

Cherwell

Oxford's oldest independent newspaper, est. 1920

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1ST WEEK, TRINITY

Oxford's social media superstars

Christina Scote and Peter Chen
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Everything wrong with Mods reform

Anonymous in
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Worcester College fellows drank from human skull until 2015

CALLUM STOVE

A drinking vessel made from a human skull was used by academics at Worcester College during formal meals until 2015, a new book by an Oxford professor has shown. The vessel is now stored in the College's archives, where access to it is denied.

The book, *Every Monument Will Fall*, by archaeology fellow Professor Dan Hicks, suggests that the skull was used to hold wine and later chocolates when it began to leak. Hicks, also Curator of World Archaeology at the Pitt Rivers Museum, traced the history of the skull – donated to the college in 1947 – as part of his aim to reveal “legacies of militarism, slavery, racism and white supremacy present in cultural institutions”.

Although there is no record of the individual to whom the skull belongs, its size, age, and circumstantial evidence indicate that it may have come from the Caribbean. The professor further suggests that it may have belonged to an enslaved woman living around 225 years ago.

The scientific basis of this point, however, has been contested. Worcester told *Cherwell*: “DNA testing was unable to identify the geographic or ethnic origin of the skull and, as such, the speculation that the skull is that of an enslaved woman from the Caribbean cannot be substantiated.”

The College told *Cherwell* that whilst such a drinking vessel did exist in the Senior Common Room and was “occasionally used as tableware”, there is “no evidence to confirm whether or not it was used for serving wine.”

However, the British chain of

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Hundreds gather in Central Oxford rally to protest Supreme Court trans ruling



- Mixture of students and Oxfordshire residents join demonstration
- Protest started at Bonn Square and moved through town to courthouse
- Liberal Democrats, Greens, and University and College Union (UCU) in solidarity

LAURENCE COOKE,
AMELIA GIBBINS,
ARINA MAKARINA, AND
NOAH ROBSON

demonstration moved down New Inn Hall Street, before turning onto Cornmarket Street and continuing down St Aldate's. Chants included “Supreme Court, blood on your hands” and “No borders, no nation, trans liberation”.

The protest comes after the Supreme Court ruled that under the Equality Act 2010, the terms ‘woman’ and ‘sex’ refer to a “biological woman and biological sex”. Supporters of the judgement claim it will protect single-sex spaces, whilst critics have said it will undermine protections for trans people.

A diverse mix of people, some affiliated with Oxford University and others local residents, made up the crowd. One resident, who wished to remain anonymous, told *Cherwell* that he was attending the protest for his trans son, aged 14. He said his son wasn't attending as he didn't “think it was quite safe [for him]”.

Meanwhile, two academics in the modern languages faculty told

Cherwell that they were “joining in solidarity with trans communities” by taking part in the protest. They carried a banner from the University and College Union (UCU) with the words: “Knowledge is power. Defend education.”

There was a minimal police presence, with only a very small disturbance occurring midway through the march when a bypasser on Cornmarket shouted at the protestors: “Misogynists go home. Defend women.” A large team of stewards and ‘legal observers’ from the organisers were present.

Some local political parties were also represented, including the Greens and the Liberal Democrats. Christopher Smowton, leader of the Oxford Liberal Democrats and Councillor for Headington, told *Cherwell* the local party had organised an “informal solidarity march” which the national party was happy to allow. No representatives from Labour or the Conservatives were visible at the protest.

By 1pm, the demonstration had largely dispersed after a few megaphone speeches which also addressed topics including racism and solidarity with Palestine.

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7% more students getting counselling support within five days, report reveals

LILLY LAW

The 2023/24 reports from Student Welfare and Support Services (SWSS) were published last week. SWSS are split into four services: University Counselling, Disability Advisory, Sexual Harassment and Violence Support, and Peer Support Services. Support from each service is available to any student in the collegiate university, and SWSS maintains a close working relationship with college welfare teams.

The counselling service reported success in their new appointment prioritisation system: 37% of students referred to the service were seen in less than five working days, up from 30%. Of the 8% of referrals which contained “substantially time-sensitive presentation or personal circumstances”, 81% were assessed in less than five days.

Women continue to outnumber men in seeking counselling, making up 62% of students accessing central university services. Undergraduates were the most likely to use all services. They were also the only degree classification to use college counselling services more than central services. While post-pandemic “survey fatigue” was blamed for the low completion

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Residents vote in last ever County Council election

CONOR WALSH

Oxfordshire residents voted in what was expected to be Oxfordshire County Council's last election on Thursday 1st May after the UK government announced intentions to reform local government in December last year.

Residents elected a total of 69 councillors in Thursday's election, with the number of contested seats increasing from 63 to 69 following a review by the Electoral Boundary Commission. The results of the election were yet to be declared at the time of *Cherwell* going to print.

The county council has been under no overall control since 2013. The previously-elected chamber was initially run by an alliance of Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Party councillors before Labour dropped out following a damning report into the provision of special educational needs services. A new coalition is yet to be formed following Thursday's election.

Oxfordshire currently has a two-tier system of local government meaning that local services are provided by a combination of councils. Across Oxfordshire, services such as social care, waste collection and transport are provided by Oxfordshire County Council where elections took place on Thursday.

Meanwhile, in the city of Oxford, local services such as planning, licensing and

tax collection are the responsibility of Oxford City Council. Elections for the city council took place last year.

The UK government has announced its intention to simplify this two-tier system by 2028. This means that Thursday's election was likely the last ever election for Oxfordshire County Council.

Instead of this two-tier structure, local government in Oxfordshire will be replaced by one or more unitary local authorities as well as the election of a new regional Mayor. The precise structure and geographic boundaries of these offices are yet to be determined.

Announcing an overhaul of local government structures in December last year, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner said: "We have an economy that hoards potential and a politics that hoards power. So our devolution revolution will deliver the greatest transfer of power from Whitehall to our communities in a generation."

Speaking to *Cherwell*, Oxfordshire politicians have widely welcomed the plans to restructure local government in Oxford. The Conservative Party, however, have expressed skepticism over the plans with Shadow Secretary of State Kevin Hollinrake calling the plans "delegation, not devolution".

Read the latest on this story at cherwell.org

Image credit: Lucie Fellwock



Oxford HMV on Cornmarket Street closes

HASSAN AKRAM

HMV on Oxford's Cornmarket Street permanently closed on 22nd April following a decision by the landlord not to renew the shop's lease.

Established in 1921 as a record shop, HMV has since expanded into a chain selling films, music, books, pop culture merchandise, and rare imported snacks. The company told *Cherwell* in a statement: "It is with regret that ... we are unfortunately having to close the HMV Shop at 52 Cornmarket St, Oxford."

The Cornmarket store has not been without its tribulations. The firm started trading in Oxford more than 30 years ago, but closed down its store in the Clarendon Centre in 2014. It returned in 2021, after a vinyl boom during the pandemic.

On the impact the closure would have on those working at the store, the statement continued: "Regrettably store colleagues are now considered at risk of redundancy and options are being discussed with everyone individually as part of the consultation process. HMV will do all it can to find roles for these colleagues in the existing store portfolio."

The news comes only a month after Oxford's Waterstones similarly announced its closure and relocation. It is part of a broader trend as outlets selling both print media and physical digital media come under pressure from online competition.

HMV further told *Cherwell*: "As we have no intention to stop serving our loyal customers in Oxford, we are actively looking for a new unit to restart trading as soon as possible and would encourage landlords and agents in Oxford to get in touch with new potential sites."

Among the student body, reaction to the news of HMV's closure has been mixed. One undergraduate told *Cherwell*: "Often after finishing my work at the library I'd go to HMV to buy a film which I'd relax and watch in the evening. I appreciate that fewer and fewer people are buying physical copies of films but I think it's still an institution worth preserving and I think that Cornmarket will look much emptier now that HMV has left it."

Also reacting to the news, and expressing less sentimentality than their peers, another student told *Cherwell*: "There's still a CeX in Cowley so it's not that deep."

Merton announce plans to refurbish student accommodation

ARINA MAKARINA

Merton College has submitted an application to conduct the refurbishment of Grade I and Grade II listed buildings. The application includes the renovation of student accommodation, as well as the Middle Common Room (MCR) and facades of the buildings facing Merton Street.

According to the application, both buildings currently have a poor heating system "due to the thermal inefficiency of the historic fabric". The existing end-of-life electrical installation is "not suitable for the current building use" so the buildings would have to be completely rewired as well.

The project proposal includes a "full strip of all existing furniture" in accommodation, replacement of fire alarms, hot water and floor

finishes, and refurbishment of washrooms. In addition, the college is planning to redecorate the MCR by improving access with a platform lift and installing new secondary glazing.

Ridge, the company conducting the works, submitted a request to Oxfordshire City Council and Historic England to review the project. The proposal claims that "[T]he 'special interest' and 'heritage significance' of the parts of the College affected by the proposals have been respected." The Heritage Impact Assessment concluded that the proposed works "can be achieved without impact on historic fabric, character or significance and 'special interest'".

Front Range No.4, originally the 13th Century Warden's Lodgings, contains the MCR, the Games Room and College Store. Front Range No.5



was rebuilt in 1904, when St Alban's Quad was reordered. The building currently contains ten ensuite study bedrooms and a bridge link to the MCR.

Clews Architects, who have been tasked with drawing up the plans, said that the project "involved a major internal renovation to better accommodate the new Warden and his families' requirements whilst also providing a more flexible house capable of accepting regular visitors."

Image Credit: Noah Robson

Winners of Oriel art exhibition to 'contextualise' Rhodes announced

JOSHUA MCGILLIVRAY

An exhibition displaying four sculptures by Zimbabwean artists which aims to "contextualise" the legacy of Cecil Rhodes will open at Oriel College later this year.

The sculptures were chosen from over 100 pieces of art submitted for a competition organised by the Oxford Zimbabwe Arts Partnership (OZAP), a group established in 2020 in response to the Rhodes Must Fall protest movement.

The competition's judges included Lord Mendoza, the Provost of Oriel College; Elleke Boehmer, a Trustee of the Rhodes Trust; and Norbert Shumuyarira, a Zimbabwean sculptor and one of the co-founders of OZAP.

The panel met on the 7th March and chose the sculpture "Blindfold Justice" as the centrepiece for the exhibition. It was created by Wallace Mkankha, 34, an artist based at the Chitungwiza Arts Centre near Harare.

Mkankha said about his piece: "The face, shrouded in anguish, symbolises the suffering of the Zimbabwean people. The two hands covering the eyes signify the forced blindness to the truth as Rhodes' regime imposed its oppressive rule."

"The two hands struggling to remove the blindfold represent the resilience and determination of Zimbabwean

people to break free from oppression."

Lord Mendoza said: "I look forward to viewing Wallace's sculpture at Oriel College. We had a challenging but engaging judging session. I'm grateful to all the expert judges for their insight to help reach a decision."

"Each sculpture represents a creative form of engagement with the complicated legacy of Cecil Rhodes in Zimbabwe."

Rhodes migrated to southern Africa at the age of 17. In 1871, he moved to Kimberley and over the next twenty years became one of the wealthiest diamond producers in the world, founding the De Beers company in 1888.

In 1890, he became Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, a territory spanning part of contemporary South Africa. During his premiership, the government passed the 1892 Franchise and Ballot Act, which raised the property qualifications for voting and thus excluded most non-white voters. He also supported increased racial segregation in areas like Cape Town.

He led the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in 1889. The BSAC colonised contemporary Zimbabwe, seizing the Mashonaland in 1890 and the Matabeleland from 1893 to 1894. From 1896 to 1897, it brutally suppressed a revolt in these territories, with estimates for overall mortality

from killings and famine ranging up to 20,000.

From 1873 to 1881, Rhodes intermittently completed a degree at Oriel College. On his death in 1902, he left it money, which allowed for the establishment of the international Rhodes Scholarship, which grants 102 postgraduate scholarships annually. Beneficiaries include former US president Bill Clinton, the Booker Prize-winning novelist Richard Flanagan, and three prime ministers of Australia.

Richard Pantlin, founder of OZAP, said: "We have many visitors to Oxford from around the world to educate them about some of that colonial history and to get them to reflect on the impact of the British Empire, particularly Cecil Rhodes' impact in Zimbabwe."

Protests in 2020 called for the removal of the statue of Rhodes above the main entrance of Oriel College. As a consequence, in June 2020, the Oriel College Governing Body voted to remove the Rhodes Statue.

However, in April 2021, Oriel College announced that the statue would not be withdrawn, citing the "regulatory and financial challenges" of taking down a Grade II* listed monument.

The exhibition will open at Oriel in September, before moving to the University Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford until December.

Image credit: Lucie Fellwock



Nominations open for new SU positions

NOAH ROBSON

The Student Union (SU) has announced that nominations have opened for its newly-introduced part-time officers, who will work alongside the full-time sabbatical officers. Nominations are also open for Student Trustees to sit on the SU's Trustee Board, with terms lasting for two years.

Any current student at Oxford University is eligible for nomination, with the deadline closing on Friday 9th May. The elections are to be held in 4th Week. The roles come as part of the SU's recently announced restructuring plans, which involved abolishing the role of president, opting instead for a 'flat' structure. The part-time officers, which are voluntary and unpaid unlike the full-time sabbatical officers, face an expected workload of two to four hours per week of term, with there being two types of position available.

Equity Officers "represent student members from marginalised student communities", with each officer being chair of an associated RepCom, where specific student communities are able to discuss and propose policy changes. These groups include a Class Officer, Disabled Students' Officer, LGBTQ+ Officer, International Students' Officer, Black and Ethnic Minorities Students' Officer, Suspended Students' Officer, and Women's Officer.

Community Officers, meanwhile, have a brief of representing students "who are involved in the various student communities" at the University. There are three roles in this category: an Environmental Officer, a Societies Officer, and a RAG Officer. The SU have also announced that there will be a Sports Officer, with this position being elected "in accordance with Sports Federation rules". In addition to the part-time roles, an election will also be held for Student Trustees, with successful candidates sitting on the Trustee Board which oversees the SU. Board members include the Sabbatical Officers, four elected Student Trustees, and four External Trustees.

Celebratory parade in Oxford for William Shakespeare's birthday

HASSAN AKRAM

A colourful parade to celebrate what would have been William Shakespeare's 461st birthday was held in Oxford city centre on 23rd April. Dozens of people attended the event, many of them dressed in fancy dress. The event featured the Town Crier and medieval music from the Oxford Waits ensemble. Civic leaders including Lord Mayor Mike Rowley and the High Sheriff participated, as well as actors portraying Shakespeare (Hannah Clift) and Elizabeth I (Cairo Ali). Dr Elizabeth Sandis of the Institute of English Studies gave a birthday toast and a talk on actors and costumes in Shakespeare's plays.

