



The Churchillian

The Newsletter of the Churchill Hall Association
Summer 2020



Churchill Hall Association News Updates

Update on 2020

This Newsletter is being sent to you at an unusual time, the time we should have been meeting for our annual reunion, and dinner in the Hall, together with a number of events arranged with the other Hall Associations. Clearly all this has been cancelled for this year. With the uncertainty and the requirements of the University year, a delay to later has proved impossible, and so we will not meet until next summer. Which, we hope to make a great weekend, but in the meantime, we hope that you are to keep well and will find something of interest in this Newsletter.

Can you help us?

The Covid-19 lockdown has demonstrated the real willingness of many people to give their time or skills to help others in a whole variety of ways. The Churchill Hall Association (of which everyone who has spent an academic year (or such part as they could) in Hall is a member) exists to be an engaged and supportive community; and the CHA Committee is there to help to make this happen.

We need you to help us to fulfil this purpose effectively. Why? Because this Committee must be able to reflect the interests and views of the membership as a whole, and currently it is insufficiently diverse to be confident that it can do this. We very much need the involvement of relatively recent graduates - for instance those of you who were in Hall after it went co-ed. Members based in or around Bristol would also be very valuable.

Could you assist? Please give this idea some thought – and then drop a line, entirely without commitment, to committee@churchillhallassociation.co.uk so that we can discuss with you what might be involved – we'd be happy to be flexible. We would love to have your involvement and are confident that you'd enjoy this particular way of making a difference.

Alumni Reunion Weekend 2021

It is hoped that the 2021 reunion weekend will be taking place in the summer of 2021 and will include the annual CHA dinner and a wide variety of other events, all subject to the current advise nearer the time. More details will follow early next year, and be available on our website

<https://www.churchillhallassociation.co.uk/>

or from the University website.



Staying in Contact

As you may be aware that the University is moving to a new platform called **Bristol Connects** which facilitates new networking features and incorporates our new dedicated network **Connect Churchill Hall**. The objective is to make it easier for you to regain contact with friends from your time in Bristol. The Alumni Relations Office will be using Bristol Connects in the future for their communications, so you should sign up and ensure your details are up to date.

Joining Bristol Connects

- 1) For those that have already created an account it is important to us that you identify with having stayed at Churchill Hall, so that we can identify you on the new system.

To do this please login to Bristol Connects <https://www.bristol.aluminate.net/>
Then go to **Profile** and **Your time at Bristol** and use the edit function to select your Hall of Residence and any Students' Union club or society that you were affiliated with.

- 2) For those that have not so far created a Bristol Connects account please find out all the information you need to get it up and running:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/alumni/documents/volunteer-resources/guide-to-getting-started-on-bristol-connects.pdf>

Then create an account <https://www.bristol.aluminate.net/> and populate it with your details; to save time, if you have a LinkedIn account you may import your details.

Then go to **Profile** and **Your time at Bristol** and use the edit function to select your Hall of Residence and any Students' Union club or society that you were affiliated with.

Joining Connect Churchill Hall

Now that you have joined Bristol Connects please join our dedicated network Connect Churchill Hall. Go to the Networks tab at the top of the Alumni Directories homepage and then select our network and then Join Network:



Please pass this information on to any former Churchill Hall residents that you have kept in contact with and who are interested in reconnecting and are not currently covered by the University's mail shots because, for example, the University does not hold a current email address for them.

CHA Website

A reminder that the Churchill Hall Association also has its own website that contains up to date information on events and newsletters and articles on Churchill Hall. It is designed to assist in the building of an engaged and supportive CHA that represents the views of its members, please take a look and bookmark for future reference

<https://www.churchillhallassociation.co.uk/>

Visit to Chartwell

In conjunction with the London Branch the Association was planning a visit to Chartwell, the home of Sir Winston Churchill, the University's Chancellor from 1929 to 1965.

Chartwell was the much-loved Churchill family home, where Sir Winston drew inspiration from 1924 until the end of his life. The visit planned for 2nd May had to be postponed but is now being planned for 8th May 2021 (date subject to confirmation) but details will be available from the Bristol alumni website.

Chair's Review, 2019 – 2020



I suppose that it is true of the great majority of organisations and individuals, in this country and around the world, that 2020 is going to be a year we would rather forget. So much optimism to start with; so much sadness and regret, and so many cancelled plans since March...and it seems inevitable that the consequences – direct and indirect - of the coronavirus pandemic, and of the defensive policies that governments have felt it necessary to implement, will be with us for a very considerable time more.

