

Christ Church Matters

M I C H A E L M A S T E R M 2 0 0 8

ISSUE 22



Editorial



Amid the current economic turmoil, it may seem either apt or foolhardy that we dedicate our main feature this edition to looking at five old members who have made their careers in finance. Linked to the

same theme, Philip Wright (1972) reports on the City Reception which took place on bonfire night. No effigies of the absent regulator were burnt, as far as I am aware, and it must have been one of the few places in the City where there were no fireworks, but a much needed good time was had by all. Crispin Odey (1977) gave a lively account of the last few decades of economic history and put the current crunch into its longer term historical context.

The day after the City Reception, the year representatives had their annual dinner and meeting, breaking with tradition for once by eschewing Oxford for Brown's Brasserie in Mayfair. Ideas for interesting events often spring from these meetings. On page 21, Tom Greggs gives us a spirited write up on the 1999 matriculation dinner, held in the Freind Room in May. Still fighting fit, 63 former college rugby players from 1954 to the present day met in Christ Church on 30th September for the first ever Rugby Gaudy. No Rugby was played that evening, but you will have to read Reg Clark's (1976) account to see if there were any scrums over Bitter beer. We are always looking for additional year reps, regional reps and sports reps, so if you are interested do contact Emma Sinden in the Development Office.

Ten days before the Rugby Gaudy we held our annual Association Dinner. This was the occasion to mark the retirement of the pillar of the English faculty and former co-editor of Christ Church Matters, Professor Christopher Butler. In his indomitable fashion and showing true college spirit he turned what could have been a sad occasion into a party. We wish Christopher a long and active retirement, and if he is planning any gardening he may want to take some advice from the column next door and don his guerrilla fatigues.

As you start to organise your dates for 2009, I hope you will note that the Association Dinner next year will be on Saturday, 26th September, during Henry's House Party. But for now may I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. ■

Fiona Holdsworth (1981), Editor
fiona.holdsworth@btopenworld.com

On Guerrilla Gardening



ABOVE: Richard Reynolds standing in his guerrilla gardening outside his home at the Elephant & Castle London

There is an omission from my recent book, *On Guerrilla Gardening – A Handbook For Gardening Without Boundaries* (Bloomsbury, 2008). Chapter Four is a history of this global movement of illicit gardening, but Christ Church's part in that history was edited out. So consider this paragraph a summary and addendum to that chapter.

I credit a redundant textile merchant called Gerrard Winstanley as the first guerrilla gardener on record. In 1649 he and other impoverished villagers began cultivating the common land of St George's Hill in Surrey. His illicit farming encampment and prolific pamphleting inspired the creation of other Digger colonies across the South East but the project could not survive repeated attacks from landowners and their henchmen. By the 20th century St George's Hill was no guerrilla garden but a fortified estate of millionaire mansions and one time home to two of The Beatles.

For the purposes of this summary the history jumps to 1969 and a vacant lot in the university grounds of Berkeley, California. Within a few days in May it was planted by guerrilla gardeners and named The People's Park. It is still there today despite Governor Ronald Regan's attempt to quell with the National Guard what he feared was a hippy uprising. Guerrilla gardening's next most significant flowering was in New York where in 1973 the Green Guerillas were formed. This bunch of students and artists transformed derelict land into community gardens and after thirty sometimes-turbulent years finally secured protection for many of them from the city's parks department - a victory for guerrilla gardeners.

In 'On Guerrilla Gardening' I describe how in 2004 I began transforming some neglected planters beneath my council run tower block in London's Elephant & Castle, how my activity spread around London and how my blog at **GuerrillaGardening.org** led to thousands around the world getting involved. When I began I was unaware of the movement's existence or history and my motivations, like so many I've subsequently met, was simply pride for his neighbourhood and a lifelong love of gardening (that for me was unsatisfied living in a sixth floor flat). But I skipped reference to my guerrilla gardening at Christ Church in Trinity 1998.

I was living in Canterbury 2.2, a ground floor room with large window sills. By my third term I was bored of the view of gravel quadrangle and the distant Peckwater lawns and my green fingers itched to get busy. So I bought a couple of window boxes and packed them with multi-coloured Busy Lizzies (*Impatiens*). These sat on my window sill for weeks and did not just improve my view but provided cheer to passers by, particularly those on the tortuous walk towards the examination halls.

My instincts, as now, were that while it was not allowed, it was unlikely to be removed. I was right. If only I could have encouraged a movement back then Christ Church could have been a much more colourful place.

Please visit **GuerrillaGardening.org** for more information. ■

Richard Reynolds
(1995)

On Guerrilla Gardening, by Richard Reynolds,
published by Bloomsbury Publishing PLC **£8.99**