

# Cherwell

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5TH WEEK, MICHAELMAS

## Oxford aims to increase BME professors from 8% to 9%

The target is part of Oxford's first uni-wide EDI plan

By BRYN MOLLET

Oxford University's Joint Committee for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion has published the first university-wide strategic plan to improve EDI. Titled "Everybody Belongs", the plan includes an increase in the proportion of BME Statutory Professors from the current 8% to 9% by 2029.

The foreword states that this plan marks "the first time we have articulated a strategic equality, diversity and inclusion vision for the collegiate University as a whole". Previously EDI has been emphasised at college and department levels.

The plan involves using task and finish groups to help achieve and report on the University's EDI. It will see the creation of racial and religious inclusion task and finish groups to work alongside the pre-established LGBTQ+ group. The strategy also offers more support for student leadership, particularly JCR and MCR presidents.

Regarding student access, the University seeks to remove barriers to undergraduate

and graduate access and see an increase in the proportion of entrants from the bottom two quartiles of the Multiple Deprivation Index to 23% by 2028.

The University aims to increase the proportion of Black students awarded a "good degree" to 94%. As of last year, 8% of Statutory Professors are BME, a number the University aims to increase to 9% by the 2028/2029 academic year. The plan also wishes to reduce the gap between BME and white staff reporting being bullied or harassed by 2027, and remove all statistically significant pay gaps between BME and white staff by 2028.

The plan seeks to increase the proportion of female Statutory Professors from 22% to 26% by 2027, and female central University committee members from 40% to 60% in the same timeframe. It also aims to reduce the gap between female staff with and without caring responsibilities who feel they are supported in their professional development, which saw a ten percentage gap last year.

Continued on pg. 3

## University's ethical investments review opens up to student input

By CHARLIE BAILEY

The Ethical Investment Representations Review Subcommittee (EIRRS) is conducting a review of the University's current policy prohibiting direct investment into companies that manufacture illegal arms, according to the official newsletter, the Oxford University Gazette. Students are invited to provide input in the upcoming weeks through webinars and a form, and the report will be published in Hilary Term 2025.

The decision to form this report was made in June following months of protests and two encampments by Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P). At the time, OA4P stated that the decision was "a direct response to the mass movement of students, faculty, and staff across the Uni-

versity calling for disclosure and divestment".

The current strategy was put in place in 2010 by the now defunct Socially Responsible Investment Review Committee (SRIRC) in light of escalating world conflict. SRIRC had faced student pressure to maintain the University's ethical standards by prohibiting investments into companies which invest into illegal arms.

They proposed that the University follow the guidelines set by the Munitions (Prohibition) Act 2010 and the Landmines Act 1998. In response, the SRIRC produced a report declaring the University's intention not to invest directly in companies that manufacture weapons or munitions prohibited under

Continued on pg. 4



## Oxford state school offer rate has decreased over the last five years

By Ila Banerji, Evelyn Power, and Charlotte Dawson

The University of Oxford undoubtedly has a reputation for elitism and yet more recently, a focus has been placed on improving access and inclusion. This outreach feels more necessary than ever, especially when considering the University's 67.6% proportion of students from state schools, which falls starkly short of the 93% of the UK population educated within this sector.

This investigation into representation of state-school students at Oxford University delves into the data, exposing

the reality of dwindling numbers and ineffective outreach schemes.

The University's official admissions reports from the last five years paint a picture of progress and positivity, emphasising how the gap between private schools and state schools is narrowing. And to some extent this is true. As graph one shows, in 2023 1,236 more state-school students applied than in 2019, increasing

the proportion of state-school applicants by 5.3% over the last four years. On the other hand, private-school students have declined by a similar proportion with just over 600 less applications in 2023 than in 2019.

This trend can also be seen in admissions. From 2019 to 2023, the proportion of private-school students admitted fell by 5.3%, while the proportion of state-school students admitted into Oxford rose by 4.8%.

Continued on pg. 5

## Rent in Oxford becomes more affordable despite cost of living crisis

By ILA BANERJI

Private rent in Oxford became more affordable last year despite the increase in the cost of living. The recent report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which measures affordability by rent as a percentage of household income, so while those living on rising wages are better off, students who do not have increased income are not.

By measuring affordability as the proportion of household income being spent on rent, the ONS data shows that rents became more affordable last year. In 2023, households were spending 38.9% of their income on rent, as opposed to 42.5% in 2022.

The average monthly rent in Oxford rose from £1,500 in 2021 to £1,612 in 2023, in line with rent increases across the country. Meanwhile, average salaries have risen too. Nationwide, there was a 6.2% increase in weekly earnings from 2022 to 2023.

This comes in the midst of a cost of living crisis, which saw an increase in day-to-day living costs, notably a spike in food prices in 2023 in contrast with the preceding years. Energy tariffs, another day-to-day necessity, rose sharply too.

Oxford students, however, have only experienced the rise in rent without a corresponding rise in wages.

Continued on pg. 2

## Rory Stewart with Cherwell on the US election, Starmer's government and the Bullingdon Club

By HASSAN AKRAM

Rory Stewart has been an academic, podcaster, writer, diplomat and politician. He read PPE at Balliol. While an undergraduate, he tutored Princes William and Harry, and attended a meeting of the Bullingdon Club. He has written several acclaimed books, including "Occupational Hazards", an account of his time as a governor in Iraq; and "Politics on the Edge", a memoir of

his parliamentary career spanning 2010-2019. Since 2022 he has co-hosted, with Alastair Campbell, the immensely successful podcast "The Rest is Politics". *Cherwell* sat down with him to discuss his opinions on the US election, populism, the Starmer government, the prison system, and his personal goals for the future, while he also touched on tutorials, his time at Oxford and his reading of *Cherwell*.

Continued on pg. 14-15



### NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS 1-5

#### Uni and Corpus take action following student suicide

The recently released inquest highlighted broad cultural issues related to "social cancelling", the college said.

#### ICC prosecutor Karim Khan speaks at Oxford amid alleged misconduct

Khan had issued arrest warrants for Hamas and Israeli leaders including Netanyahu.

### OPINION 6-7

#### The Chancellorship is of no use

Despite all the furor about next week's election, the institution is arcane, expensive, and powerless.

#### The Oxford Union has ruined itself

Rule changes, firing, and censoring signify one of the worst controversies the Union has faced. Some think the President needs to go.

### FEATURES 8-10

#### From classrooms to code: Education is on the frontline of Britain's misinformation fight

### PROFILES 14-15

#### Rory Stewart spoke to *Cherwell* about populism, podcasting, and why he left the Bullingdon Club.

### CULTURE 16-19

#### Oxford's first Hip-Hop breaks it down

In the wake of Atik's closure and the blow felt by student nightlife, Oxford's Hip-Hop society promises to fill the void

#### Ovid meets modern identities in *Sap*

The creative process is complicated for Labyrinth Productions' twist on Daphne and Apollo, coming to the Playhouse

### LIFESTYLE 20-22

#### Red flags or human flaws

Has university dating culture forgotten what it means to love someone warts and all?

#### Grieving someone I never knew

What does it mean to navigate the complexities of grieving someone who passed before your own birth?

# Oxford University and Corpus Christi take action following student suicide

By Cherwell News

CW: Suicide. Oxford University and Corpus Christi College are taking forward an independent review's recommendations following a student's suicide in January. The recently concluded inquest "highlighted broader cultural issues relating to what is known as 'social ostracism' or 'social cancelling'" according to an email from Corpus to its students.

According to the inquest, at the beginning of Hilary Term the student had a sexual encounter with someone who then expressed "discomfort" to friends, and word got around. Days later, the student committed suicide.

A joint spokesperson for the University and Corpus said that the college commissioned an independent review to identify all learnings and aim to minimise the chances of such a loss happening again.

A Corpus working group is taking forward all of the review's recommendations, a number of which have already been implemented. The University is also working on the review's recommendations as part of its ongoing work on student welfare.

The spokesperson cannot disclose

details of the review right now, but will follow with more information once the work is finalised.

This year's Corpus freshers week saw the addition of a "Living in a College Community" workshop that guided students through scenarios, including one in which a peer is rumoured to have done something wrong, emphasising tolerance.

The spokesperson continued: "We note that the coroner will be writing to the Department for Education about wider issues arising from today's inquest, and we will respond to any further guidance for the higher education sector."

In an email sent to Corpus students after the inquest's conclusion, the college wrote: "[The inquest] recognised the steps taken by both the College and the University to address the issues raised and highlighted broader cultural issues relating to what is known as 'social ostracism' or 'social cancelling'".

The case has garnered national media attention. Last week, Corpus temporarily entered a "lockdown" due to "security issues" after *The Daily Mail* entered the college without permission, the porters told students.

*Cherwell* does not report on specific deaths unless requested by family or close friends.

Image Credit: Selina Chen



# Rent in Oxford more affordable despite cost of living crisis

Continued from Page 1

A student who rents privately told *Cherwell* that he did not find Oxford rents to be affordable. Outlining the problems he faced, he said: "The house wasn't cleaned at all upon moving in. The agency charged the previous student tenants £500 from their deposit to get the place cleaned, but it didn't happen."

Nonetheless, he said that he preferred privately renting to staying in college accommodation as it worked out to the same price due to "the additional costs that college accommodation has

such as meal deposits and Vacation Residence," especially considering "the lack of a proper kitchen".

Despite the improving rent picture, Oxford remains one of the most expensive places to live in the UK. The city faces a serious homelessness problem, regularly appearing as one of the top 5 areas in the UK for the proportion of the population sleeping rough. The homelessness charity Oxford Gatehouse cites high rents as one of the key reasons for this. The local council plans to build over 10,000 homes in the next 15 years to deal with the problem.

# Oxford University Hospitals to miss waiting list targets

By EKAM HOTHI

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) is on track to miss NHS waiting list targets set to be achieved next year, recent numbers reveal.

The latest figures from the NHS show that for 3,911 out of 87,600 outstanding treatments, patients had had to wait a year or more for their procedure at OUH - this is around 4.5%. Last year, this figure stood at 2,925.

This suggests that OUH will fail to meet the NHS ambition that aims to see

that "the waits of longer than a year for elective care are eliminated by March 2025." These targets were laid out as part of the NHS' plan for dealing with the COVID-19 backlog of elective care (non-urgent and planned medical procedures) released in February 2022.

At OUH, approximately 55.9% of patients were waiting 18 weeks or less to start treatment. This is better than the average for other hospital trusts, which is 58.3%. The NHS operational standard is 92%.

The trauma and orthopaedic services had the highest number of treatments waiting a year or more, almost 1,000. The

urology service had the next-highest, with just over 500 treatments.

The Care Quality Commission, the independent regulator of health and social care in England, determined that OUH "required improvement" overall in a report published in June 2019, based upon an inspection the prior year.

Hospital trusts are run by NHS staff but work closely with universities. The OUH consists of the John Radcliffe Hospital, the Churchill Hospital, the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, and the Horton General Hospital. In collaboration with the University of Oxford, it is one of the largest teaching trusts in the UK.

# Magdalen is the most popular Oxford college, Mansfield least

By Lilly Law

Magdalen College ranks as the most popular and Mansfield College is the least applied-for, according to last year's admissions report. 1,210 applicants hoping to spend their days in the deer park selected Magdalen as their first choice college, while Mansfield received 412 out of 23,211 undergraduate applications. Below Mansfield are Harris Manchester College which admits mature students only and all Permanent Private Halls that offer limited subjects, often with a religious affiliation.

Colleges have moved up and down the ranks of applicant numbers. St John's College has clearly been working on their outreach - it has moved up 16 places, going from 445 applicants in 2007 to 1,080 in 2023, although its acceptance rate has significantly dropped at the same time, from 26% to 11%.

Some of the most popular colleges were also the wealthiest, although this trend is not universally followed. According to the College Disparities Report, Magdalen College, St John's, and Christ Church College have the highest net assets per student of the undergraduate colleges. Mansfield, the least popular, had one of the lowest net

assets per student of any undergraduate college.

Application rates also vary by subject field. Keble College's proximity to the STEM faculties perhaps made it an attractive choice for prospective STEM students who dislike walking, as it was the most popular college for Computer Science, Engineering Science, and Physics.

Rowing success does not necessarily translate to popularity: Oriel College's total of 531 applications in 2023 was far from the head of the river - the college found itself third-last.

PPE continues to be the most popular course, having topped the table for all 16 years. Its most popular colleges were Balliol College, New College, Magdalen, Christ Church, and Brasenose College; indeed, these JCRs' elections have frequented Oxfess. Older colleges were more popular for humanities, with Brasenose receiving the most applications for Classics and Magdalen for History, though the lasagne-esque Keble was most popular for Geography.

2023 continued the slight downturn in overall applicants, from a high of 24,338 in 2021, but appears to be returning to pre-pandemic levels. Throughout, the number of acceptances has remained steady around 3,200 with an acceptance rate of 14%.

## College ranking by number of applicants:

|            |       |
|------------|-------|
| Magdalen   | 1,210 |
| Keble      | 1,189 |
| John's     | 1,080 |
| New        | 1,051 |
| BNC        | 1,045 |
| Balliol    | 1,022 |
| Worcester  | 1,017 |
| Ch. Ch.    | 1,006 |
| Catz       | 925   |
| Univ       | 873   |
| Hertford   | 820   |
| Wadham     | 786   |
| Jesus      | 767   |
| Pembroke   | 738   |
| Hugh's     | 734   |
| Somerville | 708   |
| Exeter     | 697   |
| Anne's     | 691   |
| Trinity    | 690   |
| Teddy's    | 662   |
| LMH        | 660   |
| Queen's    | 659   |
| St Hilda's | 653   |
| Merton     | 633   |
| Lincoln    | 620   |
| Peter's    | 610   |
| Oriel      | 531   |
| Corpus     | 437   |
| Mansfield  | 412   |
| Regent's   | 137   |
| HMC        | 137   |
| Wycliffe   | 9     |
| Stephen's  | 1     |

# Ashmolean raises £4.48m to keep famous painting

By JOSHUA MCGILLIVRAY

Oxford's Ashmolean Museum has raised £4.48 million to prevent Renaissance painting *The Crucifixion* by Fra Angelico from being sold to an overseas buyer, narrowly meeting its 29th October deadline.

The Ashmolean had nine months to meet the deadline after the then-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport placed an export licence deferral on the work in January, delaying its leaving the country.

The artwork has been owned by a private British collection for the last 200 years. Director of the Ashmolean Xa Sturgis said the Italian work "essentially belongs to the [UK]".

The Ashmolean bought the painting in a private treaty sale. The sum was raised owing to the museum's Chairman Lord Lupton CBE, grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund, the Headley Trust, and various other donations.

Sturgis called the acquisition of the painting a "really exciting moment" for

the museum, which already displays drawings by the Italian Renaissance artists Raphael and Michelangelo.

Angelico's *Crucifixion* will be on public display in the Ashmolean from December. The painting is intended to be used as a teaching resource for those studying Art, History of Art, and Theology at Oxford University. It will also be freely accessible to the public and will belong in the collection shown to around 40,000 schoolchildren every year. Fully titled *The Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist and the Magdalen*, the painting was created in the 1420s, and is believed to be Fra Angelico's earliest surviving work. The artist, known in Italy as the "Blessed Angelic One", remains among the most celebrated painters in the Italian Renaissance.

Sturgis said that the sixteenth-century art historian Giorgio Vasari "famously wrote that Fra Angelico couldn't paint the crucifixion without tears streaming down his cheeks... He was very much concerned with the emotional response to a picture." Head of the Ashmolean's Department of Western Art Jennifer Sliwka concurred that the piece will be the "showstopper" of the gallery.

## NEWS SHORTS

### Oxford MP enters cat into competition

Oxford MP Layla Moran has entered her cat Murphy into the 2024 “Purr Minister” contest and saw fit to email *Cherwell* this information with immediate embargo. The 21-year-old cat is vying to be Britain’s “meow-st” influential cat – one of many puns in Moran’s press release. *Cherwell* thanks Moran for her diligent updates of her important parliamentary work.

### Jesus students protest ‘draconian’ JCR closure

Jesus College JCR members protested the Director of Accommodation, Catering, and Conferences (DACC)’s decision to temporarily shut the JCR after “a random fresher” caused a small fire. A mass emailing protest erupted, and a notice was posted on the DACC’s door stating: “The office will remain closed until a proper DACC can be found.”

### Cherwell copy set on fire at the Union

A member of the Oxford Union poured vodka on a copy of *Cherwell* and set it on fire with a cigarette in the society’s courtyard. Despite people’s attempts at stamping out the fire, the security asked everyone to leave. This followed a debate featuring over an hour of internal squabbling that prompted speaker Lord Heseltine to walk out.

## CROSS CAMPUS

### UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB

#### Scientist cures her own breast cancer

A virologist at the University of Zagreb, Beara Halassy, has cured her own breast cancer by injecting her tumour with a lab-grown virus. Halassy self-administered a treatment called oncolytic virotherapy to help treat her own Stage III cancer and has now been cancer-free for four years.

### CAMBRIDGE

#### Suella Braverman tells Cambridge protesters to ‘get a life’

Suella Braverman MP, former Home Secretary, told student protesters to “get a life” during a Cambridge University Conservative Association event. She praised attendees for “going ahead in defiance of the mob, in defiance of cancel culture”, and told them “don’t be cowed... by the extremists out there”. Protesters called her “Cruella” and held signs saying “Compassion is a lifestyle choice”.

### DURHAM UNIVERSITY

#### Durham newspaper writes entire piece on ex-Cherwell Editor-in-Chief

Durham’s student paper *Palatinate* recently devoted an entire article to Thomas Bristow, *Cherwell*’s Editor-in-Chief in Michaelmas 2023. The piece had great insights into the life of an Oxford student, which Durham students would no doubt be very willing to read, including Bristow’s “fascination of reading” and how he “adjusted his glasses and leaned forward”. Riveting. (The opinion expressed herein represents the writer only – not *Cherwell*).

# Largest ever UK study identifies social, ethnic discrepancies in lung cancer diagnosis

By MADDIE GILLET

Oxford scientists conducted the largest ever UK study on lung cancer diagnoses that has revealed severe social and ethnic disparities, marking a significant step towards improving healthcare inequalities.

The study found that people from the most deprived areas were twice as likely to develop lung cancer than those from the most affluent areas. Furthermore, people from deprived areas had a 35% higher risk of being diagnosed with more aggressive forms of the disease.

Conducted by Oxford’s Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Science, it included over 17.5 million people and more than 84,000 cases, making it the most comprehensive study into lung cancer in the UK.

Research leader Daniel Chen explained to *Cherwell* the reasons for this pattern: “This is likely due to a combination of factors: Higher smoking prevalence in these [deprived] communities, greater bar-

riers to healthcare access, and increased exposure to environmental risks (poor air quality, exposure to secondhand smoke, etc).”

Ethnic disparities were also identified, such as Bangladeshi men showing the highest lung cancer rates. A correlation between type of diagnosis and ethnicity was also discovered.

Women were more likely to be diagnosed, as well as those identifying as BME were twice as likely to be diagnosed with adenocarcinoma than those identifying as white. The researchers believe this highlights the role of genetic predisposition in lung cancer.

The study was published as the NHS releases its Targeted Lung Health Check Programme, which aims to detect cancer earlier, when it is more treatable, by focusing screening on areas of social deprivation.

