



2013 Christmas Newsletter

Coordinator's Column

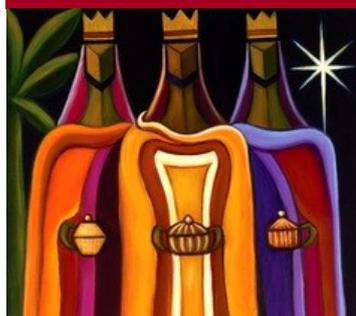
Dates for your diary

- Spring Term Programme:**
 22 Jan: Start of Alpha
 24 Jan: Swan Lake
 25 Jan: Ethiopian Party
 30 Jan: Chinese Celebration
 5 Feb: Banksy Slideshow
 8 Feb: Stratford-on-Avon
 19 Feb: Film Afternoon
 22 Feb: Stonehenge
 24 Feb: Fairtrade
 25 Feb: Crazy Golf & Meal
 26 Feb: Guided Walk 1
 4 March: Pancake Party
 15 March: Oxford
 19 March: Guided Walk 2
 25 March: Bowling & Meal

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“For to us a child is born!”



Christmas Greetings to you all from the BISC Team (clockwise: John, Ann, Jacqueline, Ben and Martina). May it be a very special time visiting with friends and family and finding quiet moments of rest after the busy Autumn Term. Throughout the term we have been able to meet many international students through The Welcome, a full programme of trips and events and our **weekly meals**. Our Afternoon Teas now bring up to 68 to our door, with up to 96 attending Soup Lunch and up to 127 attending Friday lunch. Though this is fantastic news, **BISC now urgently needs more space!!** We are grateful to trustees and volunteers who supplied us with a large marquee, complete with heating and picnic tables with scatter cushions and table decorations, to house the growing numbers. The hope is that a more permanent structure will be erected in the future. If you want to know more about how to contribute to this

much needed project, **please do contact** Jacqueline at the BISC office on 0117-9159826 or jacqueline@bisc.org.uk. By the end of October we had a little over 3000 students signed up to be a part of BISC. Our Autumn trips took us to London, Windsor and Cardiff; and evening events included A Taste of the UK, CATS at the Hippodrome, the biggest International Reception ever and the elegant Christmas Dinner. During the **SPRING TERM** we visit Stratford-Upon-Avon, Stonehenge and Salisbury, and Oxford. Evening events will include an Ethiopian Christmas party, Pancake Party and Swan Lake. We are sad to say goodbye to Ben, who has been a great inspiration, but we wish him all the best with his adventures in France. You all helped in so many ways to create a warm and friendly atmosphere at BISC and whether you are a volunteer or a student, BISC would like to **THANK YOU** for your participation and enthusiasm!



Superstar BISC Volunteers

Let's get to know **Elinor Whitaker**, BISC bookkeeper: **How did you first get involved in BISC and when?** I was helping with the Alma toddler group in 1999 and was looking for volunteer work. Stewart North suggested BISC! **What do you enjoy about BISC?** Meeting the BISC staff, helping out, and seeing the students. **What changes have you seen over the years?** In Mary's time (1999-2001) nothing was computerized and we sold loads of phone cards. During Hannah's time things were computerized and we started to use the internet. **Tell us about yourself:** I'm from Bristol, and went to local schools here, then on to Portsmouth Uni to do maths. My husband Dave and I have 2 children, Jaz and Jonny (both at Uni). **What do you do for fun?** I like concerts, tennis, travelling and bridge. I also spend hours on the computer looking up my ancestry! **Apparently you have a famous connection?!** My great great auntie was Emily Davison, the suffragette who fell in front of the King's horse in 1913.



Elinor and John in action

John Rosewell, BISC local guide, shared with us: I'm a Bristolian, who lived in London when studying and in Kenya for 3 years teaching. I've taught history and geography for 30+ years, and now lead BISC Guided Walks, talking about history! **What do you enjoy about doing these walks?** Sharing my enthusiasm with others and meeting people from other cultures. I remember being a student myself and what an exciting time it can be! I enjoy the way BISC has a great role in welcoming students to this city, also for me to be able to introduce this city and help students get familiar in finding their way around. **Thanks John and Elinor for a great job done!**



801 from 74 nations: Welcoming The World

Welcoming students is what BISC does with energy and relish, particularly in the Autumn Term when vast numbers of supporters are manning desks at the stations and the universities, cooking meals at BISC, and driving students around Bristol. This year 1462 students were welcomed in this way. On 19 October we had a fabulous time enjoying the **International Reception**, welcoming 801 people from 74 nations, a record for this event! The students were extremely appreciative of all the efforts put in by so many to make this evening special. Together with almost 70 volunteers who cooked and served, we had Baly's Cream Jazz band, Capoeira dance troupe, and the Chinese Lion dancers performing magnificently. The fruit of the Welcome period is the numbers of smiling students who come every week to our teas and lunches, on trips and to our events, so glad to be part of BISC and having the chance to meet other internationals as well as local people. **A BIG THANK YOU** to all BISC volunteers!!