The parade travelled from Oxford Castle to the Painted Room on Cornmarket Street, which Shakespeare is said to have visited in the 16th century. The Painted Room is a preserved part of a 16th century tavern with Elizabethan wall paintings. Once known as Tattleton's and later run by John Davenant, a friend of Shakespeare's, it was given to Oxford City Council in 1921 and served as the Oxford Preservation Trust's office until 1968.

Anna Eavis, CEO of Oxford Preservation Trust, said: "It was wonderful to see the local community come together to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday in such a special place. The Painted Room is evocative of Oxford's urban history and the trust is proud to host this event each year to highlight

the remarkable survival of this space and the little known connections between Shakespeare and Oxford."

One Master's student who was present told *Cherwell*: "I had a great time, it was a fantastic celebration of Shakespeare and all that he represents. I have to say the actors and the ensemble were very good and made the whole event more than worthwhile. The fact that Shakespeare visited this exact room in Cornmarket is amazing and adds to the lore and history of Oxford. More students should be aware of this and our special connection to Shakespeare's life ought to be celebrated more."

Image Credit: Books18 via Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0



Worcester College fellows drank from human skull until 2015



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ownership is undisputed: the cup was donated to the college in 1946 by the eugenicist George Pitt Rivers. The donation followed his release from internment during the Second World War for his support of the British Union of Fascists leader Sir Oswald Mosely.

The skull cup was a part of the family's collection after his grandfather, the archaeologist Augustus Pitt Rivers, purchased it the same year he founded the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1884.

It was acquired at a Sotheby's auction from Bernhard Smith – himself an Oriel College graduate – who Hicks believes received it from his father, a naval officer who served in the Caribbean, according to *The Guardian*.

In 2019, the Governing Body of the College engaged Professor Dan Hicks and commissioned scientific testing "to investigate the vessel's history and to determine the most appropriate method of dealing with the item and according its dignity". DNA testing failed to "identify the geographic or ethnic origin of the skull and, as such, the speculation that the skull is that of an enslaved woman from the Caribbean cannot be substantiated." It remains in the College's archives, where it has been stored "respectfully and securely...in accordance with appropriate legal advice".

In its response, the College stated: "Worcester reiterates its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as its financial support of the University's Black Academic Futures scheme. Racism and other forms of prejudice have no place at Worcester".

Image credit: Lucie Fellwock

NEWS SHORTS

Bod legal deposit finally restored

Non-print legal deposit materials, including books, scores, and some journal articles, are now accessible on Bodleian reading room PCs after access was disrupted by a British Library cyber-attack in October 2023. All materials deposited before October 2023 will be available too.

St John's honorary fellow next Pope?

Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe, an honorary fellow of St John's College, is one of the potential candidates for the next Pope, as one of the last cardinals named by Pope Francis in December 2024. Timothy Radcliffe is a patron of Positive Faith, a ministry of Catholic AIDS Prevention and Support. Experts say his age may rule him out.

Oxford tops ranking for investment in building

The University of Oxford has topped the ranking for investment in building repair and remediation. In the most recent academic year, the University spent £18.5m on maintenance projects, with a total budget of £26.4m. The University of York were second on the podium, having spent a total of £12.8m on repair and maintenance, approximately £3m under budget.

Pullman's projections promote prose

A series of projections have appeared around Oxford, including against All Souls, showing objects from Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*. This is in anticipation of the final novel, set to be released in October of this year. The projections feature an alethiometer, which is an elaborate truth-telling device. Set in Oxford, parts of the TV adaptation were filmed in New College, Oxford.

CROSS CAMPUS

Trump administration to halt student visa cancellations

The Trump administration is due to reinstate all previously revoked Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) as immigration authorities reverse visa revocations at Stanford, as well as other universities.

DUCU launches marking boycott

Durham's University and College Union (DUCU), which represents over 1,000 academic and related members of staff, have announced a marking and assessment boycott, beginning on the 12th May 2025. The boycott is a form of action short of strike (ASOS). This follows the UCU voting in favour of strike action due to Durham University's announcement of £20m in staff cuts over two academic years.



Sir Mo Farah and Melvyn Bragg among honorary degree recipients

CHLOE SMITH

Track athlete Sir Mo Farah and Lord Melvyn Bragg, author and broadcaster best known for 'In Our Time' are among nine recipients of honorary degrees by the University of Oxford this year. Other recipients include the former Prime Minister of New Zealand Dame Jacinda Ardern, and Clive Myrie, BBC journalist and presenter.

The esteemed recipients also include Professor Serhii Plokhii, Professor Timothy Snyder, Professor Colm Tóibín, Professor Robert S Langer and Professor Erwin Neher. Professor Plokhii is an extensively published author and historian, recognised for his scholarship on Eastern Europe.

Professor Snyder is an American scholar of the history of Central Europe, Ukraine, the Soviet Union and the Holocaust and is a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna.

Professor Tóibín is a novelist and writer whose 2009 novel *Brooklyn* was adapted for a film starring Saoirse Ronan, while Professor Langer is at MIT who has written over 1,600 articles, now recognised as the most academically cited engineer. Finally, Professor Neher

is a German biophysicist who was jointly awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1991.

The number of degrees awarded is up this year, with nine degrees awarded compared to six in 2024. Previous recipients include world-renowned Monty Python actor and comedian Sir Michael Palin in 2024 and Val McDermid, a Scottish writer who has sold over 19 million books, in 2023. Their honorary degrees followed undergraduate degrees from Oxford University, however this is not a requirement of recipients.

This year, as the new Chancellor, Lord William Hague will open the ceremony and admit the honorary degrees to the recipients.

The 2025 Encaenia ceremony in which honorary degrees are awarded will be held on Wednesday 25th June. The procession tracks from one college to the Sheldonian Theatre and includes the heads of colleges and university dignitaries. 'Encaenia' means festival of renewal and the ceremony is held annually on the Wednesday of ninth week during Trinity term. Students, staff and alumni can register for tickets from 6th May.

Image Credit: Lucie Fellwock

President Nayib Bukele among list of speakers at Oxford Union this term

CHERWELL NEWS

President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador, footballing duo Harry and Jamie Redknapp, singer John Legend, and Ireland's first female president Mary Robinson are all set to speak at the Oxford Union this term.

The Union will play host to a number of high-profile guests from the music industry, including the multi-instrumentalist Jacob Collier, and American musician Nile Rodgers, both of whom will perform as part of their appearances.

There will also be a visit from the controversial American conservative political activist Charlie Kirk, who has been outspoken on issues such as abortion rights and critical race theory. He will speak on the debate motion 'This House Believes Trump has gone too far', facing off against American political scientist Joseph Nye.

The Trinity term card also features debates on topics such as the NHS, euthanasia, and feminism. It will also entail other events, namely a student-only debate on Saturday of Week 0 (26th April), with members able to ballot for the opportunity to speak on the motion 'This House Believes capitalism has killed the arts'.

Debates this term include the motion 'This House Believes Africa must evict its colonial masters', with Errol Musk, the father of Elon, and self-proclaimed 'Prince of Pan-Africanism' Dr. Umar set to speak.

The Oxford Union will also debate 'This House Believes the right to die is a human right', hosting guest speakers such as the former President of the UK Su-

preme Court Lord David Neuberger and barrister Lord David Pannick.

A debate will also be held on whether 'This House Believes no one can be illegal on stolen land'. Guest speakers include right-wing New Zealand politician David Seymour, and Nivine Sandouka, a Palestinian feminist and peace activist.

Regarding the forthcoming term, Union president Anita Okunde told *Cherwell*: "This term, the Oxford Union is throwing open its doors wider than ever. We're not just inviting members to listen – we're empowering them to speak. With member ballots for paper speeches in key debates, including this Saturday at our debate 'This House Believes Capitalism has killed the Arts' and 'This House Believes Trump Has Gone Too Far', we're breaking from tradition of only committee members being awarded these to ensure more voices are heard. No longer reserved for the usual few, this is a term card by the members, for the members."

"From Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi's battle against authoritarianism to the explosive debate on Africa's liberation from colonial legacies, we're tackling the issues that matter – with speakers as diverse as President Mary Robinson, Motaz Aziza, and music icon Nile Rodgers and Don McLean."

"This isn't just a series of events; it's a challenge. A challenge to engage, to dissent, and to claim your place in the Union's legacy. Because the best debates don't just happen in the chamber – they start there."

Continue reading at cherwell.org

Council threatens to pursue legal action against 'erratic' paragliders after foal death in Port Meadow

ARCHIE JOHNSTON

A foal died of its injuries last month after being distressed by a powered paraglider flying low over Port Meadow. Oxford City Council has appealed to the public for information after this and another incident of powered paragliders flying around the meadow. The Council believes that there are three individuals involved in these incidents and is threatening legal action, pending investigation by the Thames Valley Police's Rural Crime Team.

A powered paraglider was spotted above Port Meadow on 10th April, flying "low and erratically", according to the Council. This caused distress to a group of horses, and a foal was injured. Though it received medical attention, the foal was put down due to its injuries.

On the evening of 20th April, three paragliders were seen "swooping low and noisily" above the meadow, and witnesses reported that horses on Port Meadow were again visibly distressed.

Deputy Chief Executive of the Coun-

cil Tom Hook said: "These reckless actions have not only caused significant distress to the animals and local residents but have also resulted in the tragic and avoidable loss of a foal."

Mr Hook stressed the danger posed to local wildlife and residents, saying: "The safety of the animals, residents, and visitors to Port Meadow is of utmost importance, and we will continue to work closely with the police and community to prevent further incidents." *Cherwell* has approached Mr Hook for comment.

Along with the adjacent Wolvercote Common, Port Meadow is a registered Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), due to the many resident species of cattle, horses, and waterfowl. The Council refers to the site as "Oxford's oldest monument", as the meadow has remained largely unchanged since its use as a Bronze Age burial ground. The horses on the meadow are "semi-wild", and the Council website forbids their being disturbed "by any circumstances".

Oxford Direct Services, a Council-owned company responsible for

waste management, issued a statement after the paragliding incidents saying: "We'd like to remind all residents and visitors: Port Meadow is a vital natural habitat, home to wild ponies, birds, and other wildlife."

"It's a shared space where animals roam freely – and where our presence must be careful, calm, and respectful."

In recent years, animals on the site have suffered injuries and intestinal blockages due to an uptick in littering. Since 2022, Port Meadow has been a registered water bathing site, but its water quality has been assessed as 'poor' every year since, due to the significant levels of bacteria such as E.coli and intestinal enterococci. If water quality at the site does not improve to a standard "fit to swim in" by 2027, the meadow's status as a bathing site will be rescinded.

The Council has asked that anyone with information about the incidents, or with knowledge of the identity of the individuals involved, to report relevant details to the Police Rural Crime Team by phoning 101.

Welfare report reveals increase in referrals to Sexual Harassment and Violence Service

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rate of feedback forms, 92% of respondents rated their experience as "very good".

Referrals to the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) increased slightly this year. 23.3% of students had interacted with DAS, compared to 22% in the previous year. By the end of the 2023/4 academic year, more than 3,400 Student Support Plans were in place. Students mainly sought help from DAS for examination adjustments, especially for dyslexia and dyspraxia. Citing concerns about NHS waiting times for autism and ADHD assessments, DAS began to accept a wider range of disability evidence. They include a referral to NHS autism or ADHD assessment by a GP, and a support plan from another university, school, or college.

The Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service saw a 5% increase in referrals, but saw a decrease in referrals to the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, who provides support for those against whom sexual misconduct has been alleged. Half of those referred did not wish to make a formal report to their college, the university, or the police. The Service saw an increase in cases where the incident was ongoing, and 40% of those that it handled had

occurred within the last six months. However, 49% of incidents disclosed took place outside of a University context. Seven more colleges adopted the online 'Consent for Students' training, with fifteen providing it in total.

The Peer Support Service continued to train students in supporting each other. 123 students completed peer support training, taking the total number of active Peer Supporters to 354. This is a decrease from last year, where 142 new Peer Supporters were trained. The Service trained 32 new Junior Deans, for a total of 137. This number dropped for the second year running, down from 47 in 21-22 and 40 in 22-23.

According to the Student Union's latest welfare report, 76% of students have felt anxious during their time at Oxford University. 44% had felt depressed. 38% reported their mental health worsening since coming to the University, with almost three-quarters stating that their course had adversely affected their mental health. 40% of students had never used welfare support, and only 35% were satisfied with it.

An Oxford University spokesperson told *Cherwell*: "Oxford is committed to ensuring that all of our students have

access to an outstanding educational experience and that we fulfil our legal obligations by providing reasonable individual adjustments and study support for disabled students. We are pleased to offer an environment in which disabled students want to study and can disclose a disability, and the University remains firmly committed to reducing and removing barriers to learning and embedding inclusive teaching and learning practices that benefit all students."

Jane Harris and Katherine Noren, Co-Directors of Student Welfare and Support Services, said: "We are proud to present this year's annual reports, with deep gratitude for the daily collaboration between students and our teams. Their collective efforts enhance our understanding of the challenges and opportunities for student wellbeing at Oxford, and shape the services we provide."

"We remain committed to delivering high-quality services and strengthening partnerships across the University, recognising that effective student welfare is a shared undertaking that draws on the diversity and wisdom of Oxford's comprehensive welfare ecosystem."

Image Credit: Lucie Fellwock



Oxford trans rights protesters in Oxford:

Image Credits: Lucie Fellwock, Arina Makarina, Amelia Gibbins for Cherwell



Waterstones to relocate from Broad Street

HASSAN AKRAM

Waterstones' Oxford branch on Broad Street is set to close this summer and relocate to new premises on Queen Street. The new store will occupy a space beside Halifax on Queen Street, which has been vacant since Topshop

closed its doors in 2021. The book store's current site is William Baker House, a Grade II-listed five-storey building on the corner of Broad Street and Cornmarket Street. Scaffolding appeared around Waterstones in February 2025 when, according to staff, roof repairs were being conducted. A Waterstones spokeswoman told the *Oxford Mail*: "We are delighted to announce the upcoming opening of an exciting and large new Waterstones shop in the heart of the city on Oxford's Queen Street, the biggest new Waterstones shop to open for some years. Occupying the former Topshop space, in the busy shopping district near Marks & Spencer, the new shop will be situated across the base-

ment and ground floor of the building. "The generous, bright and easy to navigate space will allow for increased space and a larger range of books and gifts for customers to browse. The shop will also have a café, perfect for a break whilst choosing the next perfect read." The news has received a mixed reaction from Oxford students. One undergraduate told *Cherwell*: "I understand why they [Waterstones] did it [moved the location] but I like the current Waterstones: it is in an historic building, the café gives a high view of George Street and the hills in the distance, and it's convenient having it on the opposite end of the road from Blackwells."

