

St Clare's Newsletter



No 8

May 2001

What's been happening here?

Study * Conference on human rights Chinese
new year celebrations * Fundraising sponsored walk
* EFL teaching conference * Seminars on love &
death * Tosca at Covent Garden * record IB results
* St Clare's on-line * philosophy seminars *
Latin dance classes * charity fashion show * Quake
computer tournament * mor study * International
Day on Gender * Genet's The Maids * new
computer room * Wassail feast * free trade vs fair
trade * bought: 131 Banbury Road * visited:
Kazakhstan * football team wins league * diving in
the Red Sea * IBO Director General visits * record
numbers on junior summer courses * white water
rafting * Guzheng recital * new en suite
bathrooms * students learn First Aid * new books
by teachers * still more study * Ulster study visit
. . . and plans for much more

Letter from the Principal

May 2001 sees St Clare's flourishing, as these pages show. Throughout the year, students from over 50 nationalities study in an atmosphere which promotes international understanding as they learn from and about each other.

Our new programme of English courses for adults is well established on the Academy site and benefiting from its own base. The interaction between Liberal Arts (LA) and English courses sharing the site is also very productive for students, inside and outside the classroom. Students based on the Academy site for classes also make full use of central facilities on the International College (Banbury Road) site, where most LA teaching continues to take place. The newly established academic year English course for students 16 to 18 years old is developing strongly, and fits in well with the IB preparatory (pre-IB) course.

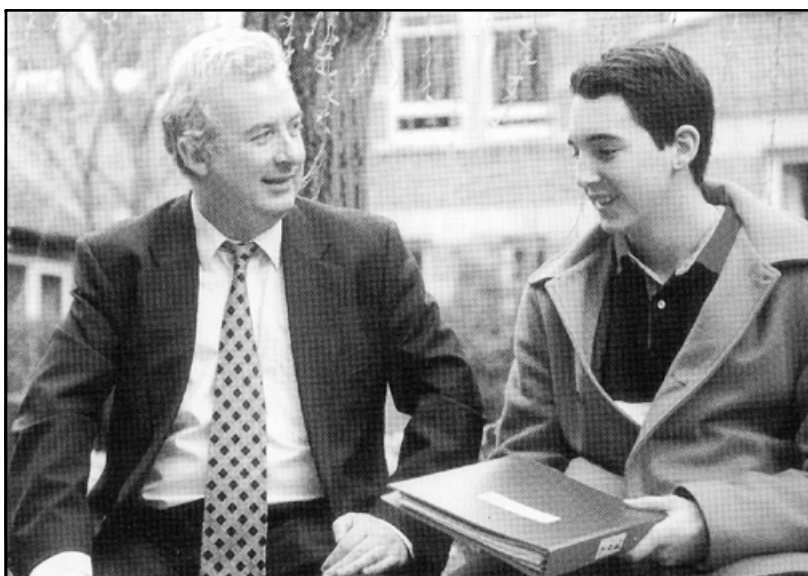
The IB programme, after its best exam results ever in 2000, started this year with record enrolment.

With two anniversaries in prospect—25th year of IB and the golden jubilee of St Clare's—we shall be celebrating, with alumni and staff, achievements and progress made. However, approaching these milestones will also stimulate us to look forward and to plan our future. Leading forward thinking and planning is a major part of my role and, I hope, will increasingly involve alumni and other members of the extended St Clare's community.

We very much value our continuing contact with alumni. It makes us pleased and proud that alumni wish to share their news with us and hear how St Clare's is developing, sometimes nearly 50 years after studying here! Contact with English course alumni has taken on a new form this year with the introduction of SCOO

(St Clare's Oxford On-Line), described on page 7. We are planning to build on Jay's excellent work on alumni relations by establishing a Development Office. This will provide an increased range of services for alumni and promote greater opportunities for alumni to be associated with our current and future activities.

