

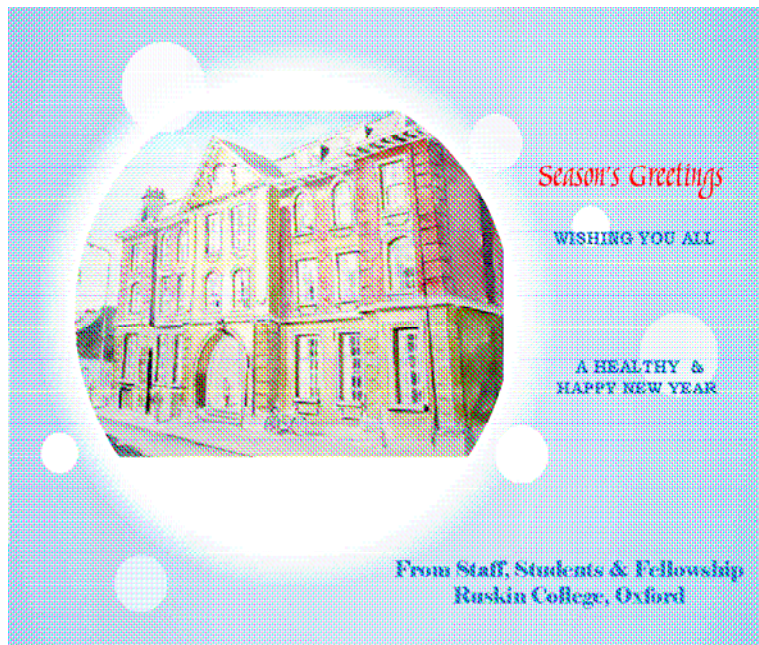
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EDITORIAL

This is the first Edition of a regular newsletter from Ruskin College and the Ruskin Fellowship (the independent association of ex-students), to be posted on the web page and sent via e-mail to those who have registered with the College. It will be posted each December and June with any 'newsflashes' as appropriate in between. So if you are reading this on the web and want a copy direct let us have your e-mail address.

It is intended to keep ex-students and those interested to keep in touch with the College and let you know what is happening, but also to air future plans and share our thoughts with you.



Hopefully you will respond, write us relevant letters, express your thoughts and give us ideas on how you feel the College should develop.

The Principal, Audrey Mullender, and President Of the Fellowship, Jan Smith will write up regular reports. We anticipate news from the Academic groups, news of ex-students where they are, their successes, where groups have local contacts/ meetings etc.

If you have any ideas for future editions please contact either the College or Fellowship. Hope you enjoy this and as the saying goes:- if you have, tell others. *If not, tell us why.*



[Principal's Page](#)

New Staff

Welcome to Sue Gibbs as the new Clerk to the Governors, and new tutors: Wolfgang Deicke in Politics, Julie Fox in Social Work, Helen Kidd in Creative Writing and English, and Yvette Summers in Youth Work. We are about to interview for a further part-time tutor in Creative Writing, one of our fastest growing subjects and one in which we now have two prizes endowed in memory of Alistair

Wisker, a colleague who sadly died at Easter. Ten staff across the College have moved from casual to permanent part-time contracts. Several very able new staff have joined key administrative and clerical posts.

NIACE Award

In June, Ruskin received the Fred Moore Award, in memory of Britain's one-time oldest learner, for its work on the Ransackers project. A special ceremony at Ruskin combined the presentation of the award on behalf of the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education and the Department for Education and Skills with the giving of certificates to former Ransacker students.

Curriculum

Degree courses at Ruskin now include Social Work, and International Labour and Trade Union Studies (ILTUS), while the Foundation Degree in Youth and Community Work has had a Community Development strand added. Further degrees being actively planned are Social Change (with the first two years already in place) and English Studies: Creative Writing and Critical Practice. There are also now MAs in Women's Studies, Public History, and International Labour and Trade Union Studies.

Opportunities to commence studying at lower levels are being extended so as to get people onto the first rungs of learning. Adult Literacy classes have proved a success. Workshops leading to the European Computer Driving Licence have also taken off quite well this term. Overall, Ruskin retains its mission to educate those with few or no qualifications and to transform the individuals concerned, along with the communities, groups and societies from which they come. At the same time, it is doing more to ensure that this takes people as far as they are personally able to go.

