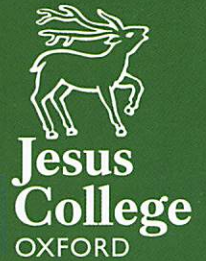




JESUS OLD MEMBERS' GROUP NEWSletter

XL NETWORK



Chapel.
Photo: Chris Dingwall-Jones

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Always look under the carpet

It is entirely possible and, I believe, more common than one might imagine, for a student to come away from their time at Jesus College without ever having set foot in the College Chapel.

The potential reasons for this are many: religion bears no part in the vast majority of modern studies – and may even be held to be the antithesis of some: the Welsh aspect, with its propensity for 'chapel' rather than the Established Church, will have played some part in the past, as will, these days, the diversity of religious traditions represented in the College membership.

Certainly, from the 1970s on, the number of students arriving in College who have felt unfamiliar, and possibly uncomfortable, with Church of England liturgy

has been increasing apace. The number of 'quires and places where they sing' has been in sharp decline, Gareth Malone's efforts notwithstanding.

Architecturally, it's possible for the casual visitor to make a tour of Jesus and leave without realising that the College has a chapel. There's no prominent spire or tower, a roofline which merely continues that of the rest of First Quad, a set of windows largely outdone by those of the dining hall, and a doorway which, though highly historic, is Cinderellaed by that of the Principal's Lodgings.

Additionally, the advent of the College's ultra-modern Fourth Quad, with its new towered entrance opening onto Market Street, at the diametrically opposed corner of the College... *Continues on back page...*

Tangling with Data and DNA

My late father-in-law, born in Cardiff in 1915, was adopted. His natural mother's surname was known, but that was all. In 2010, puzzled by an uncanny resemblance between him and the only pictures of his adoptive father, we set out to find his natural parents.

I'd vowed never to don the genealogy anorak but this was an interesting challenge, different from constructing family trees by searching out ancestors going back generations.

From his birth certificate, it was easy enough to find out his mother's full name and where he was born and, from censuses and other records, a lot about his adoptive parents and their relatives. This unearthed several interesting stories and contacts with relatives my wife never knew she had.

His mother's name was not uncommon and I followed up seven candidates, three of whom looked the most likely. The breakthrough came when we looked up the record of his formal adoption in 1929, including evidence from a lady who said the mother was her brother's daughter. With a bit more research this led to the right candidate. Some months later I was contacted by someone in the USA who had been looking for the same person, because she was his grandmother. A few years after giving birth to my father-in-law, his mother had teamed up with a Brazilian, given birth to another child in London, and then in 1920 emigrated via Ellis Island to New York. There she had married a different Brazilian before partnering a Russian immigrant. She had nine known children – and a history of abandoning them.

This was quite a triumph but we had little to go on to find the natural father. I had a hunch, from circumstantial evidence, that the father was a brother of the man who adopted my father-in-law. That would explain the facial likeness. But was it true?

That's where DNA comes in. We were in contact with the grandson of the possible culprit's sister, who we might expect to have a clear DNA match with my wife. But he didn't. So much for that theory. There were, though, many other significant DNA matches who had to be biological relatives. If I couldn't explain them in terms of my wife's known biological relatives then the link must come via the unknown father.

I could explain all of the matches up to around fourth generation or third cousin level – apart from one. I contacted the daughter of the matching person, who lived in the USA and she did indeed have great-grandparents who came from the Merthyr Tydfil area. This looked promising – but there were snags. Their surname was Jones – a needle in a haystack in South Wales. And they had emigrated to Pennsylvania around 1888. Potential fathers were distanced from the mother by the Atlantic Ocean.

Then another DNA match turned up. Their family tree had a great-great-grandfather called Thomas Jones, whom I recognised and strongly suspected to be my wife's natural grandfather. His surname was Jones and he had been a solicitor in Cardiff. He married in 1911 and had a daughter born in 1913 but deserted his wife and child. So he was in the right place at the right time – and possibly in the right frame of mind.