How else is St Clare's looking to develop? Improving physical plant and facilities for academic and residential use and for activities is imperative. I'm delighted to report that we made three significant steps this year. A new senior



Boyd Robers with IB student Dominik Klaus

residential house in Staveiton Road opened last September, providing rooms with private bathrooms and shared kitchens. At the same time we opened another computer room. Earlier this year the College acquired 131 Banbury Road, next door to 133, which houses students and dining rooms. Given its location and

previous educational use, the sale of 131 attracted considerable interest, mainly from institutions. Our Governors considered its location to be uniquely valuable to St Clare's, and we were able to secure it, though we had to pay £1.4m. It will give us additional space for much-needed central facilities. However, it is in rather poor shape, and will cost at least £750,000 to refurbish it for long term use. For these amounts, we could buy an entire college site complete with all buildings in some parts of the country. But, of course, being in Oxford is an important feature of St Clare's. We need to think through its use in detail, as part of an overall master plan for buildings and linked to the way the College should evolve. With limited space and money it is important that developments satisfy current and anticipated needs, while leaving some flexibility for future, unforeseeable uses.

Buildings are important only because they enable us to do certain things—or limit what we can do.

And facilities also need constant expansion and upgrading, for example in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

But it is people that make St Clare's. Improving provision for students, in ICT for instance, requires more people as well as hardware, software and space. We would like to improve our activities programme, strong though it is—again more people needed. And people generally need, and expect, continuing investment in their professional development and training.

We are constantly looking at ways in which our programmes can be improved—sometimes in small ways, sometimes more extensively. Just a couple of examples. The appointment of Maureen Guy, head of maths, to a new post of Dean of Students on IB, pre-IB and English Course 16+ courses, leading the team of Personal Tutors, is intended to enable us to monitor and support students on these programmes even more effectively. On English, Advanced Studies and Liberal Arts programmes we are looking at how we can increase opportunities for older students to meet and interact with more British people during their time here.

St Clare's is a registered charity: all our funds are used for educational purposes and our unpaid Governors are responsible for the efficient

use of these. But the nature of the College, with small classes, a wide choice of course options and its location in one of the most expensive cities in the UK, means our fees are high. We should not compromise on quality. But there are many who would like to attend St Clare's who would do very well and make valuable contributions, but who are not able to come unless they receive a scholarship or bursary. We would like to help more of these students.

St Clare's is an unusual organisation and has a record of being forward-looking and innovative. We were one of the first English language schools in England. We were among the first colleges in the world to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma. As an independent college we have considerable freedom to adopt new approaches. We hope to do so increasingly and to pass on to others—involved in education in national or international arenas—the fruits of our experience and thinking.

The future for St Clare's can be exciting. The future will be what we make of it. I look forward to joining with the extended St Clare's family of staff, students, parents, governors, alumni and friends to make things happen.

Boyd Roberts
Principal

Link with Kazakhstan



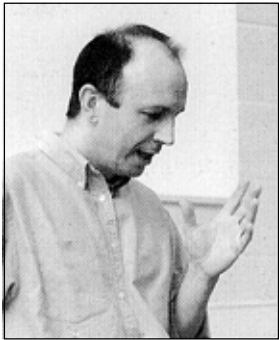
Mark, Dan & David at the war memorial

A record 12 students in this year's IB first year are from Kazakhstan. Most of these came via the International College for Continuing Education, which has sites in Almaty and Astana, the old and new capitals. In order to develop this good relationship, three teachers, Dan Denno (maths), David Ripley (English) and Mark Watts (economics & business), went to ICCE in Almaty for a week to give students there a taste of St Clare's teaching style.

They found the students well-motivated and very competent at English, which is reinforced by their interest in American films and music. Dan, David and Mark were shown around the sights of Almaty. "It's a fascinating city on the crossroads of Asia and Europe with an interesting ethnic diversity," said Dan. After a visit to the winter sports resort and the birds of prey breeding centre, they were asked to judge a beauty contest.