The new research also highlights the need to consider other aspects of identity, the report stating: “[Taken] together, our results have implications not only for targeting smoking prevention and cessation inter-

ventions in an accessible way, but also ensuring equitable delivery of the new lung cancer screening programme especially for women, those from ethnic minority groups and deprived areas to avoid exacerbating health inequalities.”

Chen told *Cherwell*: “There has been a research gap in understanding the role of ethnicity in cancer, not specifically within the NHS but more generally. This is largely due to the under-representation of ethnic minority groups in research, often resulting in small sample sizes and limited data for assessing impacts across these populations.”

He explained that, while previous research has considered ethnicity as a factor, it has nonetheless been insufficient due to regional focus and limited samples.

In this Oxford study, however, researchers used QResearch data from over 1,000 practices and more than 10 million patients, enabling a “comprehensive, nationwide view” of these disparities.



### Uni set EDI targets

Continued from Page 1

With regard to LGBTQ+ representation, the University aims to bring the percentage of transgender and nonbinary staff who agree with the statement “I feel able to be myself at work” up from 57% to be in line with the total staff average, which was 83%.

The plan also highlights the University’s belief in the importance of free speech to its EDI mission, stating the two go “hand in hand”. While the plan is university-wide, it also acknowledges the strengths of the collegiate system in achieving these goals, which allows colleges to “innovate and respond to particular contexts”.

Image Credit: David Hays.

# Oxford pub where J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis held meetings applies to renovate

By JOSHUA MCGILLIVRAY

The owners of the Oxford pub The Eagle and Child have submitted an application for the renovation of its Grade II listed building. Established over 300 years ago, it is most famous for being the meeting place for a group of writers called “The Inklings”, which included household names like J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis.

The Eagle and Child was bought from University College by St John’s College in 2003. In early 2020 it closed during the Covid-19 pandemic and has not been reopened since.

After prior plans to transform the pub

into a hotel were scrapped, in 2023 the Ellison Institute of Technology (EIT), which owns a scientific research campus in Oxford, purchased the Eagle and Child and promised to “refurbish and reopen the iconic venue”.

Notably, the writers’ discussion group met there every Monday or Tuesday for lunch in the lounge “Rabbit Room”. The Inklings, who met throughout the 1930s and 1940s, used these gatherings to share their respective writings and converse. Sections of Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy were read out within the walls of the pub, and in 1950, Lewis distributed draft copies of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to the group’s members.

Noteworthy Inklings other than Tolkien and Lewis include Owen Barfield, the philosopher and literary critic, and Hugo Dyson, an academic whose comments to Lewis during a stroll along Addison’s Walk caused the latter’s conversion to Christianity.

The CEO of EIT David Agus said: “We are humbled and proud to be able to safeguard this treasured pub’s future and continue its legacy as a place for brilliant people to come together.”

The EIT’s planned restorations, to be carried out by architectural firm Foster and Partners, include repairing the windows and cleaning the original stonework in order to stop any potential de-

composition. Additionally, the EIT plans to remove the conservatory dining space and open a side passageway to the rear garden.

In a document filed by the Oxford City Council, a representative said: “EIT is committed to carrying out sensitive repairs that allow the heritage value of these important Oxford buildings to be celebrated, and once again reopened for residents, tourists, and the wider community to enjoy.” The application for listed building consent is expected to be granted or rejected by authorities in the coming weeks.

Image Credit: Graham Higgs//CC BY-ND 2.0 via Flickr.



# Medicine applications decrease as more mature and international students apply

By LIYA SEBHATU

The number of 18-year-olds applying for early deadline courses, including Oxford, Cambridge, and medicine, has fallen, new UCAS data reveals. Despite this, there has been a 1.3% increase in overall applications, with the number of mature applicants (over 21 years old) rising by 3% and international applications rising by 4.7%.

Applications to medicine courses have fallen by 3.3% – the lowest number since 2020. The peak demand for studying undergraduate medicine was during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this figure has slowly declined since. For Oxford University, medicine has one of the highest number of applicants per place at Oxford; it is also the only course subject to a government

restriction on the number of international students admitted for fees purposes.

Of international students, China remains the largest demographic applying to early deadline courses, and has seen a 14% increase from last year's statistics. UCAS Chief Executive Dr Jo Saxton said: "It's welcome news to see that global confidence in the UK's higher education sector remains strong, with an increase in international undergraduate applicants to UK universities and colleges for early deadline courses."

The number of applications from 18-year-old students of disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (in the POLAR 4, Quintile 1 classification) has remained the same. UCAS has also introduced a new free school meals waiver, allowing students who

received free school meals within the past six years to skip the £28.50 application fee.

Saxton said: "As the rising cost-of-living continues to present challenges to everyone, particularly those suffering financial hardship, I am keen to ensure that at UCAS, we do everything we can to support students in taking their next step."

In Oxford's 2023-2024 admissions cycle, 21.2% of UK undergraduates came from the "least advantaged backgrounds", with 7.6% of these being eligible for free school meals.

Recently, the Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson announced that tuition fees will go up to £9,535 – or 3.1% – for Home students in England starting from next year, marking the first increase in eight years.

# Oxford lab sends human flesh to space

By ZACH BURGESS

Samples of human tissue have been launched to the International Space Station, prepared by Oxford University's Space Innovation Lab (SIL).

The research, undertaken by Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences, plans to study the effects of space's low gravity environment on the human ageing process and cell regenerativity.

The samples were placed within a sealed cube containing a miniature camera and microscope, which will be provided with power and data upon arrival at the ISS. Scientists at the SIL will use this to control and monitor the sample for a month, before the cube will return to earth, whereupon they will measure the expression of proteins associated

with ageing compared to a control sample.

This experiment constitutes part of a study on the effects of the low gravity environment of space, known as microgravity, on the human ageing process and cell regenerativity. The SIL is investigating the hypothesis that some of these processes operate faster in microgravity, based on astronauts' anecdotal experiences of ageing-associated conditions upon returning to Earth.

SIL founder Dr Ghada Alsaleh described the experiment as "a ground-breaking project that could help people live healthier lives, both on Earth and in space", as conclusions will be used to inform research into age-related diseases by understanding the ageing process at a cellular level, as well as understand more about the impacts of space travel on the human body.

# Chancellor election narrowed to five candidates

By EMILY HENSON

Five candidates will be voted on this week in the final round of the Chancellor election: Lady Elish Angiolini, Rt Hon Dominic Grieve, Lord William Hague, Lord Peter Mandelson and Baroness Jan Royall.

This comes after over 23,000 members of the Convocation voted on 38 candidates.

Lord William Hague was the Leader of the Conservative Party and Leader of the Opposition from 1997 to 2001. Hauge told *Cherwell* he is prepared for a "decade of change", alongside expressing his fears over the reliance on international funding.

Lady Elish Angiolini, who has held the position of Principal at St Hugh's College since 2012, is Solicitor General and Lord Advocate of Scotland. In an interview with *Cherwell*, Angiolini expressed her belief that: "The University is here to facilitate debate, freedom of speech, and thought, and that will include politics as well."

Lord Peter Mandelson held positions including Director of Communications for the Labour Party, Secretary of State for Trade, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and European Commissioner. Madelson defined himself to *Cherwell* as a "global Chancellor" with a love for the University.

Dominic Grieve served as Shadow Home Secretary from 2008 to 2009 and Attorney General for England and Wales from 2010 to 2014. Grieve, speaking to *Cherwell*, advocated for a more centralised system of University donations, rather than to individual colleges.

Baroness Jan Royall is the current Principal of Somerville College. She has previously served as an MP and a member of the House of Lords. Royall spoke to *Cherwell*, about her focus on breaking down barriers to higher education, especially finances: "I think the University, everybody in this University, or the advocates for the University, need to be making arguments in favour of a better deal for students, in a way, I completely accept that."

Image Credits: Emily Henson.

# Students involved in investments

Continued from Page 1

Arms Control Treaties, to which the UK is a signatory. Following a committee meeting in 2011, the terms of the report were tightened to ban investments into companies whose actions were illegal under UK law, even if they were legal in the place of the weapons' manufacture.

The new report by the EIRRS, which has since replaced the SRIRC, involves opportunities for student engagement, involving a form offering questions such as "What should be considered a 'controversial weapon' beyond those al-

ready banned under UK law?" and "Do you think the UK government should expand the type of weapons that are illegal?" The suggestion is that the University may expand its list of companies to refuse investment from beyond those that directly contravene existing arms treaties. Students can submit comments until the end of the Michaelmas term.

Additionally, two webinars will allow students to ask questions of Oxford's investment approach, aiming to contextualise the review and help students formulate ideas for submissions.



# ICC prosecutor speaks in Oxford

By MAYA PRAKASH

International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan gave a speech at Trinity College titled "No One Above the Law" following arrest warrants for Hamas and Israeli leaders including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The event took place shortly after Khan announced that the ICC had opened an investigation on his alleged sexual misconduct toward an aide.

An anonymous source told *the Guardian* that Khan encouraged the aide to deny the claims, but she has refused to make a statement while Khan continues to refute all allegations.

Prior to the event, a poster was found outside Wadham College calling for Khan's suspension from the ICC, repurposing the talk's title "No One Above the Law" to point at his alleged misconduct.

Trinity College representatives told *Cherwell*: "The college is aware of the allegations regarding the Prosecutor, who fully remains in his role at the ICC and has asked the ICC's oversight mechanism to open an immediate independent investigation into the allegations made against him. It is important that we respect the integrity and confidentiality of any investigation and any process it puts in place, and not comment further while any investigation is ongoing."

In May 2024, Khan issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as senior Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, and Ismail Haniyeh. The latter three defendants have since

been killed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

At Trinity College's event, Khan was interviewed by GCHQ Director of Legal Affairs and Mission Policy Chehzad Charania MBE. Khan discussed the institutional challenges faced by the ICC, the current case regarding violations in the Gaza strip, and the role of states in upholding international law. When asked whether he moved too rapidly or slowly in naming defendants regarding the Gaza case, he responded that they "moved at the speed of the evidence", according to an attendee.

Attendees also told *Cherwell* that Khan discussed the threats of sanctions against him proposed by US Republican Senator Lindsay Graham, rhetorically asking: "If bullying works, would every court that stands firm be sanctioned?"

During the audience Q&A, one woman asked a question about the ongoing sexual misconduct investigation, to which the prosecutor responded that the appropriate procedure is being followed and that they had to "trust the process".

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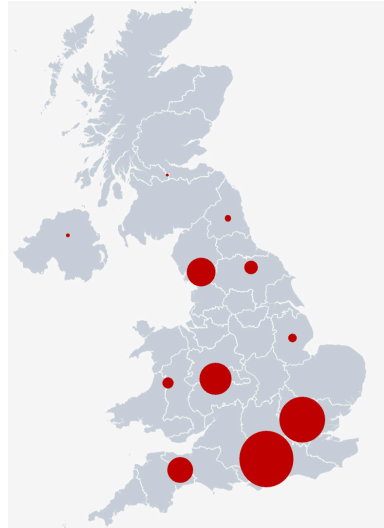
Image Credit: OSeveno/CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons



# Oxford's state-school admissions fall short despite outreach attempts

Continued from Page 1

## Graph four



The University emphasises how their attempts to improve access have been successful throughout the report, drawing conclusions such as “the proportion of UK students admitted from the independent sector has decreased between 2019 and 2023.” Similarly, the report also says that state-school students represent “between 46.5% and 79.6% ...for Oxford’s 25 largest courses,” a more generous statistic than the University’s overall intake of state-school students, which has not yet risen above 70%.

## The issue of 2019-2020

Yet this progress is not as impressive as the statistics initially imply. The five-year time range used to track state school and private school access to Oxford University is a pretty standard one. And yet it is slightly problematic due to the outlier admissions year of 2019 to 2020.

The 2019 to 2020 application cycle marked a record year for state school admissions into Oxford with 21% of 9,411 applicants receiving offers (graph two). This contrasted with the year before, when 500 less state school students applied, and 113 less offers were made to state school students. The unprecedented numbers of state-school admissions reached in 2020 have not been consistently matched in the following years. Indeed, since 2020 the gap between private school and state school access to Oxford has only grown bigger.

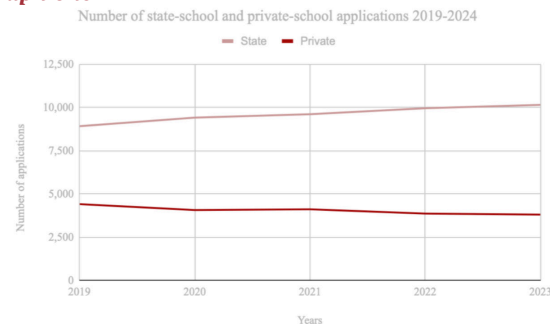
The data from the years post-2019 indicate stagnation far more than progress and the representation of state-school students at the University has been on the decline for the last four years. By 2022, the amount of offers given to state-school students had already fallen by 8.5% since 2020 and in 2023, 275 less state-school students were admitted to Oxford than in 2020.

## The hidden facts

While the University’s admissions reports provide all the data on students from state schools and private schools, it is not made clear that the proportion of state-school students applying to Oxford University is consistently higher than the proportion of state-school students who are admitted, as shown in graph three. Furthermore, the proportional difference between the numbers of state-school students at both stages has risen by 4.2% since 2020, suggesting that this trend is only worsening.

Despite the numbers of students applying to Oxford from state schools only increasing, climbing to a record of 10,150 applications in 2023 (graph one), there has been no meaningful increase in the numbers admitted. While state-school students are increasingly

## Graph one



encouraged to apply, the University’s admissions have in no real way yet matched this change.

In contrast, graph three also shows that over the last five years there has always been a higher proportion of private-school students being admitted than the proportion of private-school students at the applications stage. The gap between these proportions has only increased since 2019.

It seems as if in recent years, Oxford’s progress in accessibility has stumbled into a period of increasing inertia. Improvements made in 2020 have been followed not by a meaningful change in the University’s demographics, but by a backslide into underrepresentation of state-educated students.

## The schools

But it is not just the University’s own statistics that can provide insight into the representation of state-school students at Oxford University. *The Spectator* recently published a list of the top 80 schools that receive the most offers from Oxford University and Cambridge University. The data gathered from the 2023 UCAS application cycle shows how the proportion of high-performing schools is fairly evenly split between the private and state sector. Out of the 80 schools, 29 are independent schools and the remaining 51 are state-funded schools.

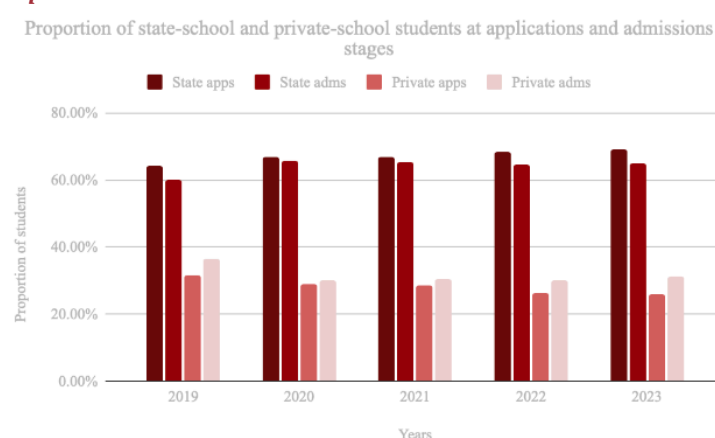
This would suggest that, if anything, state-school students have better chances of getting into Oxford University. However, within the 51 state schools on this list, there is still much stratification, with 29 being grammar schools and 17 sixth-form colleges. While all state schools are characterised by their lack of tuition fees, some are also fully or partially academically selective and others focus solely on post-16 education. Grammar schools and sixth form colleges tend to outperform comprehensive state-schools, achieving better A-level grades. Additionally, sixth-form colleges tend to be able to provide more extensive resources than comprehensive schools and grammar schools are noted to often disproportionately represent middle-class students. For example, in 2021 to 2022, 5.7% of pupils at grammar schools were eligible for free school meals compared to 22% in an average comprehensive school.

While comprehensive schools are still funded by the state, they are not selective and so accept all students regardless of academic performance and regardless of age. On this list of the top schools for Oxbridge admissions, only five, or 6.3%, are comprehensive state schools.

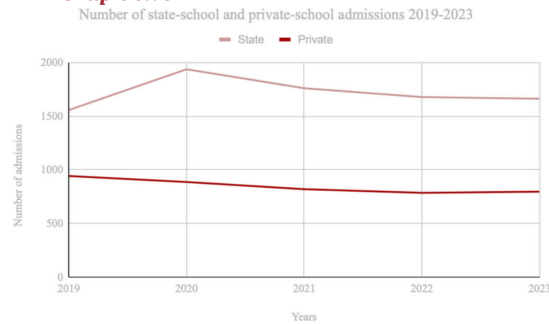
## The reasons

Another trend that Oxford Uni-

## Graph three



## Graph two



est proportion out of the 24 Russell Group universities.

## Outreach

But what is Oxford University doing to level the playing field? Outreach is a relatively new but important tool that Oxford among many other universities employs to encourage and support students from underrepresented backgrounds.

It was only in the 2010s that Oxford introduced structured outreach programmes. The UNIQ programme, a summer residential and one of the University’s flagship access programmes, was introduced at the beginning of the decade. It is now one of many initiatives run by the University. Oxford colleges also carry out their own outreach.

*Cherwell* received FOI responses from seven colleges – the Queen’s College, St Hilda’s College, St Edmund Hall, New College, Exeter College, Keble College, and St John’s College. This data shows that, as expected, state schools are the main target of their outreach programmes.

Outreach is definitely becoming more and more prominent and widespread and there is no argument that this is not a positive change. Yet in the last five years, there has only been a minor increase in applications from state-school students (graph one) and virtually no difference in the number of students from state schools who are admitted (graph two).

It might just be too early to tell. Most outreach programmes were first initiated between 2010 and 2020 and while perhaps this is not enough time to truly know, there is insufficient evidence of positive change university-wide. It may not be fair to say that outreach has no effect but its success is yet to be mirrored in the University’s applications and admissions.

## College disparities

Oxford University’s college system also adds greater complexity and the proportion of state-school students differs greatly from college to college. Mansfield College holds the highest number of state-school students with a proportion of 93.7%, which is in line with the number of students in state schools throughout the UK. However, this is 37 percentage points higher than the proportion of state-school students at Pembroke College.

The Campaign for State Education identified the college system specifically as a problem. They told *Cherwell*: “In the short term, the best thing to do would be to stop allowing colleges to control their own admissions. In both universities [Oxford and Cambridge] the proportion of state/private educated students varies enormously from college to college and this clearly reflects the exercise of quite different admissions.”

## Location, Location, Location

However, the picture painted by admissions statistics to Oxford University is not that simple. It is not just school type alone that affects access to Oxford but so does school location and in all areas, the same few locations are consistently overrepresented while the rest are nearly always at a disadvantage.

Oxford University’s admissions reports from the last three years show that London and the South East are favoured. Making up around 14% of the

total UK population, the proportion of students from the South East who apply and are admitted to Oxford is nearly double that.

Contrastingly, the 11% of the UK population in the North West is not equally represented in the 8% of Oxford applicants and admittees. Students from Yorkshire and the Humber are also underrepresented and they make up only 5% of applications and admissions, despite this region accounting for 8% of the population.

Furthermore, when looking at *The Spectator*’s top schools for students who go onto Oxford and Cambridge University, this bias is also present. London and the South East are again the most popular with 38 out of the top 50 schools falling in these regions and all but two of the top 20. Only one school from the North East, Greenhead College, has made the top 50.

