



750
YEARS
SUSTAINING
EXCELLENCE



MERTON
COLLEGE
OXFORD



ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

1264-2014





FROM THE WARDEN

It is not every year that an institution is presented with 750 years' history to celebrate, nor are there so many 750-year-old entities that are as full of life as Merton was throughout 2014.

Such a successful and enjoyable year could not have been possible without every member of the Merton community coming together with such enthusiasm to show their support for what makes this ancient College so relevant even after 750 years. From the College staff who worked so hard to make 2014 a success to the Mertonians who travelled from far and wide to take part, thank you all!

Special thanks are due also to the Celebrations Committee who started working on the birthday celebrations as long ago as October 2009, and by whom all the 750th Anniversary celebrations were conceived and brought to fruition with such aplomb.

For those of you who could not join us, we hope these pages capture something of the celebratory atmosphere of 2014. For those of you who were there, perhaps these pictures will evoke memories of what has been, in true Merton style, a birthday to remember!

Sir Martin Taylor FRS



Photographs: (top) Inga Beckmann; (bottom) Helen Morley

MERTON'S GLOBAL CELEBRATIONS

JANUARY & APRIL 2014

2014 had a fantastic start in Hong Kong and Japan in January, closely followed by the annual MC3 weekend in New York in April. Our international Mertonians showed their warmth and generosity in welcoming the Warden. In the US, they also welcomed the College Choir, thanks to the sponsorship of Reed Rubin (1957) and his wife Jane.

"I will always remember the wonderful hospitality of our global Merton family throughout 2014. Our trip to Hong Kong and Japan set the tone for a fabulous year."

Sir Martin Taylor FRS, Warden

SUMMER QUAD PARTY

SUNDAY 15 JUNE 2014

Meanwhile in Oxford – not to be held back from summertime celebration, especially post-exams – Merton's students threw a fun-filled Quad Party, with swing dancing, fire stunts and giant board games. Vast vats of Pimms, tables groaning with baked goodies, an edible Merton College and a coconut shy took over Fellows' Quad, to be enjoyed by more than 400 students, Fellows and staff.

"A glorious event, full of surprises! It was just wonderful to see so many students, Fellows and staff smiling and laughing or dancing around on the grass, many with their faces painted! Fellows' Quad looked beautiful draped in bunting but it really was the giant Merton-shaped cake that stole the show – spectacular!"

Stephanie Jones (2009)





750TH ANNIVERSARY BALL

SATURDAY 28 JUNE 2014

A fortnight later, more than 900 guests joined us on a glorious summer evening to celebrate 750 years of Merton in style. Dodgems were dodging, cameras were flashing, fireworks were popping and pipers were piping. Big bands, Freddie Mercury (or at least his doppelgänger) and Groove Armada's Andy Cato (1991) provided the soundtrack and Mertonians danced until the sun came up while Oxford slept peacefully.

"We had a 'ball' on Saturday night. I am still laughing (silently) at the silent disco (what a good idea), and the dodgems and dinner and fireworks and everything else was great."

Philippa Whipple (1984)

BIRTHDAY WEEKEND

FRIDAY 12 – SUNDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2014

Merton turned 750 on 14 September and the College hosted a vibrant and bustling weekend to mark the day. 1,200 guests joined us to enjoy lectures, fireworks and a family garden party.

Brains were stretched in workshops and lectures by some of our excellent Mertonians, from world-famous mathematician Professor Sir Andrew Wiles (1971) to novelist Mark Haddon (1981). Memories were mined for the Merton@750 Collection and our youngest visitors discovered the hidden secrets of the College on a sunny afternoon. The College's most prized treasures were on display and the College Choir were in fine form.



"How you got Walter de Merton to have a word with the requisite angel to arrange for wonderful weather I do not know! We had a great time meeting with old friends, making new ones and learning about so many things, including the Silver and Equations. We also thoroughly enjoyed the concert, recital and services."

Jean and Keith Burton (1962)

"It was a really lovely evening, great to catch up with old friends in Merton, and the fireworks were wonderful."

Meriel Cowan (1983)

"I have to say that, for me, the most powerful moments were unpredictable and almost accidental: the smell of the interior of the Rose Lane buildings, unchanged in 30 years; the inquiring angle of Geoffrey Mure's statue's head in his room; the two-minute walk from Rose Lane to the main college – all things that I'd taken for granted as a student, but which left impressions that lay dormant for so many years, only to resurface this weekend."

Peter Kessler (1982)

"It was a most enjoyable event throughout, offering superb feasts for mind and body."

Janet Harvey (1995)

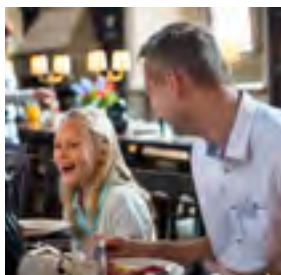


Listen to some of the Birthday Weekend talks again online at vimeo.com/channels/2014birthdayweekend



SUNDAY AFTERNOON FAMILY GARDEN PARTY

Almost 700 Mertonians, old and young, came together on the Sunday afternoon along with falcons, ferrets, treasure hunters, Morris dancers, jugglers, swing-boats and face-painters for a memorable afternoon in the College gardens.