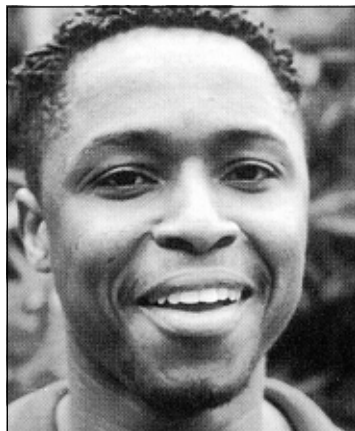
• International Days

It is now an established pattern at the College to suspend normal lessons twice a year to hold a special day aimed at raising awareness about an important international issue. "It's fun, because it brings together students from different courses to discuss a specific theme," says IB 1st year Alea Coquin.



In March 2000 Caroline Crook organised a day that challenged conventional free

market economics. In the aftermath of the demonstrations at Seattle, we invited in, among others, an environmental activist from Corporate Watch and a local green party councillor, Mike Woodin. Economics teacher Mark Watts and Chris Adam, a development economist from Oxford University (above) debated whether free trade was the best way to reduce world poverty.



In October there were two half days on the theme of refugees and asylum seekers. Students learned about the situations that cause people to leave their homeland. Guy Florent Gogoua (pictured above), a refugee from Ivory Coast who is on the IB course, gave a fascinating talk about his experiences. "Compared to him, I've lived my life like a golden egg," said one Italian student.

In March 2001 we chose gender as the theme, focusing on students' own lives as well as gender issues around the world. The keynote speaker was Eithne McNulty, member of the women's coalition for peace in Northern Ireland. Another outside speaker was Florida Safiri, an Iranian journalist, who talked about the position of women in Iran. St Clare's teachers also ran workshops on such topics as sociobiology (Carolyn Halliday) and positive discrimination (Jay Bosworth). Three army speakers gave a presentation on gender in the military and the day ended with a student debate on whether women should be allowed to fight in armed combat. Forceful views were expressed on both sides but the majority were against the idea.

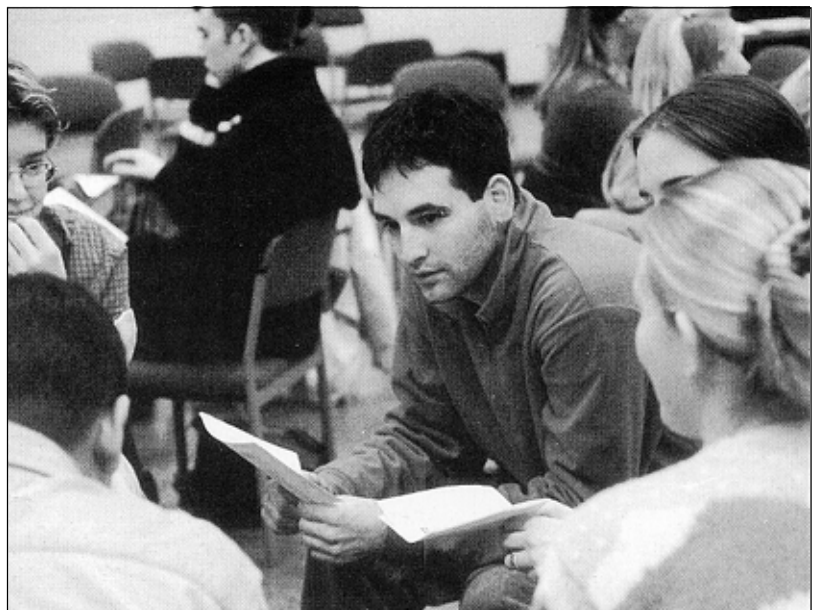
• Conference on Human Rights

In June 2000 St Clare's was the venue for an IB student conference on Human Rights, the first in Britain. Keith Alien, Academic Vice-Principal, organised the day, which drew students from eight other IB schools. The aim was to encourage informed participation in local and world affairs. We also wanted to practise for the new Theory of Knowledge presentations where students have to connect philosophical theory to a contemporary issue.