Of course, the impacts for Churchill Hall Association pale into insignificance compared with those for many organisations – but they are distressing nevertheless. We had put in place plans that would have resulted in a considerably more dynamic programme than in any recent year, and had forged a more active relationship with current student residents – via the JCR and its President – than in the past. All lost, of course...except in the sense that lessons have been learned and precedents set that will help us to replicate the plans next academic year.

One of the big questions, of course, is what that 'next academic year' will look like? By the time you read this, it may be clearer how many students there will be next year – and where they will come from? And what the academic and residential offer will comprise? And whether, if the social experience of being at university is going to be a much curtailed one, students will sign up, given the levels of fees and other expenses? It would, of course, be a very different Churchill Hall if, for instance, there were many fewer arts faculty students, or many fewer overseas undergrads – and all keeping two metres (or whatever is required by then) apart!

However, taking the view that most problems also result in opportunities, we look forward to the end of the period during which we (and the whole University, of course) need to lock down, socially distance ourselves and generally fight off feelings of depression about both the immediate and the longer-term futures. And we do so in the hope that individuals, organisations and society as a whole will emerge with attitudes that, in some ways at least, are kinder, more responsible and with a longer-term focus.

Alastair Scott (BSc 1965), Churchill Hall, 1962-3

Updates from Churchill Hall

For those of us who left Hall before 2018, it may be helpful to explain the management arrangements. The Hall is no longer managed by the Warden with the help of the Hall Tutors, but is now part of the North Residential Village, which covers the Halls of Residence in Stoke Bishop. The overall management of the Hall is now through the Head of Residential Life (North Village), who is part of the Student Residential Life Service of the Student Services Directorate of the University. In the Hall there is a Chief and a number of Senior Residents, who are mainly post graduate level students and are familiar faces around to help students and help to manage issues around safety or security. Within the Hall there is still a Junior Common Room and Committee.

Update from Andrew Abbey, (Head of Residential Life (North Village))



Clearly the 2019/20 year in Churchill has been significantly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The University announced that all University teaching buildings were to be closed and teaching moved on line two weeks before the planned start of the Easter vacation i.e. from Friday March 13th. The majority of residents left over the course of the next two weeks. As a result the residential year in Churchill has been reduced to 22 weeks.

This has led to a great sense of disappointment for many first years who feel they have been 'robbed' of their first year experience and it is the case that it takes until the second term for many students to adjust to the transition into University life and to start to really make the most of their time. The summer term is always a positive time in the North village residencies with the warmer weather contributing to a positive mood and use of the outdoor space

A big success in Churchill this year has been the mature and wise use of the JCR funds by Ed, the JCR President and the committee, investing in long term improvements in facilities for students in Churchill. To date approximately £8,000 of their budget of £18,000 has been invested in improvements to facilities and equipment including a home cinema system, new speakers in the hexagon room and various items of sports equipment with ongoing plans still to invest a further £7,000 in other items including a new sound system for the JCR and bikes for use.

In my relatively short time here I have encouraged JCR's to look to invest some of their funds on longer term benefits as opposed to all being spent on social events. Ed and the committee, this year have really taken this on board to their credit.

I was really pleased too that Churchill JCR reacted positively to an approach from me to see if they wished to contribute to the Founders Ball. Churchill were first to respond to a request for contributions. Unfortunately this is now not going ahead but hopefully the seed can be planted with next year's committee to agree to become involved and take part next year

Churchill students were still able to enjoy the Christmas formal meal and other social events including at least two movie nights a week. The JCR also broadcast sports events with the six nations seeing turnouts of over 60-70 students.

One area that has proved to be a challenge in Churchill during 2019/20 was a disappointing increase in the level of damage to some areas, in particular to the external doors at the entrance to some of the blocks. There did at times, in certain areas seem to be a disrespect for the Hall with some students.

We have had difficulties in establishing a strong and full team of Senior Residents this year and this has not helped. Our Chief Resident, left suddenly at the end of 2019. Following their departure we did appoint a new Chief Resident but she had only recently taken up her post when the pandemic caused the early end to the term. Churchill needs a strong pastoral care team given the size and design of the hall and the makeup of the student body which can lack diversity and lead to some students feeling isolated.

