

# Freshers from the Fens and the upper reaches of the River Thames

**Barts and The London Cambridge and Oxford Graduates' Club is the successor in title of the Cambridge Graduates' Club of St Bartholomew's Hospital, a Club founded in 1876 for the express purpose of welcoming each new generation of medical 'undergraduates' (Bachelors of Arts *in statu pupillari*), arriving from the University of Cambridge. Professor Chris Hudson (q Cambridge/Barts, 1955) and Marcus Setchell (q Cambridge/Barts, 1967) reveal the history of the Club**

The tradition of welcoming new students to Barts was time honoured, going back to the welcome organised by Wilkinson, a Cambridge graduate, for William Harvey. The inaugural session in 1876 was organised by James Shuter (of the eponymous entrance scholarship) to enable the Cambridge graduates in 'residence' (staff and students) to meet and welcome the new entry. This was a success and led to an annual event in the winter session held in sundry venues around London, commonly with post-prandial entertainment in the rooms of one of the Senior Staff, often Dr Morley Fletcher. This was usually musical with a piano, violin and songs. The doyen of the Club soon became Dr (later Sir) Norman Moore, who wrote a definitive two-volume history of the Hospital. It seems likely that he was the initiator of the ritual of *The Hairy Rauchie* (or *Rowky*), an extremely lengthy ballad. When the traditional West End after-dinner reception ceased, the ballad was recited at the dinner; only in the 1950s was the recital consigned to a small coterie after the close of the formal dinner.

The Club remains very unusual in having no written constitution and no membership fee. At first, there was a Convenor and a President for the day; latterly a Senior and Junior Secretary (with eventually a Lady Secretary), and a different Chairman for each Annual Dinner.

The Secretaries include some famous names such as Russell Vick and RB Etherington Smith (Ethel), a very distinguished CUBC President who died in office of a nosocomial infection and in whose memory, a small ward was endowed at Barts for sick housemen. 'Ethel' won the Grand Challenge Cup at Henley as Captain of Leander; the magnificent cup being displayed at the subsequent Club dinner. (This double, CUBC Presidency and Grand Cup winner, was actually repeated by RG Nicholson as a clinical student in 1963).

The Club's activities were suspended during both world wars, and, after the Second World War, H Jackson Burrows was a long serving Senior Secretary, succeeded by his Junior Secretary RA (Reggie) Shooter, probably the longest holder of the office, and later Dean of the Medical School.

Over the years, the Chairmen have included five Heads of Cambridge colleges, among whom A Hill (Downing) was also Vice-Chancellor, the most recent being Lord Adrian (Trinity). Two Regius Professors of Physics have also been Chairmen: Sir Humphrey Rolleson in 1926, and W Langdon Brown in 1933. Also, Sir Harold Gillies (a former rowing blue), Sir Geoffrey Keynes and, more recently, HB (Henry) Stallard of *Chariots of Fire* fame.

Guests were allowed in 1894. The first recorded guest from 'the other place'

was the surgeon W Bruce Clarke. The "Bruiser," as he was known, replied for the guests in 1902.

Over the years, the numbers attending the dinner rose to some 120, with around 50 attending the 50<sup>th</sup> dinner held in the Mayfair Hotel in 1930. Later, one of the more prominent guests was Lord Horder, who so enjoyed the party he continued to attend uninvited thereafter every year, a *de facto* situation accepted by the Secretaries! In gratitude, he presented the Club with a Loving Cup (now in the Barts Archives together with the Club's snuff box).

The Second World War saw both the Barts and The London's pre-clinical schools evacuated to Cambridge; an event commemorated by the establishment of the Rahere Studentship.

The Club re-established itself in 1948 under the Chairmanship of Reginald Vick, largely due to the efforts of Rupert Corbett. At some time, membership was also opened to doctors who had qualified in Cambridge, and subsequently worked at Barts. The arrival of women medical students inevitably included a cohort from Cambridge. There was much soul searching and it was agreed that there should be a welcome cocktail party in the library for all students in the winter session, and that the "all male" dinner should continue on the Wednesday after View Day. This was fine until the Cambridge women began to qualify. Eventually, they were asked if they wished to become full members of the Club, there being no written constitution which might have prevented this. The women doctors replied that they would wish to be so, but would not exercise their right to attend the dinner until a specific invitation was issued. This must have left them on the moral high ground, but the open invitation did not materialise until 1971, when the occasion was marked by the presence of the Mistress of Girton College as Club guest.