Therefore, this clear regional preference to London and the South East must surely have an impact on Oxford’s outreach attempts. The University’s regional outreach programme, “Oxford for UK”, describes how they aim “to help more local students from backgrounds which are currently underrepresented to make successful applications to Oxford.” This programme assigns different Oxford colleges a region for them to specifically target with their outreach programmes.

The statistics undeniably highlight the North East as an underrepresented area with the lowest number of applicants to the University coming from this region. Oxford for UK has assigned it links to three colleges: Christ Church College, St Anne’s College, and Trinity College. This is roughly the same number of colleges linked to Yorkshire and the Humber, the East Midlands, the West Midlands, the North West, Wales, the South West, and the East of England.

The bias towards London and the South East is also shown by the latter region being designated seven colleges to expand access in this already over-represented area. Eleven colleges have links to specific boroughs within London, a subdivision made for no other area in the UK.

The amount specific regions interact with linked colleges does not correlate with their applications to Oxford University. The FOI responses from the seven colleges shows that the South West is targeted by outreach programmes two times as much as their students apply to Oxford (graph four).

Graph four represents the number of schools targeted by the seven colleges in each region and it shows that regional bias is stronger than a college’s designated outreach area. The schools involved in outreach are predominantly from London and the South East, while the North East as well as Scotland and Northern Ireland receive far less attention. Indeed, regardless of designated links to the region, almost every college interacts with schools from London as a large proportion.

While this is not true for all colleges, outreach from St Edmund Hall, whose link region is the East Midlands, reached schools from that area over 80% of the time. However, this is not always the case and New College, whose link region is Wales, only interacted with Welsh schools less than 30% of the time.

## What now?

It is clear that private-school bias is still a great issue at Oxford University. State school students continue to be underrepresented in one of the UK’s top academic institutions. The work of outreach programmes and initiatives are yet to have definite consequences on progress.

The Campaign for State Education told *Cherwell*: “the English private school system concentrates massive resources on the education of already privileged children and effectively undermines the education of 93.5% of our children...The best thing to do with it would be to abolish it.”

Image Credit: kldonnelly/CC BY 2.0

# The Oxford Union has screwed itself over

After weeks of argument and overreach, the situation in the Union is unsustainable. Speaker walkouts and allegations of bias, incompetence, a hostile environment mean the President should resign.

**H**ow does one successfully get away with breaking the rules? The Oxford Union's recent antics provide an elegant solution: sack everybody who could get in the way.

If you've recently stepped foot into the Union, you undoubtedly will have noticed a consistent air of discontent: from freshers to speakers, hundreds of visitors have expressed dissatisfaction at debates being derailed by student politics, and internal officials are being removed every few days. The early weeks of Michaelmas are usually the debating society's most profitable, yet this term's membership drive has been comparably underwhelming. Clearly, the institution's recent record is rife with widespread incompetence, symptomatic of its ineffective and oppressive leadership.

President Ebrahim Osman-Mowafy could not have asked for a more united house near the start of term. As the candidate who inspired a walkout after being disqualified in Trinity, he detailed his disappointment in the Union's Returning Officer and other electoral workers (colloquially referred to as 'RO world') in a speech before the term's first debate. Proposing a list of rule changes that would reduce the power of 'RO world' and make the Union "more democratic," President Osman-Mowafy passed the reforms through the house via a voice vote (the debating chamber yelled 'aye' louder than 'no').

A series of intense procedural disputes ensued, with Committee members trading claims of rule-breaking and invalidation. For one, the debacle took place during the Union's open week, thus many of the voters were not even members of the society. Moreover, President Osman-Mowafy refused to hear selected objections against the reforms – for a society treasuring free speech, this displayed a great lack of self-awareness. Despite his claims that he has acted procedurally throughout, the rules change was recently reversed after a decision by the Oxford Literary and Debating Union Charity Trust (OLDUT), which owns much of the Union buildings and manages donations; this decision by OLDUT was directly acknowledged by Standing Committee. It is painfully clear that this was not some attempt to validly pass constitutional reform, but rather a planned exploitation of non-members in order to illegitimately force through overarching rules.

With the illusion of a new constitution in place, our President made no attempt to heed the Returning Officer's warnings that his actions largely consisted of constitutional breaches and abuses of power. This was most blatantly exhibited the following week, when the appointment of electoral officials grew increasingly sour. Procedurally, applications for Deputy Returning Officer may only be struck if concerns are raised regarding their capability: this was not the case for three applicants who were struck without justifiable explanation, after not being allowed to defend themselves. That same week, three Deputy Returning Officers were later sacked on grounds of being "unfit, unwilling, or unable" to perform their duties, also without justification.

One might argue that perhaps this institutional reshuffling is rooted in good intentions, but this belief crumbles after a brief look at our new electoral team. Of the twelve Deputy Returning Officers appointed by Standing Committee, only three have worked in Union elections before, with five terms of experience between them; the six officials who were removed had a total of 18 such terms. Our new Returning Officer is a newcomer who matriculated mere weeks ago. The integrity of our elections and disciplinary proceedings now depend on Standing Committee's handpicked appointees, largely selected out of friendship, rather than merit.

A culture of fear has festered across Union committees, following the removal or resignation of numerous officers: the Chair of Consultative Committee (a senior logistical role) recently resigned, citing a "depressingly toxic and hostile" atmosphere within the Union. Last week, the Librarian (among the officers, second in seniority only to the President) also announced his resignation, before engaging in a heated discussion against the President regarding the rules change.

It was Harold Macmillan who deemed the Oxford Union "the last bastion of free speech". He'd be direly disappointed to learn that critics and electoral workers are being removed without explanation or pressured into resignation.

All three debates this term have now been delayed by Private Business, wherein the President has been challenged on his new rules. He accuses his questioners of attempting to delay debates, but things are not so insultingly

simple. With committee members being quietly removed, it is only in the debating chamber that the President can be held to accountability. Amid this week's questions, a division was called; this required the entire house to leave the chamber, including the speakers, in order to conduct a vote. The last time a debate was delayed by a division was two years ago, under a President who soon resigned.

President Osman-Mowafy attempted to change the rules in order to ensure that he no longer had to attend Access Committee meetings, which operate solely to help the Union meet the physical, financial, and personal needs of all members. Due to the poor distribution of the rule changes, most members are conveniently unaware that the President has shifted his own responsibilities. To believe that the Union's leadership is entirely honest requires naïveté beyond measure.

In his manifesto, President Osman-Mowafy pledged to make the Union more 'transparent',

yet he refused to recognise that his reforms were invalid. He promised that the society would be more 'accountable', yet he has had numerous critics sacked. He vowed to ensure that the Union was more 'engaging', yet his tenure has produced disappointing membership numbers. His term as President has been marred by what is at best continued incompetence, and at worst, a knowing disregard for the society's rules, history and members. Osman-Mowafy has taken advantage of votes by non-members, illegitimately removed opponents from roles, refused to publicly answer questions, contradicted the judgement of the trustees, and surrounded himself with personal appointees. He is a man who has fostered an environment of hostility to keep his critics silenced. It is thus the unwavering belief of this writer that President Ebrahim Osman-Mowafy must resign.

*The author was formerly an office-holder in the Union*

*Image Credit: David Hays*



## A lacklustre budget for the young

FAYE CHANG

**F**or a budget involving tax rises worth £40bn, it's pretty damning that Labour's autumn budget can still be branded a "non-event". However, this label may be apt in some ways: the pattern of increased spending and taxation continues from the previous government, with a lack of the large-scale tax reform that some might hope for from the first Labour government in 14 years. This budget might feel additionally inconsequential for young people, with its light touch on concerns surrounding climate and costs of education.

How might the budget actually impact young people? The most pressing way will likely be through employment: for those aged 18-20 already working, a 16.3% increase raising the hourly minimum wage from £8.60 to £10 will boost earnings. Those above 21 will experience a 6.7% increase to £12.21/hour. Given that even an undergrad degree at Oxford likely leaves little time to be working a job during term time, students at Oxford are more likely to be impacted by the increase to National Insurance (NI) contributions. This tax increase alone makes up more than 60% of the anticipated £40bn, as employers will now have to contribute 15% of worker's earnings above £175 – effectively, employers will have to start paying NI for

**This budget might feel inconsequential for young people**

workers earning £5000 per year, instead of £9000 as previously. Despite Reeves' suggestion that businesses could "absorb" the costs of these tax increases through accepting reduced profits, it's an unlikely choice for business-owners. The far more likely scenario is that employees will face lower pay rises, and greater difficulty entering the job market.

The choice for tax increases to finance spending was always between the big three: VAT tax, income tax, and NI contributions. However, hopes for tax reform have been stymied, with thresholds for income tax frozen and no notable increases through income itself. There have been long-overdue increases to Capital Gains Tax (CGT), which taxes profits made from selling assets which have increased in value. While much needed, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) points out that higher CGT is an insufficient change: higher CGT could encourage people to leave the UK before selling their assets to avoid the tax, and reforms to the tax base and current structure of CGT itself would be far more effective.

If Labour makes smart fiscal choices over the next few years, we have the potential to see the growth they've promised in the long-term. But, in the meantime, at least there's a penny off on pints to stave off despair.

## Keep print alive in Oxford

FLORA PRIDEAUX

**I** was lucky to spend a few weeks working with the *Daily Mail* this summer. Love them or hate them, one thing became increasingly apparent: infinite content is the death of journalism.

In 2023, Press Gazette investigated the story output of leading UK news publishers. *The MailOnline* published an average of 1,490 stories per day in September 2023, more than a story a minute. It's not just that online news buzzes in our pockets every minute, exhausting our brains, inducing anxiety, and desensitising us to catastrophes. There is just too much news.

Compare that to print. The *Daily Mail* publishes around 30 articles daily. The paper is carefully curated (yes, to reflect a political agenda) but also to create a manageable and digestible publication. My grandmother can sit down each morning and "read the newspaper". The limit to news is not just better for our time and mental capacity; it forces editors to prioritise specific stories. Headlines and front pages come first. However, online, everything is ordered by what is most recent, and there is no way to distinguish what is significant. Blink, and you might miss it.

Print increases your chances of coming

**Infinite content is the death of journalism**

across new ideas and breaking those familiar accusations of the 'echo chamber'. The Instagram algorithm is a deceptively infinite source of information. And as long as you keep scrolling, the tailored feed will never show you ideas beyond your comfort zone. There is enough information to fuel a feed for every belief. Finding print content, however,

can prompt readers to confront divergent views. Whether in newsagents or the familiar rivalry of which newspaper, *Cherwell* or *The Oxford Student*, is on top of the pile in JCRs. You don't have to pick them both up to see that there is other content out there. Unlike with the Instagram algorithm, it's pretty clear when *OxStu* has stuck their copies on top.

I have to confess I have ulterior motives for wanting you to pick up a copy of *Cherwell*. Online news and information have the potential to be more inclusive and more accessible, to break through censorship and misinformation. But if an endless amount of content is available, doesn't that limit our understanding just as much?

So, if you're reading this online, pick up the print version (and tell your JCRs to buy more copies) to see if you notice a difference.

# OPINION

LILLY LAW

## The Chancellorship is of no use

The first time I heard of the Chancellor was when he resigned. When researching for this article, my results were flooded with stories about Lord Patten stepping down and his potential successors, but pre-2024: almost nothing. There was one story about an appointment to the Order of the Garter, then copious articles about the Vice-Chancellor. If the main time the institution of the Chancellor generates interest is when he (because in the role's 800-year history, it has always been a 'he') leaves, it suggests the role might be more symbolic than practical.

The institution of the Chancellor began in the 13th century, as every great Oxford tradition does: with the interaction of town, gown, and murder. Following the killing of a woman by a University student, tensions rose to a fever pitch, with three scholars hanged and the rest leaving the city in protest. A solution took five years: a Chancellor, appointed by the Bishop of Lincoln, to oversee certain legal proceedings in cases involving scholars. The judicial function served by the Chancellor in its creation is no longer present today – following section 23 of the Administration of Justice Act 1977, students are once again under the law of the land.

Since the removal of the function for which the office was created, the two Chancellors that have

held the post have expressed similar pessimism about its powers. Roy Jenkins, Chancellor from 1973 to 2003, characterised the role as “impotence assuaged by magnificence”. Lord Patten was slightly nicer, calling his position “usefully impotent”.

To be fair, select historical Chancellors have been transformational to the University's development. Robert Dudley, Chancellor in the 1560s, put the Oxford University Press on a permanent footing. Lord Clarendon's funding was central to OUP's success. George Curzon oversaw a tumultuous few decades at the turn of the 20th century, supporting the first women matriculating, the abolishment of compulsory Greek, and formalisation of doctorates, all of which helped create modern Oxford.

But the position doesn't lend itself towards this kind of impact.

The post demands fundraising efforts, giving speeches to promote the university, and maintaining political goodwill – largely public-facing responsibilities. Such duties are taken very seriously: throughout his 21 year tenure, Lord Patten represented the University at as many as 60 international events per year, including 16 days in the House of Lords between March 2023 and 2024. The boost the position gives to one's political career or to one's legacy, on the cusp of retirement, seems inevitable with this level of publicity.

Across various forms of public opinion, Lord Patten was referred to as a highly successful, arguably exemplary Chancellor. The main events of his Chancellorship appear to be warning of national security risks of academic links with China; wading into the Cecil Rhodes debate firmly on the retaining side, suggesting those who disagreed could ‘be educated elsewhere’; and opening new buildings at LMH. However, the position remains distant from the lives, and at times, interests, of current University students. Undergraduates, after all, are

not able to vote in this election.

It's ironic that, despite representing the University on a global stage, and being so entwined with its reputation, the Chancellor has little structural accountability to enact positive change. There is potential for transformation in the role. Having a figurehead with a foot in the real world could ensure that the city does not become an ivory tower. Furthermore, symbolism does not have to be the same as it's always been – it would set a bold tone to have the position's first woman, or person of colour.

With some work, the Chancellor could be instrumental in changing the way that the university is funded. Over the past year, collegiate and University investments have come under scrutiny, with divestment being one of Oxford Action for Palestine's most prominent demands. Furthermore, contributing to more sustainable financing, by accelerating divestment from fossil fuel funds, would cement Oxford as one of the leaders in the economic effort against climate change. A forward-thinking, innovative Chancellor, could aid the Vice-Chancellor in tackling the significant political challenges that the University faces in our time.

But when the role has existed as a reputational tool for centuries, the infrastructure required to fundamentally redefine it is limited. The surrounding superstructure that comes with the role of Chancellor is a burden against the possibility of change: perhaps an institutional shift, such as creating a more substantively powerful Vice Chancellor, and a high-powered fundraising committee, could eliminate the need for a Chancellor at all.

That is, of course, unless you really like the cut of those gold robes.

## From the Editorial Board:

### The blues, the budget, and the bookings

Let's address the elephant in the room: Trump's been elected. Some may think that the effects of US elections are localised to the country across the pond, but **Roy Shinar Cohen** reminds everyone that American politics have a global reach. With his disregard for international norms and rules of law, Trump's return to the White House might restrain America's adversaries, but it will more likely mark a sinister shift in the tone of the special relationship. How, Cohen questions, will the new president use his leverage over the UK?

Even without Trump's influence, Labour has released some pretty hefty decisions: the recently-released autumn budget takes the title as the second-largest tax-raising budget in history. **Faye Chang** breaks down what impacts this budget will have on young people: while there might be hope for long-term pay-offs, tax reforms with greater potential for generating change have been ignored. Speaking of losing steam, Labour aren't the only ones finding themselves exhausted and looking forward to the next reprieve. Oxford terms might pass by quickly, but fifth week certainly feels longer than most. The days get shorter, the work starts to pile up, and college welfare teams double down with alpacas and Freddo bars abound. As we confront this dreary time of term, **Siena Jackson-Wolfe** highlights the importance of prioritising your well-being and taking the rest you need.

Arguing fervently in favour of print newspapers, **Flora Prideaux** shares how her summer internship with the *Daily Mail* highlighted how the constant barrage of digital articles doesn't just deteriorate our attention spans and morale, but also weakens the quality of journalism. While content for print is highly curated by newspapers, it ensures that what's most important gets out first, rather than just what's most recent. For student newspapers, this is no less the case – anyone reading this editorial is getting exclusive print access to the fruits of the Opinion section's labour. Alongside journalism, student voices are rising from St Michael's Street as the Oxford Union undergoes another period of fiery infighting. After lengthy disputes over a recent rules reform, one commentator argues that the President should resign, citing the turnover of Committee members and perceived broken promises.

As the days grow rapidly darker, the light dims on certain Oxford institutions. **Arun Lewis** lays out the discrepancies in the hall booking systems as colleges keep or ditch outdated COVID systems. Making a clear distinction between the necessary structure of formals and the inhibited spontaneity of early dinners and lunches, he makes a case for cutting down on pandemic-era bureaucracy. Levelling her aim at a slightly older establishment, **Lilly Law** evaluates the office of Oxford Chancellor. First delving into its origins in the Dark Ages, she draws contrasts between active leaders in the role and the limited powers of the role itself. Her analysis raises new possibilities for the Chancellor to grow beyond “impotence”, while admitting it may be time for the role to be extinguished entirely.

Given that you're reading this editorial, perhaps with a fifth-week Freddo in hand, we have strong hope that the Cherwell print is one Oxford institution that will survive.

ROY SHINAR COHEN

## Leave us alone, Donald

*Trump is back for another four years in the White House. Oxford students can't pretend his influence won't cross the Atlantic.*

Electing a President in the United States is a global event. Why, though, is it so important? In the US, this election will significantly impact rights for minorities, women, and speech. As for non-American Oxford students, a unique impact on their lives is not forthcoming (except more Union debates about Trump). Our cushy accommodations, overflowing libraries and stained-glass windows have seen worse through the ages. But, is there anything else we should fear?

I believe there is. Trump's record as a famous billionaire, political candidate and president is one of racism, misogyny, disdain for international norms and the rule of law, and self-interest. Having been decisively elected by the American people, the United States' allies and adversaries must realise the rulebook that guided the world for decades is finally out the window.

Without international norms, what we are left with is power. It may, arguably, restrain America's adversaries. Its allies can expect different effects. For instance, Trump may hold Britain to certain standards about China or about increasing its defence spending, which we can argue is not in Britain's interest, and threaten it with some sanctions. But, would he also insist Britain protect migrants' rights or help it in stopping far-right propaganda and disinformation? In other words, would he defend democratic ideals in the United States and beyond?

Surely not. Trump and his allies recklessly spread disinformation with deadly consequences. His presidency is likely to play out in an incoherent and erratic manner across all areas of life and politics. While this will begin in the United States, it will quickly spread to its allies and adversaries. To date, Donald Trump has influenced Brexit, COVID norms, NATO and far-right violence. American or not, you will soon know what is next and should be concerned.

ARUN LEWIS

## Hall booking needs binning

*A leftover COVID system is stymying the freedom and spontaneity students need. Colleges should give it up and let us choose when we eat.*

In 2020, as the world hurtled towards COVID, Oxford faced a hard question: how could it ensure its students were fed, whilst respecting COVID-19 restrictions?

The answer was Hall booking. It allowed colleges to uphold social distancing, and as a bonus told them how much food to serve. This could minimise food waste and the associated financial and environmental damage. It could also lighten the load on kitchen staff, resulting in more productive use of the fruits of too-rarely appreciated kitchen staff's labour.

