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## Back to (the new) normal...?

Those of you who remember learning how to punt for the first time will be familiar with the problem of 'over correction' – visiting alternate willow-lined banks while trying to steer a straight line along the Cherwell. The world, and in particular its governing authorities, have been engaged in a similar learning process with their reactions to each new wave of the Covid-19 virus. When to restrict; when to shut down, when to lock down? When to relieve, when to open up? Meanwhile the virus, under its several different pseudonyms, has moved from epidemic to pandemic and now endemic – we're all going to have to learn to live with it.

The activities of your XL Network have moved in like manner over the last six months from Strictly Zoom to cautious dos-à-dos but, as I write, may be moving back towards greater restrictions in the light of the greater transmissibility of the Omicron variant. Not all Zoom is bad Zoom. Online meetings – including JCR (the Curry Club) – have been able to include members from far-flung parts of the country and the globe. Technology hasn't yet been able to transmit the pleasant odours of South Asian cooking over the airwaves, but the pleasing waft of friendship to and from foreign parts on Curry Club evenings was a definite plus for a pandemic-bound community. Uncertainty still hangs heavy over the

form of any future activities. The XL Network did manage a well-attended visit to The British Library, a good Old Members' Day in College and a couple of actual meetings in El Vino's and India India. Future ideas include a visit to The Water House, William Morris's boyhood home in Walthamstow, East London, planned for late March, a Sussex theatre and vineyard trip later in the year, and the All Alumni dinner in College around Easter. But the shadow of Omicron hangs heavy over all of these.

What should we do? Get vaccinated! And encourage all those you know to do the same.

*Editor, Andy Simpson (1970, Modern History).*

## Old Members' Day



Oxford's Botanical Gardens.

We had an excellent Old Members' Day in September, much delayed from the original covid-blighted date in June. More than 50 people attended and there was a palpable sense of relief that we were again having social activities in person!

The morning was linked to the 450th Anniversary by taking a series of speakers from different eras since the 400th Anniversary in 1971, all of whom gave a flavour of College and student life in their time. Their contributions were by turn

entertaining and evocative and amply displayed the high quality of student that has passed through the College in the last 50 years or so.

Malcolm Mclvor (1962), Chris Schenk (1968), Andy Simpson (1970), Ruth Saunders (1974), Nel Cotterill (1980) and Nathan Lawson (2019) all gave their own slant. Their contributions were amusing, thought-provoking and revealing. A quiz of the music from 1961, 1971 and 1981 amused but frustrated many, and the quiz was dominated by Richard Turner (1972) and his family who knew everything!

There was an excellent lunch in Hall, where friends could catch up after the stimulus of the morning reminiscences. We then moved on to the Botanical Gardens and were given fascinating tours of the historic garden and its flora. Particular attention was given to the bed with the ancient botanicals that go into Oxford Artisan Distillery's Physic Gin. This was the prelude to the final activity: a gin tasting back in College. We tasted the three gins made by the distillery, heard a talk on the historic origins of gin and were given the background to each of the distillery's gins.

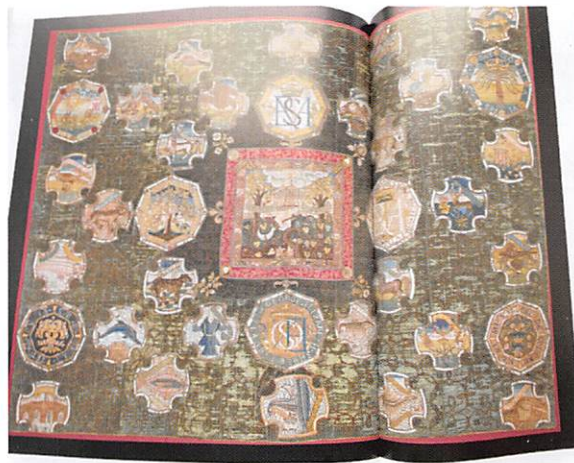
A really good day ended with a hardy nine or ten repairing to the King's Arms to reminisce a little further about old times!

Peter May (1968, PPE)

## Elizabeth and Mary: Royal Cousins, Rival Queens



Successor and son, James I.



Mary's needlework.



Earrings from the Penicuik Jewels.

'Mary Queen of Scots got her head chopped off' is a fact everyone knows – but why did it have to end like this?