Image Credit: Oscar Whittle



Oxford City Council passes Boycott Divestment and Sanctions motion

ASMA ISSA

Oxford City Council passed a motion on 24th March in support of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. The motion, which cited International Court of Justice (ICJ) rulings, passed with a unanimous vote by councillors across multiple political parties. The motion called for "strengthening" the Council's "ethical procurement and investment policies" to "reaffirm" its "commitment to human rights and international law", as well as diverting funds from companies prolonging the use of fossil fuels. Councillor Barbara Coyne, who proposed the motion said: "It is vital, in this moment, that Oxford City Council act to uphold international law and end local complicity in colonial genocide". On the evening of the vote, dozens of protestors gathered outside the Town Hall on St Aldate's to hold a silent vigil in support of the motion, holding signs reading "Divest now" and "Not in our name". The BDS movement, founded in 2005, works to "end international support for Israel's oppression of

Palestinians" through non-violently pressuring Israel to comply with its obligations under international law. The motion cites ICJ rulings which underline UN member states' obligation to actively avoid complicity in Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine. The motion further emphasises that international legal norms that apply to states extend to local authorities. Councillor Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, the seconder of the motion, said: "We have put forward this motion as we hear all those Oxford residents who have demonstrated, expressed disgust at the Israeli war crimes and boycotted Israeli goods." The decision comes after Oxford City Council's unanimous vote for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza in November 2023, and the Council's decision last year to oppose the Anti-Boycott Bill. The timeline for concrete changes by the council remains uncertain, as do any potential bureaucratic obstacles. However, Councillor Coyne remains optimistic, expressing hope that the motion "will be thoroughly implemented, and that its passage may pave the way for other councils to take decisive action."

OPINION

LinkedIn: A Faustian bargain

LLOYD DORÉ-GREEN

There are some truths about the world which are both obvious and yet rarely addressed. That social media is, in fact, deeply antisocial is one such truth. Long gone are the days when my Instagram or Facebook feeds were filled with wholesome photos of an old friend's summer holidays, the works of an artist I had followed, or some beaming celebrity. Here to stay are the literally endless reels, the brain rot memes, and the armies of bots ready to dispense opinions on anything from the Russian invasion of Ukraine to their lord and saviour, Donald J. Trump. What was once expected to be a vehicle for truth has become a tool for lies and conspiracy at such a rapid rate that it is impossible to combat with the truth. What was once a tool for keeping in touch with friends has become a tool for cramming as many thirty second clips as possible into every minute of your day.

And yet, despite being such an obvious problem it manages, for multiple reasons, to

avoid any useful scrutiny. Firstly, social media is an extremely useful tool for all of the people who would otherwise be able to use their platform to criticise it. When so much news is borrowed from Twitter (currently known as X), structural criticism of the social media platform itself gets forgotten. Only an idiot would take to social media to tell everyone how bad it is. Further, actual criticism of social media is often insincere, based more on political affiliation than any genuine principles. Right-wing opinion of Twitter, at least in the US, seemingly flipped overnight after Musk's takeover in 2022, despite free speech on the platform having suffered since. Finally, so much of the criticism of social media is focused on the personal rather than the political, advising individual embargos on shortform content or a 30-day dopamine detox.

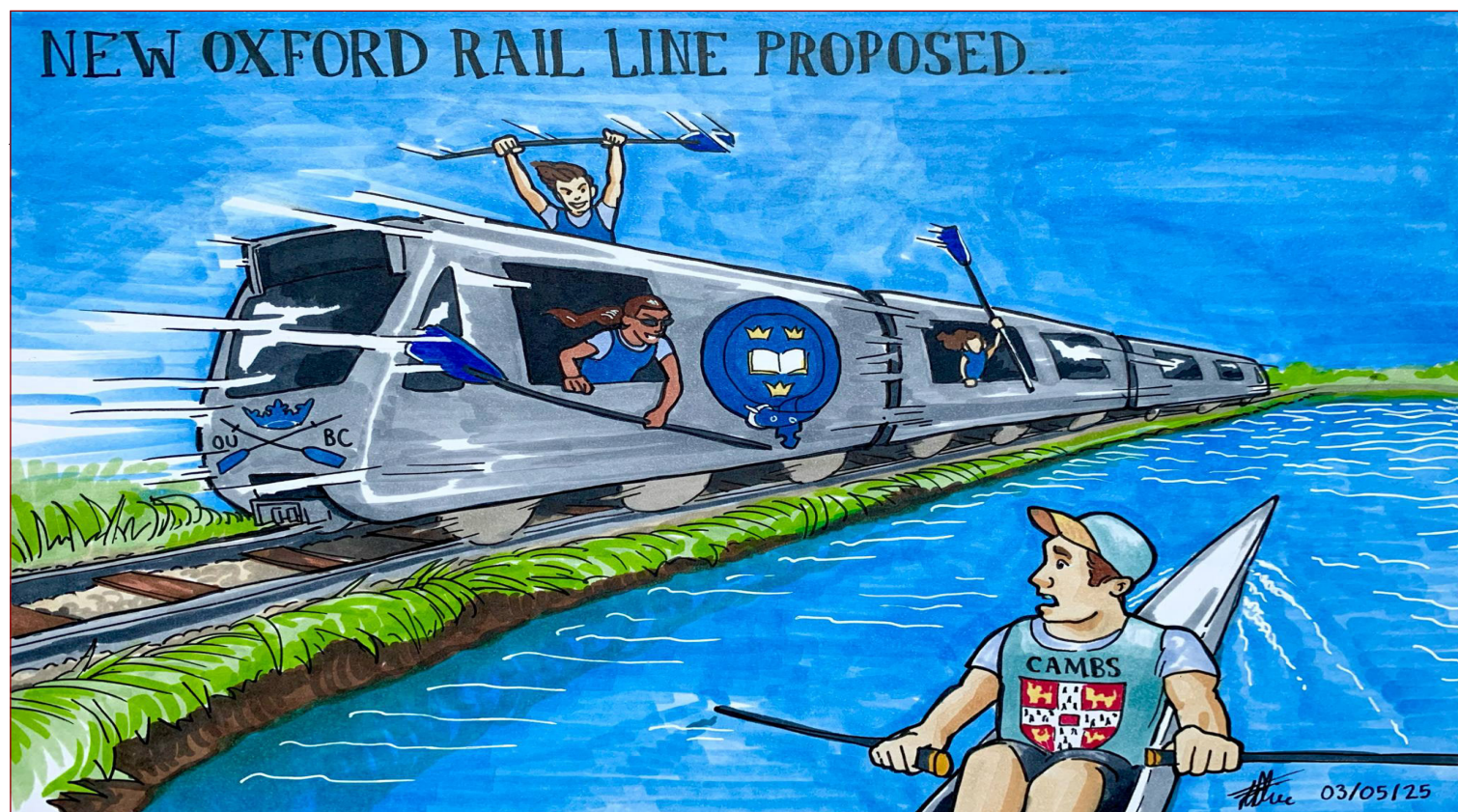
“
**Perfect business model
for Microsoft, yet poisonous
cocktail for the consumer**

Only one social media platform poses a truly interesting personal dilemma. A social media site which is, on the one hand, worse for your mental health than any of those mentioned

above, especially prone to causing depression and imposter syndrome. Yet, on the other hand, significantly improves your job prospects and gives you the opportunity to humblebrag about your latest internship (without mentioning, of course, that you were really just doing odd jobs for your Uncle Jeff). In many ways, LinkedIn has the perfect business model. It has managed to make itself an important, if not indispensable, tool in job applications, actively promoted by schools, universities and hiring managers. An applicant without a LinkedIn account is at an undeniable disadvantage when faced with a veteran LinkedIn warrior.

Yet what is a perfect business model for Microsoft is a poisonous cocktail for the consumer. Instagram is often rightly accused of perpetuating unhealthy expectations. But LinkedIn is far worse in this regard. Every single post is geared to make you look like a dream employee. Even posts about mental health and the damage that a social media might have on consumers are framed so as to be appealing to recruiters. ('People who discuss their mental health on LinkedIn are shunned but I alone am brave enough to do it anyway'.) With this in mind, it is hardly surprising when studies demonstrate the harm that LinkedIn has on its users. In being so obvious, it manages to be the perfect Faustian bargain. Will you trade your mental health for better employment prospects, your soul for material wealth?

Mephistopheles will see you now.



International students enrich, not endanger, our universities

LAURA BRINK

The first line of the 'About' page on the University of Oxford's website makes a claim for the institution's central focus on internationalism: "Oxford is a world-leading centre of learning, teaching and research." Despite the fact that the University consciously fashions itself as a world leader, proudly promoting its international profile and multicultural scholarly community as a strength which is "unlike that of any other university", xenophobic sentiment amongst the student population is rising.

It is true that the proportion of international students in the United Kingdom has risen to 26%, partially as a result of the exorbitant international fees that these scholars from abroad pour into UK institutions. Furthermore, these international fees, to a certain extent, make universities more accessible to less-privileged home students by supplementing their fees which are capped by the British government. It is, however, disappointing to see increasing globalisation framed as solely due to these financial considerations. Especially at purportedly proudly multicultural institutions like Oxford, it is hypocritical and reductive to discuss the systemic flaws of the British university system as if it mainly victimises British students.

Whenever an anti-international moral panic seems poised to ensnare British students and taxpayers, it is important to humanise "the international student" with an individualised account. As a South African student, I sought tertiary education in Britain due to

the extreme lack of funding for my subject area in the humanities back home – a situation which Britain directly contributed to as a colonial power, and still unapologetically profits from culturally and fiscally.

I rarely see students like myself – hailing from developing nations with already-crippling international fees compounded by unfavourable interest rates – represented in these conversations. Even when some of our families have to scrape together years of savings and make immense sacrifices to afford a British education, we are erroneously reduced by mainstream political discourse to a bottomless wallet.

The University and student body often claim to be committed to decolonisation and diversification, hence the "Uncomfortable Oxford" walking tours and the removal of statues and portraits of slave owners, yet there is a worrying lack of accountability when the time might come for a British student to make what they perceive as a sacrifice. When both elite British universities have historically accrued wealth through imperialist investments, how ethical is it to prioritise giving exceptional academic opportunities to British citizens over international students simply because of where they were born? Even average Britons benefit from a higher quality of life and financial freedom than the majority of the world. The Global South may not pay taxes to the British government (anymore), but they often pay dearly for the privileged lifestyles which have become normalised in the North. The South, for instance, disproportionately shoulders the negative impacts of climate change, all while struggling to recover from

the atrocities committed by European colonialists.

Of course many international students come from wealthier countries and personal backgrounds, not all of which are shadowed by colonialism, but this is not to say that these students are undeserving of the uniquely exceptional resources and training Oxford has to offer, which may still be superior to the offerings of their home countries. To imply that an international student is only offered a place because of their increased fees does a gross disservice to their intelligence, tenacity, and holistic potential.

Clearly, there are deep injustices of the current university admissions and funding system, but pitting international and domestic students against one another is a misguided response. If we can agree that the main functions of a university are to provide high-quality education and to produce cutting-edge research, it is in our best interests as a global community to ensure that the brightest thinkers gain access to it, regardless of nationality.

I have concerns that closed-minded, "us vs. them" rhetoric about university access can be a slippery slope to the kinds of extreme right-wing views espoused by President Trump in his de-globalisation efforts. International students do not swoop in and snatch opportunities away from British students any more than immigrants come to maliciously "steal jobs" from citizens. Many make extraordinary financial and personal sacrifices to seek better opportunities, which citizens of more developed countries often assume is rightfully theirs. Let us not be tempted by the easy response of scapegoating the 'Other' and look to approach systemic injustices together.

Letters to the Editors:

Readers of *Cherwell* respond to articles from our Week 0 print edition

College chapels in progressive Oxford: A surprising remnant?

SIR AND MADAM – I am sure that one of the reasons for a higher level of Christian worship at Oxbridge colleges is the relatively large number of private school pupils attending these colleges. Christian worship is still very much promoted at these schools, and those pupils moving on to Oxbridge will want to continue the habits they have learned.

My old school recently had to install a new, more powerful organ in the chapel because the enthusiastic singing was drowning out the old organ (installed when I was at the school). While an atheist myself, I thought this was a splendid story, and I hope this tradition endures.

Nick Langford

St Peter's, 1981 - 83

SIR AND MADAM – Alexandre Guilloteau makes some interesting and important arguments about the role of college chapels in Oxford. It is all too often and all too easy to take for granted the beauty and importance of the spaces we have access to. I confess that there is a particular sense of satisfaction that one gets from strutting past tourists gawping at a chapel and looking distinctly disinterested in it. Mr Guilloteau is right to remind us to take a step back and appreciate what we have here.

That being said, while for those of us that are familiar with Christian spaces of worship there is a sense of homely nostalgia to being in and getting involved with a chapel, this is not the case for everyone. As much as we can and should enjoy these sorts of antiquated spaces, we should recognise that they can also be alien to some, which is a shame. While we should remember how gorgeous and important the spaces we have access to are, we should also look to make them as inclusive as possible in order to conserve one of the most quintessential parts of the Oxford experience.

Oscar Whittle

History and Politics, St John's

Oxford's strange social scene

SIR AND MADAM – Despite prefacing his article by saying he had no desire to "psychoanalyse" the students of Oxford, Oscar Whittle's piece proceeds to do just this. I find the idea that people get involved in societies to "know stuff" a little bit ridiculous (and why the author considers such a desire to "know stuff" to be unnatural?). The author's position also seems to be that 'people join societies to fit in'. Insightful. There are a multitude of reasons why people join societies at Oxford. Yes, in part, getting to know the ins-and-outs of some of Oxford's most historic and important societies does provide some of the appeal – perhaps more to some individuals than others.