After hearing about different perspectives on human rights, including religious, Marxist and feminist angles, they went on to look at a particular case study, such as land redistribution in Zimbabwe or blocking of Internet access in France. "The best part of the day was when we had to present our analysis of the case study," said one student, and many agreed. "We could be creative about it and it was fun to hear the others. Some of the presentations were really good."

• Senior seminars

The senior seminars, presided over by Brian Clack, are now in their third series, this time on the theme of Love and Death. The adult atmosphere of the Academy dining room provides a relaxed setting for a lecture and lively discussion followed by refreshments. The weekly meetings give the more serious Liberal arts and adult students a chance to meet each other and to interact with scholars from Oxford University and other academic institutions.



Students in groups discuss international issues

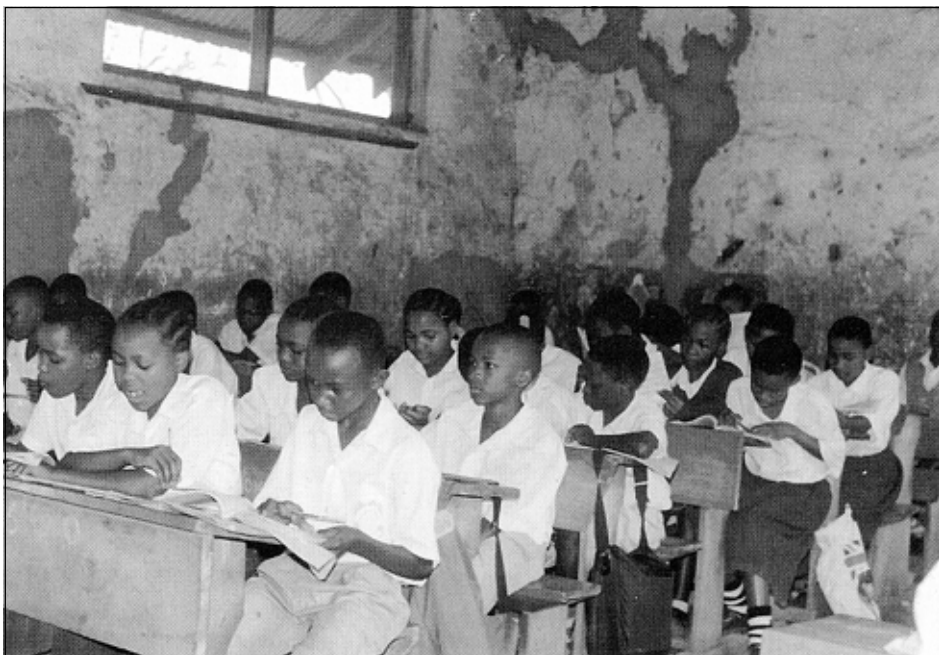
Tanzania project

French teacher Philippe Durant and a group of enthusiastic students have set up STEP, St Clare's Tanzanian Education Project. Its aim is to raise money to support a rural school in Tanzania. Philippe made contact with Kiboriloni Primary School when he worked at the nearby IB school in Moshi, and he was later involved in an exchange project there. The school's needs are great: renovated classrooms, new toilets, kitchen and library, but initial fundraising efforts here have already raised £6,000.

So far STEP has organised various events including a concert, magazine, sale of T-shirts and a sponsored walk. Students identified and contacted local TV stations and firms which might be interested. Most of the organisation is being done by students, so there is a learning process involved and some of the money-making schemes have proved difficult. The project has given students valuable experience of business skills such

as banking, letter writing and website design. The firm of one alumna of the college donated \$1000 after she saw the website, designed by Chris Ndhiovu (Pirsi Year IB1).

If you would like to know more, visit the web site on www.stclares.ac.uk/cas/Tanzania.htm or contact Roni Hamieri at St Clare's. She is taking over as coordinator from Philippe.



Overcrowded and dilapidated classroom in Moshi

The biggest sports achievement of the year was winning the North Oxford **Men's indoor football** league. After mixed success earlier in the year, the team suddenly got their timing right and steamed through the final games.