The British Library exhibition, to which an inquisitive XL Network went in September, brings new insights into Elizabeth's and Mary's relationship and how it went from mutual curiosity to suspicion and enmity. It tells their personal history, their struggles for survival and power in a world dominated by men, intrigues, religious conflicts, changing alliances and wars. The exhibition shows many letters and documents written by both Queens; some to each other, together with many personal objects, including a recently-discovered portrait of Elizabeth, a large tapestry embroidered by Mary during her captivity, and the Penicuik Jewels Mary gave away before her execution. The letters are difficult to read, the

writing being very small and many written in code. Secrecy was vital. The cousins never met as Elizabeth, for various reasons, was advised not to do so. One cannot leave the exhibition without wondering whether things might have turned out differently if they had.

We very much enjoyed having exhibition curators Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes with us and after the viewing we had a great Q&A with them and two curators from the British Library. To do justice to the exhibition we bought the Exhibition Catalogue which includes chapters by both Susan and Paulina, with Susan editing the whole three hundred pages. The success of this event reflects the hard work of XL Chairman Peter May and everyone in Jesus College.

Andrea Geser

## From Jesus to Absinthe



Manet: *The Absinthe Drinker*.



Moss: *The Absinthe Salesman*.

I first heard descriptions of absinthe when reading French Literature at Jesus in the 70s. Poets such as Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud drank the notorious 'green fairy'; Zola described it in *L'Assommoir*.

Vast quantities were consumed in France during the Third Republic, but it was banned in most parts of the civilised world after one of its side effects, along with bankruptcy, turned out to be permanent blindness. Maybe if I'd asked my tutor, Tony Pilkington, about it he would have described the moonshine version made in Switzerland during the ban: he had refined his French while living in Geneva.

Forgetting absinthe, I found my first job in marketing at Kraft

Foods. Recalling that I had read French at Oxford, Kraft decided I was the person to co-ordinate UK sourcing of French dressing and mayonnaise from their international facility in Belgium. I didn't tell anyone that my use of oral French at Oxford was probably no more than a couple of hours in three years: I had spoken much more French while hitching through Europe. A few years later, I became Marketing Director at Rémy UK (the company then responsible for Rémy Martin, Cointreau, Krug champagne etc). Tasting such marvellous drinks was even better when using a few French descriptions. Soon I was in meetings with top global management who were mostly French. The President said, 'We normally talk French in front of the English because they don't understand. Since Alan understands French, we may as well

speaking English.' I never corrected her!

I never knew whether my subsequent transfer to set up an Indian subsidiary was a promotion for my 'excellent' French. I didn't use French for a few years, except on long distance calls to HQ or on annual trips to see management in Paris. On returning, eventually, to live in the UK, I was interviewed by the first company selling legal absinthe – and I was hooked. Even more so when this led to my meeting a Swiss company which had recently switched from moonshine to legitimate absinthe ... and it was – and is – excellent absinthe! I now co-own that company and often reflect that my Swiss partner's French dialect reminds me of Tony Pilkington's. Santé, Tony!

*Alan Moss (1970, Modern Languages)*

## Curry – how to get yours

No known Indian language uses the word 'curry' – the nearest equivalents seem to refer to something like 'sauce'.

Food historians would have us believe that the origins of curry go back to when the Portuguese arrived in Goa in the early 1500s. 'What's that you're eating?' they asked and were told 'khari'. At the time, this was probably a particular spice blend, as well as the dish it was used in. The word is still in use, usually referring to a type of sauce. But you won't find a lot of curry in Portugal.

So, India's many and varied ragouts and stews seem to have

become known as 'curry' under the influence of us British. Well known dishes such as biryani and vindaloo have arrived here after a complex journey from regional specialities to simplified, curry-house classics, thanks to a combination of colonialism, empire and immigrant entrepreneurs.

It's certainly something to celebrate as XL committee member **Norman Wright** invites us all to meet up once every two months in El Vino's in Fleet Street for a drink (or three) before trooping across the road to the underground delights of India India and a highly convivial curry. Don't be shy: come and join in.

## The Wisdom of Thomas Edward

One dark afternoon in November, Thomas Edward and his chums were lounging around his rooms, discussing matters of high import. 'Why is it,' complained an outspoken young buck, 'That the fellows of Magdalen, with their well-stocked deer park, can dine on venison every week while we, despite

having three deer on our escutcheon, must content ourselves with bully beef?' Later that night, the city constable detained a young man driving five deer up the High Street from The Plain towards The Turl. 'So we see,' said Thomas Edward, 'How unreasonably a man may act in matters of the hart.'

## Welcome to New Members

Those who join the XL Network tend to be approaching the liberating age of 60 when one may start to have a little more time to indulge in new activities and revive old friendships and interests.