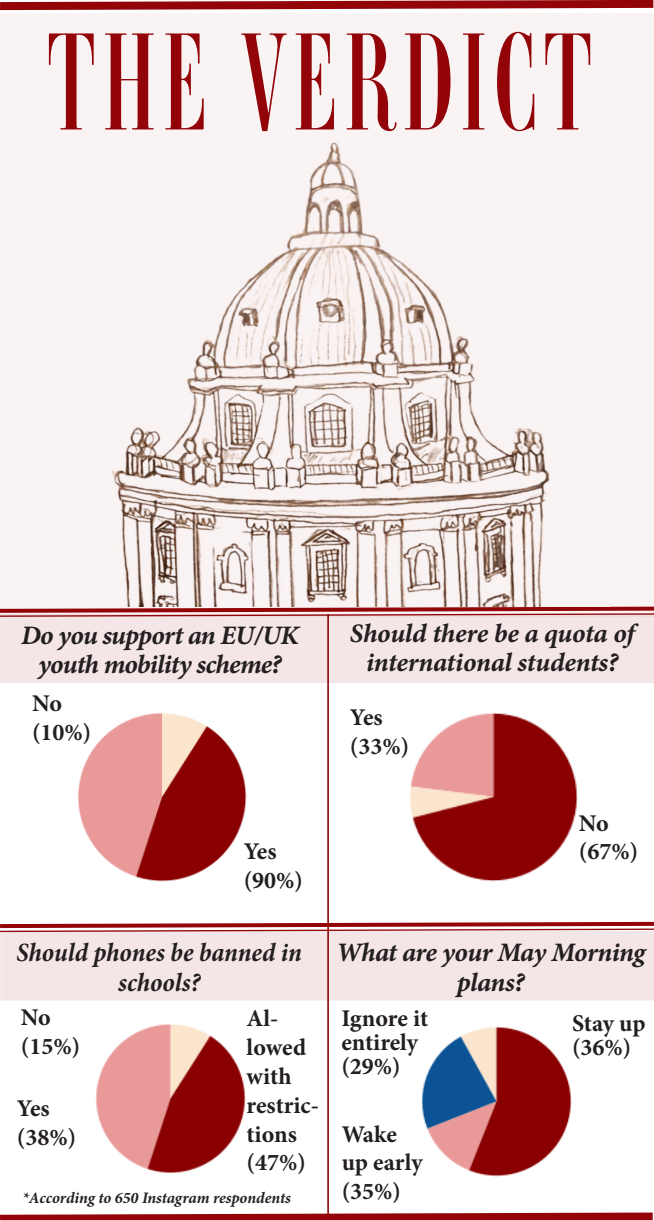
Yet, there are many reasons that go beyond this. How about the fact that people enjoy what the society is actually about; is the appeal of debating, journalism, and politics really that far gone? Although to be fair, maybe the current state of Union politics would suggest so. On top of this, societies offer students a unique chance for one to dip their foot in the water of different career paths and importantly gain relevant skills for them to 'stat-pad' their CVs and LinkedIn with. Most people see being at Oxford as a great privilege and a way to honour that is by making the most of the opportunities that the university has to offer.

Further, I find the author's assertion that a "solid" number of student journalists have Union backgrounds rather hard to believe. While true for a few members in the current *Cherwell* editorial team, it is far from a majority. I also wonder if it would be an interesting addition to what is a rather well written piece, to explore the social scene beyond "the big three" of University societies, referring to the Oxford Union, student journalism, and JCR committees – a phrase I myself have never heard before.

Oxford naturally attracts some aspirational and motivated individuals and I think it would be very interesting to see how this manifests itself in societies concerned with sports, hobbies, and careers.

Anonymous

**Got an opinion on this print's Opinion?
Submit a Letter to the Editors via:
comment@cherwell.org**



The silence Vučić hopes that the world won't hear

BENEDICT MASTERS

In Novi Sad, a city in northern Serbia, a railway station canopy collapsed, killing sixteen, and injuring another. Five months later, almost every public university in the country is blockaded. Students refuse to study, and staff are rarely able to teach.

What transpired from the accident to today was a tangled mess of government corruption, failed propaganda, and police brutality. Although the transport minister did resign under pressure, both he and the broader government refused to take responsibility for the collapse. This denial triggered a wave of public outrage, leading to protests, which were met in turn with excessive force. And so began a vicious cycle of anger and escalation.

The president, Aleksandar Vučić, also tried his hand at largely ridiculed propaganda campaigns. In response to the shutting down of public universities, a rag-tag band of around ten people camped outside the Parliament buildings in Belgrade, calling themselves the “Students Who Wish to Study”. The fact that a few of these “student” protestors seem to be in their mid-forties, with limited evidence of their being students, raised alarm bells.

Here, I disclose my biases. I myself visited the blockades. On seeing my Bod card, proving that I was a student too, the students now managing university buildings were eager to tell their side of the story.

These students dismissed the narratives Western media outlets often impose on Serbia – a battle between conservative nationalists, and leftists who want to see further European integration. This dichotomy could not be further from the truth. No matter their ethnicity or political affiliation, they were all dyed-in-the-wool patriots who largely shared the same values.

To them, Vučić is a useful idiot. Whilst campaigning for Orthodoxy and traditionalism, which many students agreed with, he has sold out his country. He has divided his country’s resources between China and the European Union, leaving his own people poorer and voiceless. Chinese companies control Serbia’s copper resources, whilst Brussels has fought for control of Serbia’s lithium.

Rumours circulated around the blockades of Chinese mining companies creating exclaves of sorts, towns in Serbia which now had their own laws, enforced by their own miniature police forces brought in from abroad; Serbia’s participation in China’s Belt and Road initiative also came to the forefront. It was alleged that the Novi Sad canopy incident stemmed from a shadowy Belt and Road contract, signed with little oversight, and even less accountability.

Far from being students with “bad grades”, who wish to cause “terror”, to me, these students were extremely well-informed and wanted nothing more than the best deal for their nation.

I would like to draw particular attention to the blockaded State University of Novi Pazar. I visited this institution a few times, getting to know those most directly involved in the protests, in spite of my comically limited language skills. When I arrived, they were in the midst of planning a large rally, which would see students from Niš to Kragujevac hosted on airbeds and blankets in the University’s labs and lecture theatres.

Novi Pazar is special. It’s the only Muslim majority city in Serbia, a time

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These students were extremely well-informed and wanted nothing more than the best deal for their nation.

capsule from the Ottoman empire. It is, largely, populated by Bosniaks, who share the same love for the nation as any Serb would, which locals say is unique to the area. The 15 minute silence for the victims of the canopy collapse, here, is extended by one minute. This is to remember Ernad Bakan, a Bosniak killed in Belgrade by a speeding car. The driver, convicted only after national outcry, received a mere ankle monitor. A theory that the injustice was caused by the difference in ethnicity between the victim and perpetrator is, to the blockade, not groundless.

The day before I was due to leave Serbia, student protestors in Niš blockaded the three major bridges keeping both sides of the city together. An Italian musician, making the most of the grand piano stationed on one of these bridges to block cars, was promptly handed a letter informing him that if he did not leave the country within 72 hours, he would face the full force of the law. At this time, I receive a welfare text from the Consulate making sure that I didn’t receive a similar letter. Perhaps it was for the best that I didn’t stick around for the rally.

On the 12th of April, at 11.52am, the State University of Novi Pazar fell silent. 17 minutes later, the silence ended. A flood of people, from every walk of life, engulfed the city, in a beautiful display of national unity. I am quietly confident, that in due time, the world will hear the silence.

New Mods: A step back for Oxford Classics?

Changes to Classics Moderations display the Faculty’s complete apathy towards language learning and teaching

A CLASSICS STUDENT

Oxford has long played an important role in the world of classical academia. Feeney, Lyne, Griffin, Macleod, Murray, Hall, Osborne... the list of notable classicists who have studied here, if not even taught tutorials themselves, is immense. Surely it is only common sense that the University should continue this tradition, a duty both to itself and to the discipline of classics more broadly?

You would have thought so. But the changes to the Mods syllabus (the equivalent of Prelims, exams which classicists sit in Hilary term of their second year) make alarming reading for anyone invested in the subject. The most striking change is the removal of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, two works that are vital to study because of their fundamental influence on all of the rest of ancient culture. They have been replaced by an anthology of texts, including such niche works as Terence’s *Adelphoe* and Lucian’s *True Histories*, interesting in their own right but surely not fitting to be studied by classicists at the very start of their degrees.

Whilst the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* can now be sat as Finals papers instead, this still means that a classicist can go through their entire degree without reading the most influential texts in the classical world. To try and understand ancient literature without the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* is like trying to understand trigonometry without algebra first.

The language of these texts is also relatively easy for a first-year student to read, certainly far easier than that of Thucydides and Tacitus, two of the authors who will replace them. The Faculty generally seems to be very apathetic to the study of classical languages, so much so that they have not yet released any details of the form of the new language papers, the website only saying that ‘grammar work’ will play some role

in the course. Reports suggest that they intend to make prose composition (translating from English into Latin or Greek) optional, offering candidates an alternative comprehension paper on a text they have prepared beforehand, becoming little more than a memory test. But writing in other languages is an invaluable skill, giving students an awareness of structure, style and idiom which cannot be gained simply from translating into English. Any languages student could tell you that for free, yet the Classics Faculty seems unable to appreciate it.

But, for anyone who has some knowledge of the Faculty, this decision is entirely, depressingly unsurprising. The centralised language classes are known to vary heavily in their quality, with the worst being little more than a recap of grammar learnt at A-Level or even GCSE. Handouts often contain mistakes and the grammar tests focus on arcane, practically irrelevant forms. Yet the Faculty also disapproves of the language classes that individual colleges run for their students, set up precisely because of their failure; they have even rejected offers from senior college language tutors to help run Faculty classes. This all seems to point to a faculty that believes classics can be taught without in-depth study of original languages, a notion which has gained currency recently but is undoubtedly absurd: it’s like the Old Testament without Hebrew, Dante without Italian – English students must even learn Old English before studying *Beowulf*. The simple fact is that so many fundamental aspects of literary criticism, from style to tone to word choice, cannot be properly appreciated in translation.

At this point an important caveat should be made: whilst no longer “the hardest set of exams in the world”, (as *Cherwell* once called it), the demands are still brutal, with candidates sitting more papers at Mods than at Finals. It is no secret that the Mods term is perhaps the most gruelling in the whole four years.



Moreover, students with no prior experience of Latin or Greek at Oxford seem to be at a disadvantage: in the past three years they have made up a third of the intake, but only a fifth of the First Class results at Mods. The fact that someone’s sixth-form experience makes more of a difference to their result than the five terms of teaching they have received here is another damning indictment of the Faculty.

Indeed, this attitude is simply infantilising towards Classics students, many of whom became interested in the subject precisely because of the linguistic side. It is especially patronising to those who have not studied Latin or Greek before: the enthusiasm and commitment to study a subject you have little prior experience of should not be underestimated. You are forced to ask: who do these reforms actually benefit?

Clearly not the students, nor many of the professors, with some even using their lectures to show their sadness/disgust/indignation at the changes to the course. Even worse, one tutor noted that placing less emphasis on language will have a knock-on effect on schools and their teaching, just as the government has decided to pull the plug on funding for Latin lessons: any idea that these reforms will promote equality is simply naive and misguided.

The changes to Mods are detrimental to the study of both language and literature, demeaning to tutors and tutees alike, and will perhaps even be harmful to the teaching of Classics throughout the country. This is a faculty that is unable to live up to the standards of its own staff and students.

Image Credit: Laurence Cooke for Cherwell

FEATURES

Oxford's influencers: The student life, but filtered through the prism of a phone screen



LARA MURRANI

Oxford has often seemed like a far-off and mysterious place for those not at the University. An online generation in a digital age is getting a unique but nonetheless curated glimpse of what life is like working and socialising under the dreaming spires

There's something about Oxford that makes people want to document it. The terms are fleeting, and begging to be captured. While Oxford students have a long tradition of photos, journals, and diary entries, a new way of capturing it all has emerged among Gen Z. You've probably seen them around, and you've probably watched their TikToks and Instagram reels. You may have even met a few of these quasi-famous figures. Student online personalities are no novelty, but a sign of the times, and Oxford's storytelling legacy has evolved to make room for a new offshoot in the digital age: the Oxford student influencer.

The student influencer online

Of course, the University presents its own perspective online. The University's official Instagram boasts 1.8 million followers, and college social media profiles routinely attract hundreds of thousands of views. But this sanitised, institutional perspective isn't what people are looking for. Something else has grown independent of the University's online personality, something far more intimate: the perspective of the students behind the caps and the gowns.

Many of us searched Oxford online before we

arrived. We subscribed to YouTube channels, followed Instagram accounts, and watched TikTok creators who documented their lives as students. Some of us even followed creators from their sixth form days, through the fervour of their results day, and into their fresh first weeks at Oxford. These influencers can almost feel like mythical creatures. We know they're here, but in a strange way, their specially-documented lives seem isolated from our own, mundane student experiences. That is, until we stumble on their posts, and suddenly there is this instant connection: sometimes it's just a laugh, sometimes it feels more personal, like being seen by a stranger online who may only be 5 minutes from you at any given time, like having something that felt like your own unique experience watched by millions of people online.

The people behind the screens

To understand what it actually means to be a student content creator at Oxford, I spoke to several current and graduated Oxford students whose accounts have documented their lives and times at the University.

Oliver, @oliversoxford across Instagram and TikTok, is famous for his interviews with other students, most notably known for his

satirical interviews with 'Bartholomew Hamish Montgomery' ('Barty'), a fictional aristocrat who regales viewers with tales of private jets and endless trust funds. Beyond that, Oliver also puts out some "more down-to-earth content, like interviews with regular students". Oliver's interviews with characters like Barty help poke fun at the ancient traditions and privileges at Oxford, while his conversations with real students work to gently peel back the stereotype, revealing a more diverse and grounded reality behind the University's image. Next is Meagan (@meaganloyst on TikTok and Instagram), who spoke to me from New Zealand, where she's currently staying. She shares content that blends the aesthetic Oxford life with behind-the-scenes moments, everything from study sessions to scenic shots of Oxford's iconic architecture: "My Instagram is basically a living video diary of all my Oxford experiences and beyond". Meagan's content walks the line between aspiration and authenticity, trying to show a realistic display of life as a student.

Lastly, rooted in the 'study-tube' tradition, Chloe, @chloepomfret on Instagram and @chloerevises on TikTok, is focused on putting out content that highlights the realities of what life is like as a student, especially from a working-class

perspective. Chloe's social media presence seems to challenge the traditional view of life at Oxford, and as her footprint follows her from her years in secondary school and sixth form, it presents a rarer perspective of a journey into Oxford.

The conversation began with a question about how each first got into content creation. Oliver said he began "during the pandemic, as most people did." Initially, he wanted to promote his eco-friendly queer fashion brand: "you know how people joke that it took them 25 years to realise they were gay and it took the algorithm 10 minutes?" But it soon fell into Oxford-focused videos, his street interviews were popular, and their conversational style "suited him well".

For Meagan, it was much more deliberate: "When I got to Oxford, one of my goals was to get good at video editing and hit 10K on TikTok by the end of Michaelmas, so I started posting a video a day!" She also traced her start to the pandemic. "I initially started writing in a diary to document my experiences, but it was way faster to do daily videos instead."

Chloe, on the other hand, started her social media career before the lockdowns. She told a story from her childhood, explaining the striking visual of being sat in the hospital when her grandfather was admitted, posting her notes

online just for something to do, and watching it become the most unexpected escape outlet. She was quick to emphasise how much she values the community she built around her and how it became such an integral part of her life that it just had to continue into university.

The throughline of the COVID-19 pandemic is obvious. With the lockdown having been the first growth spurt for a lot of online circles, this isn't a huge surprise. The pandemic was a pivotal moment for Gen-Z around the world. A generation that was already becoming defined by social isolation and a closer connection to screens was suddenly shoved entirely into the digital sphere. TikTok use exploded in 2020.

