# Oxford’s Balliol May Ball dazzles as Cambridge colleges scale back amid rising costs



Bleary-eyed students from Oxford University emerged onto the historic streets following an exuberant night at Balliol College's annual May Ball, themed "Star Crossed Lovers." As dawn broke, revellers clad in elegant ball gowns and sharp bow ties made their way home, embodying a mix of exhilaration and exhaustion after a night of festivities that began at 8pm and concluded at 4am.

The Balliol May Ball is an event steeped in tradition, and this year's gathering saw participants enjoying a range of entertainment, including live performances from nostalgic band Toploader, known for its hit "Dancing in the Moonlight". The atmosphere was electric, with drone footage capturing vibrant strobe lights illuminating Balliol's picturesque courtyards, giving the campus an aura reminiscent of a summer festival.

Amid the celebrations, some students were spotted recuperating with late-night snacks while others playfully shared their weariness—one woman hitched a ride on a friend’s shoulders, while another group carted crates of unused beer in a wagon. Notably, early in the evening, students donning masquerade masks eagerly queued along Broad Street, waiting in anticipation for the event to commence.

The sold-out tickets, priced at £165, included provisions like food, drinks, and various games, marking Balliol College, founded in 1263, as a hub of social dynamism and community spirit. This event once again showcased the college’s illustrious history, with notable alumni, including Boris Johnson and Rory Stewart, having walked its hallowed halls.

Contrastingly, not all university colleges embrace such lavish affairs. At Cambridge, some colleges have begun to abandon the traditional May Ball format in favour of more budget-friendly options. Robinson College recently announced the cancellation of its extravagant May Ball, opting instead for a "mega bop" event at a significantly lower price. This shift reflects broader economic pressures facing students, where rising living costs and exorbitant ticket prices—previously reaching £270—have deterred attendance.

Speaking to the Varsity student newspaper, a spokesperson for Robinson College noted that "rising costs" and "lower ticket sales" were prompting changes aimed at increasing accessibility for students. Their initiative underscores a shifting landscape in student culture at prestigious institutions, highlighting an emerging trend where affordability is intertwined with traditional celebratory events.

As the night drew to a close, the blend of excitement, nostalgia, and urgency characterised the struggles and joys of a university experience that often teeters between privilege and practicality. With other Oxford colleges also hosting their balls on the same evening, the May festivities captured the essence of student life—a vibrant tapestry woven from shared experiences, challenges, and exuberant celebrations.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14699999/Bleary-eyed-students-head-home-Oxford-Universitys-prestigious-165-ticket-Balliol-College-Ball.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/news/2024/november/balliol-ball-2025-star-crossed-lovers-masquerade> - Balliol College announced its Star-Crossed Lovers Masquerade Ball, scheduled for May 10, 2025. The event promises an enchanting evening with a Veronese masquerade theme, featuring a delightful range of food, drinks, and captivating performances. Tickets are available for Balliol members, with information for alumni tickets provided on the college's alumni page.
* <https://www.balliolball.com/> - The official website for Balliol Ball 2025 provides details about the upcoming Star-Crossed Lovers Masquerade Ball on May 10, 2025. The event is described as the most anticipated of the year, offering a night of elegance, music, and unforgettable memories. The website includes information on ticket availability and contact details for the organizing committee.
* <https://www.balliolball.com/dress-code> - The dress code for Balliol Ball 2025 is black tie with a masquerade mask, aligning with the 'Star Crossed Lovers' theme. Attendees are encouraged to embrace the masquerade aspect of the event, adding to the evening's allure and mystery.
* <https://ball.ballioljcr.org/> - The Balliol College JCR's website provides information about the Commemoration Ball held on May 6, 2023. The event was themed 'Bienvenue à Paris,' celebrating 50 years of female tutorship at Balliol. It featured a range of culinary delights, a variety of drinks, and captivating performances, offering an unforgettable Parisian night.
* <https://www.tumblr.com/ublend/108839550493/oxford-ball-guide> - This Tumblr post offers a guide to various Oxford University balls, including Balliol College's 'A Night in Monte Carlo' held on May 9, 2015. The event featured a casino, jazz bars, a mini Grand Prix, and entertainment from the Oxford Revue and DFO, providing a glamorous Monte Carlo experience.
* <https://cherwell.org/2016/05/23/dress-guide-to-oxford-balls/> - An article from Cherwell provides a dress guide for Oxford balls, including themes like Queen’s College's 'A Night on the Orient Express' and Wadham's 'Wonderland.' The guide offers fashion recommendations to match the themes, such as metropolitan London styles for Queen’s and neon and electric futuristic vibes for Wadham.