We will be reviewing the role of the Chief and Senior Residents over the summer and are looking to increase the proactive side of their role, i.e. delivering more in the way of activities and initiatives designed to build an inclusive community and support health and wellbeing.

Overall life in North village was progressing well until Coronavirus appeared. A major initiative this year for Residential Life as a whole was the introduction of a Well Being Access service. This opens up access to well-being support to all University students who can complete an online form requesting support at any time 24 hours a day. This has been a sector leading initiative that will continue to provide support to all students in the future.

The challenges for the coming year are twofold. Firstly what will the accommodation provision look like for the 2020/21 intake? Significant decisions have to be made by the University as they consider likely student numbers for the next year and beyond. Secondly, we anticipate that the need for welfare support will continue and be more

important than ever given the fact that most new students will have experienced a significant period of lockdown and restrictions on their normal activities which may make a move to University more significant and challenging than normal. It will be an interesting year ahead.

Andrew Abbey, (Head of Residential Life (North Village))

Update from Ed Smiley, President of the JCR

The JCR has used this year's budget to entertain this year's students with social events as well as to invest in long term improvements to facilities and equipment. The first thing we did was to improve Churchill's communal spaces by investing heavily in the hexagon room and the main common room. The hexagon room was previous unused but we re-clothed the snooker table as well as buying a darts board, TV and speakers resulting in its constant use. In the main common room we bought a new table tennis table as well as a projector and beanbags so that we could host film nights as well as broadcast live sports events. Now that the year has been cut short we plan to invest the remaining budget in a surround sound speaker system in the common room to go with the projector as this was the only thing lacking. However, we are waiting for access to the main building before this can take place and be installed. We also purchased sports equipment such as footballs, frisbees, rugby balls and a plastic cricket set to be used in the quad.

In terms of social events the twice-a-week film nights and televised sports events were incredibly popular with regular high attendances. We would provide food and snacks to add to the occasions which everyone loved. We put on a day to the horse races in which we hired a bus and people went to the local point to point for a fun day out. This had great reviews and as a result we were planning a few more excursions for the summer term which are sadly no longer possible. On a few occasions we also provided alcohol in the common room on Mondays evenings before everyone went clubbing and this really brought people together.

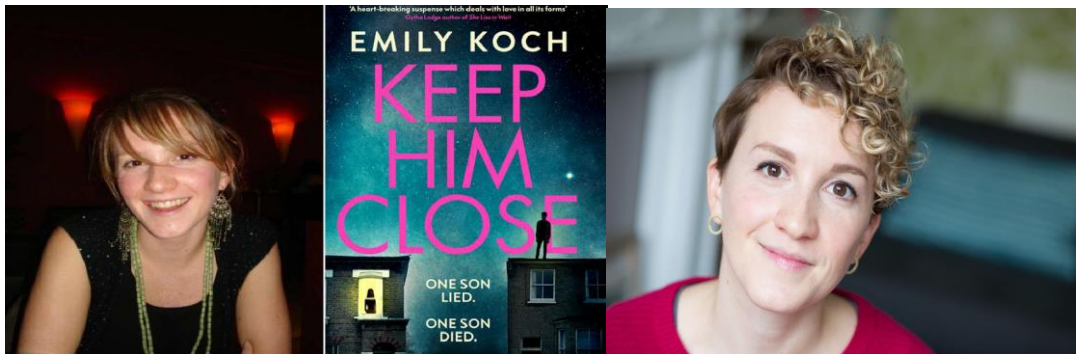
The December Churchill formal was a great success with a Christmas themed dinner for 240 students followed by dancing downstairs. For many people it was the highlight of their Churchill experience. It is such a shame that the remaining two formals cannot take place along with the summer party planned in the quad. A lot of Churchill students are feeling quite down about this and feel our time has been cut too short without being able to make use of the quad in the summer which everyone was so looking forward to.

One suggestion is a final farewell party in the autumn to take place just before the new Churchill students move in but this obviously depends on government guidelines.

Ed Smiley (President of the JCR 2019-20)

Emily Koch

(Churchillian, award-winning journalist and writer, who was going to speak at our planned July 2020 dinner)



Churchill Hall has become something of a tradition in my family. When I arrived for my fresher's year in the autumn of 2004, I was the third Koch in forty years to unpack my bags into a room overlooking the quad. My father, Hugh, was there in 1969-70 and my brother James was seven years ahead of me in 1997-8.