It's entirely free to join and gives an easy route to keep in touch with College matters and the social and cultural activities of the group. The network's main aim is social, but occasionally it is involved in raising money to support Jesus students.

After the lull associated with the lockdowns and restrictions of the pandemic, we're keen to recruit new members who always bring new impetus and ideas for activities. Our activities range far and wide and are good social occasions (often involving a meal and a drink) with a strong cultural core. Plans for later this year include a visit to the William Morris Museum and, later in the year, a tour of Chichester Cathedral with a vineyard tour and wine tasting. Do come and join!

*XL Network Chair, Peter May (1968, PPE)*

## 'I just turned around and they were gone...'

It was a shock to learn that **Colin Clark**, **Chris Pout**, **Peter Silverman** and **David Stokes** had all passed away last year within a few months of each other. All had supported our group and we still receive their contributions to the XL bursaries. All were good company: a few words should trigger fond memories. Chemists Chris Pout and Peter Silverman and modern linguist Colin Clark matriculated in 1962 and promptly formed friendships which lasted the rest of their lives. Colin rowed in the first eight, Chris was a master of the Lizzies, and Peter played for the rugby team. They were among the first supporters of the XL Network when it was launched in 1989 and remained so thereafter. Colin followed a career in marketing with IBM, Chris as a chemist with BP and Peter became an MBA and gravitated to a career in financial services. Colin and Chris retired relatively early, Colin becoming skilled in marquetry and antique furniture restoration, a Liberal Democrat town councillor, a keen hill walker and trekker, and an excellent golfer. Chris became President of Kent Archaeological Society, took first class honours in Archaeology at Kent University, brought the American and Australian branches of his extended family together with the English branch for a celebration at the original marsh-side village location of this old family of farmers traced back to

late mediaeval times. He was a keen countryman and also an excellent golfer. Peter was a late but enthusiastic starter in country walking, a keen painter who exhibited at West End galleries and an indefatigable campaigner and publicist of keeping Britain litter free.

All three were active supporters of the social events of the XL Network. Peter took over editorship of the newsletter and his brain teasers were a regular feature for many years. David Stokes, who matriculated in Mathematics in 1961 following in his father's College footsteps, also died last year. He will be missed for his fund of amusing tales and his sports. At cricket, he was the College Captain and went on to make his mark in Lancashire, even playing against Clive Lloyd.

Sadly, **Tim Slater** (1966) died in May 2020. He was one of the great College characters who read Greats, was a star of Jesus rugby, and a stalwart of the White Horse. One memory of Tim sums up much about him: after he scored a barnstorming try to win an important game, he said 'I saw a gap, but it was cluttered with three players – so I went for it!' We'll all miss him and his occasional alternative Yorkshire Gaudies held near his beloved Pocklington.

## Committed ... should they be? Your XL Network Committee



**Andy Simpson** (1970 History) – XL Network Newsletter Editor welcomes any prospective contribution to this publication. In particular, I'm on the lookout for short articles detailing how anyone

who studied at Jesus College has found their time there relevant in their later life.



**Peter May** (1968, PPE), Committee Chair. Peter is the main link with the College on matters affecting the Network and liaises regularly with the Development Office. He also organises

Old Members' Day.



**George Reah** (1962, Mathematics) – Treasurer; advises on budgets and pricing for JOMG events, as well as Network income and expenditure, and those relating to donations

managed by the Network's outreach support.



**Paul Seward** (1968, Mathematics) – Secretary. Paul is responsible for the administrative aspects of the work of the Network, checking the detail and ensuring rules and the constitution are followed.



**Richard Cosier** (1968, Physics) runs all things to do with membership and data, and shares part of the website responsibility.



**Malcolm McIvor** (1961, Mathematics) the recently-retired Chair who has a wealth of knowledge about the Network and describes himself as 'an enthusiast without portfolio'.



**Norman Wright** (1969, PPE) organises the website and runs the estimable JCR (the Curry Club).

Many roles are shared, including events organisation. The useful emails for the Network are as follows:

**chair@jomg.org** forwards to Peter  
**contact@jomg.org** forwards to Richard  
**events@jomg.org** forwards to George (changes according to event lead)  
**membership@jomg.org** forwards to Richard  
**newsletter@jomg.org** forwards to Andy  
**secretary@jomg.org** forwards to Paul  
**treasurer@jomg.org** forwards to George  
**webmaster@jomg.org** forwards to Norman  
**abuse@jomg.org** forwards to Richard (part of an inbuilt safety net)