First Impressions

At a recent soup lunch, our roving journalist asked BISC students to share some of their impressions: **Hi, where are you from and what are you studying in Bristol?** We're all from Kiel and training to be teachers. **How did you hear about BISC?** **Daniel:** I was invited to the Welcome meals by Carina and we came to every evening meal! **Carina:** I found out about BISC on Facebook, and told all my friends. We also went on the Guided Walks – they really helped us get an overview of Bristol and its history. **What are your first impressions of BISC?** **All:** it's a great place, friendly, family-like and homely. We like meeting new people and seeing old friends too. It's good to have such a variety of events and trips. **Daniel adds:** I tried black pudding at the Taste of the UK event – it was great! **Carina and Annika add:** and the International Reception was cool – amazing. **Another group of students** munching on their flapjacks and muffins at one of our Monday Afternoon Teas, shared in a word their **first impressions of BISC:** Delicious! – warm – friendly - international – family – homely – organised - fun - meet new people – kind – awesome – hospitable – “fabulicious” (!) –



Daniel, Carina and Annika with friends at a BISC soup lunch

warm environment – cosy – place to meet other people and chat. And there you have it in a nutshell: students' appreciation and love for the organisation called a **Home Away from Home**. Currently there are almost 3000 students signed up with BISC and we wish you all a wonderful year, enjoying fun and laughter at YOUR centre, where the world meets!!

Exploring Together

Between all the fun and laughter when enjoying the many BISC trips and events, BISC is also more than happy to explore issues of life and meaning together with international students of all faiths and backgrounds and those of no faith. Between eighteen Autumn Term events, BISC had one such opportunity this term, when we hosted a **Food and Discussion Forum** on Science & God with an invited speaker from Bristol University. 45 of us talked through very interesting issues on this topic in a relaxed lounge

setting while enjoying a delicious two course meal. It was truly stimulating with a variety of opinions from many different backgrounds.

Next term we are looking forward to the **Alpha course** when we continue on this journey of exploring together and look at issues around the meaning of life, the origin of the Christian faith and where we fit into the bigger picture. All international students with any opinions and questions are welcome! **Simply sign up on the BISC website: www.bisc.org.uk**

Farewell to Ben, until...

At the end of this term we will sadly have to say **goodbye to Ben**. He has been working enthusiastically at BISC for over a year and we have really appreciated his warm and generous heart, and the way he has thrown himself into the work and into befriending international students.

In January, Ben will be moving on to a position in Avignon, France, for at least the first 6 months of 2014.

We asked him what he is looking forward to about going to France. Ben – onions, salad and couscous! Oh and soaking up the sun! I'm looking forward to living in a new culture, meeting new people and practising my French - I'm going to be involved in a local church, and getting stuck in with their activities. But I will miss BISC with all my heart!!

THANK YOU BEN for being our BISC Superstar!



Ben (far right): A Superstar like no other!!

Student Talk

At BISC we celebrate the diversity of many different cultures and at a recent soup lunch we took the opportunity to interview friends who met through BISC.

Tell us about yourselves:

Pierre: I'm from Toulouse and studying Aeronautical Engineering; **Alberto and Antonio:** Both of us are from Spain and we are both doing Civil Engineering.

How did you hear about BISC? Alberto and Antonio: We met Phil & Claire as BISC volunteers at the Students' Union Welcome Lounge on our first day.

Pierre: I saw the sign outside in Woodland Road and simply had to go inside. **Which trips have you enjoyed so far? Alberto:** I went to London, and really liked it, with the tour guide in the bus and seeing everything. The BISC staff was great and very friendly.

Pierre: Windsor Castle was a good trip. We had a sunny day! It was truly amazing and I enjoyed it very much. **Antonio:** I did the Taste of the UK event and it was good to be with so many people and taste real British food. **All:** We like British food, especially at BISC! The soups are great with five different choices each week!!

Aitor is studying Business Management at UWE. Together with his girlfriend, Elena, he moved to Bristol this term. **They tell us their story:**

Aitor: We're from Tenerife. We arrived to Bristol for first time on the 11th of September and we thought the city was absolutely amazing and nice. UWE is fantastic, with a lot of facilities and activities and full of people from the whole parts of the world. We had the pleasure of meeting the BISC team at the Octagon and all of them were really nice and friendly. We found an apartment thanks to BISC and as much as we can we go to enjoy at BISC the meals, cupcakes and also to meet people. **Elena:** I am involved in



Antonio, Pierre & Alberto with Lucille. Elena baking (below)



BISC three days per week helping in the kitchen in general. I also helped with the Christmas meal. It is a big time because I can improve my English and at the same time I can learn to cook typical English food, to make some friends and to have a really fun time with the lovely people that run BISC. **Any tips for new students?** They should know that the beginning is always hard but they need just to be patient considering that sometimes it is a bit difficult to find accommodation. They have to bring waterproof clothes, plug-adaptor device, though the most important thing is to come with excitement.

Linking with the Locals

Hanyin is from Singapore and studying law at Bristol University. She joined the **Local Link hosting scheme** last year and tells us about meeting a local family. **Hanyin:** I like the contact with local Bristolians,

as you don't get to meet people here as students, and I thought it would be fun. **Eve** is my host – she has taken us out to Cheddar and also to her home for afternoon tea. We have done a variety of activities which give us different experiences. I like that she explains things to us and doesn't assume that we know everything and so we learn more about England through her, culture and customs and so on. **What will be your memories of Bristol? Hanyin:** Afternoon tea! And meeting people from all over the world in just one city. I also enjoy my course!

What a marvellous opportunity to welcome students, so keen to learn about British culture, festivals and



Hanyin (second from right) with BISC friends

customs. **If hosting is something you'd like to try, please contact Ann** at the BISC office (0117 9159826 or bisc@bisc.org.uk)