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I think most people realise that the videos are satire. If someone watches one of my posh sketches and decides not to apply without doing any further research, maybe Oxford wasn't the right fit for them in the first place.

Chloe, whose channel predates the pandemic, explained how she suspects that many people found community in those online groups to fill the absence of lecture halls and communal spaces. Now, even in the 'after' times and the real-world, in-person Oxford, so much of our lives are still filtered through screens and algorithms.

Oxford: Romantic, elitist, both?

When it comes to the image of one of the world's most famous universities, there's an inherent tension between the romantic cobbled streets and the realities of student life: three essay weeks, high expectations, and, of course, the exclusivity at the heart of it all. I asked the content creators how they navigated the paradox that is the many sides of Oxford University when presenting such a complicated place in short videos to millions of people.

Oliver said: "I think most people realise that the videos are satire. If someone watches one of my posh sketches and decides not to apply without doing any further research, maybe Oxford wasn't the right fit for them in the first place." He was undoubtedly referring here to the frequent appearances of 'Barty' and his merry men in the oliversoxford sketches. In one video, Barty humorously tries to navigate modern dating, poking fun at the outdated ideas of the Oxford elite. "I try to balance them with more down-to-earth content, like interviews with regular students," Oliver explained. He went on to stress his view that most students are down-to-earth people from all kinds of backgrounds who are just passionate about their subject, not "the insane brainiacs that people often imagine".

Meagan flattered our entire country when she told me: "As an American living in Oxford, it felt like living in a movie." She explained that for her, posting about Oxford was a way to highlight the parts of it not everyone gets to see, showing a more realistic view into a student's day-to-day.

Chloe explained that since day one, it was her goal to show Oxford for all its beauty while never shying away from the financial realities of studying here. We talked about the 'work ban' at Oxford, a rule that stops students from taking on paid work during term time. It's something a lot of students don't realise exists until they actually get here. She feels it is an unfair exclusion, barring certain students who may need the money during term time to afford their college rent. On the topic of college rent, she told me about a time when she approached St. Catherine's College when she couldn't afford her battels, and was "offered a job working in the college kitchen" to help pay them. She tells me that it's things like this that can make Oxford feel out of reach for students who don't have the same financial security as others, leaving them to figure things



out on their own. To Chloe, bringing attention to barriers like this for prospective applicants is just as important as her other content.

Juggling TikTok and a degree

Now for the question that was really on my mind: how did they manage to juggle their degree with what was essentially a full-time job?

"I don't do the degree", Chloe deadpanned.

While I must preface, for the sake of her tutors and the Catz academic office, that she is joking, Meagan seconds her point: "You have to make it a priority to give content creation a real shot. Consistency is everything when you're starting."

Chloe did go on to explain that for her, content was closely tied in with her daily life and, as a result, flows fairly naturally from it.

Oliver told me that he did struggle at one point. While lawyers are already professional whiners about our workload, Oliver might have more of a right to complain: he's balancing content creation, his Master's in Law, and work for a marketing agency. And I thought I had it bad bouncing between Law and Cherwell articles! He stressed that he found discipline was key, and his schedule was not too different from everyone else's: "Everyone at Oxford does societies and other stuff outside of your work – it just so happened that I could monetise mine."

Why keep the posts coming?

So, what motivates these stars of the rectangular screen? Chloe told me that she does it for the reactions to her content, both positive and negative. If you look up student life at Oxford online, you are often inundated with a flood of "posh accents" and trips to Bicester Village. She wants to be a part of challenging this, helping people find it easier to imagine themselves walking the many halls and corridors of the University. Oliver, similarly, wants to reflect that Oxford is a "much more diverse place than people think". Meagan also explained how she knows her videos, originally just a visual diary, have been helpful to incoming freshers looking to learn more about the University: "I've had a bunch of students tell me they saw my

videos before arriving and it helped them choose their college, get excited about their degree, and beyond."

I asked all three to tell me about how being content creators at Oxford has affected their lives. Oliver told me: "It's rewarding to see how people react to the content. As for the online persona, I try to stay authentic. I'm not trying to be someone I'm not, and I think that helps me balance the two worlds."

Meagan really emphasised the connections she's formed, the friends, the experiences, and the doors it opened up. She is a "huge advocate

student care leavers and being able to talk with them about a future at the University.

Fame, online and on the street

All three creators told me how their online fame often spills over into their everyday offline lives. Chloe has lost count of how many times she's overheard someone say, "Oh, it's that girl from TikTok." Oliver and Chloe were, respectively, #2 and #6 on last year's BNOC list. Even though it's easy to think of them as existing solely on the screen, their fame can translate into real life far more than anyone would expect.

Lastly, I asked what's next for these creators? Chloe discussed her work as co-chair of the Oxford Class Act Campaign, particularly a current project where she's interviewing students who have been in local authority care or are estranged from their families. The goal is to compile a report for the University, which will use the findings to improve its support for these students. Oliver delved into his research on vaccine misinformation and the legal and ethical implications of censoring health-related misinformation. Meagan has already built up a reputation for Gen Z VCs, a global collective she founded. It's basically a community for young people interested in investing, starting businesses, or working in startups. Her online fame has helped her get a monthly column in *The Times*.

So, that's it from our cast of Oxford student influencers. Writing this piece made me reflect on just how differently we all move through and document our brief time here. But it also reminded me that even when we feel completely wrapped up in our own lives, we're often walking different versions of the same story. Our experiences might feel deeply personal, but they're rarely solitary and can be shared with the people around us. In talking with these people, I was reminded of the long history of Oxford students narrating their time here, the art of storytelling it may seem, never really dies; it just evolves and evolves.

Image Credits: Selina Chen [Left] and Satchel Walton [Right] for Cherwell

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It's rewarding to see how people react to the content. As for the online persona, I try to stay authentic. I'm not trying to be someone I'm not.

for the pros of social media, especially from a career perspective, and how you can leverage it to create and even manifest the life you want."

Speaking about the pros and cons, Chloe mentioned the negative or disparaging comments she sometimes receives, both online and in-person. While those are par for the course, it's the community she has built and the goals she's working toward that make her feel incredibly lucky to have a voice and to use it to effect change, both in Oxford and outside of it. She especially highlighted her pride in being able to make Oxford a more welcoming place for

Twelve points to politics: Eurovision, more than it seems

Brits don't care as much as our continental cousins. Still, mixing glitter and geopolitics, Eurovision is more than a laughable song contest: it's a cultural flashpoint

JAN MACIEJEWSKI

It's two weeks until the Grand Final of the Eurovision Song Contest, held this year in Basel, Switzerland. I don't know about you, but I can almost smell the latex and hairspray. For many, Eurovision is an annual ritual of humiliation whereby families gather round the television on a Saturday night to scorn the nations of Europe for their questionable performances and voting patterns. For others, Eurovision is a progressive celebration of different cultures which promotes inclusivity, fosters diversity, and allows countries as small as San Marino to share the stage with musical powerhouses like the United Kingdom.

Beyond acting as a song contest, Eurovision has also become a symbol of queer culture, the Wadstock of the European world. In 2014, Austrian drag queen Conchita Wurst won the contest, and ten years later, Switzerland's Nemo became Eurovision's first non-binary winner. Aside from the artists, merely enjoying Eurovision has become shorthand for being gay. Telling people that I enjoy the contest feels like coming out all over again. By the same token, seeing my boyfriend squirm when I force him to watch Moldova's entry in 2011 feels like an advert for conversion therapy.

All these interpretations are fundamentally reductive. Eurovision is far from an event that's one-night-only. In fact, 'Eurovision season' begins several months prior to the show in September, as national broadcasters choose who they wish to represent them on an international stage. For some nations, Eurovision is the largest platform they get to show themselves off. Countries like Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan value Eurovision as an opportunity to showcase their unique and diverse cultures to an audience who otherwise wouldn't be able to spell 'Azerbaijan' if you put a gun to their head. As such, Eurovision is not just a song contest which forces a captive audience to consume three hours of kitsch Euro-slop, but rather a platform for artists and delegations to show off their country in front of as many as 200 million viewers.

A European platform

Here in the UK, we like to mock Eurovision artists from their questionable fashion right up to their even more questionable vocals. Across Europe, however, Eurovision is a treasured institution. Last year, 96% of television viewers in Iceland tuned in to watch the

contest. Other high viewing shares were reported in Sweden (87%), Norway (86%), Croatia (73%), and Lithuania (70%). By contrast, the viewing share last year for the UK was just 47%. It goes without mentioning that the reach of Eurovision exceeds household viewing – pubs, bars, and JCRs all take part in the fun too. Last year, I fondly remember ordering a pint of Orchard Pig at St Hilda's as a Slovenian woman sang a song called 'Veronika' in the background: a night to remember (if only I could).

Despite such watch parties, though, Eurovision is not as salient on this side of the Channel. One reason for this apathetic attitude towards the contest is the legacy of our commenting tradition. Prior to Graham Norton, the main commentator for the BBC's coverage of Eurovision was Terry Wogan, whose dry and sardonic humour meant that the contest wasn't held in great regard during the late 90s and early 2000s. Furthermore, successive victories in the early 2000s by Eastern Bloc countries led to a sentiment that Western countries were being deliberately sidelined by voters. Notoriously, Wogan claimed that the UK's dreaded nul points in 2003 was due to "post-Iraq backlash". Regardless of whether it's Iraq in 2003 or Brexit in 2016, it seems that UK viewers and commentators will go to no end in blaming external factors for dreadful finishes in the contest.

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Here in the UK, we like to mock Eurovision artists from their questionable fashion right up to their even more questionable vocals. Europeans are far more keen

Valued at £7.6 billion in 2023, the UK music industry does not need Eurovision to prove its worth. As embarrassing as Jemini's performance of 'Cry Baby' was in 2003, it didn't have major repercussions on the UK's international image. Even Jemini eventually profited from the ordeal, performing at a John Lewis in 2023 when Liverpool hosted the event (très chic). While larger countries usually dominate World Cups and Olympics, even the likes of Malta and Luxembourg get in the limelight at Eurovision. Every broadcaster is subject to the same rules: one act; three minutes; five partially-clothed dancers.

Juries and anti-intellectualism

What do the Brexit referendum, Donald Trump's first election victory, and Eurovision 2023 all have in common? Apart from acting as evidence that people should never be allowed to vote on anything ever, all three events have epitomised a narrative that so-called 'experts' are wrong. In the Brexit referendum, economists warned about the financial ramifications of leaving the EU; in both the 2016 and 2024 US elections, it was a desire to 'drain the swamp' which propelled Trump to victory; and in Eurovision, there has been backlash towards the juries as 'music experts' which epitomises this anti-intellectualist trend.

In 2023, backlash was especially pronounced following Sweden's victory at the contest. Despite Finland topping the public vote in eighteen different countries, accruing 376 televotes, it was Sweden's Loreen which triumphed overall owing to a large jury score. Though discrepancies between jury and televote scores aren't new, they have only been clearly visible to non-Eurovision geeks since 2016, when results ceased being combined into one overall ranking. For televote winner Finland to have an 133-point-lead with the public, and yet still miss out on the trophy, was a very public display of jury/televote misalignment.

The 50/50 jury/televote system began in 2009 following successive victories by Eastern Bloc countries in the early 2000s. As Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union splintered into several countries, Eastern Europe began to achieve a monopoly in the televoting system of the early 2000s. Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Serbia, and Russia are all Eastern European countries which won for the first time in this era. Though neighbourly voting is not unique to Eastern Europe, with Scandinavian countries also exchanging high points, the arrival of many Eastern European nations in the 2000s made their regional alliances particularly influential in shaping the leaderboard. Notably, in 2007, not a single Western European country finished on the left-hand side of the scoreboard, nevermind placing in the top 10.

This 'bloc voting' concerned executives at the EBU who sought to improve the quality of music at the contest and to curtail the Eastern European dominance. The result was the introduction of 'juries'. Each jury would consist of a panel of five 'music experts' whose ranking of the performances would constitute 50% of a country's overall voting result. Though this was controversial right from the outset, there was a general acceptance that the introduction of juries would, and did, improve the overall quality of entries in the contest.

Recently, the debate has become more heated. The last time that the juries and televote agreed on the winner of a contest was in 2017, when Salvador Sobral topped both scorecards for Portugal. The last time a televote winner won the overall contest was in 2022, with Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra propelling them to victory in a Eurovision season defined by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In 2023 and 2024, however, it has been the jury winner who has triumphed over the televote favourites. As such, resentment towards the juries is understandable. The jury/televote debate is, however, more complex than this. What qualifies as a 'music expert' to the EBU is ambiguous and has therefore been the source of confusion. For instance, a member of the Swedish jury in 2013 was a 40-year-old backing singer called Monika. Monika may know how to hold a note; but should this ability give her the same voting power as hundreds of thousands of Swedish televoters? Thus far, the jury is out.

Regardless of where a particular audience member stands on this debate, though, its very nature acts as a microcosm for anti-intellectualism and indeed populist discourse which questions the notion that expertise and experience should qualify individuals to hold positions of power. It's a trope that has been particularly common in recent election cycles. For Eurofans, though, it's been in our conversations for a while. Often, the discourses that the contest generates are replicated on a grander and more potent scale.

Money, money, money

Though the EBU does not make any money from organising Eurovision, the contest is nevertheless a substantial revenue stream. Ticket-sales, sponsorships, and adverts all offset the costs of running the contest and, as such, the EBU tries to incentivise certain countries to keep participating in order to reduce the losses they would otherwise face. Sites like The Conversation have suggested that Israel's continued participation in the contest, despite the war with Hamas, is driven not only by a desire to retain their participation fee but also by the influence of Eurovision's main sponsor, Moroccan oil, an Israeli cosmetics company that could pull its support if Israel withdrew. Their continued involvement with Eurovision following the Israel-Hamas war has increased tensions in recent contests, which has rubbed off on how the contest is perceived. One Oxford student told me the contest is "dystopian". Another told me the EBU has "incomprehensible ways of policing which political statements are allowed, and who can share them". For the fans, the continued participation of Israel is a question of morality. For the EBU, though, it may be one of finances.

In the past, some host cities have profited from the increased revenue streams brought by Eurovision. In 2023, for instance, Liverpool generated an extra £20 million after hosting the contest in 2023. However, organising Eurovision can also be a financial burden. Copenhagen lost big in 2014 after its organisers bafflingly decided to construct a new arena in a disused shipyard, only for it to literally never be used again.

Beyond budgets, hosting Eurovision can also

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Eurovision is a microcosm and melting pot; both an escape from conflict and an arena for it to play out on stage

be considered controversial as countries use the opportunity to polish their image in much the same way that they do so on stage. Azerbaijan was accused held a contest known for its queer following whilst maintaining a crackdown on queer communities, and also evicted local families to build its 2011 venue. More recently, the 2024 edition held in Malmö was remarkably tense owing to the large Muslim population of the city protesting Israel's participation, with death threats allegedly levelled towards Israel's representative, Eden Golan. Eurovision can thus act not just as a microcosm, but indeed as a melting pot of anxiety and conflict. Far from its origins as a festival designed to promote peaceful coexistence following WWII, critics argue that modern-day Eurovision is more divisive and violent than ever.

