Dear Antonians,

Welcome to the second issue of the ‘Hilda Besse renovations’ newsletter. These termly updates give you a rundown of upcoming milestones, and an overview of the project and fundraising progress made. Please follow us on social media, as well as on our website for more pictures, information, and real-time updates.

In this issue we have lots of photos of the progress inside in the Hilda Besse building, and some from how college life is getting on amidst the renovations.

Please don’t hesitate to send any comments or questions about the project to HBB@sant.ox.ac.uk.

All the best,

Kara, Martyn and Wouter
The Development Team
Hilda Besse Renovations Progress

Progress continues apace on the Hilda Besse renovations. These include both essential maintenance and improvements to the fabric of the building itself, and restoring the Grade II listed building to its full glory. You can read more about the history of the Hilda Besse building (including its awards!) [here](#).

Below we have some of the highlights of the progress during Michaelmas Term 2019.

The photos above show the Hilda Besse building cleared ready for the start of the renovations. It was especially strange to see the Dining Hall missing its iconic carpets on the walls, and the hall and common rooms completely empty of both people and furniture.
Scaffolding and Access
Scaffolding to the external elevations of the Hilda Besse has been a major undertaking, spanning much of the term. The final touch was installed in December whereby the scaffolding got its ‘Monarflex’ sheeting to ensure that building work can continue in (pretty much) all weather. The sheeting protects both the building and the builders from rain, wind, and snow - especially important throughout the winter months.

Asbestos
Some of the most complicated processes were the asbestos survey and removal works. However, due to safety concerns this was also one of the most important and necessary steps at the beginning of the renovations. Asbestos was widely used in buildings during the 1960s and 1970s, and present in many kinds of building products and heating/insulation materials. Thankfully, we did not encounter a huge amount of asbestos and it is only a health risk when airborne (and therefore breathable), but the project still presented an invaluable opportunity to make the building safe for future generations of Antonians.

Stripping out the old...
Electrics and mechanics inside the Hilda Besse have needed replacing: most of these were the originals from when the building was opened almost fifty years ago! Complicating things even further, many were actually located inside the concrete walls and floors, meaning that there had been no way to access them to make checks or repairs as they began to degrade.

Jack hammers were used as part of demolition, which did initially take some adjusting to. Flooring, layers of old polish, carpeting, kitchen equipment, toilets, and much more have
also been removed to clear the way for the new.

Cleaning
Cosmetically restoring the building to its former glory is another major renovation goal. Two of the biggest tasks are uncovering the original features of the building (such as brickwork and tiling), and cleaning the concrete.

With the interiors of the Hilda Besse stripped, cleaning began on the concrete both inside and outside of the building. First, samples were sent away to be checked for accuracy before the process was green-lit for the larger areas of the building. You can see the difference in the top two pictures above: red arrows mark the boundary between the ‘dirty’ and the clean areas of both the pillar and the heating casing. High pressure washers are also being used on the exterior of the building to clean the concrete without damaging it.

Room Shuffles
Although the focus of these works is restoration, there are also major changes to the layout of the building underway. These include the creation of new rooms and breakout spaces, as well as some ‘reshuffling’ of existing rooms.

The Fellows' Dining Room has moved from its position on the ground floor to a brand new room on the first floor. New technology has allowed the kitchen layout to be streamlined, and a new room has been made from the excess space. You will enter this room from the right as you walk up the stairs from the ground floor, on the opposite side to the dining hall entrance. You can see the beginnings of this room in the bottom left picture above.
Supporting the Hilda Besse Refurbishment Campaign

The Hilda Besse building won awards from both the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Concrete Society, and is also Grade II listed by Historic England. The renovation project is a fantastic opportunity to rejuvenate the intellectual and social core of St Antony’s but it presents a financial challenge the College is unable to meet from its existing income and capital.

Nearly £6.5 million has already been secured towards the total cost of £9 million of the project. The College was delighted to receive a generous grant from the Wolfson Foundation, and the generosity of the Worldwide Antonian community for the Hilda Besse refurbishment has been heart-warming.

The Development Office is delighted to be able to work with year and other champions who help rallying the support of their contemporaries. If you would like to help with the Hilda Besse fundraising activities as a champion, please get in touch with Wouter te Kloese. Your involvement is much appreciated.

The College is keen to ensure that as many Antonians as possible can be acknowledged in the completed Hilda Besse building when it reopens in the summer of 2021. Gifts of £250 (given in a single or multiple instalments, which can be spread over a number of years), will be listed in the Hall on a matriculation year Donor Board. Other significant groups of Antonians, such as Old Antonian Rowers, former members of the JCR / GCR, will also have the option to receive recognition in this way.

In addition to this collective giving, there are a number of individual naming opportunities, listed on our website. Please contact the Development Director if you would like to discuss these.

Gifts to St Antony’s can be made through the website of the University of Oxford.