"The best bit was the hunt where you looked in the trees and spelt the Hobbit and got a soft toy at the end."

Peter, age 6

"I liked the big tent with lots of cake."

William, age 4

"It was the first time that we brought the boys to College, and they thought it was magical. Our six year old's favourite things were plate spinning and hunting for Tolkien-related letters. Our four year old loved the balls-in-buckets, the falcons and the ferrets. They both loved the swing-boats, and we all enjoyed the cake."

Catherine (1997), William and Peter's mum



THE MERTON CONVERSATIONS

The College launched a new style of event in 2014 for the Anniversary Year – the Merton Conversation. Mertonians from all walks of life eavesdropped on conversations between high-profile experts and moderators on contemporary topics ranging from global finance to forensic science. Each was held in a prestigious venue – from Hong Kong to London and over the Atlantic to New York – where listeners were presented with stimulating expert views on subjects of current importance.



THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL FINANCE

WEDNESDAY 15 JANUARY 2014

Speakers: Sir Callum McCarthy, Liu Mingkang, Charles Li, and Alejandro Reyes (moderator)



THE TWO CULTURES OF CP SNOW

THURSDAY 15 MAY 2014

Speakers: Stephen Fry, Professor Brian Cox and Lord May of Oxford (moderator)



CHINA AND THE WEST: CULTURE AND SOCIETY

FRIDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2014

Speakers: Lord Patten of Barnes, Professor Dame Jessica Rawson and Professor Rana Mitter (moderator)



ON LIBERTY

TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2014

Speakers: Rt Hon Sir Brian Leveson, Shami Chakrabarti CBE and Philippa Whipple QC (moderator)



THE GLOBAL MEDIA REVOLUTION

SATURDAY 12 APRIL 2014

Speakers: Mark Thompson, Sir Howard Stringer and John J Kirby (moderator)



THE REAL SCIENCE BEHIND CSI

TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2014

Speakers: Professor Sir Alec Jeffreys, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe and Michael Ridpath (moderator)

Watch the 2014 Merton Conversations again online at www.merton.ox.ac.uk/merton-conversations



MERTON MUSIC & EXHIBITIONS

THROUGHOUT 2014

The new Dobson Organ in the College Chapel came to life and the whole College echoed to its majestic sound throughout the year-long Organ Festival. The College Choir performed *The Dream of Gerontius* in the Sheldonian Theatre, premiered compositions from the Merton Choirbook and toured in the United States.



Merton's historic Library and Archive were well placed to commemorate 750 years of rich history. More than 1,000 visitors were able to see Merton's treasures up close in the Upper Library. A special exhibition in the Bodleian Library and a series of exhibitions, lectures and symposiums in Merton covered a range of Mertonian stories, from the College's foundation in 1264 and its early relationship with its Jewish neighbours, through to Mertonians in the First World War and the marvellous imagination of JRR Tolkien.



Digging deep into their attics and their memories, Mertonians also sent in stories, photographs, old letters and other memorabilia to add to the Merton@750 Anniversary Collection, helping us to paint a picture of the College in its 750th year. Over 350 stories were collected from more than 50 Mertonians and made available to explore and enjoy online.

Photograph from 'Merton's 700th Anniversary', Keith Pickering (1960), © Gillman & Soame
Collected as part of the Merton@750 Anniversary Collection.



"Merton's 700th anniversary ball was held on my birthday. Tickets were £8 17s. The Footlights Revue came from Cambridge and John Barry's Seven played (John Barry wrote film music, including the score of 'Out of Africa')."

"I imagine there aren't many who did both balls – the 700th and the 750th. They didn't really compare, as the number of things going on at the 750th Ball this year was incredible. The 1964 Ball was much simpler – at the time it was fabulous, and so was this."

Derek Richards (1948)

Explore the Merton@750 Collection and add your own stories at share.merton.ox.ac.uk



THE FINAL 750TH ANNIVERSARY AND CAMPAIGN DINNER

FRIDAY 5 DECEMBER 2014

The Warden, along with the President of the Merton Society, The Rt Hon Sir Brian Leveson (1967), wrapped up a wonderful year with a celebratory dinner at The Middle Temple Hall in London. Bill Bryson was guest of honour and spirits were high following a glorious year and a successful fundraising campaign, which exceeded the College's £30 million target.



SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE: THE 750TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

"Our greatest thanks are due to all the Mertonians and friends of the College whose generosity has helped us guarantee the tutorial system, support our students and continue to protect our historic buildings. Whether you gave to our Annual Fund or became a College Benefactor, your generosity raised £30,419,635 for our Sustaining Excellence Campaign."

"With your help, we have made a huge stride along the path to sustaining Merton's excellence for years to come. Our hard work continues."

Christine Taylor, Fellow and Director of
Development



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Unless otherwise stated, all other photographs were
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More photographs from the 2014 Anniversary
Celebrations can be found online at
www.flickr.com/mertoncollege.





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