Twelve points to politics!

Eurovision is embroiled in geopolitics and queer politics alike. Though Eurofans like me do enjoy the contest for its own sake – and believe me, nothing makes me happier than when someone gets my reference when I say that an outfit is 'giving Barbara Dex' – an awareness of the contest can often offer more insight into the complexities of geopolitics, self-determination, and performativity than several feature-length op-eds in the New York Times or Atlantic. Eurovision is a microcosm as well as a melting pot; an escape from conflict as well as an arena for it to play out on stage. Political whilst professing to be anything but, Eurovision is an event that's full of contradictions. That's what makes it so fun to watch. Next time someone loudly boasts that Eurovision 'is just political', whether this be a family member or fellow college bar goer, nod your head in agreement. However, although such statements are intended to lessen the value of the contest, it really just makes Eurovision all the more fascinating to follow.

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Archives: Troublesome tabs strike again in sinful swap

This week in the archives we cast our minds all the way back to Hilary 2024, which is the most recent (but surely not the last) time visitors from The Other Place trashed an Oxford college. Former *Cherwell* Editor-in-Chief Julia Amann had the story covered that day, reporting that a 2023 sports swap gone wrong between Balliol and St John's, Cambridge had led to 130 hours of community service for the Johnians due to "leaving broken glass, mud, and urine" in the changing rooms and smashing up the

bar. Among the offending sports teams was, remarkably, the St John's croquet club. Who knew such a tame sport could be so violent?

Remarkably, the swap survived and has been held again since, with your archivist having the misfortune of visiting the John's bar a few months ago at the precise moment the two rugby teams arrived to treat us to their rendition of 'Wonderwall'. The best reaction in Amann's article was from one student who said "It's really classic Cambridge, isn't it?". Perhaps they're both as bad as each other.

Oxford colleges have also received complaints about student behaviour after sports day swaps to Cambridge. One source told *Cherwell* that, in their experience, sports days have included excessive drinking and urinating on statues at Cambridge colleges.

Another Oxford student said the behaviour from Cambridge did not surprise him. "It's really classic Cambridge, isn't it."

John Evelyn

Salutations, fine shyts.

The World Health Organisation has identified a new disease, straight out of Frewin Court. Protonmail-itis. Just when you think the term will be civil, it strikes, with no mercy, and certainly no morals. Its latest victim is Regan, who you may think would give up, but word on the street is that she will not back down, citing "lalalala I can't hear you" in her defence.

Preparing for an emergency, Jevelyn has spotted Obi Wan and Mustafa Kemal scouting for seccies. Efficiency, efficiency, efficiency! But they're not alone.

You may have heard a hiss last TSC. The source of the noise? Our very own Vipera Otiosa Keblensis, aiming to run for President as many times as he autoresigned back in Michaelmas. But who will run with him, and more importantly, will he re-

member to submit his nomination form?

Enter stage left, the heavy-hitting Offic-ers for this term. Rumour has it that Obi Wan has trained Anakin Stoogewalker for a clean sweep, eliminating the poor undergraduate hack younglings without mercy. He is joined in a Tripartite Pact by Bondage Baby, and the only man with any charisma of the three, Ben Bella. Not that they actually know who they're running under for sure, as King Lear seems to think that gatekeeping basic information is powerful and cool and not profoundly frustrating.

On the flip side, Goneril is scouting for her own star lineup. Whilst King Lear is *still* hosting Slate Socials (do your degree, I BEG), Goneril is seemingly more interested in hosting Spring Statements. She has courted the attention of Rachel Reeves, probably in an effort to make the Tripartite Pact



feel

at least a little jealous, given how they won't flip to her anyway. Her other options include Change, who, from inside her moon palace, is still mourning the loss of the Puppy Yoga event, and the Cornmarket shouty karaoke guy, because at this point, anybody would do.

Editorial



Laurence Cooke and Phoebe Davies
Editors-in-Chief, Trinity 2025

Welcome back to Week 1, and with it, another edition of *Cherwell*. Following so quickly on from Week 0, the standard of content across the whole paper continues to amaze us. The entire team, from editors to illustrators and photographers, have been working hard (while also enjoying the summer sun) to bring you this paper.

We've always known that the Oxford term doesn't stay still, so neither should student journalism. So this week we are back to announce something new: the launch of the *Cherwell Spoken* podcast. That's right, we are bringing your favourite newspaper beyond the page!

Georgia Campbell and Juliette McGrath will be bringing you behind-the-scenes chats with editors and writers, interviews with top Oxford voices, and a quick weekly news round-up. We know not everyone has the time to read *Cherwell* cover to cover, so all this will be wrapped up in just 15 minutes. This is by no means a replacement, the idea is to bring the print to life. Excitingly, we even have our own *Cherwell* jingle. Whether you are walking to a lecture or taking a break from the library, *Cherwell Spoken* has you covered.

For our first release, the presenters are joined by Richard, the Cornmarket singer who *Cherwell* interviewed last term. Richard chats more about his life, delving into everything from fatherhood to his big summer plans. They will also talk through some of our top news stories from the last two prints, including the introduction of gender-inclusive Latin in ceremonies, and the University's welfare report.

Of course, we are not ditching print anytime soon. This week's paper ranges from discussions about Classics Mods changes (page 7), Guinness drinkers (page 20), and an exploration of Oxford-based influencers (page 8-9). We also have an exciting interview with an Oxford Instagram celebrity themselves, the Oxford Kermit (page 13)! As always, the Puzzles team have crafted another incredible selection of puzzles, the perfect activity while lounging in the sun.

So whether you're more of a print purist or a podcast regular – thank you for reading, listening, and continuing to support *Cherwell*.



Ila Banerji
Deputy Editor, Investigations

Being a news two-termer at *Cherwell*, I have had perhaps the craziest experiences the paper has to offer. From legal issues to three-hour meetings, the paper has provided me with the closest a university has to offer to real-life journalism.

As News Deputy Editor, the pace of the work is relentless, but the output is more rewarding than any other student publication has to offer. From covering the occupation of the Radcliffe Camera, to poring over council planning documents, *Cherwell News* has everything you could want to get involved with the goings-on of every part of Oxford life.

Nonetheless, my favourite part of my time in News was the more in-depth, analytical, and investigative pieces that revealed information about University institutions that people deserved to know about. Spending hours reading over documents and crafting articles made me feel like I was really contributing something.

As Investigations Deputy Editor, I am able to work with a dedicated team to spend longer researching the issues that matter to Oxford students, whether that be through Freedom of Information requests or through interviews and testimony from Oxford students themselves.

Cherwell offers such a unique experience for Oxford student journalism, to truly speak truth to power, and to hone your skills in an unmatched way. We are always looking for fresh voices and fresh perspectives to share important information to the Oxford student body.

PROFILES

“I wish the Oxford Union would appoint proper interviewers

Cherwell spoke to philosopher and social media star Alex O'Connor

CHRISTINA SCOTE

Alex O'Connor is a 26-year old philosophy social media star. He started his YouTube channel at the age of 17 under the name 'CosmicSkeptic' and now has 1.4 million subscribers. His podcast *Within Reason* has seen everything from scholars dissecting Biblical hermeneutics to Penn Badgley telling him about what it was like to star on the Netflix show *You*. These combined efforts have landed him in the same circles as Richard Dawkins, Jordan Peterson, Sam Harris, and the like. He studied Philosophy & Theology at St. John's College, Oxford.

Cherwell sat down with him in Covent Garden to discuss a range of topics over (soya) lattes, from his Oxford experience to his thoughts on Christianity.

Cherwell: *Opinions on the Oxford Union? Do you think it's a bastion of free speech?*

O'Connor: I don't think anything that happens in that chamber is really significant, and the debate format is absolutely ludicrous. It's completely ridiculous. The idea that you would invite eight of the greatest speakers on a wide variety of topics, and they all say yes because it's Oxford, and they don't even talk to each other. Not once. You can get these people in the same room as each other like nobody else can, and they literally don't engage with each other. It's absolutely insane. I get that that's the style of debating in the house, but whatever. It's boring. People stop going after a while. If you know you're about to see a showdown, back and forth, questions and answers, people would go.

I've done speaker events for it. It was fun, but I did not for one second think that I was taking part in a serious debate. I'm just giving a ten-minute speech and then meeting some people afterwards. You can't format it like that and then pretend to be a bastion of free speech.

And yeah, they invite controversial speakers, and that's great. But. I think that gets taken too seriously as well. I understand that students get upset not just with the speakers being there, but with what

it represents — the normalisation of particular worldviews. But if the students have any idea that somehow if they manage to stop this speech from going ahead, they'll have done the world a favour, then they've just forgotten that YouTube exists. So I think they've got to be very precise about what they're protesting. It shouldn't be, "Let's not give this guy a platform" — because, I'm sorry, Steve Bannon would platform the Oxford Union, not the other way around. It should be more specific, something like, "We don't want to implicitly endorse the normality of this kind of view". If that's your position, cool. Suddenly then it feels like a legitimate concern, but no longer really enough of a concern to be like blocking the entrance to the Oxford Union.

So it's all just a bit intense. I think it's a bit overblown. I kind of wish that people either recognised the unseriousness of it all or took it actually seriously.

Also, a lot of these presidents are not good interviewers. It's a kind of microcosm of the Westminster world: a lot of backstabbing, parties, and the elections are based on popularity. It's all very cringe-making.

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My worst module was General Philosophy in first year!

All these slates, as they call them. They're all called #Inspire or #Regenerate or whatever, and it just makes me want to throw up in my mouth. Basically, it's a student society and a social club, and you want to be the president because it's cool. And so you end up with somebody who heads up the Union, and they're probably the right person for the job, because they won the popularity contest, but then they're the person asking Andy Murray, "Oh, why did you get into golf?" Because the thing that they're good at is being mini-politicians.



They're not interviewers. I wish the Oxford Union would appoint proper interviewers. But then I get that if you've got a big celebrity, the president's going to want to do it.

Cherwell: *Were you well-behaved as a student?*

O'Connor: No, not at all. Once I realised that lectures are technically non-compulsory for a humanities course, I stopped going. I think I went to maybe a handful of lectures near the beginning, and then I stopped. And then near the actual exam time, I started watching some of the online lectures. But no. I didn't do any of the reading for the tutorials.

Cherwell: *Then how did you get through them?*

O'Connor: Well, most of the time I didn't. Sometimes I did, sometimes I didn't. It's not like I was always totally bad. But I definitely did the minimum amount of reading. Which wasn't great. I wouldn't recommend it.

When I had an important deadline, when I really knew I needed to learn something, I would do it. But I was always acutely aware of the fact that the only thing that mattered was the exams. Anything I didn't think would be needed for the exams, I didn't prioritise. My worst module was General Philosophy in first year. Amia Srinivasan was teaching us, who later became this feminist superstar—she

wrote *The Right to Sex*—and we just happened to have her in first year. And I completely wasted the opportunity. For that particular paper, I just had a lot on. I remember being in her tutorial having not done the reading, and I regret that.

I enjoy learning about things, but I've never gotten on with, like, academic environments very well. Certainly, back in like secondary school, no way. I wanted to be a skateboarder or guitarist. The first time I did my A-levels I failed them and had to retake them, because I just wasn't going to class. And there were meetings about it, with parents coming in. I overslept one of my exams. It was at 1pm and I overslept it. It's the level of disrespect that I had.

The thing is, if I'd have done well the first time, I would have done Maths and Further Maths. I would have gone onto do something science-y, and it would have been a different career path. I think I was just in the wrong line, you know?

At Oxford, I would occasionally just not do collections. I'm pretty sure that once I sent an email being like, "Look, I'm just not going to do this. I don't want to do it, I know you don't want to mark it, I wouldn't answer this question if it came up on the exam, so I just don't think it's worth my time right now." And I think as long as you can demon-



strate to your tutors that you genuinely think that, and you're not just taking the piss, depending on who the tutor is, they might be okay with it.

I came out with a 2:1, which is great, but I definitely could have got a first if I'd studied. Especially in the degree that I did, Philosophy and Theology, given the line of work that I was already in, I felt like I could get away with a lot. But that was wrong. I mean, you'll be doing a philosophy of religion paper, and you do a week on the problem of evil, and it's like, "Okay, I reckon I'll be alright here". But you're still not going to know the papers that they specifically want you to read, and you're still not going to know the angle that they want you to take.

Cherwell: Give us an Oxford hot take.

O'Connor: Oh, maybe a hot take is I think Christ Church is a bit shit. Not the people, I just mean I don't like it as an environment.

Cherwell: When you're in the middle of a debate it can be hard to realise you're wrong. How do you get better at acknowledging good rebuttals to your position, especially in the moment they're made?

O'Connor: It depends on the nature of the point, because if the point would undermine your entire worldview, that's not something you should just say there and then, because there might be things you haven't considered. I think you just have to say,

"That's a good point. I'll think about that."

The best thing you can do is, prior to that occurring, have an attitude and orientation to conversations and debate where people are aware that you are not arrogantly entrenched — so that if someone comes along and makes a good point, you can just say so.

You can go into a debate thinking, "I'm right about this, and I've got something to prove here," and that's fine, but then if somebody makes a good point, prepare to be embarrassed. If you come in with a bit more humility, you might still be embarrassed but it won't have the same feeling as "that guy really needs a smack in the face". It's like the difference between a boxer giving all the talk and then getting knocked out versus a boxer who says, "Hey, this will be fun. Let's find out who's the better fighter. Good luck," who then gets knocked out. It's still a bit embarrassing, but not in the same way.

Recognise that if you're going to have a career in public speaking or you're going to have debates with your friends, if you have one debate every month for the rest of your life, it is guaranteed that at least one time you will be wrong. So, you just have to be prepared every time you have a debate for that to be today.

Image Credit: Alex O'Connor

Student spotlight: Josh Nguyen on Oxford Kermit, the University's newest social media splash

A graduate student in healthcare policy, Josh Nguyen speaks to Peter Chen about the sensation that is Kermit

Cherwell: To get us started, why don't you tell us a little bit about your background?

Nguyen: Sure. My name is Josh Nguyen, I am currently pursuing a MSc in Applied Digital Health at Wolfson College. I'm from Iowa originally, and I studied biology at Yale for undergrad. After that, I moved to New York for a bit and worked in consulting in the healthcare industry. As soon as I started there, I was like, let me go back to school, and then came here. I don't think consulting was for me.

Cherwell: What interests you about healthcare?