Roy Davies (left) with me, getting our BAs, 1963.

How could we prove he was the one? I found and made contact with the daughter's son. He and my wife should be half first cousins. He agreed to take a DNA test and in July 2020 the result came through – half first cousins. Our search was over. And this also explained the DNA matches with descendants of the American Joneses.

How might my time at Jesus College have helped in all this? You don't need a degree to be an ancestry anorak. But when needles in haystacks abound and brick walls are frequent obstacles, experience at researching sources of information, hanging onto a lot of data and making sense of it is very useful. This is particularly so when half the people are called Jones and it's necessary to prove that theories are right or wrong rather than just plausible.

Also, when I wrote up the research, all that essay writing for tutorials paid dividends. I was also able to ask one of my fellow Jesus physicists, Roy Davies, to peer review what I'd written and the conclusions. He found no loopholes but made some good suggestions for improving the text. Hopefully our former tutors would have been proud of our efforts – though not a single equation was involved.

Tony Hughes (1960, Physics).



Apparent likenesses can be deceptive. On the left is my father-in-law; in the middle his adoptive father; on the right the adoptive father's brother, original prime suspect to be the natural father.

Sorry Sextons

A group of vintage Jesus alumni and guests were in Chichester to explore 'a well-worn armchair of a cathedral', as Pevsner put it. We found much to admire beneath its Norman and Gothic arches though, sadly, this time, not the renowned John Piper tapestries. They'd been attacked by moths and sent to the invisible menders. Ah well...

The cathedral has had many other disasters over the centuries, including several roof fires and, in the 19th century, the sudden collapse of the bell tower and spire. Remarkably, hidden beneath the rubble they discovered some forgotten mediaeval bas reliefs – intricate sculptures of the Lazarus story that were to inspire both John Piper and Eric Gill. I sympathised with the angry-looking gravediggers, peeved that the raising of Lazarus meant they wouldn't get paid. And it was intriguing to see the gothic 'Arundel tomb', showing the recumbent Earl of Arundel in full armour, holding hands with his wife.

The image was the source of a Philip Larkin poem, but the poet was less than pleased to discover that the gesture was probably a Victorian reconstruct.

From recent times, there's a pleasing modern aluminium pulpit which appears to float in the air magically without support; an impressive Graham Sutherland; and a wonderful Chagall window in fiery reds and oranges. Meanwhile various contemporary installations, being dismantled as our tour progressed, were a reminder that Chichester today is still a haven for creativity.

Then it was time to head off to Brasserie Blanc. Lunch was a chance to catch up with old friends, after which the group split up, some to visit a local Tinwood Estate vineyard, renowned for its sparkling wine. If memories of the tour are a bit blurred, it's probably a good sign.

The rest of us, meanwhile, were given an informative tour of the city which, like the cathedral, is comfortable and welcoming, full of cheerful young people. Its university is 60th in the Sunday Times rankings.

Founded by the Romans, Chichester is still enclosed by their defensive walls and their street plan also survives. In the centre is an elaborate 15th century market cross built from stone brought across from Caen, an indication of a thriving cross-channel trade, aided by Chichester's large natural harbour.

We were shown elegant Georgian streets, as well as humbler quarters where the smellier trades could be kept well away from the prosperous merchant households. We saw the house where Keats stayed (nowadays you can go there for a manicure or a haircut) and Vicars' Close, formerly the home of the vicars choral who sang in the choir. We learned that at one point, their carousing in the city's many taverns got out of hand, so the canons decided to close their gate in the evening. Shades of Oxford college life?

Our guide showed us a tall 18th century building known as Pallant House, guarded by two gateposts surmounted by comic dodo-like stone creatures, which turn out to be heraldic ostriches. This house now contains a wonderful collection of modern art which we visited the next day and warmly recommend.

All in all, a memorable trip brilliantly organised by Peter May who, we discovered, had got married to Deborah just two weeks earlier.