Dad had enjoyed his time there so much that he recommended it to my brother, and my brother loved it enough that when I came to put down my choices for halls onto the application form, there was no question in my mind where I should go. They both told me that Churchill was, without a doubt, the best hall to be in: I'd have the most fun and be with the best people.

And the family connection goes even further. When I was filling out the accommodation application, I was doing a summer season on a Greek island, teaching windsurfing. My friend and colleague Matt, the resort's mountain bike guide, was also starting at Bristol University later that year and didn't know which halls to list as his preference. 'You've got to put down Churchill,' I told him. 'Go on, it'll be fun if we both end up there.' So he did.

Sixteen years later: we're married and have two daughters.

That year as a resident of C-block feels like a very long time ago, and the memories have faded with time into a haze of trying to revise while lying on the grass of the quad, regular meals in the dining hall, voting in my first general election in the hall library,

singing at the hall bar's open mic nights, and fire alarms going off in the middle of the night (rarely due to a real fire, more often as a result of a prank gone wrong).

Outside of hall life I was busy getting to grips with the first year of my English degree, which I remember enjoying but finding a huge step up from school-level education. The challenge of it, and the many (MANY!) books I had to read, have paid off now, as I am two novels into what I hope may be a long career as an author. Every day I'd join the throngs of students walking across the Downs and down Whiteladies Road, to the university buildings in Woodland Road, and the Arts and Social Sciences library.

I would spend weekends at various windsurfing events all over the country, wherever there was a body of water and some breeze. On Wednesday afternoons when my friends played hockey or football, I was on a freezing cold lake in Gloucestershire teaching beginners to windsurf for the university club, which I became president of in my second year at Bristol.

Some of my closest friends now are people I met in Churchill – three of our eldest daughter's godparents were there with us, and we often reminisce about our time there.

After completing my degree, I spent six months living in London, training to become a newspaper journalist, but I immediately returned to Bristol afterwards. In my final year studying English I'd spent Saturdays doing paid shifts at the local paper, the Bristol Evening Post, and they offered me a permanent role when I finished my training.

Bristol is now firmly the base for me and my family. My ex-Churchillian brother is also still here, and has two successful establishments on Gloucester Road – award-winning bar, restaurant and live music venue The Gallimaufry and vegan restaurant Suncraft.

I remember my year at Churchill fondly, especially when I am up on the Downs, which is often! I haven't been back there much, but during the Covid-19 lockdown I did take my daily exercise on my bike one day and cycled round the Downs and then up to see my old hall. It looks much the same – though it was quieter than I remember, for obvious reasons.

At more usual times, I smile fondly when I see students traipsing across the Downs to their lectures, and wonder if they have walked from Churchill, and if so what block they might be in. Maybe one of them is living in my old room? I hope they are making lifelong friends, like I did – and maybe even finding their future husband or wife!

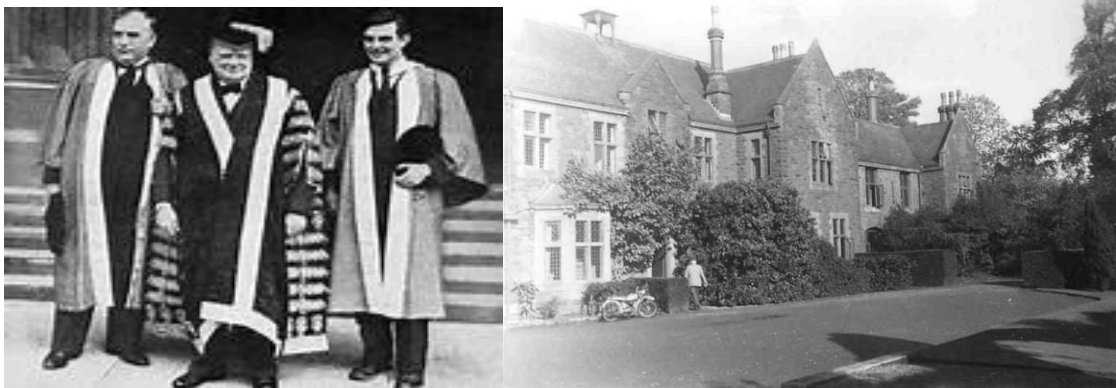
Notes

**Keep Him Close, Emily's second novel, is out now. It's a dark domestic drama about the friendship between a woman whose son has died and the mother of the boy accused of his murder. Hardback, e-book and audiobook formats available from all good bookshops.*