Since the pandemic, however, a smorgasbord of policies has emerged across Oxford: St Cross requires all meals to be booked, New College still books for early sittings and Formal Halls, whilst Univ books solely for Formal Halls. Formal booking makes sense – the work that goes into the meal justifies students organising themselves. But the inconsistency in standard meals astounds: without the pressures of the pandemic, meal booking isn't worthwhile.

Students are busier than ever. With the stresses of work and extracurriculars, it's easy to imagine students letting meals slip. The release of freely eating with friends will be lost to dull bureaucracy and strict daily regimens. The bonds of friendship forged over a tagine or the in-jokes born of a tired lunch might be impossible to numerically assess, but are of incomparable value to students. What conveniences colleges could derive would be at a cost to student's mental and physical wellbeing.

Trust students. The formality of booking served its purpose during the pandemic, but we don't need it now. If Oxford promotes an independent working style, colleges should accept students know their own stomachs. Hall is not the GP; we should be able to eat without booking days in advance.

SIENA JACKSON-WOLFE

## Student support just is not good enough

As the air cools and college puffers become essential the darker days seem to match the mood. Week 5 of the Oxford cycle looms, threatening many with the notorious '5th week blues'. This point in the term isn't just the halfway mark; it's often the tipping point where academic rigour, mental fatigue, and the relentless pace of Oxford's term collide. For many, the pressure to excel, maintain momentum, and “do it all” becomes overwhelming.

Oxford's eight-week terms are rigorous, creating a demanding atmosphere that exhausts and burns out many Oxford students. The university counselling service has seen a massive increase in students asking for help in recent years. The student body is struggling and when it all gets too much rustication appears to be the only option.

High achievers are bad at giving themselves a break. Drive, a core trait of many at Oxford, is

a blessing and a curse, creating high-level results but also causing extreme pressure. Recently, there have been more calls for a reading week to be implemented to break up the term. Students feel like it would reduce pressure, but I am unsure whether it could drastically change the fifth-week blues. A reading week could become another week where students take on more, work harder, and continue to put in the hours. The University needs to look at how to support morale drops throughout the term, whenever students are asking for help. It is essential that student welfare is prioritised, especially when students often forgo their own mental well-being in order to excel. Being gentle is neither nurtured at Oxford nor innate to the personality types at this uni. But it is important. Now more than ever, check in with your friends, give yourself some downtime and celebrate small wins.

Image Credit: David Hays



# From classrooms to code: Education is on the frontline of Britain's misinformation fight



By UJVAL SIDHU-BRAR

Legislative changes, new tech, and media education for students and older generations alike have been proposed to address growing misinformation crises, especially in the wake of the UK's summer riots and a second Trump presidency across the pond. Data from the Oxford Internet Institute and beyond holds some of the answers.

Taking to Facebook in early August 2024, a 28-year old man encouraged “[e]very man and their dog [to] be smashing [the] fuck out” of a hotel housing asylum-seekers in eastern Leeds. The Crown Prosecution Service found no evidence that he participated directly in the riots. He was instead jailed for “intending to stir up racial hatred”.

The incident that sparked this summer's unrest - the false claim that a Muslim asylum-seeker committed the Southport stabbings of 29th July 2024 - is unlikely to have originated with this man. It did, however, spread rapidly across social media platforms and instant messaging apps. By the end of July, the rumour had been viewed nearly 20 million times on X alone. In the wake of the man's conviction, National Police Chiefs' Council Chair Gavin Stephens warned in *The Telegraph* that “left unchecked, misinformation and harmful posts can undermine all our safety.”

## An overblown issue?

Yet, despite widespread concern over the role of social media platforms in amplifying disinformation (intentionally-shared misleading information) and misinformation (unintentionally-shared misleading information), some have argued that the issue is overblown. Professor Ciaran Martin of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government has cautioned against overstating the outcome of misinformation, at least in relation to national security. “There is a tendency sometimes... to confuse intent and activity with impact,”

Martin explained. Similarly, of the 289 peer-reviewed researchers who responded to the 2023 Expert Survey on the Global Information Environment, only a third viewed social media platforms as “the most threatening actors to the information environment”.

One of the reasons for this scepticism may be the surprisingly low prevalence of misinformation on these platforms. For instance, a recent analysis by Aarhus University of 2.7 million tweets found that a mere 0.001% linked to an untrustworthy source. Historical data further supports this view. In their study of 120,000 letters sent to editors of *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* over a 120-year period, Joseph Uscinski and Joseph Parent found that the frequency of conspiracy theories has remained steady. The specifics and targets may change, but the appetite for misinformation has not increased.

Additionally, engagement statistics alone can be misleading. Just because a piece of misinformation is shared widely does not imply that its entire audience believes or endorses it. A study examining 9,345 Danish tweets during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, found that about half of the tweets referencing misinformation were ridiculing it.

## Biased algorithms and biased humans

Social science research also challenges another prevailing notion: that algorithms are to blame for shielding users from information sources outside their bubble. “I think this is widely exaggerated...that Google or other

search engines would hide information from you, and you see only what you like,” said Professor William Dutton of the Oxford Internet Institute (OII). Indeed, a 2017 study tracking the news consumption habits of over 3,000 British users revealed that most people access content from a broad range of both partisan and nonpartisan outlets.

Algorithms certainly play a role in shaping the information we encounter online, but they may not be the root cause of the problems of dis- and misinformation. For Dutton, “[i]t is not a problem of the technology. The problem is that we are the algorithm that decides that we are going to look only at what we believe is the case.”

This points to a deeper phenomenon that predates social media algorithms: human psychology. For decades, research in social and personality psychology has demonstrated that people are inherently biased towards information that reinforces their existing views. More recently, a study of 879 Americans discovered that participants were more likely to believe false headlines that were aligned with their pre-existing beliefs and actively sought fact-checks for headlines that portrayed their political party negatively.

## The problem with government

Still, even if news quality has less of an effect on beliefs than we might expect, the spread of mis- and disinformation remains an issue. At best, it acts as a distraction, diverting resources from legitimate political, media, and governmental efforts. At worst, it facilitates

chaos, deepens pre-existing divides, and undermines trust in institutions.

Perhaps legislation could be tightened. Under the UK's Online Safety Act 2023 (OSA), social media companies must promptly remove “illegal content,” with penalties reaching up to £18 million or 10% of their global annual revenue. However, the Act does not explicitly designate “disinformation” or “misinformation” as illegal content. False communication is considered an offence only if the person spreading it intended to cause harm and knew it was untrue. While “disinformation” is therefore captured by the offence, Ofcom notes that it automatically rules out “misinformation” as illegal since it is, by definition, unintentional.

Filling that gap in the legal framework would require redefining misinformation, a change that appears unlikely. To define misinformation, a formal definition of “news” would be necessary. Regulators themselves could take matters into their own hands but are reluctant. “I am not convinced that having a very clear definition is possible. What is news? News is lots of different things to all sorts of different people,” explained Cristina Nicolotti Squires, Ofcom's Group Director for Broadcast and Media.

There are also fears that a legal definition of “news” would limit the media's independence from government influence, subject it to censorship, and weaken its ability to hold the government accountable. As Professor Rasmus Kleis Nielsen of the Reuters Institute notes, “British journalists and British publishers...



generally believe that having a formal, authoritative, state-imposed definition of what is news is worse than not having one.”

Additionally, aggressive unilateral measures could damage Britain’s soft power. Social media platforms are already bending to the demands of “decisive governments” where platforms must comply with restrictive laws. Robert Colville, Director of the Centre for Policy Studies, warns the UK Government against adopting similar policies. “We probably do not want to do things that autocratic governments can seize on, saying, ‘You see, the British are doing it.’”

### Tech action and inaction

To limit the UK Government’s reach, tech companies themselves may need to shoulder more of the burden. One promising approach lies in provenance-enhancing technology, which adds metadata to determine the origins of digital content. This could prove particularly useful for content shared on instant messaging apps like Telegram, whose active user base

*“the country’s younger people represent a crucial battleground where biases can be addressed before they take root [...] Before the summer riots, Oxford also took steps to aid the media literacy of a portion of its students”*

swelled by one million between July 29th and July 30th 2024. However, such tools to evaluate media are only effective if users engage with them.

Increasing transparency around social media algorithms has also emerged as a major focus. The OSA places the onus on platforms to publish transparency reports. Still, it’s unclear how detailed or useful this will be. Some tech companies already disclose similar information. Meta, for instance, details how its ranking system demotes certain content, while Google shares its search quality evaluator guidelines. But the complexity of algorithms – often involving billions of parameters – limits transparency.

Commercial interests also remain a significant barrier to full transparency. As Jane Singer, Emerita Professor at City, University of London, notes, “Why would the platforms necessarily want to do what you tell them to do?” Dutton also cautions that exposing the inner workings of these systems might “give everyone the information that they need to optimise their search,” providing bad actors with the tools to game the system even more effectively.

If the inner workings of algorithms cannot be disclosed or fully explained, they could at least be made more effective. Over half of the 289 experts surveyed by the International Panel on the Information Environment believe current AI-powered moderation tools are poorly designed, failing to catch harmful content consistently. This is especially important for platforms with few human content moderators as a safeguard, such as X which had its team gutted in 2022.

Hours after the Southport incident, a post published by a 41-year old woman, calling for mass deportations and violence, was flagged by at least one X user. Despite her order to “set fire to all the fucking hotels full of the bastards for all I care,” an automated email informed the reporter that she “ha[d]n’t broken our rules



against posting violent threats.” While her post might not be interpreted as a direct threat, it is unclear how it did not violate X’s prohibitions on violent speech, which include “Wish of Harm” and “Incitement of Violence.” The post has since been deleted and the woman’s account is no longer active; whether a human moderator at X took action or whether she removed it herself is unknown.

### Empowering minds

Between commercial interests, algorithmic complexity, and the limitations of current AI moderation tools, tech companies cannot go it alone in eradicating the problem. Dr Dani Madrid-Morales of the University of Sheffield may be right when he says that the UK Government remains “overly focused” on regulatory and technological approaches to combatting misinformation, at the expense of educational initiatives.

Although Ofcom data show that 71% of the

*“Between commercial interests, the algorithms’ complexity, and the limitations of current AI tools for moderation, tech companies cannot go it alone in fixing the problem.”*

739 16- to 24-year-olds surveyed use social media as their primary news source, one might assume that older news consumers should be the primary target of such initiatives. Referring to Estonia’s media literacy programme, Maia Klaassen at the University of Tartu says, “I’m not worried about youth. I’m worried about 50-somethings.” Similar issues can be seen in Britain. While the UK ranks high on OSIS’ Media Literacy Index, this is misleading. Dr

Steven Buckley at City, University of London, contends that many Britons may still lack the skills needed to navigate today’s information landscape effectively, such as an understanding of how to evaluate sources and how news is produced.

There is some evidence for this. In Ofcom’s 2024 Media Use and Attitudes survey, respondents aged 55+ were less likely than those aged 16-24 to recognise misleading news or verify its accuracy, such as by consulting additional sources or using a fact-checking website. They were also less confident in spotting fake social media profiles and more sceptical of genuine information.

Yet, if Dutton and the academic literature are right about confirmation bias and selective exposure shaping responses to misinformation, then the country’s younger people represent a crucial battleground where biases can be addressed before they take root. Despite being digital natives, many pre-teens, teenagers, and young adults have been found to be overly trusting of news found through search engines and to overestimate their grasp of algorithm-driven content promotion. The problem is therefore present across a wide variety of demographics.

### A risky bet

Media literacy has its champions, including Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson, who has indicated that the ongoing school curriculum review will emphasise critical thinking skills relevant to media consumption. Before the summer riots, Oxford also took steps to enhance the media literacy of a portion of its students through last year’s climate change-themed Vice-Chancellor’s Colloquium. Importantly, the scheme was interdisciplinary, ensuring that all students could understand how misleading data can drive misinformation.

This notwithstanding, there are questions about media literacy programmes’ effectiveness and scalability. In a co-authored opinion piece for CNN, Professor Philip Howard at the OII deemed them “a risky bet” for combatting mis- and disinformation. Several factors contribute to this scepticism.

Funding is a hurdle. In 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport allocated just £1.4 million to media literacy programmes. This in turn affects scalability. Delivery has been piecemeal and project-based, often led by media organisations and nonprofits. As a result, these initiatives struggle to impact a meaningful number of students. For example, the Student View programme reached just over 2,000 pupils between 2016 and mid-2021—out

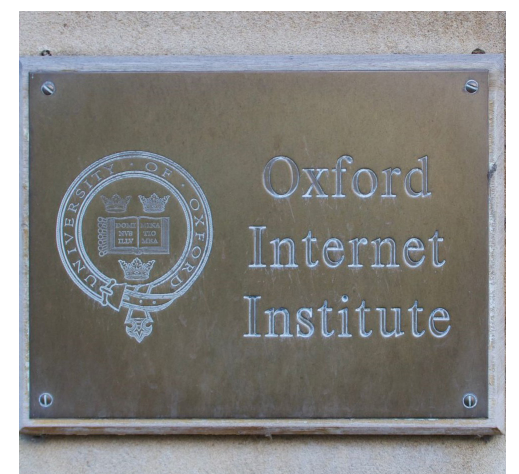
of nearly 9 million English school students.

Ofcom’s new media literacy responsibilities under the OSA could address some of these issues, but whether they will have the desired impact is uncertain. A 2012 meta-analysis of media literacy interventions showed positive results, but most of the studies predate the algorithmic age.

More recent assessments, such as a 2019 RAND Corporation study, highlight the difficulty of defining media literacy and establishing a clear link between media literacy programmes and resilience to disinformation. Even when programmes show promise, results are often modest. The evaluators of the Guardian Foundation’s NewsWise programme found that it improved 9- to 11-year-olds’ ability to spot misinformation. However, the effects were not statistically significant.

The test we now face is to ensure we accurately assess a threat that is starting to reveal itself. Overcorrecting legislatively carries risks. Social media platforms may not cooperate fully. The impact of media literacy programmes may take years to materialise. But the summer riots suggest that the effects of dis- and misinformation on British political discourse are no longer as “hard to detect” as Martin suggested in April 2024. He was right to warn against overreaction. He also recognised things could change quickly. We must now confront whether, as 2024 comes to a close with Donald Trump as President-Elect of the United States, we have reached that tipping point.

*Image credits: CC 2.0-BY/AH717438 via Flickr [left], John Cairns [top right], Khadijah Ali [below]*



# The students working to tackle homelessness

Turl Street Homeless Action distribute hot food, drinks, and hygiene products to rough sleepers. *Cherwell* spoke to their committee of student volunteers while on one of their shifts.

By SUBHAN ASLAM

When walking into Magdalen Street Tesco for a meal deal, sweet treat, or cheap bottle of wine, you're always met with that polite request: *any spare change?* Homelessness in Oxford is unignorable. It's an odd sensation to be at one of the richest universities in the world, whose city nonetheless has so many people in need of help.

As a student at Exeter, it is commonplace to see a scrappy piece of paper in the kitchen which reads "TSHA Do not Touch!". Most of us don't really know what they do but you assume it's something good, so we leave the various pot noodles and tins of soup alone. Look further, however, and you'll see a student movement dedicated to helping tackle homelessness in Oxford. Euan, a second year medic at St John's, is treasurer of Turl Street Homeless Action and spoke to me about how he got involved with the charity. He feels we are confronted with the "harsh reality" of homelessness "almost every day and it made [him] want to try and do something to help".

TSHA has three main functions: bringing hot drinks, food, and hygiene products to those sleeping rough; providing company and offering a listening ear for those who want it; and bridging the divide between students and the homeless community. Euan told me about how on his first shift he released "how insular and inward-looking this University can be". We walk past those that are struggling on a daily basis and the vast majority of us happily go back to our grandiose dining halls for a warm meal without a second thought. We treat Oxford as our campus, ignoring the fact that we're temporary residents of a city which isn't just chapels, quads, and college bars.

People start working with TSHA for a number of reasons and stay once they realise just how important their work can be. On my first shift I met Tony, a second year lawyer at St Hilda's, for whom working with TSHA was simply "a nice break from reading". Jack, third year historian at St Hugh's, ended up becoming president of the society all as he was "bored in first year". Unassuming motivations leading to noteworthy actions.

TSHA has come a long way. Ivan, a third year physicist at Exeter, said that when he started as a fresher, they would struggle to get 2 or 3 shifts out a week, but now they were happening pretty much daily. Another long-term volunteer spoke about how "this is the strongest the society has been in my 3 years volunteering". There's now

an active community of volunteers and groups like Oxford University Islamic Society or the University rugby team come in to do shifts too. Given the eagerness to help I was curious to learn why this wasn't always the case. A volunteer told me when they started "there was no real publicity, and it was tough to see how to get involved". The new committee understood these problems and with a proactive attitude have generated a buzz. They revamped the social media, cleaned up the finances, and for the first time hosted a stall at freshers fair which was very successful. For secretary Ruby, fourth year engineer at Hertford, their "focus is getting people out every night".

There are a number of regulars that TSHA visits, and on my second shift we met a group of them. Half a dozen mattresses pushed up against a wall, the people on them packed close together. We gave them socks, hot drinks, pot noodles, chocolate bars, and wipes, everything received with the utmost gratitude. As we started packing our stuff away you couldn't help but look up at the shimmering lights of the Westgate roof terrace, where just a few months ago a restaurant serving a £50 set menu with £30 worth of wine pairings was opened to great fanfare. There was an almost cinematic cruelty to the whole scene which made it hard for me to not to feel angry at such stark inequality. TSHA is not a campaigning group, but their student society status means they can easily ask for money from college JCRs easily. This makes them a bit of a Robin Hood organisation. Taking from the rich the University and giving it to the poor of Oxford.

Homelessness is on the rise. In Autumn 2023 there were 46 people sleeping rough in Oxford, up from 27 in 2022. The seriousness of the issue is not to be understated as between 2021 and 2023 there were a recorded 27 deaths of homeless people in Oxfordshire. With this in mind, getting involved with TSHA seems like a no-brainer. As Ruby puts it, "You can do one shift and never again or do weekly shifts, it is really up to you". Just a couple hours spent walking around Oxford, pouring hot chocolates for people who need them, and asking them how their day has been. Maybe even talking about how music was better 'back in the day' and bonding over your love for Bowie, T. Rex, and The Doors outside the covered market.

As students we often walk around wearing our college puffers with our heads held high, but it is looking down that gives you a sense of the reality for many in Oxford. Even with no spare change to give, a spare evening can make a huge difference.

*Image credit: Turl Street Homeless Action*



## UK unis' worldwide reputations are at risk

A mix of punitive immigration laws and the worry of a 'pay-to-play' mentality threatens recruitment.

By EMILY HENSON

Oxford is the best university in the world, by many standards. While national league tables quibble over teaching quality and student satisfaction - figures that are often simply marked N/A for Oxford and Cambridge - the University retains a near-unparalleled prestige for students around the world. So why have undergraduate applications to Oxford from the EU nearly halved in five years and the level of non-EU applicants fallen for the past two?

Maybe the national league tables are right to fret over teaching and support over research output, especially at the undergraduate level. Students without labs or language classes are often left with only one or two incredibly intense contact hours a week and a lingering aversion towards lectures. It cannot come as a surprise that students, especially those who are paying over £40,000, are not too keen on the idea of ploughing through academic tomes with little support beyond the odd text from a college parent. Most other universities offer a more substantial range of classes, lectures, and seminars.

