

HILARY 1989

Ever since the old Doctor Who Society (about which little is known, not even whether it showed videos or not) closed down in 1985, Oxford University had been sadly lacking when it came to Doctor Who. However in Hilary 1989 Messrs Roger Shaw, Adam Stephens, Simon Clifford, Ian Middleton and Matthew Brookes decided to do something about this. Having made up their minds to start up a Doctor Who society, which would show old Doctor Who stories every week, they set about the formidable task of finding a TV, a video, a room and some members, without the luxury of money.

On February 18th 1989 (Saturday of 5th week) in Roger's room in Corpus, the Society's first ever committee meeting was held. The problem of finding a senior member had been solved in the form of Adam's tutor Dr Martin Grossel and it was time to sort out the committee posts. Roger was to be the President, Adam the Vice President, Ian the Secretary and Simon the Treasurer. Interesting quotes from the minutes of that first committee meeting include "that it probably isn't too good an idea to find any members just yet" and "Simon sprayed Adam and Roger with a water pistol."

The following Monday (20/2/1989), the Society registered with the Procters and became an official University society. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to apply for a start up grant until there were some members.

On the Thursday of that week (23/2/1989), the Society actually held a meeting, albeit an unofficial one. This was a joint meeting with the Sherlock Holmes Society, held in Exeter JCR TV room, at which the Tom Baker classic, 'The Talons of Weng Chiang' was shown.

On the following Monday, in Seventh week, the Society held its second committee meeting, at which Jon Bryden, Warren Peto and Gabriel Finch joined the committee. Jon's joining the committee really helped the Society get underway as he generously made his video recorder and portable TV available for the Society's use as well as his enormous collection of Doctor Who videos. He was duly appointed 'Keeper of the Video' (after objecting to the title 'Keeper of the Matrix'). Warren became Sponsorship officer and Gabriel became Publicity officer (Gabriel was better known for reviving Oxford Monty Python Appreciation Society, which was revived again by Ian Portman and company in 1991). Adam had found a room for the Society in Christ Church and so everything was ready for lift off (or should I say dematerialisation).

So, at 8pm on Wednesday 8th March 1989 in eighth week, the Doctor Who Society proper began. The venue was Christ Church Tom Quad lecture room 2 (the Society's home ever since) and the event was the Doctor Who Society free inaugural meeting. Top of the bill was the BBC video of 'Pyramids of Mars' (complete with copyright message) and punters were invited to join for the princely sum of £1 for membership throughout Trinity term, with the promise of a £1 discount on full membership in Michaelmas. That first meeting also heralded the start of two of the Society's greatest traditions, the first was free Jelly Babies and the second was Society quizzes. The first ever Doc Soc quiz was written and hosted by Roger Shaw and began with the infamous question "What science fiction series started on November 23rd 1963 and has run for a quarter of a century".

That first meeting was a roaring success and once again Oxford University was host to a Doctor Who society.