AimHigher and Progression Routes

A one-year project funded by AimHigher is focusing on progression routes from local FE Colleges into Ruskin, and also from Ruskin to a number of universities for students who choose not to complete their studies with us or whose selected subjects are not available. A recent event brought staff from local access courses to meet Ruskin tutors. The clear message was that our new degree courses will give us a great advantage in attracting those who do not want to move from a one-year access course to a one-year CertHE, only to have to move yet again thereafter.

TUC

Ruskin had a strong presence at Congress this year, co-sponsoring the GFTU Sunday-night reception, with GFTU – at which the Principal spoke about the new BA and MA courses for trade unionists, and sharing a stand with Northern College all week. There was a great deal of interest in the new directions the College is taking and in our successful recovery from recent problems.

Property Strategy

Work towards consolidating the main College on the existing Old Headington site is speeding up. Some pieces of property elsewhere in Oxford are being sold to help raise funds and an application is going in to the Learning and Skills Council for approval as well as an element of financial assistance. Good relations are being built with influential groups such as the Friends of Old Headington, the Headington Committee for Development Action and the Oxford Preservation Trust, and with the Conservation Officer for the area. Talks have opened with Worcester College to see whether the Walton Street site could be refurbished on a partnership basis so that Ruskin can continue running its short courses from there. Meanwhile, a refurbishment project for Stoke House is underway, intended to restore it to conference standard, and plans are once again being considered to build a 12-bed annexe there. Assistance from trade union colleagues to relaunch Stoke as Ruskin's trade union training centre would be warmly welcomed.

Financial Situation

The projected surplus was delivered last year and was higher than expected at just under a quarter of a million pounds. We still have to watch spending very carefully but some modest advances have been made in staffing, particularly in relation to the key areas of teaching and of learning support, and we are prioritising improvements in security cover at Ruskin Hall.

Success Story

'The MA in Public History has continued its successful track record. This year saw very good results for students: nearly 40% obtained distinctions. For so many students to achieve at this level is exceptional. Already students are putting their MAs into practice. For example, one has already started a research degree at the University of Oxford and another has been commissioned to write a biography for the new Dictionary of Biography, based on a scientist covered in his studies. A number of students who graduated last year have been offered PhD places and several from this year are now pursuing applications. Students and former students participated in the international inter-disciplinary conference 'People and their Pasts', sponsored by the British Academy and held at Ruskin in September, chairing sessions, delivering papers and contributing to the lively exchange of ideas.

Dr Hilda Kean
Course Director - MA in Public History

The Fundraising Campaign

The Fellowship has been aware of the need to raise funds for the College and two years ago was about to launch a scheme involving members. Audrey Mullender arrived with a scheme based on the College alumni. By agreement, these schemes were merged to mutual advantage. The College supplied the system, the Fellowship the organization and time.

A joint letter is sent from the Principal of the College and the President of the Fellowship to former students with telephones and, shortly after this, they receive a call from a group of volunteer ex-students who spend some time talking about the College more generally and answering any questions people may have about Ruskin in 2005 but who also have a serious reason for ringing: to raise money. This can come in the form of one-off gifts or, whenever possible, ongoing standing orders to produce a regular income. If the donors are taxpayers, the College can claim a further 28% back from the Inland Revenue.

The money can go to the College, the College Development Fund, or to the Fellowship Student Fund. This last fund has a built-in escalator.

The Fellowship Student Fund is designed to be spent directly on the needs of students. It might be in the form of a grant, or special equipment

for an individual student, but can also be used to provide for the students collectively. i.e. Study lamps, redecoration of Student Common Rooms. This would be directly beneficial to students and release College money to be spent elsewhere.

The Fund is held by the college but allocated by the Fellowship. Only the previous years income can be spent, less £1000 which, with any end of year surplus goes into an interest bearing account. Thus, over the years, this element must grow and produce a useful income. Just think: the College is over 100 years old so in another 100yrs the fund will be substantial The Fellowship could support its own scholarships long before then. Now that would be ex-students truly supporting future ones and putting something worthwhile back into the College. What a thought.

Should you not have a phone, or not receive a phone call, but would like to join the scheme, contact Bob, the coordinator. Tel: 01323 892647 or e-mail matbobshe@aol.com

The first calls were made on 27th November 2005 and we already have over £2000 per year from standing orders plus £500 in one-off donations - an encouraging start. Watch this space.

[Fellowship Local Contacts](#)

The fellowship has local contacts and we hope to develop more. If you live near one of the areas below and would like to make contact and find out what goes on, then do e-mail, or phone us.