But home applications haven't followed this trend, and the international application numbers are not just falling for Oxford, it's nationally - according to the most recent UCAS data. These are not people prevented from bringing families by stringent immigration laws, which is often cited as the biggest cause. These are eighteen year olds looking at British universities and deciding against them.

Somewhere between the millions of pounds worth of state funding, plans to make Britain a hub of tech innovation, and the lowest corporation tax in the G7, the idea that it is strategically essential for our universities to maintain their global appeal seems to have been lost. Oxford is respected, even revered, globally. That isn't up for debate. But the unpopularity of UK universities on the global market has weakened the sector as a whole, taking Oxford down with it.

You needn't look far in the news to see that higher education is grappling with significant financial issues. Courses are closing, academics are losing their jobs, and the phrase 'crisis' has been used even more than usual. Everyone is keenly aware that limited home fees are crippling universities.

The usual arguments of "Labour was over-ambitious and financially irresponsible in the 2000s" and "the Tories fatally underfunded the public sector" have, naturally, been bandied around. Yet reliance on internationals' fees - often from postgraduates as much as undergraduates - complexifies the picture. The tightening of immigration law - restricting students from bringing their family with them and limiting opportunities to stay in the UK after graduation - suggests that governmental priorities outside of education ignore this nuanced reality. The messaging on visas: come by yourself and study, but don't make too many new friends, because we're desperate for you to return home afterwards. It's hardly the most inviting prospect.

It's hard not to note the irony given that

everyone wants international students. *The Sunday Times* uncovered schemes run by Russell Group universities in which international students were recruited separately to usual UCAS procedure, often holding Cs or worse at A level, and placed on 'International Year One' - which facilitates progression onto second year without passing the exams sat by their coursemates.

And yet the universities aren't attracting those who would have come ten years ago. The desperation for funding cheapens the degree, becoming a pay-to-play. Most in support of high levels of international students aren't arguing from a standpoint that emphasises diversity or meritocracy - it's nearly exclusively financial. Paradoxically, desperation - and the impression it gives to prospective 'student-customers' that they are only there to subsidise home students - only reduces a university's appeal and so exacerbates their recruitment woes.

The anti-international camp aren't exactly motivated by sympathy for those who are being used in this way. Rather, they're often fixated on immigration numbers, and can usually be quite neatly typified as those you'd shuffle away from at the village pub, lest a conversation begin on how an eighteen year old studying biomedicine is demolishing English culture as we know it. Reducing international students becomes a necessity for any government looking to massage entry figures for this demographic.

But Oxford is different. For many Americans, it works out cheaper than the equivalent degree at Harvard or Yale. Oxford doesn't, as far as anyone is aware, engage in these international recruiting procedures. The same desperation isn't there. Oxford and Cambridge have colleges richer than every other university. And yet, international applications are on the decline.

Perhaps it isn't the attitude to international students that's the problem, it's what universities are offering them. Three years of specialisation, surrounded by concrete for the most part, with variable accommodation, disengaged tutors, and a drinking culture that in most countries would be cause for medical intervention. And the weather.

It's a hard sell when put against the idea of American colleges - however romanticised that might be - whose websites seem to consistently put out sunny drone shots of nineteenth-century buildings and multicultural groups laughing over a shared hobby. For those not set on a specific discipline, aiming for a more holistic, character building experience, it's hard to see how the UK could appeal.

In this case, universities need to turn the tide. As Oxford loses talent to other countries, so too does the UK's pool of talented graduates. Let alone the risk of becoming closing off from differing perspectives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. Otherwise, even Oxford may begin to find that its world-beating reputation is at risk.

# John Evelyn

**T**ables turn. On the Saturday of 3rd week, Rees Mogg and friends delivered judgement on our dear leaders, reversing time itself to undo all decrees issued since term began.

After wiping away their tears, the regime brought their changes to the Seat-warming Committee once more. The meeting featured guest appearances from rulers of old, including King Edward, The Blooming Hedge, and the original Mr. Authoritarian and Impulsive himself!

Facing such unacceptable opposition, Khan and Ramses resorted to tactical filibustering and adjournments ad absurdum. Their manoeuvres continued until King Edward was forced to leave, shifting the balance of power and allowing the House to make the final decision on Reign Reinforcement.

November 4th saw the dawn of a new autocracy across the pond, yet Union members could only look on enviously—at least that regime will probably know what it's doing. Meanwhile, the election night social was an unmitigated disaster, with members of the Clueless Cabal demonstrating their trademark competence by arriving promptly for their shifts—an hour after the event began. This astounding display was too much for even the Christ Church Crusader, who succumbed to his injuries the next day, dying a hero and martyr, gone but never forgotten.

The Gibralt-Aryan, in a final act of defiance, publicly self-immolated

for the Resistance at the start of the third debate of term—a gesture history will no doubt remember kindly. Our dear leaders ignored calls for delay and pressed on with theatrics that gave attendees a distinct sense of déjà vu from the first week. This time, however, the rebels did not sit idly by. Moses, armed with divine revelation, summoned a divination. Parting the House between the yays and nays, delivering us from the Pharaoh's grasp. Among those in this exodus was the Ex-President from Pembroke, who subsequently vanished into the moonlight.

Unshaken by the real risk to his life, Moses entered the chamber once more to challenge Ramses II to a poll, which was accepted with great reluctance. Immediately, resistance agents began collecting signatures for the Union's very own Declaration of Independence. Meanwhile, some imbecile—likely an agent of Genghis—set alight the previous edition of John

Evelyn. Clearly, the anti-intellectualism of the regime has reached new depths.

The Boat Party, which went well insofar as the boat didn't sink, saw the Serpentess take initiative for the first time in her life.

She attempted to pitch herself for the presidency and form a slate—only to fail miserably. Simultaneously, the insidious Keblite, with great assistance from Genghis Khan and Punjabi Pinocchio, transitioned from a sloth into a snake. He plunged a dagger into Her MAA-jesty's back, taking half her team with him and blaming his actions, rather shamelessly, on his girlfriend.

Undeterred by this treachery, Her MAA-jesty's proxy only grew more resolved, re-positioning herself as the great uniter between the rebels and disillusioned members of the Axis of Access, fulfilling the conditions of the prophecy to be called the true 'MichaelMessiah'. And with that, the Resistance transformed into a Revolution.

Sic Semper Tyrannis!



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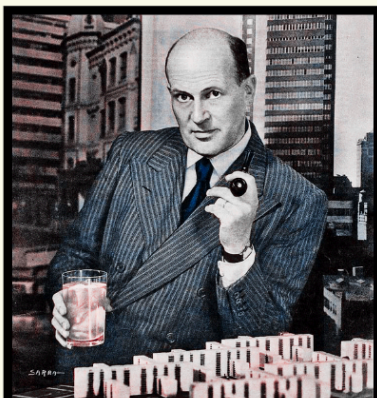
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# PROFILES

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“Iraq and Afghanistan were humiliating messes.”

## Rory Stewart spoke to *Cherwell* about populism, podcasting, and why he left the Bullingdon Club.

By HASSAN AKRAM

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**R**ory Stewart has been an diplomat, politician, academic, writer, and podcaster. He read PPE at Balliol 1992-1995. He has written several acclaimed books, including “Occupational Hazards”, an account of his time as a governor in Iraq; and “Politics on the Edge”, a memoir of his parliamentary career spanning 2010-2019. Since 2022 he has co-hosted, with Alastair Campbell, the immensely successful podcast “The Rest is Politics”. *Cherwell* sat down with him to discuss his opinions on *Cherwell*, the US election, the prison system, and his aims for the future.

**Cherwell:** *Was there anything in your early life which foreshadowed your later career?*

**Stewart:** I was very interested in travelling when I was young. A lot of my strongest memories are of spending time, for example, in Malaysia, Thailand, and China when I was very young. That time had a deep impact on me. I have boys who are seven and ten and we’ve just been travelling in Afghanistan together, and I’ve been very struck there by getting a sense of what they notice and what they do and don’t notice. One thing that’s very striking is how attractive jungles and rainforests are. Watching my seven-year-old walk along the paths and watch the birds, tress, flowers and nuts, reminded me a lot of being that age.

**Cherwell:** *When you were nineteen you came up to Balliol. Do you have a memorable tutorial moment from your undergraduate years?*

**Stewart:** I had a tutor called Martin Conway who was a History tutor at Balliol. I remember very strongly doing the Spanish Civil War with him, and realising that the story of why Franco won the war was almost a village-by-village, town-by-town story. It was almost a question of a million tiny events, almost unpredictable flips, 51-49, in tiny communities that won it. We often forget that

looking back at history. We imagine there are big single causes driving things. It struck me how often these are often close-run things, how they are very contingent, and how the great causes are things that we read back into them. The process of simplification in history is misleading. It’s one of the things that made me change from History to Philosophy at Oxford.

**Cherwell:** *Did you read *Cherwell*?*

**Stewart:** I did, I enjoyed reading *Cherwell*, yes.

**Cherwell:** *What did you think of the Oxford Union?*

**Stewart:** I didn’t like the Oxford Union, not my kind of thing, no.

**Cherwell:** *You’ve mentioned that you attended a Bullingdon Club event once. How was that?*

**Stewart:** I didn’t like it, I didn’t like the tone of it. I don’t know what it’s like now but, then, the feeling seemed aggressive towards other people. It seemed as though the club members were setting themselves out to shout at people who weren’t at the club. That wasn’t something that made me comfortable or want to continue to remain a member.

**Cherwell:** *Since graduating, which has been your favourite of the careers you’ve pursued, and why?*

**Stewart:** Certainly running Turquoise Mountain in Afghanistan. It was something which had an intimacy, a scale, a concreteness, a practicality which I’ve never really found elsewhere.

**Cherwell:** *On your time governing in Iraq, which you detail in *Occupational Hazards*, and your support for intervention in Afghanistan: What’s your response to the argument that Britain and the West really don’t have a place interfering with and occupying these countries?*

**Stewart:** My response is that we need to get a balance. Iraq and

Afghanistan were humiliating messes. They were examples of extreme overintervention, hubris, and totally unrealistic attempts at nation-building. But I felt in my earlier career in Bosnia and Kosova, that it was possible for the West to intervene, to prevent wars, and to create more peaceful and secure situations for people. A world in which the West overintervenes is a bad world; a world in which the West does nothing is an even worse world. The fantasies of people who thought that Trump isolationism or Biden withdrawal from Afghanistan would lead to a more peaceful or prosperous world have been misplaced, as we can see in Ukraine, the Middle East, and Sudan.

**Cherwell:** *After your time abroad, you were in Parliament between 2010-19, years of which you give a very vivid description in *Politics on the Edge*. Why did you decide to write that book after leaving Parliament?*

**Stewart:** I felt that one of the ways to understand Boris Johnson and Donald Trump and the rise of populism was to understand the nature of politics, to make people feel what it’s like as a day-to-day life. The kinds of things that get people promoted, the priorities of politicians, the way they talk to the public, the lifestyle that they live.

**Cherwell:** *What do you think is the nature, significance, and threat of populism in the UK and across the world?*

**Stewart:** It’s got three elements. One is individual policy. In Trump’s case, a policy could be mass deportation of illegal immigrants, 11 million people rounded up by SWAT teams and pushed across the border. The second thing is a worldview. In his case, a worldview about authoritarianism, isolation, and protectionism. The third thing is a tone of politics, an attitude towards your opponents, a way of speaking. You can imagine having a firm view on immigration without using the kinds of demonising, aggressive, scatological references that populists often employ.



**Cherwell:** *On what grounds did you clash with the government over COVID policy in 2020?*

**Stewart:** I believe the government should have locked down earlier and lifted the restrictions earlier. Boris Johnson was very slow to react to events in Italy, very slow to embrace masks. He allowed things like the Cheltenham races to go ahead. I found myself in a difficult position where I was attacked by younger ministers when I pointed out the necessity for taking precautions and acting quickly.

**Cherwell:** *Since 2022, you've become known for 'The Rest is Politics' podcast. How did that come about?*

**Stewart:** It came about by accident. Alastair Campbell did an Instagram live looking for someone to do a podcast with him. This process generated my name. We did it as an experiment, imagining that we would record half-a-dozen shows. We certainly didn't imagine that this thing would become almost the dominant theme in our lives. We're now better known as podcasters than anything else, and probably half my week is spent engaged in this act of podcasting.

**Cherwell:** *Another process which generated your name was the Oxford Chancellorship election. Why didn't you run?*

**Stewart:** It's a question of getting a sense of what stage you are in your life, what sort of role it is, how much good you can do in it, how suited you are to it. The risk for me was that I'd get excited about trying to change things, then find out that wasn't what the role was about.

**Cherwell:** *Are you backing a candidate in Oxford's chancellor race?*

**Stewart:** Not at the moment. I'm friends with William Hague and Dominic Grieve but I haven't thrown my weight behind them.

**Cherwell:** *What have you made of Keir Starmer's term in office so far? Highlights? Lows?*

**Stewart:** The highlight is that they pulled off a budget which, for better or worse, had content. It was bold and big – a lot of borrowing, taxation, spending – and consistent with their essential criticism of the Conservatives which is that they hadn't spend enough, in other words austerity. But the growth projected from that budget is pretty pathetic. I would like to see them being bolder around AI, tech, investment, planning and infrastructure development.

**Cherwell:** *This summer the government was forced to release prisoners early. As a former Prisons Minister, do you think this was necessary and what could be done to prevent a repeat of it?*

**Stewart:** It was inevitable given that the Conservative government and the Labour opposition had conspired to keep increasing sentence length and introducing new offences and new sentences. Britain already has more people in prison per head than most European countries – fewer than the US – and that's because we lock people up for longer periods. I would suggest that we are approaching it in the wrong way. We need much better community sentences. Generally, putting people in prison isn't good for the prisoner or for society. Prison should be reserved for extreme crimes where it's necessary to put someone in prison to protect the public.

**Cherwell:** *Turning to the US, I know that you were very confident that Kamala Harris would win. Firstly, how much did you bet on her winning? Secondly, why do you think that she lost?*

**Stewart:** I bet more than I want to admit on her winning. As for why she lost, I don't think any of us can know exactly why somebody wins or loses because it is 70 million people in a secret ballot. There are 70 million reasons she lost. The question is, What

are the additional numbers which increased Trump's vote from last time and led to the Democratic vote's collapse? There, I think that the mystery is not that Kamala Harris lost, but that someone like Trump – who is so manifestly unsuited to be President – should win again. To re-elect him after the January 6th insurrection, after he's been convicted of felonies, suggests that a certain portion of the population has so completely lost faith in the old liberal-democratic processes, the old models of leadership, the open global system, in markets and economics, that they've resorted to a hand-grenade to throw against the world. That brings you to the nature of social media, the 2008 financial crisis, the messes in Iraq and Afghanistan, the rise of China – these are the reasons for the emergence of this new mood. It's startling.

**Cherwell:** *What contemporary or historical figure do you find yourself most in sympathy with in politics?*

**Stewart:** [long pause] I'm intrigued by people like Pete Buttigieg in the US. I'm very interested in the strengths and weaknesses of Emmanuel Macron, why that experiment didn't quite work. I'm intrigued by the ways Rishi Sunak got things wrong; he's obviously a bright, hard-working, diligent person who somehow was lacking something. We live in an odd political moment where the media and the voters seem to want figures who seem to be quite unsuitable, creating an atmosphere that favours the Johnsons, the Trumps, the Farages.

**Cherwell:** *Final question: What are your plans for the future? A political comeback? More books?*

**Stewart:** In the short-term another book. I've been experimenting with a novel, set in the 1940s. I've thought of writing about geopolitics or about ideas of heroes through time.

# Ovid meets modern identities in *Sap*

# STAGE

Harriet Wellock explores the creative process behind Labyrinth Productions' twist on Daphne and Apollo at the Oxford Playhouse.

There used to be proper lesbian bars but they're all Prets now." It is clear from the outset that *Sap* will certainly be a loose retelling of Ovid's lovers in *Metamorphoses*, but it is a dutiful one nonetheless. It proclaims itself as a 'queer urban fable about passion, power and photosynthesis' that uses nature to grasp the complex relationship between a woman and her own sexuality. With a tiny cast and only an hour to fill, the play uses the tale to make a daring commentary on the adversity faced by bisexual women in modern society. This production's Daphne is a bisexual woman working with a charity. She becomes increasingly mired in the consequences of a hazy sexual encounter and a dishonest relationship. The drama's classical influence is evident in the binding force of the play that we don't see, narratively underscoring hyper modern language as we traverse Twitter feeds with our protagonist, rather than the heavens.

This play is about understanding what it means to be a bisexual woman and to have your identity erased by those demanding categorisation. Daphne's girlfriend, 'Wonder Woman' tells her that she doesn't believe it is possible to be bi. The violence which Daphne faces over the course of the play only works to substantiate the possibility of her sexuality. It manifests in such fear and resentment in others.

Towards the end of the play, Daphne reveals the statistic that bisexual women are five times more likely to experience domestic abuse than straight or gay women. As she is enveloped by awful life events unfolding around her, the protagonist must choose between grasping this identity and letting it possess and destroy her. Her transformation into a laurel tree represents the stoic ability to do the former. 'Sap' is the positive substance made of identity and agency which will course through her in tree form. The transformation – a metamorphosis – represents a kind of fortification and self-preservation against the other character's cruelty. It is, at large, a representation of bisexual women's defence against society's malice.

Director Rosie Morgan Males promises to pack a wedding, restaurant, club, apartment, and even Kew Gardens into the Burton Taylor. She told us that 'you can expect a bit of everything' as the play snaps very quickly between multiple locations and experiences with only two actors. Lead actor Siena Jackson Wolfe nervously quipped that she better



be entertaining because she's 'nearly all we've got for an hour' and looked briefly forlorn when she recalled how many lines she has to learn in two weeks. She doesn't leave the stage once.

Luke Bannister faces a job equally demanding. He must embody every other character in the production, composing Daphne's life and the play by weaving together the experiences of multiple, very distinct personalities. This is a copious story packed skillfully and dynamically into sixty minutes.

Luke even tentatively suggested that the play resembles something of *Fleabag*. This certainly rings true: breaking the fourth wall, the fact of never hearing the protagonist's name and experi-

encing the action solely with and through her. He was careful to express, however, that this is not a replication of the hit show. It simply shares some of the absorbing yet buoyant qualities which make it a safe environment to explore very dark themes.

In the vein of infusing an undeniably heavy play with buoyancy, the audience will also be visually and sonically mesmerized. Mystical hangings and iridescent colors will dress the stage as a space constantly morphing around Daphne, flitting in and out of situations in real time and space and her internal world. It will feature mixture of real-life sound and imported, non-naturalistic sound which the director coins a 'non digestible soundtrack'. These sonic elements aid the construction of these

populated scenes and bind us closely to Daphne's experience as her heartbeat fills the theatre. It is as an amorphous pallet onto which a dingy club and a sweeping Kew Gardens will be easily superimposed.

Siena added at the end of our interview that the brilliance of Rafaella Marcus' script, not even two years old, will do most of the work for the crew, but that the director's 'palpable passion' ensures that the prejudices and dangers of being a bisexual woman are confronted with humor, beauty, and sensitivity.

*Sap* will run from 19th-23rd November, 21:30 at The Burton Taylor Studio.

Image Credit: Theodore van Thulden, 'Apollo and Daphne' via Wikimedia Commons

## Review: *NUTS* at The Burton Taylor Studio



By PHOEBE DAVIES

Following the success of *Bedbugs* last year, expectations for Coco Cottam's newest play were high. With *NUTS*, she does not disappoint.

