

## May Secretary's Report

Greetings to you all.

By now, you will all have heard and digested the latest COVID news, and particularly the start of a cautious re-opening of society over the summer months.

This, of course, is excellent news. It also means that we on the VOCS board will be considering any events we may be able to organize as we move into summer. No Bard on the Beach this year, of course, but we ought to be able to put something together before you all disappear overseas to celebrate the resumption of international flights.

In the meantime, please email us ([vanoxbridge@gmail.com](mailto:vanoxbridge@gmail.com)) with any suggestions you may have for suitable summer festivities.

There is a tradition in Oxford for celebrating the May morning. For those unfamiliar with this event, the choristers of Magdalen celebrate by singing the hymn Hymnus Eucharisticus from the top of Magdalen Tower at 6am on the morning of May 1st. The choir also sings the madrigal, Now is the Month of Maying, followed by prayers for the city led by the Dean of Divinity.

No-one knows precisely when this event started: the common held belief is that it is over 500 years old.

In non-COVD years, it became extremely popular. In 2017, it is estimated that a record 27,000 people gathered to hear the choir.

The singing is then followed by general revelry and festivities in Radcliffe Square for a couple of hours from 6:15am onwards, whereupon everyone goes home and starts their daily routine. If one were to walk through Radcliffe Square later that morning, no trace of the festivities would remain.

Last year, the celebrations were cancelled, although the choristers did manage to sing remotely and post to YouTube. This year, however, the singing did take place on Magdalen Tower, but without any crowds or other festivities. Here is the YouTube link to this year's celebration: <https://youtu.be/Dhwxo2pvp5s>.

Enjoy (and also observe the temperature atop the tower at 6am!!).

I have hazy memories of celebrating May morning when I was up at Oxford. If my memory serves me right, the best way to celebrate is to go to a ball the previous evening (even better if one gatecrashes the ball) and do the whole thing in evening dress!!

I look forward to hearing from you.

Simon Taylor