Men's outdoor football has a new coach, Darren Watts, who plays for Abingdon. Under his direction, the team had success against Cherwell College and Oxford Brookes. With a squad of 25 players, the future looks bright.

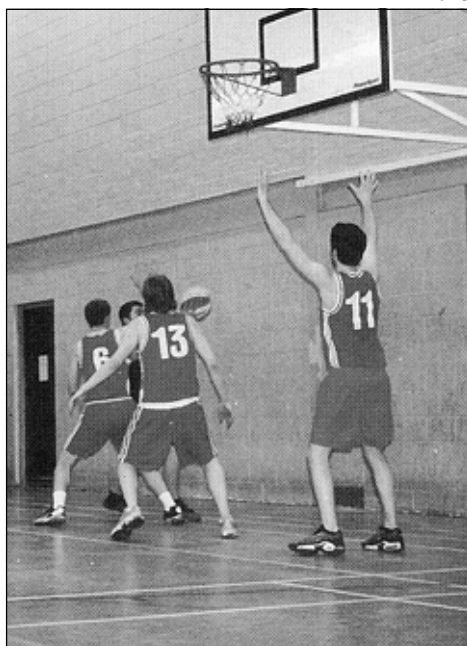
A one-day charity fund-raising event organised by Salt of the Earth, who raise money for salt-pan workers in India, drew a keen group of enthusiasts who travelled to the national water sports centre in Nottingham. Amazingly, in spite of no training or previous

Sport

experience, the St Clare's **white water rafting** team came first against 50 other teams from all over the country. It was a tough contest. The students, led by Jo Swannell, had to overcome increasing tiredness and worsening weather as they raced in a series of heats, but the promise of victory spurred them on. See photos on www.salt-of-the-earth.org.uk.

After a difficult first term the **women's basketball** team have finally turned a corner. Under the coaching of Philippe Durant, and with some talented new American players they have had an impressive series of wins against team Jet and Witney Cougars and are on target to come top of the league.

The **men's basketball** team, shown left, had another successful season.



Excursions

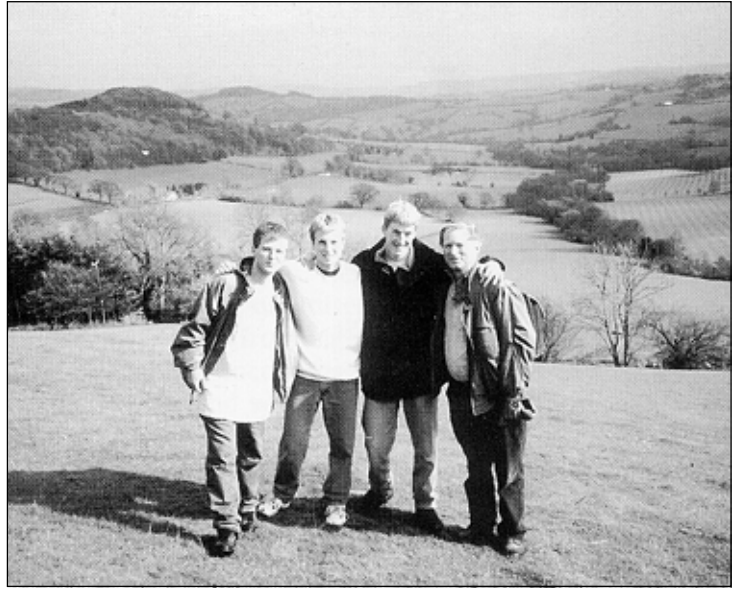
Always a hive of activity, the Student Activities Office—under the direction of Jo Swannell and Martha Hewison—at times resembles a travel agent.

Besides one-day trips to popular tourist sights such as Warwick castle and the Tower of London, there are now more activity weekends such as camping and walking in Wales or cycling in the New Forest which attract students from all courses. Longer trips during the holidays are also popular, especially for those who live too far away to go home. Easter saw 12 Liberal Arts students going to Kenya with Jo for a combination of safari and a beach holiday. In October a trip to the Red Sea was an opportunity to learn scuba diving.