Tyne and Wear

We hope to have an informal get together in March 2006. Mike Todd, (1967-1969) former student and Organiser for the Northern Region of the WEA. Phone 0191 4618100 or E-mail: ntodd@wea.org.uk

London

Carole Bonner (1998-1999), E-mail: c.bonner-alumni@lse.ac.uk

Informal irregular evening get-togethers in London.

Brighton

Bob Matthews (1966-1968), E-mail: matbobshe@aol.com or 01323 892647

I live just outside Brighton. If there is an interest, I'll arrange something in Brighton during term-time next year.

Oxford

Jan Smith (1995-1996), Email: jansmith103@hotmail.com or 01869 369095

About 300 members live in Oxford area. Jan has offered to convene a local group. Let her know if you would be interested.

[Thanks Ruskin](#)

My first introduction to Ruskin was in 1954. I was a local union representative and sent by my union on a TUC course. My tutor was Bill McCall, then on the TUC staff but later to become General Secretary of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants. The College Principal at that time was Billy Hughes. Not long after, I became a full time union officer and so most of my adult life has been spent in the trade union movement. Probably my main claim to fame was inventing the acronym THIGMOO (This Great Movement Of Ours) which quickly became adopted by cynics countrywide, including those professional cynics, the Labour press.

The achievement of which I was proudest was reaching an agreement with the employer setting out shop stewards' rights; this was used as a standard by ACAS but did not long survive the Blair Government. In those years I was quite often at Ruskin, although for conferences and meetings rather than study. Ruskin staff and particularly the Principal, John Hughes, were always an inspiration.

On retirement, after a few years doing this and that for ACAS and NEDO and some independent research, I became interested in the pensioners' movement and particularly in securing a voice for pensioners on matters that concerned them where they lived. This included leisure, recreation and education. It follows that I was very enthusiastic about an idea I heard being propounded by Vi Hughes, retired Ruskin tutor, at a conference of the government's Better Government for Older People project.

Vi's idea was to set up courses for older people who had missed out on higher education, providing an opportunity to pursue a research project of their own choosing, with expert help from College staff. She named the project Ransackers', Gaelic for 'researchers' says Vi (and who can argue with her?). With help from BGOP, the project got off the ground. Ruskin was keen to be involved and so I found myself on the first Ransackers course, with six other pensioners from a variety of backgrounds. Our individual projects covered a wide range: micro-banking in Uganda, the future of old age, the history of welfare for pensioners, older women from poor backgrounds making a success of life, council tax and students. My own was the Nazi attack on modern art in the 1930s.

We felt that the Ransackers course had changed our lives. In my case, this involved signing up for a two year MA course in Public History. I am now in my second year.

So Ruskin has played a big part in my life - and will continue to do so.

PS I'm a Yorkshire man, despite having lived in London for 60 years.

Tony Carter (1993-1995)

Editors Note: Tony left school at 15yrs old with a School Certificate. He retired as General Secretary of COPOU, Confederation of Post Office Unions, when BT and the Post Office split.)

[A Thank You from the Principal, Dr. Audrey Mullender](#)

In her Winter Report to Governors Audrey paid tribute to the Fellowship. To quote: ' Relations between the College and the Fellowship have never been stronger. The new President, Jan Smith, is keen to move forward together and is backing ideas for shared fundraising. Bob Matthews, the Fellowship's Membership Secretary, is using his knowledge of former students to head up a pilot telephone campaign aimed at raising money for the future of the College and its current learners. Efforts are also continuing to ensure that current and recent students hear about the Fellowship so that it can be enlivened by alumni from all eras and generations.'

[From the Fellowship President](#)

To those of you who are new to the idea of a Fellowship connected to the College, may I say that the first thing you should do is access an application form via the website at www.ruskin.ac.uk. The Fellowship is an organisation made up of ex-students, staff and associate members whose general aim and objective, apart from the fun and frolics and intense debate of the yearly re-union, is the support and promulgation of this excellent institution. Having experienced some fairly difficult times over the last few years, I think we can safely say that Ruskin College is now very securely under new management and experiencing a renaissance in its fortunes. What I, as President of the Ruskin Fellowship, would like to see during the next year is an emulation of this renaissance within the Fellowship.



As I write, we are almost on the eve of a significant fund-raising telephone appeal which we hope will not only find new supporters of the College, from both a financial and a physical point of view, but will also lead to an increased membership of the Fellowship. The appeal is part of a joint action by the academic staff, the students and members of the Fellowship.