St Antony’s College is a registered charity (number 1141293). There are several schemes available to help donors based in various countries to make tax efficient donations:

- Canada and United Kingdom
- Germany
- Hong Kong
- Switzerland
- United States

The Development Office is happy to answer any question you may have about the Hilda Besse campaign or how to make a gift: alumni.office@sant.ox.ac.uk

If you wish to get involved or make a donation to the project then please get in touch or visit the development office website for more information.

Thank you for supporting the Hilda Besse refurbishment campaign.
In Focus: The Dining Hall

As of the largest dining halls in Oxford, this room is surely one of the most memorable spaces in St Antony's college. This room is a gathering place for all Antonians: the scene of many bops, formal halls, matriculation and graduation meals, and (not so) quiet everyday meals.

On the left above, we have an original sketch of how HPKA architects envisaged the dining hall. The righthand image is a vintage photograph taken shortly after completion in the 1970s. Antonians who are familiar with the Dining Hall will note the lack of carpets, and the different table configuration. Want to know how our hall look in a year or so's time? Take a look at the Hilda Besse renovations section of our website for a sneak peek!

An interview with the GCR President

This time our termly interview is with Nainika Dinesh, the current Graduate Common Room President (2019-2020). She is in her second year reading for an MPhil in Modern South Asian Studies, researching missionary experiences in 19th century India.

What does the Hilda Besse building mean to you?

I think of the Hilda Besse as the heart of all activity in college. All members of the college walk through the corridors of the Hilda Besse as they go about their day. It is both adored and taken for granted as a space. Given its centrality to college life, the refurbishment program is much needed and appreciated by members. I am very pleased to see the quick progress on the Hilda Besse works and look forward to seeing the revamped building buzz with life and cheer.

What changes are you most excited about?

I am most excited to see the new buttery with the late bar. This space is used extensively by students to study and hang out. The refurbished bar will definitely be appreciated by
most students and will contribute to a lively college atmosphere.

**What has been the most challenging aspect of the renovation process so far?**

The most challenging aspect has definitely been working towards keeping student attitudes towards the ‘Hilda Box’ positive. Fortunately, most have embraced the space and have worked closely with the GCR to make it a pleasant social space in the absence of the Hilda Besse buttery. Talking and working on the box has brought members of the college closer together.

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**College Life in the Hilda Box**

St Antony’s new hub, the Hilda Box, was thoroughly tested over Michaelmas Term and passed with flying colours! Early on, it was transformed for a glamorous ‘Housewarming’ party (complete with a live band and circus performers), supported almost all of the traditional freshers’ week events, and hosted its first set of large formal dinners as part of the inductions.

**Bops!**

On the 3rd of November, the GCR social and welfare teams gave the box its biggest challenge yet: HalloQueen 2019! St Antony’s showed its indomitable spirit by fearlessly staging the 22nd instalment of the famous Halloween bop. Antonians and non-Antonian friends alike danced until the morning and were entertained by fantastic pole dancing and drag performances. This was the first of several successful bops that took place last term.

**Come Dine with Us…**
College formals are a cornerstone of Oxford social life; offering a chance to mingle with students from your own college and with guests from others. St Antony's works hard to ensure our great reputation for hospitality continues, something that was unchanged even with the move to the Box. Both hall staff and GCR formal secs rallied to ensure that St Antony's formals have the same spirit, whether in Box or Besse.

Christmas Dinner

The Hilda Box got a special makeover for the first Christmas Dinner in our new home. Lighting modifications and carpeting had been installed in the previous week, and all that was left was some festive decorations. The modifications themselves have made a huge difference to the ambience in the Hilda Box, and improved the acoustics considerably. Unfortunately, we must report that no one managed to find a legitimately funny joke in the crackers this year. We hope you had better luck yourselves!

The Hilda Box gets its wrapping! The groovy 1970's inspired hoarding was installed as the finishing touch to the exterior. The design was influenced by the colours of the era and by the ceiling of the Hilda Besse dining hall.

Who to contact and further information

If you wish to get involved or make a donation to the project then please get in touch with alumni.office@sant.ox.ac.uk or visit the development office website for more information.

A gift of at least £250 will entitle you to your name being listed on a Donor Board in the Dining Hall with others from your matriculation year. Pledged gift payments can be spread over several years. Gifts of any amount will be very gratefully received.

There are also various individual naming opportunities for larger gifts. These can be discussed with Wouter te Kloeze, the Development Director. He can be reached at wouter.tekloeze@sant.ox.ac.uk
If you have any questions about the Hilda Besse, Hilda Box, or any aspect of the project, please direct these to hbb@sant.ox.ac.uk.

You can see regular updates on the project on our website here, and you can also visit our website to find answers to Frequently Asked Questions. We will also be posting regularly about the project on our social media, so please click the links below to follow us.