**The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester with Mr and Mrs William Shand in 1992**

Since then there have been two splendid occasions. The hundredth dinner was held on 11 July 1992. The Secretaries, recognising the historic significance of the Club's survival for well over 100 years, were determined to make it a very special celebration and agreed that William Shand, the long serving Senior Secretary, should be Chairman. HRH The Duke of Gloucester (as President of St Bartholomew's Hospital and a Cambridge graduate from Magdalene College) was invited to be the Principal Guest with many other distinguished guests. The oldest member present, Dr Percy Hancock-Thompson had gone up to Cambridge 71 years earlier!

A new Club silk tie with stripes of Cambridge Blue rather than silver, was designed. A commemorative bone china mug was also produced, many of which are still in use. Fine red velvet chairs were hired for the 240 guests, and the Great Hall was filled to capacity, with a Top Table for 42 guests. The Duke of Gloucester gave the Guest Speech, and was presented with a Club Tie; while the Duchess received a set of commemorative mugs.

After this splendid occasion, there was rather a decline in attendance. However, an even grander celebration soon followed

when Mr (later Sir) John Chalstrey was elected Lord Mayor of London, the first medical man to hold this position for more than two centuries. His occupancy of Mansion House enabled us to hold the Annual Dinner there in 1995. The Duke of Gloucester was invited to attend again. This somewhat complicated the planning because, in the City of London, the Lord Mayor has precedence over the Royal Family, necessitating dual approval of all the arrangements. However Mansion House welcomed almost 300 people.

A number of recent complicating factors has jeopardised the Club. The opening of the Clinical School of Medicine at Addenbrooke's Hospital reduced the intake coming to London for clinical experience, and for a time such students were obliged to get their medical qualification as a London degree, albeit with a BA (Cantab).

The newly formed Barts Alumni Association then decided to hold an annual dinner on View Day, one week before the traditional date of the Cambridge Dinner. For this reason a move of the Cambridge Dinner to November was tried. The merger of Barts Medical College with The London introduced a further problem.

Although the Royal London had for many

years had a similar intake of Cambridge students, it had no equivalent Club. The Secretaries decided wholeheartedly to embrace the change, re-name the Club as the Cambridge Graduates' Club of Barts and The London, track down as many Cambridge/London graduates as possible and invite them to join this unique Club, and one, moreover, with no subscription! The secretaryship was expanded to have two London Honorary Secretaries, as well as the two from Barts.

Soon after the creation of the new Club, a Dinner was held at the Royal London. However, more negative forces were at hand. The Alumni Associations of the two Medical Colleges had amalgamated to form BATLAA, with The London Hospital Dental Club. Their main event was to be a Dinner and Dance in the Drapers' Hall in November, yet again squeezing the newly expanded Cambridge Club.

In 1999, Marcus Setchell, who had been Secretary for 20 years became Chairman for the Dinner, but numbers attending were down to no more than 60. It was hoped that with the new secretaries there would be a resurgence of interest, but for a few years no dinners at all were held!

The problem of sustaining numbers has also affected BATLAA and it has been decided that the Drapers' Hall event will be held in alternate years, with an occasional regional event in the intervening years (Queens' hosted the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pre-clinicals' return in 2005). With the Barts Fountain Club establishing a View Day dinner in a City Livery Hall, this has led the Secretaries to decide that this Club's dinner should likewise be in November in alternate years.

The relationship with graduates of 'the other place' has, since the Bruiser's day, always been cordial, with an open invitation. In recent years the reduced intake from 'grey stone', has encouraged a more formalised Oxonian participation.

The really important thing is that the Club has gone back to its founding purpose with a regular welcome party for both Oxford and Cambridge "Freshers" in the Senior Staff Common Room, hosted by staff members from both universities, and attended also by current students. It is to be hoped that the new structure and timetable of events will ensure that the Club will flourish for at least another century. The present Secretaries are Dan Berney (Jesus), Pathology and Professor Kate Costeloe CBE (Girton), Homerton. ●