The appeal is indicative of the way I would like to see the Fellowship progressing over the next twelve months; that is conjointly with the College and with the Students. We need progression and this can only be achieved by engaging the present students and the staff in our aims and endeavours. We also need to widen our scope and engage past students who have, for one reason or another, disengaged themselves from the activities of both the College and the Fellowship. Part of the work we shall be doing during 2006 will be to advertise both the College and the Fellowship to an extended group of prospective and ex-students.

At the moment we have a female Principal of the College, a female President of the Fellowship and a female Secretary of the Fellowship. Is it the year of the Ruskin woman? I hope it is, but I also hope that it is the year of the Ruskin man. I am a firm believer in everyone from whatever gender, age, ethnic group, religion or cultural background working together for the common good and I am convinced that the College is a part of that common good.

I hope that you will join us in the highly enjoyable task of putting both the College and the Fellowship very firmly back within the thoughts of everyone who has been a student at Ruskin, whatever the timescale of their course may have been. Whether you attended for a weekend, a week, a month or for years, you are still entitled to become a member of the Fellowship. Alongside this we hope to encourage new members to join the select band of individuals who have undergone the ' Ruskin Experience' .

As we approach holiday time can I, on behalf of the Executive Membership of the Fellowship, wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Peaceful and Happy New Year.

[Jan's Night Out](#)

Recently the President of the Fellowship, Jan Smith, braved the elements and underwent the experience of homelessness.

A regular event, the sleep out attempts to raise money for resources for the homeless. The money raised is shared amongst the many charitable agencies who work with the homeless in Oxford. The volunteers are sponsored to sleep out in a local churchyard (St Clements) and in the past the event has been very successful raising thousands of pounds for the homeless. Luckily the night was cold but dry but Jan admitted that the experience was not one that she would like to undertake on a regular basis. 'It certainly concentrates the mind on the comforts of home', she said.

Fellowship Reunion 2006!

The Fellowship reunion in 2006 will take place over the weekend of Friday 15th/Sunday 17th September. Booking forms go out on 24th June 2006. Usual buffet, bar and entertainment on Saturday.

!!ANNIVERSARY!!

Richard Andrews, Jock Jeffery, Tom Morris and Bob Matthews are Ruskin Fellowship Executive Committee members together and also came up to Ruskin in 1966 together, 40 short years ago. 2006 will be the 40th Anniversary Reunion. We are in touch with Stan Thorne, Fred Smith, Roy Evans, Derek Hill-Willis, Bob Jones, Pete Cook, John Milne, Dave Mansell and Malcolm Ball. Hopefully they will attend. Sadly Larry Giles lives in Canada still and is unlikely to make it here. Can you?

We would welcome any others from the intake of 1966/1968. The Fellowship has agreed that non-members from that year may attend the special reunion at a slightly increased charge but will need to book via the official form. So if you are from 1966/1968 and want to come, contact Bob on 01323 892647, or e-mail matbobshe@aol.com. Let's make it a cracker.

X'mas Fun Day, Headington



Principal, Audrey Mullender, Mavis Bayton, Bill Dewhurst and Bob Mathews spent the Fun Day seeking new members at the traffic lights at Headington. It proved very busy with enquiries. The 'fun' was in keeping away the cold with mulled wine!

Gladys Ingham

We are sorry to hear that Gladys died in April this year. Early students may remember Gladys was the House Keeper at The Rookery in the 50' s. She married Peter Patterson (52-54) Peter went on to become a Social Worker until his retirement and now lives in Surrey. We extend our condolences to his family and will think very much of Peter in the coming season of good will.

NEWS SECTION

Magdalen Mayday Madness!

I am sure everyone remembers meeting on Magdalen Bridge to greet the dawn and the College choir singing from the tower, or watch the Morris Dancers, or even have a punt out with 'champers' over night. Do you?

The event's been going some 500 years but one of the side spectaculars has come under scrutiny, so much so,, that some want it banned, perhaps not too surprising, given the results of the participants' folly.

People jump from the bridge, some 25ft into the river. Foolhardy you might say... well, you would be right. The river is often only 18 inches deep! Results.....the Radcliffe Infirmary almost called a major incident alert this year: 41 were taken to hospital, 12 detained, one seriously injured, £73,000 spent on corrective surgery.

This, despite 60 privately hired Stewards, who tried to persuade people not to jump; it would seem with little effect as some 100 plus did jump. The police, amongst others, would like the bridge closed off, but there is fierce resistance from within. I wonder how many Ruskin students jumped?

Have you any memories of Oxford, mad or otherwise, share them with us please.