**N***UTS*, from Peach Productions, offers a harrowing portrait of deceit, desire, and the murkiness of morality. The play marks a departure from Coco Cottam's previous work, as it veers into a more plot-driven territory while retaining the strength of character that made *Bedbugs* so compelling.

The plot centres around the intense friendship of two women, Eve (Alice Macey-Dare) and Nina (Orla Wyatt). The precarious balance of their relationship topples into chaos when a man, Liberty (Rufus Shutter), invades their flat. His murky past and urgency to move in sets in motion a series of emotional conflicts which unravel this seemingly perfect friendship. What begins as a lighthearted and witty examination of friendship soon

develops into something darker and more psychologically complex.

Cottam's script is stripped back and poised; relying on subtle exposition and controlled tension rather than more bombastic drama. The plot is intentionally minimalist, focusing on the emotional ramifications of Liberty's arrival. *Nuts*' complexity emerges in subtle, seemingly insignificant moments between characters – a cutting remark or a flicker of doubt teasing at what is to come.

Such a script leaves actors precariously exposed; thankfully this is a challenge they faced brilliantly. Alice Macey-Dare's Eve radiates a palpable sense of fragility, a character whose self-doubt slowly consumes her. As Liberty, Shutter is convincingly charming, his smooth

exterior concealing a more menacing presence. Shutter pulls off this precarious balancing act effortlessly, from the start the audience is sceptical of Eve's trust in him. As Tasch, Thalys Kermisch threatens to steal the show, delivering a monologue so devastating that it is difficult to watch. Orla Wyatt is particularly spectacular as Nina, whose initial self-assurance is worn away by Liberty. Wyatt's performance is both painful and compelling, her OUDS debut casting her as a talent to watch.

Ultimately, the play succeeds not just because of its strength of writing and performance, but because Cottam taps into something universal about the deceit and doubt which can lurk just beneath the surface of even the most secure relationships.

Read the full review at [cherwell.org](http://cherwell.org)



## What Oxford's Watching

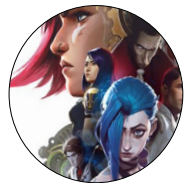
### IN THEATRES



#### THE HERETIC

Two missionaries face a deadly faith test against Hugh Grant's diabolical antagonist.

### ON SCREEN



#### ARCANE

The second season of the League of Legends adaptation picks up after season one's thrilling finale.

[The Heretic] Le Pacte/CC by 4.0 via Free Malaysia Today

[Arcane] Valorant/CC by 4.0 via Dearplayers.com

# ART, POWER, AND CINEMATIC PATRIOTISM

BY ADAM NOAD

**H**ow can we say that *Papicha* is Algerian, if the film was banned without any explanation in the country shortly before its release? It is a film that belongs to Algerians and not necessarily to Algeria. Given that some accused the film of being western propaganda though, this description still falls short. Perhaps it is better, then, to say that *Papicha* is a film that belongs to Algerian women or, to be more precise, to 'papichas'.

The term 'papicha', as well as being the film's sittle, is one tossed about frequently throughout the film. A typical example of 'algérois', a mix of French and Algerian Arabic, at times it is a term of endearment and at others as an insult. A 'papicha' is essentially a pretty, funny, and emancipated girl; someone who studies, someone who dreams and thinks for herself. In other words, someone who challenges the status quo of Algerian society in the 90s. Someone like Nedjma, the film's protagonist: a French literature student with future plans of becoming a fashion designer who features as the film's protagonist.

The 90s in Algeria are often referred to as 'la décennie noire' ('the black decade') – which is about as cheery as it sounds. In 1992, the Algerian Civil War broke out with Islamist groups

fighting the incumbent government after their electoral victory at the polls. The 1990s in Algeria represent a call back to the most radical version of Islam possible in the country and this is what we see in the film: Nedjma's successful journalist sister is shot, her French professor is kidnapped whilst giving a lecture, and the autochthonous white haïk garment is replaced by Middle Eastern black hijabs.

Though the threat posed by rapacious men is omnipresent *Papicha*, women arguably carry out the most shocking scenes of Islamist violence. Mounia Medour, the film's director, is hence able to mimic the complexity of gender relations; women often perpetuate the structures by which they are oppressed.

Despite being inherently political, this is an extraordinarily artistic film. As the Islamists' reign of terror becomes increasingly restrictive, colours slowly start fading from our TV screens, a metaphor for individuality vanishing into thin air. The boutique from which Nedjma would buy sequins, colourful fabric and leopard print lingerie only sells black clothing by the end of the film. The best Nedjma can do is resist – a dangerous act that will not go unnoticed by those around her.

The main criticism generally levelled against the film is that Mounia Medour's target audi-

ence is French. Some believe that she therefore reinforces stereotypes regarding Algeria. Nonetheless, it seems to me that Medour is representing a quintessentially Algerian form of feminism. For Nedjma, resistance is synonymous with being faithful to Algeria: when a boy that she likes offers to take her to France to escape from the violence, she turns his offer down right away, angry and disappointed at his cowardice. Her attitude may demonstrate a naïve and stubborn belief that things can change but – more importantly – Nedjma's feminism does not come into conflict with her Algerian identity. This is a film as much about resentment as about love towards one's country.

Despite being set in the 90s, *Papicha* still has a lot to tell us about the way Algeria is today. It is true that women no longer fear for their lives if they do not wear the hijab outside or ululate too loudly. But in a country where femicides fill the newspapers and less than a fifth of women work, there are still many 'papichas' awaiting change.

## FILM AND TV

# Blood is compulsory: The life and films of Martin McDonagh

By THOMAS ARMSTRONG

**U**nder normal circumstances, asking me to write about a filmmaker who's changed my outlook on life might invite something moving. There are plenty of directors, after all, who have that effect. Scorsese's parade of doomed hyper-masculine protagonists marches on like a premonition. Francis Ford Coppola's best work touches perfectly on the ways unremarkable people react when everything falls apart. Or, on the lighter side, there are the simple joys of Wes Anderson, who effortlessly evokes memories of long-departed times and places.

For all their merits, though, none of those three ever drunkenly told Sean Connery to 'f\*\*k off.'

Martin McDonagh, above all else, is an idolater. His plays, unapologetically drawing on his Irish roots, appalled the stuffed shirts of Fleet Street with their violent, absurd depictions of working-class life – but at the same time, caused a furore across the sea on the grounds that McDonagh, a Londoner by birth, was stereotyping his homeland for his own gain. He might now sit at the head of British film and theatre but if that head were to meet a similar fate to those of his protagonists, it might make for grisly viewing.

The chaos inherent to his films is perhaps best exemplified in *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (2017), in which Mildred Hayes (Frances McDormand) erects the titular fixtures in protest at the police's inability to find her daughter's murderer and rapist. This seemingly reasonable frustration leads to a

small-town death spiral: a suicide, a defenestration and an arson attack, all stemming from the attempts of the parochial and the powerful to protect their reputations.

America as depicted in *Three Billboards* is angry and fractured. However, while this perspective on the country earned critical acclaim, it also provoked the ire of some quarters in the media. The film's portrayal of race was especially criticised, with the bigoted and violent Officer Dixon (Sam Rockwell) becoming an apparently sympathetic figure despite not changing his ways.

It's true that Dixon and Mildred grow closer as the film progresses. But rather than assuming that this signifies an acceptance of Dixon, one might easily see it as a symbol of Mildred's descent into amorality. Everyone turns against Mildred, so she turns against everyone – audience included, as it turns out. She sympathises with Dixon not for his hateful views, but for his ever-present anger at the same world Mildred sees as having failed her.

I'd suggest, therefore, that McDonagh's handling of racial issues is more nihilistic than ignorant. Themes of cruelty and depravity also run through *In Bruges* (2008), in which Colin Farrell plays Ray, a hitman driven to suicidal thoughts at the guilt of having killed a child is hunted by his colleague Ken (Brendan Gleeson), who is instructed to kill him in response. The same two actors reprise in similarly bleak roles in *The Banshees of Inisherin* (2022). In the midst of the Irish Civil War, Gleeson's character Colm cuts off his own fingers for no reason rather than to avoid talking to his former best friend Pádraic, played by Farrell.

In response, Pádraic attempts to burn Colm alive in his own house. Scenes such as these demonstrate McDonagh's worldview; bitter conflict is practically a given, and the only things more fragile than his protagonists' social bonds are their egos.

In McDonagh's work, no one is safe from corruption. The strong female lead joins forces with racist thugs, alienates her son and wishes a violent death upon her daughter on the very

day it occurs. The two inseparable friends see their country torn apart by sectarian violence, and mutilate themselves for the sheer sport of it. This conception of society – one without heroes or convictions, dominated by self-destructive vendettas – is striking because, in our uncertain century, it speaks to us more than any traditional morality tale could.

Image Credits: Raph\_PH/ CC by 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons



# 'The Pink City': Ten generations of Jaipur gems

*Cherwell* visited the Choudhary family's prestigious jewellery collection, now almost 300 years old.

# ART

By DEFNE OZYUREK

**M**arvelling in a hushed awe at a Mughal era star sapphire from Burma, I asked Krishna Choudhary how he can tell when a stone is particularly valuable. "Numerous factors such as colour, cut, carat, rarity, pureness," he states, is the 'professional answer'. "But really, it's when you start tearing up, and simultaneously get an urge to bite into it, that's how you know." He drew the light directly above the 150 carat, translucent, and rich deep blue that snuggled into his palm, and the stone burst the light rays six different ways. The visual experience was similar to opening your eyes underwater and looking up at the sun.

During a recent trip to India, I visited a secluded eighteenth century mansion, the Saras Sadan Haveli, which houses the headquarters for the Royal Gems & Arts in the old town of Jaipur. This residence has an opulent combination of bright colours from the Rajput Middle Ages and the remnants of Victorian inspiration, revealed by a well-preserved kaleidoscope of frescoes in natural pigments covering every inch of the walls and ceiling. However impressive these are, an equally dazzling treasure that lies within these walls is the Choudhary family's jewellery collection. Krishna Choudhary, who is running the business alongside his parents Santi and Shobha, showed me a precious selection one by one, letting me handle each piece and relish each of their corresponding stories.

Jaipur became known as "The Pink City" when, in 1876, Maharaja Ram Singh had most of the buildings painted pink — the colour of hospitality — in preparation for Queen Victoria's visit. Although the epithet of the city continues to bear the spectre of British colonial presence in India, there are locations



in Jaipur that remain an authentic testament to its historical heritage intertwined with a tapestry of cultures, religions, and political identities. Central to this history is the Choudhary family, whose contributions to jewellery-making establish a legacy that underscores how gems and designs can hold cultural memory.

In 1727, the Hindu Rajput ruler Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II moved the capital of Rajasthan to Jaipur, and invited Choudhary Kushal Singh to relocate to the new capital, bringing with him his knowledge and experience in financial and administrative matters. Over generations, they transitioned from minting coins for the royal authority to becoming the royal

family jewellers. The incredibly labour-intensive pieces that they designed most often served to bejewel the royal men, and less so the women, who were wrapped in the rarest colours and kinds of fabrics. Jewellery was a way to distinguish how important a person was, and the essence of Indian jewellery could be defined by the "more is more" aphorism. Photographic documentation of royals reveals how they always carried an impressive weight of valuable stones.

India's rich culture of jewellery is partly a result of its geological advantages. The mines of Golconda, the earliest diamond mines known to man, are known to have yielded the highest grade of diamonds.

Kashmir is known to have produced the rarest and most beautiful sapphires, and the greatest emeralds arrived to India from Colombia through commercial exchange via the Portuguese-controlled ports of Goa. Jewellery-making in India underwent a significant evolution in the Mughal period (1526-1761), when the craftsmen of the royal workshops welcomed Persian influences into the Indian artistic tradition, creating a style that came to define itself, even past the fall of the dynasty. When India came under British rule in 1858, the Mughal style endured and extended its influence on Western aesthetics and practices. Thereafter, as the family began thinking of showing their pieces to a global audience, the Persian carpets on which the business was conducted were replaced by glass vitrines.

There are various design elements that make Indian jewellery distinct. For instance, the traditional "kundan" technique, which involves setting stones in gold, as well as the "meena" technique with its intricate enamel painting are special to India. Furthermore, the execution of motifs like elephants, falcons, fish, lions, as well as the use of patterning and colour define the artistic tradition. Krishna founded Santi Jewels in 2019, and has since been creating designs that fuse the authenticity of these techniques with experimentation, giving some of the vaulted, age-old gemstones in the family's collection beds to lie within contemporary renditions.

By incorporating uniquely Indian elements such as the jaalis — architectural ornamental openwork screens — into contemporary designs, Krishna, as the 10th generation jewellery maker from his family, marries the rarest gems with the most intricate craftsmanship available today.

*Image Credit: Royal Gems & Art*

## ARTS CALENDAR

# What's On.

### MUSIC

#### OUSinfonietta

(University Church, 22 Nov.)

The University's premier chamber orchestra, led by student conductor James Norton, comes together for an evening of diverse repertoire, including Brahms, Ravel, Milhaud, and Mayer.

#### Oxford University Chorus

(Keble Chapel, 20 Nov.)

This newly-formed choral society will take on Karl Jenkins' iconic mass 'The Armed Man' with a superb orchestral accompaniment.

### ART

#### Ashmolean Now: Bettina Von Zwehl

(The Ashmolean, until 11 May.)

The London based photographer explores portraiture, silhouettes, and still life inspired by objects displayed at the Museum's first opening in the 17th century. Free admission.

### STAGE

#### About Love

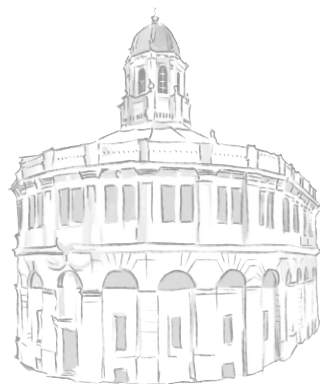
(Oxford Playhouse, 19-23 Nov.)

Dance, philosophy, and 60s soundtracks combine for this piece of student writing on the mysteries of love. A promising new show from Coffee Cup Productions: not to be missed.

#### 'Tis Pity She's a Whore

(The Pilch, 26-30 Nov.)

John Ford's 17th century drama is reimaged in this new student adaptation from Peach Productions. Packed full of the absurd and fantastic student talent.



# A literary map of Oxford **BOOKS**

By MAYA HEUER-EVANS

**B**ookshelves are the most revealing part of a room. There you'll discover if your potential hook up is into incel-adjacent self-help books (in which case, leave as soon as possible) or bruised editions of old paperback classics (in which case, they're a keeper). An Oxford undergraduate's bookshelf, however, is more likely to be filled with an unchanging set of volumes, brought ritualistically to university at the beginning of each term as part of an optimistic belief in the existence of free time. In a city with such a rich cultural history, you can absolve yourself of the nagging guilt over these books left to gather dust by absorbing the inspiration its alleys and canals have to offer. Below is the perfect afternoon dawdle, chasing the ghosts of literary greats through the town — particularly beautiful in these next few weeks as the leaves continue to turn.

*First stop - Christ Church College and the Thames:*

The richest and biggest of Oxford's Colleges, Christ Church is also the site on which Mathematics don Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (better known as Lewis Carroll) found inspiration for Alice in Wonderland. A boat trip from Folly Bridge to Godstow undertaken by Carroll and the three daughters of a dean from the college on the 4th July 1862 was later identified by the author as the date of inspiration for his nonsense novel. Its protagonist is supposedly based off of the middle daughter, Alice Liddell, with whom Carroll enjoyed a particularly close relationship — it's been speculated by a biographer of Liddell's that his sudden break from the family occurred after his desire to wed the 11-year-old girl was discovered. (Hint: This connection to Alice in Wonderland is why you'll find Alice's Shop opposite the college.)

*Up High Street to University College:*

Percy Shelley's name does not usually figure on the list of Oxford's literary alumna. Possibly because his stay at the university was

so short. He was expelled five months after arriving at University College in 1810 for circulating a pamphlet called 'The Necessity of Atheism' that he and fellow student Thomas Jefferson Hogg had written.

*Down Magpie Lane to Merton College:*

Don't ignore Magpie Lane as you pass through — Robin Swift, main character of R F Kuang's dazzling 2022 'Babel', spends a brief few months of semi-blissful ignorance at the beginning of the novel living here in student accommodation. Kuang's study of academic complicity in imperialism could not be further from the homely nostalgia of 'The Hobbit', written by future fellow of Merton College J.R.R. Tolkien. Merton, mischievously re-imagined as 'Judas College', plays a crucial role in Max Beerbohm's Zuleika Dobson. It is Zuleika's familial connection to the university that allows her to gain access to and wreak havoc upon the sexually frustrated men within Edwardian Oxford.

*Along Merton Street to Magdalen College and Holywell Cemetery:*

Magdalen College dons were taken by surprise in 1878 when Oscar Wilde, notorious University-wide for his aestheticism and disobedience, graduated with a double first in Classics. Some fifty years later, The Inklings — a group of writers including C. S. Lewis and J. R.R. Tolkien — began their regular meetings at Lewis' fellow's room in the college. Behind the college lies Holywell Cemetery, which not only contains the grave of Theophilus Carter, reputed inspiration behind the Mad Hatter, but also Kenneth Grahame, who wrote 'The Wind in the Willows', and the son for whom it was written.

*Down Holywell Street to the Bodleian and Rad Cam:*

Grahame bequeathed all his royalties to the Bodleian despite never studying at the University; this imaginative hold of the library over generations of writers is testified to also by the central place it occupies in Babel and Deborah Harkness' All Souls trilogy.

*Read the full article at cherwell.org*

# FASHION

## Nepo babies on the runway

By SRINETRA BANERJEE

Whatever happened to talent? It is a question many viewers of 2025 spring runways asked as yet another catwalk was graced by the relatives of the rich and famous. The internet has been obsessed with the idea of 'nepo babies' – someone who gains industry success through nepotism – since Nate Jones' famous article title: 'She Has Her Mother's Eyes. And Agent'. The obsession stems from the belief that people who are revered for their talent have been awarded roles because of their family connections.

But not all nepo babies are considered equal.

The public accepts talented nepo models like the Hadid sisters: their fame is put down, for the most part, to their own hard work and natural gift for modelling. On the other hand, the shadow of the Kardashian name continues to haunt Kendall Jenner. Despite being the highest paid model in the world in 2023, her success is still attributed to Kris and Kim's connections. The same can be said for Lila Moss, Leni Klum and Lily Rose-Depp.

The issue with 'nepo' models centres around the authenticity of beauty. People love the idea that the most beautiful woman in the world is just a normal person.

*“What positive changes are the people who have been born into this system going to advocate for?”*

Giselle Bündchen, Cindy Crawford, and Heidi Klum became successful because they were scouted from the streets or won talent competitions. It makes them more approachable, more 'human'. Naomi Campbell has largely remained popular in the public eye because she was scouted, having worked her way up, and advocated for greater racial diversity in the beauty world. But what genuine positive change are people who have been born into this system going to advocate for? The nepo models skip straight to the highest earning gigs with apparent ease: there's no drive to change an industry if it is already perfectly suited to you.

The issue has been ongoing for at least the past fifteen years. Is it too late to bring back the 'real' models? Unfortunately, it probably is. The 2008 economic crash, exacerbated by COVID-19, played a role in shrinking the aspirational class which could once afford haute couture.