Nguyen: I think I've always been interested in medicine, I suppose, and helping people in that sort of manner. I grew up not really, I guess, having access to health care. I grew up in a low-income family, so we didn't have health insurance. I think having that sort of lack is what got me interested in the first place. So, you know, when I went to college, I thought I wanted to pursue medicine. Still, I'm thinking about it, but kind of more on the edge about it. But I think patient care is so important.

Cherwell: You said you are from Des Moines, Iowa. What was that like growing up there? I imagine there weren't that many Asians there.

Nguyen: No. There were hardly any Asian people. I think in my class there were a total of three out of a hundred. It was definitely difficult. I'm Korean and Vietnamese, so the nearest Korean town or Vietnamese town was in Chicago. It was a seven hour drive and we would make an annual trip there. I would just be so excited. It was definitely difficult, feeling a bit more isolated because of my racial identity. But getting to move to Yale afterwards was so eye opening because it was the first time in my life where I was suddenly surrounded by more Asian people, and all this diversity.

Cherwell: Let's talk about the Kermit. Did you bring him today?

Nguyen: I did! I always carry him around with me just in case, and I put him in this black bag.

Cherwell: So how did you come up with the idea of the Oxford Kermit?

Nguyen: I think prior to coming to Oxford, I

just knew I wanted some fun way to document my year here. I think it'd be fun to take pictures of some sort of doll or something like that. So let me go on Etsy and see what's out there. I saw this Kermit dressed in a trench coat, and I was like, this is so Oxford. And then when I got the doll, I was like, wow. He's so cute.

Cherwell: What has the response been like?

Nguyen: It's been crazy. So much bigger than I anticipated. In my head I thought Oxford was going to be a more serious place, and I didn't know if people were going to really receive it that well. But immediately as I started, it kind of just grew exponentially right away.

And as I kept doing it, it just blew up more and more. I got collabs with Oxford University, and all of a sudden, I got thousands of followers and I was like, dang! This is amazing. The first college collab I did was with St. Catz, and then I just went on and on afterwards. And then now there's departments, and student clubs.

Cherwell: Do you ever get any hate?

Nguyen: I think I recently saw on Oxfess that 'I wanna drag Kermit to the Ninth Circle of Hell.' And I'm like, what the...? Like, honestly, they make me laugh because how can you have hatred towards a doll? It's kind of funny, honestly. Overwhelmingly, the comments and what people say to me are just so positive.

Cherwell: Why do you think it resonated so much with all students?

Nguyen: I think for the deeper, more human content that's on there. I think people resonate with that because it takes more complex feelings and expresses them through something familiar and cute. I think for the funny, more light-hearted content, people like it because it gives them a refreshing break from their studies, from the intensity of [University].

Cherwell: You're finishing your course soon, so what's next for you and what's next for the Kermit?

Nguyen: For me, personally, it's still kind of up in the air. I really have learned to love the UK as I've stayed here more and I do think that I wanna stay here longer. My original plan was just to go back to the US, either New York or DC, but I don't know. I think with this whole Kermit thing, I've realised how much I like social media, and that's something I wanna pursue, and I'd love to pursue that in London.

As for what's gonna be next for Kermit, that's also something I've been thinking about a lot. I don't know, is my answer. I think I would like it to keep going but I'm not sure exactly how that would work. Maybe I can hand it over to someone, but I'm open to ideas.

Read the full article at cherwell.org

Image Credit: Josh Nguyen



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Review: Oxford's Medieval Mystery Cycle 2025

STAGE

It's all Middle Dutch to me! Comedies, choirs, and inflatable hammers in St Edmund Hall's medieval mystery plays

RHYS PONSFORD

I wasn't sure what to expect from a medieval Mystery play cycle. What I was not anticipating was Lucifer recast as a finance bro 'fired' from Heaven (now a corporate office setting), shepherds from the Nativity prancing through a graveyard while singing in 16th century French, and a comedy about four incompetent soldiers and the crucifixion of Christ. Oh, and Lucifer was howling in Middle English.

These surreal and wonderful plays were performed in a mixture of languages including contemporary and Middle English, Medieval German, and even Middle Dutch across 13 short shows. It was all set against the backdrop of St Edmund Hall's medieval architecture, offering a brief but tantalising window into the world of medieval theatre.

Perhaps what took me most off-guard was just how funny it was. Jim Harris, the effortless deadpan deliverer of one-liners in rhyme, remarked in his introduction (preceded by an actual trumpet fanfare) 'you're going to be here for hours'. Yet this elicited not groans but laughter. There was a sense of festivity in the air from the very beginning. Talking to *Cherwell*, the Heads of Performance, Antonia Anstatt and Sarah Ware, said this is what they were hoping for. "The levity [of these shows] is an important thing, especially if you're sitting in a marathon" of plays, said Sarah. Antonia also mentioned that the play cycle immediately dispels the myth we have of "the Middle Ages as a period when people took everything really seriously." Instead, she said we "have actually really funny plays about women being martyred or [about] the crucifixion... it gives us a new idea of the Middle Ages, and how they approached these biblical texts. And like Sarah said... they also wanted to have fun ... on these carnival-like days." Indeed, Sarah herself had remarked how "medieval mystery plays were very much the everyday person's most easy access to the world of biblical narrative. These [plays] were how people accessed the Bible – in addition to attending church, if they could."

One highlight was the charged rendition of 'The Martyrdom of the Three Holy Virgins', done in a blend of Latin and Present-Day English that flowed relatively seamlessly into one another. It featured



the brutal martyrdoms of three women who refused arranged marriage and pagan customs. The Latin was performed with vigour, declared in distinctly Italian tones that, while perhaps not historically accurate, were nonetheless suitably emotive for the narrative. There were impassioned performances from all of the martyrs – Loveday Liu, Abigail Pole, and Laura Laubeas. Liu was especially striking, defiantly staring down the figure of Emperor Diocletian (Jialin Li) as she decried her unwanted wedding. The aesthetic was partly modernised, the 'guards' becoming fascistic police officers that dragged the martyrs offstage in a way hauntingly reminiscent of the arrests of contemporary protesters.

Perhaps the strangest play was *The York 'Crucifixion'*, translated into Modern English but re-

taining its original Middle English rhythms. The Crucifixion is hardly an event I'd consider ripe comedic material, let alone in a medieval context. Nonetheless, the absurdity was heightened in this modern interpretation. From nailing Christ to the Cross with inflatable hammers, to saying Jesus had saved them time when "he himself laid him down", these three (in this case four) Stooze-esque soldiers are almost endearing in characterisation, until you remember they are condemning Jesus to an agonising death. The physical comedy juxtaposed to Jesus' stoic proclamations is another reminder of the bleak sense of humour that was more normalised in medieval theatre than one would typically imagine.

The most amusing play, though, was the final one, *The Last Judgement* – labelled "good old

fashioned eschatological fun" in the extended programme. It certainly fulfils its promise. The Angel Gabe (Alice Watkinson) a guitar-wielding herald of the end of the days, chirpily introduces the play with "Wow! Judgement Day! You guys excited?". Indeed, though adapted by Ruby Whitehouse from the Middle English *The Last Judgement*, the play has more in common with the irreverence of Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman's *Good Omens* than the doom, fire, and brimstone of the Book of Revelations. At one point, a jubilant and smarmy Jesus (Alicia Camacho Fielding) skips airily about with those souls destined for heaven, while the others are dragged off to hell by a leather-jacketed Satan. Who knew the end of the world could be so much fun?

[Read the full article at cherwell.org](https://www.cherwell.org)

Image Credit: Rhys Ponsford

The oxymoron of the prerecorded-live production

CLEMMIE EWINS

The concept of recorded theatre seems an oxymoronic one: how can a medium defined by its being live, in person, and on-stage suddenly become pre-recorded, remote, and on-screen?

In the last half-decade, the medium of 'recorded theatre' has undergone a boom, with it now being the expectation that performances of all levels not only be observed in person but also preserved on film. While there are obvious advantages to this new hybrid medium, are we witnessing the downfall of the priority of 'LIVE'?

The concept of recorded theatre seems an oxymoronic one: how can a medium defined by its being live, in person, and on-stage suddenly become pre-recorded, remote, and on-screen? Just as digitalisation has done with countless other concepts, the very definition of theatre is changing.

Recorded theatre is undoubtedly helpful in its ability to widen the catchment of those able to

witness outstanding shows. For example, National Theatre Live claims to offer audiences the best seats in the house from the comfort of their own home or a cinema at a fraction of the price of a seat in the stalls, with performances such as Jodie Comer's *Prima Facie*, Rosamund Pike in *Inter Alia* and Ncuti Gatwa in *The Importance of Being Earnest* all on offer. But most will acknowledge that there is always something missing from seeing the performances second-hand. After all, theatre is unique in its spontaneity: a performance is a one-off event that cannot be replicated and the same can be said for the audience experience of a live show.

But perhaps what we lose in 'live feel', we gain in education: through the increasing culture of recorded theatre, students, actors and fanatics

alike can analyse performances through watching and rewatching in a way that's never been possible before. We are living in a world in which the memories of some of the greatest performances of the age are being lifted out of the mouths of their audiences and placed onto the screens of the masses: Benedict Cumberbatch's performance as The Creature in the National Theatre's *Frankenstein* is not just the stuff of myth, held in the memories of the select few live-audience members, only accessed through attempted articulation to others, but it's now a single search away on YouTube and has become a cultural staple of recorded theatre. In this way, there is a huge new opportunity for aspiring actors, writers and directors to study their favourite plays.

[Read the full article at cherwell.org](https://www.cherwell.org)

FILM AND TV

Editors' Picks

IN THEATRES



SINNERS

Ryan Coogler's new vampire horror infuses chilling horror and a dark, supernatural twist into deep-South America.

TO STREAM



A CRUEL LOVE: THE RUTH ELLIS STORY

This ITV drama delicately follows the last woman to be executed in the United Kingdom.

Image Credits:
[SINNERS] - Michael B Jordan by Gage Skidmore via Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0
[A CRUEL LOVE] - Lucy Boynton by Gabbo T via Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 2.0

IS THE BOOK ALWAYS BETTER?

SOPHIE PRICE

From the director who brought you *Saltburn* comes a story of violent passion, bleak moorlands, and the mutually destructive relationship between a teenage girl and a 'dark-skinned' brooding antihero. Emerald Fennell's new *Wuthering Heights* adaptation has placed Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi into the shoes of Emily Brontë's Cathy and Heathcliff, a casting choice that has infamously perplexed readers and critics upon its announcement last September.

Elordi and Robbie, for all their talent, deviate considerably from the characters they will be portraying. Like many other period dramas falling victim to 'iPhone face' casting and 21st-century embellishments, the pair feel oddly misplaced in Brontë's Yorkshire. Most notably, Heathcliff is described by Emily Brontë as 'dark-skinned', and while his ethnicity is never explicitly stated, he is likely of Romani or East Indian descent. Heathcliff's outsider status is central to the novel's romantic and social tension, and his being an outsider is augmented by issues of both class and race.

However, fidelity to the source material doesn't have to mean scene-by-scene replication. Films are constrained by runtime and driven by visuals, and many literary scenes are like untranslatable words in a foreign language when trying to adapt to the screen. Pages of a character's inner monologue would be frankly unmarketable if accurately translated to screen with no artistic flair, and many filmmakers find themselves at the mercy

of studio demands for runtime, meaning they simply cannot afford to include everything. Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, for example, spans well over nine hours in its entirety and still omits significant parts of Tolkien's original. Yet, Jackson's choices in the 'to cut or not to cut' debate work because they preserve the central plot of the story he wanted for his movie, while maintaining respect for the source material. Some content can be cut, and not a great deal of the overall picture changes, but this is not the case for what viewers are seeing with the new Heathcliffe and Cathy.

But how far can filmmakers go before reinterpretation turns into distortion?

“No one listens to Kate Bush expecting a Brontë lecture. But they do expect Heathcliff, not Elvis

Most viewers understand that film and literature are different media. It would be patronising to assume otherwise. The frustration doesn't come from minor adjustments or those necessary evils that arise from the adaptation process, but instead from drastic changes to the story's core. Those 'essential organs' that should survive the journey of translation – characteristics of age, race, and background – are not irrelevant details that can afford to be upended to cast marketable public figures.

When done well, adaptations can be refreshing

approaches to a known tale. Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* pleased audiences upon its release in 2019. Along with altering the timeline's linearity, Gerwig notably left the ending ambiguous: Jo still marries Professor Bhaer, but it remains unclear whether this is Jo's fate or the ending she penned to sell her novel. In the book, Jo marries Professor Bhaer as a reluctant Alcott writes the ending that her own publishers desired for her heroine. Gerwig's film is not a letter-for-letter adaptation of the original, but her changes enhance the experience of watching the March sisters grow, rather than detract from it.

At the other end of the spectrum are adaptations that lose their footing entirely. Director Mary Harron has expressed disappointment over the reception of American *Psycho* in pop culture. Though both the book and the film are intended as satires of the 'finance bro' archetype, Christian Bale's Patrick Bateman has been bizarrely embraced as a role model by some viewers. Those putting this satirical figure on a pedestal misread or missed the plot altogether, accidentally idolising a figure that was created to be mocked.

It's easy enough to argue 'you can't please everyone', and directing a film is an entirely different ball game from writing a book. However, the uproar over Robbie and Elordi's casting teaches us that, at the very least, audiences ask that adaptations remain faithful to the parts of a story that really matter to its overall message.

After all, no one listens to Kate Bush expecting a Brontë lecture. But they do expect Heathcliff, not Elvis.

Adolescence: Can TV spark radical change?

TOM COCKBURN

Adolescence is just another example of art acting as a conversation piece. The recent series has inspired much conversation after it has highlighted how harmful online misogynistic content can influence young boys. Netflix's announcement that the series will be available to screen freely in UK schools shows the cultural importance that has now been placed on *Adolescence*'s messaging.

After all, it was Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer who called for Netflix to make such a move. But can four hours of television tackle something as enormous as online misogyny and incel culture? Or does it just scratch the surface? And are we now in a 'govern by TV' show doom-loop?

Adolescence, if you haven't seen it, is about a 13-year-old boy, Jamie (Owen Cooper), who's arrested for the murder of a female classmate. As the series unfolds, we start to learn about Jamie's dark motives, and we're shown how horrific the consequences of 'incel culture' content can be.

The series also demonstrates how Jamie's parents (Stephen Graham and Christine Tremarco) deal with their son's horrendous crime. It explores their second-hand guilt for Jamie's actions, and their confusion surrounding his motivations.

The series is important. It is a direct response to the rise of hateful 'red pill commentary' amongst teenagers – a huge societal challenge staring us right in the face. What *Adolescence* does well is raise integral questions at an important time. But what it doesn't do is answer them – and, in all fairness, I don't think it was ever meant to.

However, the politicisation of *Adolescence* as

the answer could be problematic. Politician's overeager responses to the Netflix drama risks an epidemic of condescending conversations between adults and children if adults don't grasp the nuance of the problem itself first.