Emily Koch (Churchill Hall 2004-5) is an award-winning journalist and writer living in Bristol with her husband and daughters. Her debut novel - *If I Die Before I Wake* - was shortlisted for the Crime Writers' Association Ian Fleming Steel Dagger award, longlisted for Authors' Club Best First Novel Award, and selected as a Waterstones Thriller of the Month. Her second novel, *Keep Him Close*, came out earlier this year [2020]. The Sunday Times called it 'a tense drama' and The Sun said it was 'Twisty, emotional and addictive'. Waterstones have said it: "cements Koch's place as one of the most exciting new crime writers of our day."

Churchill Hall and VE Day 1945

2020 is the 75 anniversary of VE Day, and this was going to be a subject to be covered at the annual reunion weekend. However, it may seem strange to talk about Churchill Hall and VE day, as the Hall did not open until 1956, but there are a number of connections.



Firstly is our name, for not only was the Churchill Hall named after the wartime Prime Minister, who was the Universities third Chancellor (from 1929-65), but the Hall came about as a result of the "Churchill Appeal". Which was launched in October 1946, in the belief that "a very large number of our fellow countrymen,..., would welcome an opportunity of showing in a practical way their deep appreciation of Mr. Churchill's incomparable leadership..." it aimed to raise £300,000 (at 1946 prices) to provide additional student accommodation.

Secondly, the Holmes, for although the University purchased the house in 1943, they did not get to use it until 1946, as it became the official residence of a number of senior American Commanders, including Generals Collins, Hodge, Devers, Patton and most notably Omar Bradley. It was here Gen Bradley commander of the US 1st Army, and later 12th Army Group, planned the D-Day landings. In his (mainly ghost written) autobiography “A Soldier’s Story” he refers to the Holmes twice.

(1) “V Corps had requisitioned a residence for me beyond the Bristol Downs, a billet spacious enough to house my key staff officers and aides.”

(2) “It was 7.15 when I went down to breakfast at my quarters in Bristol on the morning of June 3rd. We had loitered late over dinner the night before, our last evening together in England. Today we were to board Admiral Kite’s flagship for the invasion. D-Day had been set for June 5th*, and the warm summer sun that poured through the leaded glass windows of the Holmes cheered us ...” (*D-Day was postponed to 6th June due to the weather.)

To mark these events a framed statement from General (President) Eisenhower (who was Supreme Allied commander Europe) which reads “It was here General Bradley spent the months during which he organized the First United States Army for the momentous assault against the Normandy beaches.” can still be seen in the Main Hall of the Holmes, see image below.



It is not possible to consider the story of VE day without covering the wider effect of the war on the University and City. Much of which concerned bombing, the destruction of the University Great Hall in December 1940 (see picture above), and the terrible bombing of Bristol on Good Friday (April) 1941, which killed 200 people and injured about double that number. It should be noted Winston Churchill visited the City and University the following day to award honorary degrees to Robert Menzies and Gil

Winant (the US Ambassador) (see the first picture at the top of this article) having travelled through the bomb ravaged City. Also as Churchill Hall is now part of the North Village, we should remember the former students who lost their lives and are remembered on the memorial in the Monica Wills Chapel in Wills Hall.

David Ewart (BSc 1977), Churchill Hall 1974-7

Treasurer's Report

The financial year for the Association ends on 31 March, so the majority of the activity and hence, of this report, relates to activities in 2019.

As usual, the major activity of the Association is related to the Reunion Weekend and a variety of factors resulted in an increased surplus on the event. We do not use the Weekend to raise funds but the costs for the event have to be set in advance and, whilst some charges such as the cost of rooms are on a 'per head' basis, there are others where we are charged a single amount for the event and we have to assess the likely numbers and calculate what the equivalent charge per person will be.

In 2019 a number of factors have led to a surplus of £200 for the year, giving us funds in hand of £4,024 and so as I mentioned in my report in the 2019 Newsletter (which was published much latter in the year) we were pleased to be able to give a donation to the Friends of the Botanic Gardens in appreciation of the tour.

Part of our 'Mission Statement' is to support the life of the Hall so, as can be seen, we have the funds to do this when suitable objectives are identified.

Keith Walton

Churchill Hall 1969-72