dedicated to the Deacon and Protomartyr, it will continue to form people for service and witness, strengthening them with the wonderful gifts of catholic tradition. Located in East Oxford, it can offer a compelling vision of residential training that both emphasises the link to academic excellence and offers every opportunity for contextual experience. This gives it a potentially unique role in the Church of England which we can articulate courageously and clearly.

Parting thoughts?
There has to be a word of thanks to the many people with whom I have been privileged to share the life of St Stephen’s House as part of our continuing Christian pilgrimage. Formation exercises its influence for the rest of our lives.

- Fact File -

CHORAL INSTITUTE AT OXFORD

Location
St Stephen’s House is the home of the Choral Institute’s International Summer Programme, offered in collaboration with SSH, by Westminster Choir College, Princeton.

Key contacts
The Co-Directors are the College’s Senior Research Fellow and music faculty member Dr James Whitbourn, and Westminster Choir College’s Senior Professor of Choral Conducting, Dr James Jordan.

About / purpose
The Choral Institute is course of study for choral conductors who come work with the Institute’s choir-in-residence, the Grammy-Winner Voices, and to take instruction from the two Directors and from other tutors, mostly drawn from Oxford’s Faculty of Music and Westminster Choir College.

A day in the life of a Choral Institute Conductor
Breakfast starts the day and already the conversation is unexpectedly lively. Then the first academic seminar begins. One day it might be a workshop with the boys of Christ Church Cathedral, another day a session on the music of Arvo Pärt. Before lunch there is a seminar in Gregorian Chant to aid the understanding of so much of Western music. A plenary lecture might follow, before the ever-popular tea – a chance for the conductor to make music with a group of singers of extraordinary talent and generosity, and to learn what it means to be a human being. There is much to talk about this at supper but conversation breaks in time for more chant rehearsal. As sun sets, every seat in house is filled with choral song. SSH is the only college in Oxford with two such beautiful singing acoustics. Few even have one that measured; recruiting, training, and deploying clergy, caring for them, and sustaining their vocations.

How does Choral Institute work with SSH?
St Stephen’s House is the summer home of the Williamson Voices and the only home of the Choral Institute. The Institute uses every available bed (and more) for almost two weeks and the College is filled with choral song. SSH is the only college in Oxford with two such beautiful singing acoustics. Few even have one that measured; recruiting, training, and deploying clergy, caring for them, and sustaining their vocations.

WWW.RIDER.EDU/OXFORD

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When theological colleges were first founded in the Church of England in the 19th century, it was assumed that the academic side of forming candidates for ordination would be dealt with in the Universities, and that the colleges needed to be places of retreat and spiritual formation. However, once the Universities began to give up their Anglican identity, a second generation of colleges, among which was St Stephen’s House, consciously located themselves in Oxford, so as to maintain a counter-cultural witness to the Academy. This was a point which Archbishop Coggan chose to draw out in particular when he preached at the House’s centenary in 1976. This year has seen the beginning of a big change in the traditional Oxford Theology course for undergraduates. Some ordinand students at SSH have been taking the so-called Schools course since the early 1970s, called Schools course since the early 1970s, students at SSH have been taking the so-called Schools course for undergraduates. Some ordinand students at SSH have been taking the so-called Schools course since the early 1970s, students at SSH have been taking the so-called Schools course for undergraduates. Some ordinand students at SSH have been taking the so-called Schools course for undergraduates. Some ordinand students at SSH have been taking the so-called Schools course for undergraduates. Some ordinand students at SSH have been taking the so-called Schools course for undergraduates. Some ordinand students at SSH have been taking the so-called Schools course for undergraduates.
**HOW TO SUPPORT St Stephen's House**

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Visit www.ssho.ox.ac.uk and click on 'Support St Stephen's House' on the right hand side of the page.

**Regular giving**
If you wish to make a regular payment, please instruct your bank to set up a Standing Order.

The College's bank details are:
*Account name:* St Stephen's House  
*Account number:* 74542834  
*Sort code:* 60-16-06

**By cheque**
Please send a cheque payable to the Society of St Stephen's House, FREEPOST St Stephen's House, 16 Marston Street, Oxford OX4 1JX

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**Thank you for your kind support of St Stephen's House**

Please do alert us to your gift.

**Contact**
If you would like to discuss your gift or talk to us about how you might wish to support the College, please contact:

Rachel Makari, Development Director  
Email: rachel.makari@ssho.ox.ac.uk  
Telephone: 01865 610489

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