



A woman's place...

Miranda Kaufman
(2001)

This summer, 200 alumnae returned to the House to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Women at Christ Church. Saturday 24 June offered an opportunity for alumnae to reminisce and celebrate a rich diversity of achievements. On Sunday 25 June families and friends of our alumnae were welcomed to Christ Church for a veritable carnival of activities. Many thanks to all who put together this successful and significant event.

Given that Christ Church was founded over 450 years ago, 25 years of women might not seem particularly significant.

The Upper Library's creative exhibition of women's memorabilia reflected the low level of involvement of women in Christ Church before 1980. For example, a copy of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* was on display. Spenser's poem was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I, who, as monarch, was the official Visitor of the House. Can Elizabeth I be described as a 'Woman of Christ Church'? Certainly she and the other Queen Elizabeth are the only women boasting portraits in Hall.

From what Judy Pallot said after dinner, it became clear that the arrival of women at Christ Church was not exactly greeted with delight amongst many members of the House. This feeling was confirmed by some of the stories told by the first year of female entrants. On their first night in college a couple of girls had gone to the bar and ordered two beers. They met with the response: 'I'm sorry, we don't serve dogs here.' This line had apparently been thought up and planned in advance. I find this story shocking on two counts. Not only does it display rudeness and disrespect, but even worse, it displays absolutely no humour, wit or intelligence! At least the other

line circulating at the time, 'A Woman's Place is in the Home and not the House', was a decent pun!

Despite initial hostility in some quarters, the women who have passed through Christ Church in the last 25 years have gone on to achieve great things. This was made clear by the wealth of interesting speakers available on the Saturday afternoon in a variety of careers-based panels. Louise Bagshawe – an alpha female such that she needed no panel to support her – had a supreme self confidence of a sort I have rarely seen in a woman. I suppose it's the sort you might acquire when your first book is published when you're 21. She has an amazing absence of self doubt, revealing that she was a convert to Catholicism, and thus regretted the sex scenes in her early work. The next bombshell (her talk began to be like one of her novels, with a new plot twist every few minutes) was that she aspired to become a Tory MP! The Q&A session at the end became almost comical, especially once our Chair declared herself to be a Lesbian Quaker.





Amelia Neilson
PHOTO: DAVID NEILSON

On Saturday night, women of three decades could be found in the Undie dancing to retro cheese classics, some on the tables, some fending off the attentions of the handful of first year boys who had got wind of the event and made it their business to attend. This spectacle demonstrated the quiet – or not so quiet – confidence of these women, who although varying widely in personalities, and not necessarily friends (even in 1980, the small number of women in college did not all know each other's names), nonetheless displayed the solidarity of a minority group who have worked hard to get where they are today, creating along the way a community in Christ Church accessible to men and women alike. ■

'What a glorious day, it was fantastic. I do hope you won't wait another 25 years to organise another one!' **Francesca Boschet-Michel** (1985)

'A weekend to remember for a long time.'
Katie Ernest (1984)

'The perfect mix of the seriousness of the occasion and the frivolity that characterised much of our time at ChCh!' **Elizabeth Newton** (1995)



INSET OPPOSITE: *Croquet in the Master's Garden*
PHOTO: JOHN DRUMMOND

LEFT: *Pre-dinner drinks*
PHOTO: DAVID NEILSON

BELOW: *1980 matriculates 25 years on*
PHOTO: JOHN DRUMMOND



The Queen meets the Dean

Royal visit to the House is great success.

John Harris, Steward



TOP: *from left to right: Belinda Jack (Junior Censor), Christopher Lewis (Dean of Christ Church) and Edwin Simpson (Senior Censor) with Her Majesty*

ABOVE: *pupils from Christ Church Cathedral School welcome the Queen in Tom Quad*

BOTH PHOTOS: BI SCOTT

BRILLIANT SUNSHINE added further sparkle to an already festive occasion on Friday 5 May 2006, when Her Majesty the Queen, Visitor of Christ Church, spent the day in Oxford and much of it at the House. Members of the whole Christ Church community, including staff and pupils from the Cathedral School, were joined by friends and family and lined Tom Quad to greet Her Majesty as the Royal Daimler arrived and the Royal standard rose above the Deanery.

By this time the Queen had already completed several official engagements elsewhere in Oxford. Events at the House began with a reception in the Deanery, where groups representing different sectors of the academic community, staff and benefactors were presented.

Her Majesty took lunch in Hall and was warmly welcomed by the Dean, describing her as a 'fellow member of this House' and offering birthday congratulations. The lunch was attended principally by junior and senior members, as well as a number of civic guests. Head Chef Roland Dépit and his brigade had not had to compete on television to prepare the celebratory lunch for the Queen and 300 guests, producing an Aubergine Terrine, Best End of Spring Lamb and a Mango Tarte Tatin. The Buttery cellar had yielded a 1992 Johannisberger Erntebinger and a 1989 Chateau Beychevelle.

The extra ingredient in the day's events was the performance in Hall of a play after lunch. Act I, scene VII of *Macbeth* was chosen. The players were undergraduates Jessica Lund and Luke Parker, and the piece was produced by Oscar Wood. The performance of a play in Hall to an Elizabethan monarch represented a piece of neat historical symmetry, Queen Elizabeth I having similarly enjoyed a play in Christ Church Hall in 1592. ■