Now that the middle class isn't buying in the same way, there is no need for fashion houses to pretend to be inclusive. Beauty trends are inherently exclusionary. Take the 90s 'heroin chic' craze. The trend's emphasis on extremely small sizes was often accompanied by expensive (and extremely dangerous) drug habits – hence its name – and also glorified under-eating to achieve a desired weight.

But changes are being made: Chanel has a new Indian CEO, Victoria's Secret participated in the 'Runway of Dreams' last year and Halima Aden wore a burkini in Sports Illustrated. Still, the overall picture isn't one of increased diversity and representation. Until ordinary people have enough disposable income to consider these brands, the companies have no reason to look beyond the family names that made them successful in the first place.

# Oxford's first Hip-Hop Society breaks it down

By HONOR THOMPSON

In the wake of Atik's closure and the blow felt by student nightlife, it would seem the enjoyment of music is taking a different turn this winter, and hopefully into the New Year. Following its announcement back in the last few weeks of Trinity '23, the Oxford student body had the launch party of Oxford's first HipHop Society to attend. Traditions of soul, jazz, rock and many more exist within the umbrella and often contentious term 'hip-hop', a genre that seems to be in a constant state of expansion and evolution. This notion of multiple genres influencing a stream of new, almost genreless music honours the huge and growing potential of this area of music. The dynamic and social nature of hip-hop, manifested in the success of Hip-Hop Soc's launch night at The Varsity Club, is evident in the inspiration behind the society. In fact, the origins of the society arose from conversation around an MF DOOM ring representing the iconic MadVillain mask all the way back in 2023. After a year of discussion, the society is finally in action, boasting a 10 person committee and a far larger number of supporters.

From listening parties to song recommendations, Hip-Hop Society is harnessing the interactive nature of music to their advantage. Strongly refuting the notion that 'rapping is easy', Tobe Onyia, the society's secretary, spoke about his own views on hip-hop's place in Oxford. He stated that the genre is often 'viewed on a level below other genres', being seen as easy or requiring less talent. Tobe also highlighted that 'hip-hop from its roots is something stemmed from black culture', subsequently underlining that 'the negative reception it gets is often rooted in subconscious racial biases'. Concluding

his passionate testimony with comments on the current state of hip-hop, Tobe noted that sub-genres like rap 'do not have a fixed form and are ever expanding,' ultimately concluding that 'at the end of the day music is supposed to transmit emotion'; a resonant message speaking to the importance of authenticity in music. In introducing themselves, other committee members of the society took to instagram to expose their guilty pleasure listens, ranging from George Michael to Westside Gunn.

Evidently, the effects of hip-hop go beyond music, but represent the power of a collective, and its manifestation in the lives of people, young and old. The diversity of sound within the genre speaks to a rich fabric of talent and storytelling, and moreover a plane of emotion indicative of the shifts and changes in the world around us. Indeed, as

Oxford's newest musical society explores the ways it can bring people together and facilitate a much-needed space for hip-hop music, only one question springs to mind; where have they been all this time? It can safely be said that this new society embodies more than just hip-hop – their palpably clear love for music is obvious, as well the warmth and friendliness of their members. They suggest that starting with anything produced by the Alchemist or Mike Dean will stand you in good stead for a 'spiritual musical experience'. After the much-anticipated ignition, Oxford Hip-Hop Society has finally got its foot on the accelerator, and is asking students to just hold on (we're going home).

*Image Credit: Beatriz Braga/CC-BY via Pexels*



## TILE SOURCE

By JOE WILSON- DIMMELOW

### Lessons from a Taiwanese Coaster



I woke up in a world  
Where everything was beautiful,  
And nothing hurt.  
Love was utterly abundant,  
A brimming harvest  
Which stretched from winding rivers,  
To concrete forests.  
Frayed pockets of clouds,  
Lightly tapped, caressed and  
Welcomed into this utopian Earth.  
Frail sprig homes,  
Reinforced into their ash groves,  
With tender care and loving cadence.  
As eyes are glazed  
With a gentle coat  
Of peace and understanding.

I idled through this glowing land  
Worry pressing on my brow,  
Puzzled and inept,  
As I tried to explain my unease.  
Until it hit me,  
How can one truly appreciate beauty,  
If you have not sobbed on your knees.



## Abolish the high table

*Madelina Gordon questions if the physical reconstruction of academic hierarchy in Oxford dining halls is an all too familiar reminder of British classism.*

This is an article about class. About the class system. And Oxford. Recently, my mum came to visit Oxford. Predictably, I took her to a formal dinner. We ate our meal in a cavernous, candlelit hall, and she was amazed by the pomp and performance of it all. I, equally, felt enlightened by her presence. Watching someone foreign to Oxford experience this paradigm of the university's culture spurred my own self-reflexivity.

The high table walked in, forming a long, straggly line and taking their mighty fine time getting up the two steps to the stage. Most of the heads sitting down at the table were balding, grey, and white. We jovially ate our meal, occasionally looking up at the backs of those sitting 'above' us. Despite being elevated to an impressive vantage point over the hall, most high-table-ers were far more concentrated on their pheasant than us plebs below them.

There was a man with Down Syndrome on the high table; he was the only one of them who actually did engage with the rest of us. He not only stepped down to the lower level, leaving the high table to speak with others, but he also disarmed all he chatted to, table-hopping and striking conversations.

Towards the end of the dinner, whilst people not on the high table were still busily eating their desserts, the gavel was banged, chairs were scraped back, and the high table tottered out of the hall as unceremoniously as they walked in. The lights went on, and staff immediately started imploring the rest of us to leave. A visiting student next to me, mid ice cream scoop to the mouth, asked why it's always the case that formal dinners ended so abruptly (and admittedly, long before the majority had finished eating). I explained woefully that alas, it was because the high table received their meals first, ate first, were finished first, and therefore were ready to get up and go first. And of course, they were the only diners of relevance in the hall; when they're done, everyone is done.

As the line of high table diners shuffled out of the hall, they talked amongst themselves, not once looking down to clock our faces staring up at them. The same man who had been so friendly during the meal was the only one of the high table diners who took the time to engage with the room. He smiled and waved at everyone standing to watch, and got many waves and smiles in return.

It is interesting that a single neuro-divergent attitude – one of friendliness and positivity – was enough to truly shine a light on the absurdity of the high table tradition.

The high table has its origins in the 13th century, a time where class was the formidable front-runner of social stratification systems. In the Middle Ages, the table was designated for fellows, faculty, and 'distinguished' guests, with students at the tables below them. Back then, the dining arrangement reflected the academic hierarchy in colleges. Indeed, the elevated high table represented a reverence for educators. This, I think, is understandable.

Today, however, using physical hierarchy to command respect for those who teach us seems slightly out-moded. Why? Maybe it's because the esteem in which academics are held, as custodians of knowledge, has slowly worn down as knowledge has become more accessible in the era of the internet. For the most part, most of us now couldn't tell one academic on the high table from the other, and only know a handful of them. But maybe there's something more that makes the high table feel a bit off. Maybe it's because the hierarchy of academia it represents hits a bit too close to home. A bit too close to the bitter sentiment in British society towards class domination.

The class system in England is still deep and entrenched. Yet, this entrenchment exists alongside an awareness of, and increasing commitment to, eliminating class barriers. For the amount of emphasis placed on increasing access and opportunity at Oxford, the continuation of the high table tradition sits in striking contrast. This paradox implies that Oxford has embraced the most limited of revisions: We'll admit a few more people who we once wouldn't have, but once you're in, hierarchy and privilege remain as operational as ever.

I think the contradictions at play are what I am seeking to point out. Can Oxford seek to improve access, diversity, and equality whilst it retains traditions that are both symbolic microcosms and physical reconstructions of hierarchy? Barriers into Oxford receive a lot of attention. I don't think the same can be said of the many exclusive institutions you become accustomed to once you're in. As access improves, albeit slowly, we might be coming closer and closer to the time where what's going on behind college walls is reassessed. The relics of an oppressive class system that still stand alarmingly tall in Oxford would be first in line for the chopping block.

A high table, raised above a mass of diners, translates privilege differentials into a literal, physical, and visible hierarchical relationship. All there is to lose from removing high tables is a legacy of exclusion.



## Grieving someone I never knew

*A discussion on the unique difficulties of grieving family who pass before we're born.*

Grief is usually tethered to memories: recalling the sound of someone's laugh, the warmth of their hug, or mulling over their meaningful mantras. It is a process shaped by these intricacies – tiny, profound moments that form the deep bond that, with loss, becomes heartbreakingly intangible. How does, or perhaps how can, such grief manifest when this mosaic of memories are not truly yours? What happens when the bond you grieve is with someone you never actually managed to meet?

For me, the figure of the deceased becomes somewhat mythic – painted in the soft light of others' nostalgia. My uncle, on whom this article focuses, passed unexpectedly the day before my birth over 21 years ago. For my family, this day represented an incredibly unique moment of simultaneous birth and loss. I was welcomed to the world eight hours after his exit, a moment that seemed to represent the circle of life in its most intimate form. Unlike losing a friend or close relative whom you've known, however, mourning someone who was already gone when you arrived has always served as a constant reminder of life's finite nature. I've grown up feeling that loss, as if I occupy a hollowed-out place in the family's shared history.

Growing up, my uncle's legacy has seeped through every moment. His memory was ever-present in family gatherings, almost as if he simply stepped out of the room and could walk back in at any moment. At birthdays, at Christmas, on the anniversaries of his passing – my family keeps his memory alive. Each time, I listen to my family recount endless stories of his humour, his kindness, and his dreams, painting a vivid portrait of someone I could never know but was somehow deeply and intimately connected to.

In many ways, his presence shaped me. Family members would point out my laugh, saying it reminded them of him, or remark on how he loved Stevie Wonder's music to the same extent as I do. Due to the unique meeting of my life and his death, I have found myself constantly searching for parts of him in myself, as though I could piece together his essence from my traits. This inheritance of character and memory became a way to feel connected to him, as if he lived on not only in their memories but also in me. Yet, it has always been a bittersweet connection – one filled with pride, but tinged with the

sadness of knowing these traits are all I have of him.

Legitimising the grief of someone you never knew is important, though it's rarely recognized in our culture's understanding of loss. We often assume that mourning must be anchored to direct experiences and memories, but grief can be, and is for me just as real for someone whose life touched us indirectly. It's a unique kind of sorrow – one that's deeply tied to the legacy, love, and presence the person left behind, not the shared moments that traditional grief might rely on.

I want others to recognise that my grief deserves validation because it's a real connection, even if it looks different from other forms of mourning. For me, there's a longing not only for the person I never met but also for the relationship we could have had. It feels natural to carry sadness for the moments we missed, for the advice he might have shared, and for the unique kind of love that could have shaped my life. This grief reminds me that, even without my own memories, his presence still resonates deeply within me.

He's part of who I am, woven into the story of my entrance into the world and importantly, my family's story. Though I can't reach back and touch shared experiences, his impact remains alive in me – in the stories, the traits I'm told I share with him, and the family's love that keeps his memory close. This is a form of connection that feels meaningful, even if it isn't one I can remember firsthand, and it deserves to be seen and understood.

I'm not a particularly spiritual or religious person, but a part of me holds onto my uncle's spirit. This is because, last year my mum, on a bit of a whim, visited a psychic medium with a friend. During the session, the medium began to spell out my uncle's name, letter by letter, to confirm his presence. She then told my mum that, because of the "shared story" between my uncle and me, he has always been watching over me.

Whether or not you believe in things like this is up to you, but for me, hearing that held a deep significance. It felt like an affirmation of our bond, a quiet reassurance that, even though we never met, he's a constant presence in my life and I have a right to grieve with my family despite these unique circumstances.

*Image Credit: Rod Ofoclix//Pexels License via Pexels*

## HOROSCOPES



**Aries**

Ignite the fire within you. Make some sparks fly.



**Taurus**

Get it together. Lock in and beat those blues!



**Gemini**

Try a new library this week; you'll be surprised.



**Cancer**

Nice outfit!



**Leo**

Work your magic with your tutors and make it happen.



**Virgo**

Your restraint will be rewarded.

## HOROSCOPES



### Libra

Abundant blessings are looking for you. Let them in.



### Scorpio

How about you take a break?



### Sagittarius

Keep doing you. People like you.



### Capricorn

Reconsider your latest decision. Or don't.



### Aquarius

He isn't who you think he is.



### Pisces

Keep an eye on Oxfess this week...

## Le pain: Living as a coeliac at Oxford

By SAMUEL OWEN

**C**oeliac disease is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system mistakes gluten for a threat, attacking and causing damage to healthy tissue in the small intestine. There is no cure to coeliac disease; the only treatment is a strict gluten-free diet. Since gluten is the protein that gives structure to wheat, barley, and rye, you can imagine this is quite a challenge. Cross-contamination is also a major issue for people who suffer from the disease, with less than 20 parts per million, much less than a crumb, causing a reaction.

Now to address some common myths. Firstly: coeliac disease is not an allergy. Consequently, there is no EpiPen nor effective post-medication. Next: there is no immediate reaction or likelihood of death after consuming gluten. Rather, a host of insidious gut-related symptoms – the details of which I shall spare you, in case you're reading this while eating – and other more general afflictions (think fatigue, brain fog, and mouth ulcers) gradually arise in the following days and weeks. This makes it difficult to identify the source of contamination in my diet, giving rise to a less-than-fun exercise in detective work.

Other than the obvious (i.e. breads, pastas, and baked goods), gluten manages to find its way into more surprising and rather annoying consumables like sausages, soy sauce, beer, and some flavourings. However, contrary to the concerns of some of my friends – who have swooped in to 'save me' on more than one occasion – potatoes and rice do not contain gluten, instead comprising a staple of my diet.

I was diagnosed with coeliac over eleven years ago, concurrently with my twin brother – but he doesn't go to Oxford, so we won't mention him again. This means I've had over a decade to master 'the art of the coeliac', as well as forget many of the pleasures and indulgences of my former life (e.g., bread with any semblance of structural integrity).

Let's cut to today and address the elephants in the room. One of the most common questions I get is: "Can you still kiss someone after they've eaten gluten?". The short answer is no, but it depends on how

long ago they indulged. Usually, my kiss-ee would need to brush their teeth, which tends to kill the mood. However, owing to a recent decision out of my control, this issue no longer presents a problem in my day-to-day. The next most common question I get is, "Can you touch gluten?". Here, the answer is yes. In fact, any anatomical surface is gluten-safe, so long as the gluten doesn't reach my GI tract (from either direction).

As anyone with dietary restrictions will tell you, food-related conditions have many non-obvious effects on life at university – especially in relation to socialising. Dining with friends can often be a nightmare, especially without knowing the kitchen protocols of every establishment one's group decides to visit (except Pho in the Westgate, which rumour has it I frequent weekly). Dietary restrictions also affect one's ability to participate in certain JCR events, like bops. 'Bop juice' is a questionable concept for any student, but it's even more of a risk to someone for whom cross-contamination is a concern.

The overall cost of living is also much higher for someone with coeliac. Coeliac-safe alternatives are often two or three times the cost of their gluten-containing counterparts; gone and fondly remembered are the days of sixty-pence Oaties from Tesco's. Further, my coeliac existence complicates many living situations. The safest way to prevent possible cross-contamination is having separate cutlery, pots, pans, and work surfaces, as well as keeping ingredients like butter separate. This, obviously, makes cooking in other people's kitchens overly complicated, with perpetual streams of washing up and stress. I have also heard some horror stories in relation to fellow coeliacs eating in college halls; this unfortunately disqualifies me from the experience of hall-swapping at most colleges. However, I must say: despite the lack of kitchen access for first-years, Jesus has always been outstanding in catering for me, and I can't thank the kitchen team enough (big-up Bruno).

All in all, being a coeliac only adds one more dimension of anxiety to the already-stressful Oxford life. However, I don't mean to sound too preachy, or to farm your sympathy. Mostly, I've written this article so I can send it to the next person who inevitably interrogates me when I respectfully decline their invitation to kiss. This doesn't help me defend against the accusation that being coeliac is one of my only three personality traits, but it's worth it for the time I'll save. Anyway, it's back to washing up for me.

## The Breakfast Club: Bringing the mid to midday



By AMANDA LI

**B**runch is a particular love of mine. Between the poached eggs at Brasenose brunch, the coconut pancakes at The Handlebar Kitchen, and huevos rancheros at the Oxford Brunch Bar, there is no shortage of weekend brunch options in Oxford. So when my boyfriend and I decided to have a quick brunch date, we went off the beaten track (to Westgate) and tried The Breakfast Club. The place is a chain, based on American breakfast and brunch food. Though we came for breakfast, they also had an appealing lunch menu.

The place was packed, and we were sat at a table with another couple; it wasn't a bad environment. The peppy music was bright and breakfast-y, though the HP sauce and full English breakfast on offer served as a reminder of what country we were in. I debated getting the avocado toast, but we eventually decided on eggs royale and blueberry and bacon pancakes, with some French toast sticks to share. Their raspberry maple syrup lemonade was intriguing; I enjoyed the tanginess of the raspberry and lemon, though you couldn't really taste the maple beyond it sweetening the drink. The food took a while – about twenty-five to thirty minutes – to arrive. I admit that they were busy, so it was just a little bit annoying. The food arrived all together, and it certainly looked good. The taste and texture was something different.

It is easy to make a pancake too dry, and unfortunately this place fell into that particular trap. While the pancake portions were fine, there was not enough syrup to cover how dry and floury they were. The bacon was delectable, and the blueberries helped add some flavour and moisture, but the bits without blueberries just tasted like I was eating flour, even with butter and syrup added. The French toast (eggy bread for the Brits) was fine, but could do with a bit more even distribution of the egg and maybe some cinnamon and nutmeg to add some flavor besides sweetness. I found that £5.75 for a thick piece of toast cut into strips was definitely not worth it. The eggs royale, though a whopping £16.95, were not bad. The sourdough was high quality and perfectly toasted, and the egg was runny and seasoned well. The ratios of each ingredient were great, and they didn't skimp out on the salmon. The hollandaise still felt a bit lacking in something acidic.

My biggest issue, though, was the price. Including the surprise 12.5% service charge, the breakfast was £50. I'm not kidding. My bank account will not recover. I wouldn't spend that amount of money on a dinner, let alone a brunch when BNC brunch is £5. Besides the eggs royale, which could theoretically be justified, the quality of the dish did not match the prices. Most independent brunch places are cheaper if not better tasting – the eggs royale at the Art Cafe are £3 less than here, and the bacon pancakes at the Oxford Brunch Bar a whopping £5 less. Skip this place and try them instead.

## Agony Aunt:

Help, I'm in love with my tutor! I can't focus in our tutes as I stare at his face, daydreaming about our (future) lives together. When he asks me a question I feel the tension rise between us, and then I get flustered, can't think, and give him the world's worst response. I'm 99% sure he thinks someone made a mistake letting me into this university. What do I do?

- Oxsmitten at St. Peter's



**D**earest Oxsmitten at St. Peter's, I am in no condition to make an assessment of the viability of your future happiness with this man, but nevertheless I can say: it's time to get a grip.

Hinge, Tinder, and hell, even Bumble if you're desperate are much much much (much) better alternatives to whatever is going on here. In other circumstances I would do all I could to keep unsuspecting readers away from the horrors of the apps, but in this case I fear I have no choice. You really have gone off the deep end. Not only has the Uni literally banned this prospective relationship (as of like two years ago, but still), it's also an unbalanced power dynamic. And hey, maybe that's hot, but keep it to your day dreams.