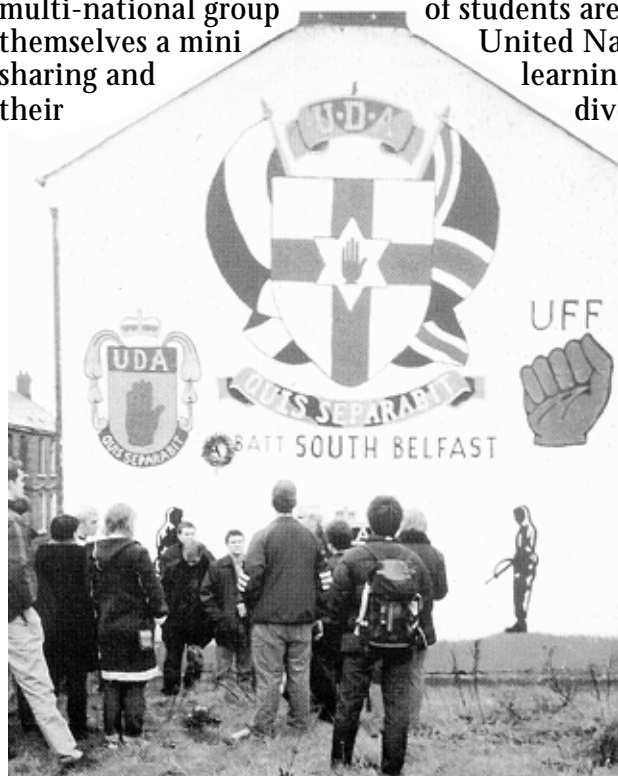
Liberal Arts students come to St Clare's partly for its British location, so from the orientation course, which includes a trip to Stonehenge and Glastonbury, they are encouraged to make the most of opportunities to see new places. Tony Lurcock organises weekends around literary themes. One trip goes to Hardy country in Dorset, following in the steps of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and another to sites related to Jane Austen's life and novels. Less literary in theme, the Three Castles trip to Wales takes students to some atmospheric ancient sites in spectacular countryside, shown top right.

Students studying French had the chance to use their language on a long weekend in Paris organised by French teachers Philippe Durant and Catherine Gospel.



For the past few years Rory Kelly and Andrew Young have led international study visits with a political focus. In October, a cross-course group went to Prague, where they had the benefit of Czech alumnus Lucas Kratochvil as guide. With an MA in Politics from Keble College, Oxford, Lucas was able to talk with authority on Czech politics and history. In November 32 students went on a long weekend to Belfast. See picture below. In a preparatory lecture Andrew explained who's who in the Northern Ireland conflict, what they want and what means they use to achieve it.

During the February half-term Andrew and Rory led a trip to Poland, where after a day at the castle and cafes of Krakow, they visited the concentration camp of Auschwitz. The irony of the slogan over the gate and the quietness produced by a covering of new snow made the experience powerfully moving. Such visits give students a chance to go below the surface of a foreign country and to understand its history and politics. The multi-national group of students are themselves a mini United Nations, sharing and learning from their diversity.



IB director visits

Professor George Walker, director-general of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) in Geneva, visited St Clare's in March. He spoke to representatives from local schools and held a question and answer session for St Clare's staff and Students.

When St Clare's began to offer the IB, back in 1977, it became part of what was at that time an exclusive group of schools offering an experimental programme. Since then the IB has expanded to a point where there are now nearly 1000 schools offering the Diploma programme, whether in French, Spanish or English. From the original European base, world-wide expansion recently has been rapid, particularly in China and India,

raising issues of how far the programme is Eurocentric. Professor Walker argued that while some knowledge, such as science methodology, is international, the critical thinking

St Clare's IB results for 2000 were the best ever with 94.5% awarded the Diploma. Results are audited by the British Accreditation Council.

encouraged by the IB is unashamedly in the western humanist tradition. Theory of Knowledge has an important part to play in increasing students' understanding of how knowledge is approached differently in different cultures. "Ultimately," George Walker said, "the IBO affirms as an act of faith the belief expressed in the UNESCO declaration, that education and the development of the mind will improve the world."