We wish them every happiness!

Julian Soar (1962, Modern Languages)



Ukraine and UK

A huge thank you from the College Development team to the XL Group for generously coming together to make all the difference to our successful Ukrainian Student Support appeal.

We are so grateful to you all – without your support we would have struggled to fulfil our target at its later stages. You'll be pleased to hear our student has started at Jesus, reading for a Masters in Religion and is settling in well. Through the British Academy's Researchers at Risk programme, we will also be welcoming a Ukrainian academic to

College this year, and supporting them with free accommodation at one of our annexe sites. The academic will become a Supernumerary Fellow for their time at Jesus College.

A sincere thank you to everyone who has supported this appeal with such generosity and urgency. It has once again demonstrated the power of collective giving and the strength of belief the Jesus community has for supporting those in higher education.

Georgina Plunkett, Deputy Director of Development.

Continued from front cover. ...from the Chapel may have the effect of pushing the Chapel further into the background. Who, now, would consider spending any of the many millions dedicated to expanding, modernising, and enhancing a college on a large and highly adorned area devoted only to religion?

But step back a minute from the indignities of those 'prayer rooms' stuck away in corners of our modern-day shopping centres, airports, hospitals, and other public buildings and take a look at the huge public outpouring of feelings in the funeral of our late Queen. If one can say so without sounding too *Thought for the Day*, it's not altogether mistaken to see a great unfilled desire for spirituality in our modern, mechanistic world.

Back in the day, the central aisle of the College Chapel was carpeted in, I recall, a sort of muddy brown colour. Who knew, then, that under that fuzzy concealment lay some of the most beautiful tile work on which a seeker-after-truth (or seeker-after-self) could hope to set eyes?

Andy Simpson, Editor (1970, History)



The Wisdom of Thomas Edward



One late autumn evening, in a window overlooking the Broad, Thomas Edward and his drawing master were sharing a celebratory sherry.

The artist, on Thomas Edward's advice, had established in court that his family's horticultural holding in Evesham could not be arbitrarily confiscated at the end of their lease because it was held under the ancient Evesham Custom, which guaranteed security of tenure and restitution of expenses for any improvements made.

'So we see,' said Thomas Edward, 'the efficacy of the Common Law in establishing something "to which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary"'

Dr John Walsh



Saddest of our thoughts over the past few weeks will have been for the loss of Dr John Walsh, fondly remembered by many Jesus College alumni, whether or not they studied history.

For me, personally, he was the original reason why I came to Jesus and I recall fondly his wise teaching, his humanity

– and his inimitable handwriting, the image of which has stayed with me for 52 years. I feel the most suitable tribute to his long life comes from his granddaughter, Lottie Sellers: 'My lovely grandpa: infinitely, unfailingly generous and kind to everyone he met. He had nine lives, seemed to have met everyone under the sun, and always carried his principles through his work as a historian, academic, Methodist and human being.'

Andy Simpson, Editor (1970, History)

It's Free!

Your XL Group Committee is expanding. At its last meeting it was agreed that more representatives could be co-opted: we're very keen to see that new blood, in particular female blood, is brought on board – and the revolution has begun.

We're very pleased to announce that **Helen Cotterell** (1980, Engineering Science), known as Nell, has joined the committee, and there's scope for more.

An 'annual general meeting' rarely sounds like an exciting prospect but in this instance it provides a very easy way into a group you might like to join. The 2023 AGM of the XL Group will be on Zoom at 7pm on Thursday 9 March. If you want to link up with this sociable, informative and lively group, become a member very easily (it's free to join) by contacting membership@jomg.org in time to join the Zoom on 9 March.

XL Group 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.

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

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'.

Helen 'Nell' Cotterell (1980, Engineering Science). A big welcome to Nell as our first ever female committee member, hopefully to be soon joined by more as the 40 (XL) entry point rolls onwards into the College's mixed era.

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 in-built safety net)