Next time you look at his face simply imagine in its place is something you hate – like a rotting vegetable, or a puddle of vomit, and remind yourself that any future you cooked up for the two of you between dreary essay feedback sessions and awkward tute questions, is entirely, utterly fictional. You, at the very least, deserve something real. Though I am not one to promote the Oxford (STUDENT TO STUDENT!!!) dating scene, at the very least it would give you something new to daydream about in your tutes.

Please, please move on – your essays await you, but this man, I am sure, does not.

Lots of love,  
Your Agony Aunt

## PORTER'S PICKS

### Top 5 Hottest Colleges

#### 1. Somerville

Oxfess said it first. They're woke, edgy and above all, hot.

#### 2. Keble

Sporty and hunky like the many bricks that built the college. Overwhelmingly represented in Blues Football, and Keble netballers are popular it-girls.

#### 3. Wadham

Hot and they know it. Sometimes give ugly-hot. But they're confident above all, and that's what leaves us wanting more.

#### 4. Christ Church

Old money hot. They're hot and we wish they weren't. We wish ChCh students were outshone by their college's grandeur. Alas. They are not. ChChers irrefutably match their college's good looks.

#### 5. St Anne's

The dark horse. They're nestled away on Woodstock Road, so you might underestimate the friendly Anne's lot. But they're flirty, charming and elusive. The trifecta.

## NIGHT OUT SPOTLIGHT

THIRSTING for something different?



With Atik's closure, the establishment that used to sit in its shadow is stepping into the spotlight. A fairy light adorned courtyard, and live dancefloor makes THIRST an untapped secret. So next time you find yourself wandering towards Spirit – stop at the door before it. Thirst comes first.

## Red flags or human flaws?

Ciara Beale questions if modern dating culture has forgotten what it means to love someone, warts and all.

Anyone who knows me even a little bit knows that I am chronically on the Channel 4 website watching reality TV dating shows. Celebs Go Dating, Married at First Sight, First Dates (my favourite, and my last resort if I'm still single by 30): You name it, I've watched it. By their very nature, they require a certain amount of box-ticking. First Dates asks singles to list their preferences, which are then magically materialised into someone to snog at the end of the show. It's almost uncanny how well they are matched every time: If ever a 'dislike' sneaks in among the 'likes', chaos ensues – these are the moments inevitably segmented into YouTube videos later on. No one has ever told me that I should base my dating expectations on the 'reality' TV that I obsessively watch, but these shows all broadcast something interesting about the way we view dating now, on and off the screen. Because we can fine tune our dating preferences on all manner of apps, which do Fred Sirieix's job for us, we are able to exclude anyone who doesn't quite fit the bill. Had I met certain Tinder dates in an organic environment, perhaps I'd overlook the fact that they'd chosen to list wrestling as an interest in their bio, or only have group profile pictures. But because there are always more profiles to see, more faces to scrutinise, I keep swiping – looking for an embodiment of perfection that I now fear doesn't exist.

As a result of the tangle of influences from both dating apps and shows, telling me I should really watch out for certain (objectively benign) characteristics, I end up finding it reasonable when a contestant on Married at First Sight inexplicably calls her spouse a liar because he didn't tell her about his acting career (AKA dabbles in am-dram), or when a suggestion of splitting the bill is enough for a first date to end on a sour note. Modern daters have become so merciless. Although I'd never watch Naked Attraction unless caught unawares while watching Gogglebox with my parents (eek), there's something, somehow, more forgiving about it: your bits look a bit like mine, you're wobbly in places that human bodies tend to wobble, let's give it a go.

Dating shows and other forms of box-ticking dating have existed for decades, and I fear I might be a special case in my guilty pleasure of watching them all the time. Yet the encroaching force that is The Internet has only



made romantic matters worse. TikTok and Instagram reels (my chosen poison) are crammed full of red flags, green flags, ghosting, breadcrumbing, soft launching, and love bombing (sprinkle sprinkle). I had to Google 'online dating slang' to get a sense of how extensive the list has become and encountered many I'd never even heard of. Can someone please tell me what makes a flag beige? When did we all start waving flags around anyway? While some might like this shorthand as a tool to prevent wasting time, I feel this new dictionary of love languages has only muddied the waters. It's now possible to designate a character trait as a red flag and rule someone out completely. What happened to second chances?

As you grow older, the kinds of debates you have with family members tend to change. At the ages of six, eight and ten, my brothers and I argued over which football team was worthy of support; four years on, who was robbed in the final of X Factor; give it another few years and we're engaging in our own kind of mock politics (as my brother developed a never-explained obsession with Nick Clegg). Although last Christmas when I was reunite-

ed with my siblings, I was surprised when my light-hearted reference to someone having given me the 'ick', a term that had come into popularity in between occasions of us seeing each other, sent sparks flying. My eldest brother insisted the concept was demeaning and set unachievable standards for men. While I stumbled trying to defend it as a tool for women to redress the balance while faced with sky-high expectations set for us by men, I realised he had a point. All it takes is for me to catch a glimpse of a boy on a Voi and I'm out. I thought recently about how I'd never be able to go on holiday with a romantic partner unless I averted my eyes when they walked through the street with a suitcase. I did some sociological research for more icks and dug up: chasing a table tennis ball (how often does that even happen?), running for the bus (a reasonable necessity in modern life), tripping while running up the stairs (come on now). I think it's high time we lower our expectations. In the words of Jessie J, Nobody's Perfect. Maybe we just need another reminder.

Image Credit: Wellington Silva/ Pexels License via Pexels

## Cherpse.

Oxford blind dating.

[A Friday evening at the Bear over pints. They might have bared their feelings, but did they come away unscabed?]

#### Patient 0:

##### Did it meet your expectations?

It went further than I thought (we held hands without protection) and therefore far exceeded expectations! I think he got more than he bargained for as a consequence of that, however.

##### Highlight?

I could tell it was going well when I saw him stacking the salt and pepper shakers out the corner of my eye. Frankly chalang of him! Following work experience at a zoo, I can confirm that many primates perform similar building behaviour when confronted by attractive females (Pizzari et al 2014), so I was really quite flattered by this behaviour.

##### Most embarrassing moment?

He declared the 'seal was broken' and ran to the toilet after his first sip. Then again after his second, third, fourth... You get the idea. In spite of his many justifications ('alcohol is an ADH inhibitor!') I hope his strength of character is greater than his bladder. In fairness, I gave him scabies.

#### Patient 1:

##### Did it meet your expectations?

I didn't expect scabies. #itchy

##### Highlight?

When she bought me scabies cream the next day #chivalry

##### Most embarrassing moment?

I had to piss at least 25 times #brokenséal #AlcoholIsAnADHInhibitor

##### Describe the date in 3 words:

Permethrin scabies cream

##### Is there a second date on the cards?

I flipping hope so

(Editorial Note: These two are still dating.)



# SKILLS, THRILLS, AND THE X20

A day in the life of a (lower level) uni sports captain: South Central Men's Division 5 North's strongest soldier.

By SEBASTIAN PAGE

Never have I ever woken up more wired than to that 8am alarm on a Saturday morning. In kit just a few minutes later, I'm facing the prospect of the mighty Thame 2s (away). Headphones on, grabbing the bike, and I'm off to Iffley, picking up my goalkeeping kit. On the way, the illuminating red light of the Tesco sign speaks to me, beckoning me in for a breakfast meal deal. With a main-sized portion of mango and a tiny almond croissant in my bag, I hit the road once more to lug the mountain of protective foam over to High Street.

Typically, we either take rental cars or cars owned by teammates to away fixtures (the furthest ones are up to an hour from Oxford), but the X20 bus awaits us for a more local fixture than usual. With one car sent ahead with our hockey balls, and protective masks, the rest of the squad neatly file in and up the stairs to spread ourselves out into the seats at the back. Thankfully, with no one upstairs with us, we can get the speaker out and get into the mood for it.

A win would see us go fourth (out of 12) from ninth, and today's opposition were promoted into our league only last year. Finally getting to

the venue, we have somehow made it earlier than our oppo, so we assert some serious authority and start warming up in their absence. Gates are opened and closed with military efficiency.

They finally turn up, and it's the usual mix of 14- and 40-year olds that you'll find in this league. Older blokes out of their prime, who can't hack the pace at the top level; and younger players who rinse you again and again, making you to question whether you really enjoy this sport. The game comes and goes, and is, all in all, pretty even. Both teams have had some very good chances, but great last-minute defending from Oxford means both teams walk out with a point each at 0-0 (we're gonna ruin them in the home leg, trust). Filing into the showers after the game, the chatter continues as we debrief post-game, and get changed into the customary 'ones', shirt and tie, with smart trousers and shoes. Apparently, other team's clubhouses used to have dress codes, and so being as smart as possible guarantees we won't get turned away anywhere (and I suppose it just stuck).

Some of said chatter includes newly-created fantasy hockey chat. With one of our teammates having spent some time coding over the summer, he's managed to replicate fantasy football (commonly known as FPL), and so debate ensues about

how many points each player will have accrued over the course of the day. Stupidly, I had transferred myself out the night before the game, and immediately got our first clean sheet of the season, which would have provided some seriously nice points. Oh well. Teas provided by the oppo round off the day while we nominate 'Man of the Match' and 'Dick of the Day,' the former going to Stan Doel for some excellent work at the back, and Ben Cole runs away with the latter for [REDACTED].

We trudge back onto the X20 home, and return mildly disappointed in our inability to come away with the win, but spirits still high with Vinnie's on the cards for the night. Traditionally a members-only club, the Vincent's Club (or Vinnie's/Vin's) is a club-wide hangout spot for hockey on Saturday nights. Players from various teams unwind and catch up on the day's events (and some games that have been passed down since well before you or I were born) over a few Pinkies. Mid-Vin's trip, I stop to log the game's result on the online database, just to realise I forgot to upload the team sheet the night before the game (oops) and so sneakily log it before the league notices (oops again) and we potentially get fined (sorry FJ) – at the time of writing, I don't think we did, so I may be in the clear...

Between getting home and going to Vin's, I contemplate doing some work for the essay due on Monday at noon which I haven't started. Having decided that sporting mediocrity will always triumph over academic success, I quickly bin that off and pore over the events of the game. I look at what to work on in training next week, provided a decent number from the squad turn up for once. Invariably, they won't, but what can I do if not try?

After stumbling all the way back home to Summertown, it's finally time to get some rest after a busy day, and I slowly cry myself to sleep because we left two points on the table (I just love the game so much). At approximately 3am, I give up on sleeping and start scheming for the next week's game, away at Marlow, cooking up tactics that Pep Guardiola would call crazy, but Sean Dyche may describe as 'sound'. I'm telling all the boys that injured players can't defend and certainly can't score.

If you want to see some of the finest hockey known to grace the Fletcher Field astro at Iffley, come down on Sunday at 2pm to see us take on Marlow 5s, and get the full experience.

Image Credit: Isla Finlay



# SPORT

## MATCH OF THE WEEK

2-2

St John's vs St Anne's clash in Men's 1s Football

Derby day in Division II, and the two favourites for the league title battled it out, eventually sharing the points, after a hard-fought and well-deserved draw. Goals from star fresher Matt Farnfield and wiley vet Ben Cooke kept Anne's turned the game on its head, giving them the lead after Edo Campione's early strike put John's ahead. It was Owen Castles who brought John's back level again, but the Anne's defence held strong to earn their point, and stay unbeaten in the league.

## HALL OF SHAME

14-64

Rugby Men's Blues vs Ealing Trailfinders

Under the lights on Friday night, the Men's Blues rugby team suffered a pretty harrowing defeat with an eventual 50 point margin. Despite a resilient 7-24 first half, the visitors piled on the points in the second, showing why they are the current Championship holders, and sit second this year, having scored 247 in just five matches.

## SHOE THE TABS

Cambridge, as usual, has struggled to put up even the most perfunctory of defences against quality opposition; a consistent flaw of theirs, but what can we expect from a university steeped in a history of mediocrity? Their Men's 2nd team in Rugby, the LX club, lost 0-59 against Australia Stockman Rugby at home. Not the kind of clean sheet you'd like to have! Though it bodes well for us in the Varsity match later this season, I'd say we expect to stamp them anyway, and so I wouldn't even break a sweat.

# COLLEGE MATCH HIGHLIGHTS

## TENNIS

Oxford secure third place at the Monte Carlo Tournament 2024

Held annually for universities around Europe, Oxford enjoyed a successful run in the HEC-hosted Monte Carlo Tournament. After a narrow loss to Bocconi in the opening match of the group stage, they clinched a 2-1 win over Trinity College Dublin to qualify for the semi-finals. Despite falling to Cambridge in the semis, another win over Trinity saw them place 3rd.

## NETBALL

Relegation scrap ends in dramatic fashion

As time expired in St Anne's league match against Jesus, the former scraped their way back to earn a draw, having taken the lead early on in the first few corners. Some well-timed made shots by Jesus put Anne's under the cosh, but composure reigned supreme, as Georgia Stevens and Maia Pendower went toe-to-toe with their opposition, and the latter's shot found the net as the timer went off.

## LIFTING

South Midlands University Championship winners

Aaron Spencer led the charge in terms of total, at 710kg, and a 94.89 GLP (Good Lift Points - the scaling system for competitive lifting). Whereas another dominant display from the world champion Gwen Marsden saw her put up 104.79 GLP, the highest in competition. These results ensured the victory, as they corresponded to the highest men's and women's scores.

## SWIMMING

Friendly gala against various other universities result in Oxford winning 23 out of 27 events

Oxford's A and B teams were triumphant over the likes of Bristol, Warwick, Imperial, and Oxford Brookes, as personal bests were sent flying by Carrie Power, Charlotte O'Leary, and Ahmed Abushomi in their respective events. Other highlights included Oxford swimmers placing from 1st to 4th in the Women's 200m Freestyle, en route to claiming 241 total points.

# Coffee Break with Cherwell

Puzzles of varying difficulties and types, do stay with us and give them a go...

## CLASSIC SUDOKU By Joe Dunn

Fill the grid so that the numbers 1 to 9 exist in every column, row and section ONCE

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 7 | 9 |
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
|  | 5 |   |   | 9 | 8 |   |   |   |
|  |   |   | 9 |   | 7 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
|  |   |   | 8 |   |   |   |   | 7 |
|  | 2 |   |   | 6 |   | 9 |   | 8 |
|  |   | 9 |   |   |   | 1 | 8 |   |
|  |   | 8 |   | 7 |   |   |   | 5 |
|  | 6 |   | 3 |   |   | 7 | 9 |   |

## Double Duty by Julian Xiao

|   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |  |   | L | G | O | R |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| A | E |  | I | O |   |   |   |  | I | L |  |   |   | O | N | I |   |   |   |
| N | U |  | E | R |   |   |   |  | D | O |  |   | A | S |   |   |   |   | U |
|   |   |  | A | L | N | I |   |  |   |   |  |   | L | S |   |   |   |   | B |
|   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |  | I | U |  |   |   |   | U | N | P |   |   |
|   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |  | R | S |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |  | M | U |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |   |   |   | L | C | A | R |   |
|   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |   | V | D |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |  | H | R | E |   |   |  |   |   |  |   | A | E |   |   |   |   |   |
| A | E |  |   |   | R | T |   |  |   |   |  |   | A | E | X | V |   |   |   |
| L | A |  |   |   | N | H |   |  |   |   |  | C | R |   |   |   | B | D | E |
|   |   |  | I | V |   |   |   |  |   |   |  | H | G |   |   |   | B | I | R |
|   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |   |   | L | U |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |   |   | C | A |   |   |   |   |

Here are the rules:

There are no clues for this puzzle other than the provided pairs of letters - fill in the blank squares such that they make valid words with both pairs of letters. A slot may have more than one possible answer, but only one of them will fit the grid!

Below is an example of a solved section:

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
|  | A | R |   |   |   |   |  |
|  | I | E |   |   |   |   |  |
|  | P | A | R | E | T | Y |  |

## Cryptic Crossword by Alessandra Edwards

|    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 26 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 28 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Across:

- Spinning top motion is irrelevant (4,5)
- Varieties of central city pests (5)
- Miss out rep, return to captain (7)
- Car reversed during long distance, it's a phenomenon (7)
- Own around fifty, split in two (5)
- Consequently, found in chest, here for ever (9)
- Hands over gifts (8)
- Rejected train system reveals fibber (4)
- Sniffer is informed on the phone (4)
- Properly twist arm in recklessness (8)
- Isolate one elsewhere (6,3)
- Urge leaders I may persue extra leave (5)
- Essentially limit a text copy (7)
- Looker says "Yes!" to dance (7)
- Muck from flip latch regularly scrubbed (5)
- Heat exhaustion from beating Stokes' run (9)

Down:

- Out of form so mistake grabbing top scorer sent off front men (9)
- French gold that is left in college (5)
- Snooped quietly inside, getting spotted (8)
- Annoy girl tucking into nutty tier (8)
- Had cast off moderate mood (6)
- Aim to disrupt great tango (6)
- Expressed by images, reportedly chose Oriel (9)
- View distinguished broadcast (5)

- Key dispatched inside disorderly aisle (9)
- Cunningly allure boy from shade (5,4)
- Complex ten hours to get down under (8)
- Two, in possession of millions, to kill first four opponents, it's about to happen (8)
- Left to occupy shore, causing wash out (6)
- Extravagant robes worn by unknown fighters (6)
- Firm starts extreme quarrel (5)
- Friendly final three, out with Greek (5)

## Double or Nothing by Julian Xiao

|   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1 |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |  |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |  |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |  |  |

Each square in this variety crossword will contain either two letters or no letters. Words read across or down as usual but may skip one or more spaces:

Across:

- Begin
- Store in an overhead bin
- Animal that sounds like it's not very interesting?
- Word that can go in the blank in "big \_\_\_\_" and "full \_\_\_\_"
- Sea creature with many spines but no bones
- Small swirling current

Down:

- Did arduous work
- Most common form of carbohydrate in human diets
- Messy
- Classic stir-fry dish

Wk 3 Racketeer Answers:  
Across: 1) Infringement, 7) Darken, 8) Thirty, 9) Noun, 10) Academia, 16) Shadow Cabinet, 17) Alcatraz, 22) Afar, 23) Number, 24) Lessee, 25) Simultaneous  
Down: 1) Indonesia, 2) Formulaic, 3) Ninja, 4) Extra, 5) Elite, 6) Tutti, 11) Cocoa, 12) Debt, 13) Manifesto, 14) Attorneys, 15) Soft, 18) Louis, 19) Album, 20) Rural, 21) Zelda

Wk3 Trivia Equations  
Equation 1: 36 + 12 = 48  
Equation 2: 261 - 169 = 92

Wk 3 Cryptic Crossword Answers:  
Across: 1) Gasp, 4) Educator, 10) Allegro, 11) Martini, 12) Date, 13) Unassuming, 15) Alphabetically, 17) Masquerade ball, 20) Systematic, 21) Core, 23) Workshop, 24) Alright, 25) Register, 26) Antsy  
Down: 1) Guardian, 2) Split up, 3) Sage, 5) Domestic Animal, 6) Circulates, 7) Trivial, 8) Ruing, 9) Counter Example, 14) Banquettes, 16) Fluently, 18) Absorbs, 19) Amongst, 20) Sewer, 22) Area

Get in touch - If you have any suggestions for future issues, ideas for puzzles do let us know at [puzzlescherwell@gmail.com](mailto:puzzlescherwell@gmail.com)