The IB is continually reviewing and updating its courses and developing new

ones. Trials are planned for new transdisciplinary subject such as Ecosystems and



Societies, which will look at environmental issues in their social and political context. Other innovations being explored: on-line exams and distance learning. A newly approved school in Finland does all IB teaching on-line.

• SCOOOL

No, it's not a misprint, but the name of St Clare's Oxford On-Line, which offers English language support for St Clare's alumni. Former students can enlist and will get a regular newsletter with educational tips. They will be able to place messages on a bulletin board or raise queries in a language clinic. A recent newsletter featured an article by Mark Jennings which explained how to download music from the web. There were website addresses for singers and groups, the words of some songs including the Oxford band Radiohead, and a quiz on music vocabulary by Rawdon Wyatt.

Future newsletters will feature competitions and web polls. Later we hope SCOOOL will expand to incorporate more activities. This free service is run by Geoff Taylor, computer assisted language learning coordinator for EFL courses. The website is accessible via the homepage of the St Clare's site, www.stclares.ac.uk

• Published writers

Rawdon Wyatt continues to produce books at a remarkable rate. His latest publication is *Check your Vocabulary for IELTS* (Peter Collin Publishing). Rawdon says he has several more books in the pipe-line. **Richard Walton's** latest book, an upper intermediate to advanced level coursebook entitled (Cambridge University Press) has been well reviewed on www.teflfarm.com, which gave it four stars. Richard and his co-author Mark Bartram, will be talking on Collocation and Learner Training at the IATEFL conference this year.

• No-stress conference

St Clare's Academy site was host to a successful one-day IATEFL conference for English language teachers in February. Jan Kelly organised the day on the theme of "Busting stress and boosting self esteem". Teachers attending from independent and state colleges in the UK and abroad gave a very positive feedback.

When they aren't studying . . .

• Opera fever

Musicals such as *Les Miserables* and *The Lion King* are always popular, but this year there was also a taste for something more highbrow. Students went to the newly renovated Covent Garden in London to see *Tosca* and *Turandot*. The Opera Society, a new activity run by Vicky Bullard and Brian Clack, attracted a keen following, including staff. A record 30 people saw the Welsh National Opera perform *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Apollo Theatre in Oxford.



Jessica Heggs & Ines Lutz in The Maids by Genet

• Charity fashion show

Staff joined students in dressing up for a fund-raising fashion show, parading the catwalk in clothes from Oxfam, Red Cross, Sue Ryder and Save the



• Community service takes some new directions

In September Mike Brittan joined the student activities office and took over the organisation of the community service programme. He has brought welcome new energy and enthusiasm to the task and developed many new initiatives.

One of these was the on-site First Aid course run by the Red Cross. This comprehensive course involves 28 hours of training and is now the most popular service activity on campus, with 25 students enrolled. "It's great that so many will have the training to react to circumstances if they find themselves in the front line," says Mike.

Other popular projects include KEEN, a university-run programme for physically challenged youngsters.

Volunteers are able to bring out the creativity and coordination of these youths through drama and sport. Up to a dozen students have participated at one time in the weekend sessions.

The Oxford Conservation Volunteers took quite a hit this year when foot and mouth disease restricted access to farmland. The regular Sunday activity recently resumed after being cancelled for six weeks.

We have continued links with local volunteer groups, including the Summertown Oxfam shop, the English language programme at the Ferry Centre and the cafe for the homeless. Although some IB students initially complain about having to do service, most find a sense of satisfaction in it.

Children charity shops. Under the direction of Jo Swannell and Martha Hewison, the event was slick and lively, incorporating mimed skits and mini-plays. The two hundred in the audience enjoyed themselves hugely and the show raised £500 from the entrance price and sale of clothes.

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Published by St Clare's, Oxford

Registered Charity No. 294085

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