Critically, the series shows how young boys in general find it incredibly hard to talk about social media and incel culture, whilst also illustrating adults' ignorance of those very problems in the first place. This is exemplified when the confused Ashley Walters' DI Bascombe and his son have an awkward conversation about this mysterious online content at school in episode two.

However, the exchange demonstrates not the naivety of teenagers to the challenges *Adolescence* presents, but the naivety of adults. It highlights the need for politicians, teachers, and parents to truly get to grips with this issue before presenting solutions. Anything other than this will result in similar ill-informed conversations happening nationwide.

Furthermore, the laziness in which Andrew Tate's name is briefly mentioned is a forced and obvious signpost to older viewers of the crux of the show – like they were worried all the 'red pill chat' would go over people's heads.

This is not to mean that young people don't need education on the issue. However, will positive change be enacted by simply showing the Netflix show in classrooms without any other guidance accompanying it?

Unless adults generally can comfortably and confidently engage with these issues in a non-condescending way, then there's no hope anything will ever be solved. Showing kids films or shows in class doesn't always lead to great results – look at

Mr. Malik in episode two of the show.

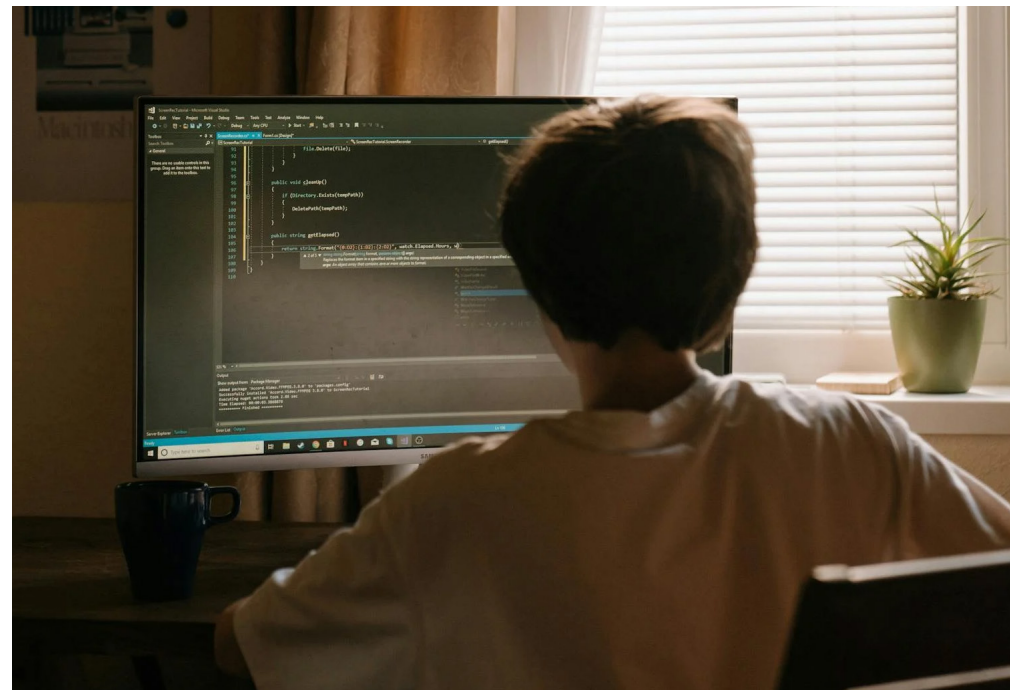
At the heart of *Adolescence*, though, is one thing: a girl who's been murdered because of the internet – this should, importantly, not be forgotten. Jamie's crimes, however, demonstrate the worst-case scenario of misogynistic online radicalisation. Not every teenager will be a Jamie. Some may just feel confused and isolated – scared of social media and its effects. These children deserve more than Netflix's 'govern and educate by TV' strategy.

In future, the government should be more proactive in investigating the underlying causes behind the issues *Adolescence* presents. It's also

patronising to young boys to group them all together as potential Jamies – they're not. Education on this issue needs to be done with subtlety and nuance.

What the writers of *Adolescence* have given society is a prompt. Sometimes that's all that's needed. And no one can argue that it hasn't started conversations. Without conversations, great societal challenges can never be solved. The hope is that *Adolescence* kickstarts the fight-back against online misogyny and incel culture and isn't just treated as the cure itself.

Image Credit: Cottonbro Studio via Pexels / CC0



Sally Rooney's *Intermezzo*, reviewed

Peter Chen examines philosophy, language, and chess in Rooney's latest work, and how it differs from the author's previous novels on modern love

I thought it perplexing that critics felt *Intermezzo* similar to other works by writer Sally Rooney. Certainly, it shares some familiar ingredients: it's set (mostly) in Dublin, explores personal relationships, and the characters seem to have perpetually miserable lives. Yet the resemblance stops there. Rooney's new book is a bold exploration of love and grief, and an exposition of how not all of life's problems can be solved by logic and intelligence.

The epigraph of *Intermezzo* is taken from Part II of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: "Aber fühlst du nicht jetzt den Kummer? (Aber spielst du nicht jetzt Schach?) [Trans: But don't you feel grief now? (But aren't you now playing chess?)] The (nonsensical) question is posed in the context of 'language games,' a central tenet in Wittgenstein's philosophy in which he rejects a general definition of language or words and adopts instead the 'meaning as use' concept. In this view, words (or sentences) do not have set definitions; their meaning depends instead on how they are used.

Take the word 'game'. What's a game? The problem isn't that the reader cannot conjure one singular definition of 'game'; rather, the meaning of the word changes depending on the context in which it is used. Wimbledon is no hide-and-seek. Wittgenstein discusses grief as a pattern that weaves through life: though the statement 'I do feel grief now' is logically permissible, such a response fails to capture the atemporal and personal nature of grief.

Indeed, much like grief, philosophy and logic are deeply woven into the fabric of *Intermezzo*. Peter and Ivan Koubek are brothers. Peter is a successful barrister and Ivan is a chess prodigy. In typical Rooney fashion, the story revolves around love in its various instantiations: the Koubek brothers' love for their late father, Ivan's love for an older woman, and Peter's love for his former partner – who is unable to have sex



due to a recent accident – and his current, more youthful companion.

“*Much like grief, philosophy and logic are deeply woven into the fabric of Intermezzo*

The central struggle is one between the brothers. They deeply resent each other, despite sharing many similarities: Ivan and Peter are both highly intelligent, and they both have careers that use logic to solve complex problems. They are also both entangled in complicated age-gap relationships, although this alienates the two. In many ways, both characters embody their professions. Peter is cool, calm and com-

posed, adept in social situations and difficult conversations. Yet like the law, when faced with a moral dilemma and unorthodox arrangement he suffers a complete meltdown. Ivan is nervous, reflective and deeply kind; bashful as a bishop, yet he is unafraid to trade and make sacrifices for the people he loves.

By setting grief beside logic, and chess beside law, Rooney exposes the limits of systems that promise order while life remains defiantly unruly. The Koubek brothers' problems are never solved by the cold elegance of an opening or an overlooked precedent; instead, they are revealed, move by messy move, as an attempt to translate private anguish into language that others might understand.

Read the full review online at cherwell.org

Image Credit: Close up of chess pieces by Robbe

Jaspers via Pexels / CC0

BOOKS

Reading for pleasure in Oxford terms

RUBY TIPPLE

The idea of students reading for pleasure during term time has sparked much debate. Simply put though, Oxford's intensive schedule makes it near-impossible. The natural consequence of eight weeks of unrelenting academic work is for some hobbies to fall in priority, and reading for pleasure is often the first to be swept away by the Oxford whirlwind.

The decline in reading for pleasure among students might seem like a natural consequence of our new exposure to the pressure cooker of career readiness innate to the 'adult world'. Why would we make time to read a book when we have to decide what we want to do with the rest of our lives, and how to make it happen?

This, though, is perhaps not the sole reason for the decline in reading rates. Whilst university is undoubtedly a stepping stone for our future careers, that shouldn't be its only function.

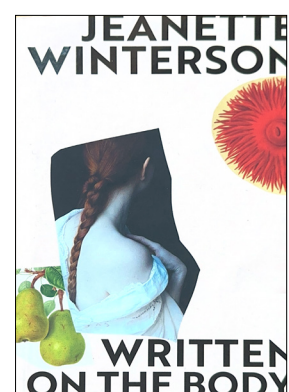
Rather, I think there's another reason that's particularly pertinent to Oxford students. Because of the uniquely demanding course of study we've chosen, most simply can't make time to read.

Reading requires a level of intellectual labour that many of us are simply unable to commit to on top of our degrees. With the old adage of 'work hard, play hard' in mind: why should students devote our attention to something even more academic (regardless of its benefits), when they could be recharging with something like going to the pub or watching TV – something that's social, or more obviously relaxing?

At the start of last term, I realised I wanted to try and reignite the passion I once had for reading. I set aside time in my week, got friends to recommend books and hold me accountable, and joined book clubs, both in Oxford and at home.

Read the full review online at cherwell.org

What's Oxford reading?



WRITTEN ON THE BODY

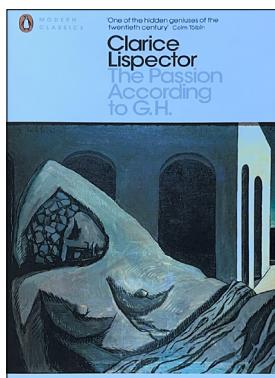
Jeanette Winterson

Winterson's masterpiece is an enduring ode to the physicality of love, grounding meditations on attraction, and affection in the material of the body. Despite the relatively short length of the novel, Winterson crafts a devastating piece on how transcendent love can be pulled back sharply to earth.

THE PASSION ACCORDING TO G.H.

Clarice Lispector

A surrealist monologue charting the life of the mysterious G.H., from the hours after she crushes a cockroach with a wardrobe door. Lispector's distinctive, innovative prose pervades the novel, making it a gorgeous musing on the place of humanity in the course of history.



The pasts contained in preloved books

MAYA HEUER-EVANS

I spent Saturday morning taking the bus to the Oxford Brookes. Why? Because the Oxford Premier Book Fair had come to town – a rare and fleeting gathering of sellers of antique novels, aged children's books, and antiquated pamphlets from around the UK. Sprawling far into a large hall in the Fusili building of the site, the Book Fair represented a treasure trove for the curious; its busyness a testament to Oxford's love for second-hand books.

But why is it that we find objectively old, musty, and often damaged books so fascinating? Thirty minutes in, and I overheard one goer saying they had spent £320 on goods already. Which prompted the question: why are people willing to spend such extortionate amounts of money on pre-owned books? A simple mix of nostalgia, curiosity and imagination is often at the root: an affinity for the pages of a book on fairy illustrations from the 20s, for example, because of its resemblance to those you read as a child. Sifting through niche works from centuries before is a testament to just how long we have been motivated by these impulses to create and explore.

A good second-hand bookstore can also make real the community of readers that have preceded you. Scribbles in margins by another's pencil can bridge the division between

past and present and make stories feel timeless. In a store in Inverness, I once picked up a book on Scottish nationalism and found three generations of questions pencilled, inked, and felt-tipped into the front page. The first: "When will my beloved country, my beautiful land, my Scotland – be free?????" The second: "Still not – 1999." And the third: "NEVER – and I write this 30 years later – 8/1/06."

Together, they formed a dialogue of disappointment between three individuals who would probably never know each other, but had been united briefly by this book.

Having aroused suspicion from the old men around me by taking copious photos of every page I found even slightly interesting, I left the fair without buying anything. That sadly included leaving behind an old almanac from 1884 which congratulated me on Charles Dickens' death falling on my birthday. My student budget, unfortunately, does not stretch to paying £50 for a single book, but I'm nonetheless glad I went. Most of all for the feeling it invoked – probably more to do with just how anomalous I was age-wise than the event itself – of being very small and young again, with endless avenues, stories and times left unexplored, and unlimited time to do it in.

Read the full review online at cherwell.org

Ancient echoes, modern forms at the Ashmolean

Cienna Jennings explores the Ashmolean's Reforming Abstraction exhibition, where abstract expressionism meets East Asian folklore and spirituality

ART

Upon entering the Ashmolean Museum's *Reforming Abstraction* exhibition, visitors are immediately struck by the diversity and energy of the works on display. 2D artworks line both the left and right walls, their vivid colours and dynamic shapes standing out against the gallery's plain backdrop. The exhibition presents a wide range of media – from sculptures and woodcraft to experimental prints – highlighting the bold innovations of Asia artists during the late 1900s, with a particular focus on the Hong Kong sculptor, Cheung Yee.

Cheung Yee was a visionary who helped redefine the boundaries of Hong Kong art. At a time when Western modernism was beginning to influence the local scene, Yee carved a unique path, merging traditional East Asian iconography and folklore with contemporary forms like abstract expressionism. Rather than copying Western styles, he reinterpreted them through the lens of his own cultural heritage. As a significant figure in this creative shift, Yee also co-founded the influential Circle Art Group and was an inspiration to many young artists seeking a break from innovation.

One of the most compelling pieces in the exhibition is Cheung's *Spirit* (1977), a striking example of his innovative 'cast paper' technique – a method that combines printmaking and sculpture. The process begins by carving reliefs into wooden blocks to form lead moulds, which are then filled with paper pulp and reinforced with glass fibre to give strength and texture. Once dry, the piece is painted in a monotone colour; in the case of *Spirit*,



a bold, saturated, red. This colour was carefully chosen – red holds deep significance in East Asian culture, symbolising good fortune, joy, and celebration, often used in festivals such as Lunar New Year and weddings.

At first glance, *Spirit* may appear abstract and ambiguous. But upon closer inspection, the piece reveals its depth – its concave shapes, curved lines and textured surface evoke the shell of a tortoise, a recurring motif in Cheung's work. This is not just decorative – during the Shang

Dynasty (c.1600 BC-1046 BC), tortoise shells were used with animal bones for divination practices and inscriptions. The spindle-shaped holes of this piece are a reflection of the Shang Dynasty practice of engraving and heating oracle bones to create fissures, which were seen as messages from the divine. In this way, *Spirit* stands as a perfect encapsulation of Cheung Yee's artistic mission: to blend contemporary techniques with traditional symbolism in a way that is both timeless and new. Also featured in the exhibition is Chinese artist

Liu Kuo-sung, another pioneering figure in East Asian art. One example is his vibrant work *The Sun*. In this piece, the sun sits at the top centre of the composition, surrounded by a deep crimson red sky that gradually softens into orange as it moves downward. In the foreground, green hues suggest landmasses and oceans, anchoring the piece with a sense of earthly presence. This part of the painting was created using Liu's innovative technique of stripping away paper fibres and ink blotching, giving it a textured, organic feel.

Rather than depicting a landscape from the traditional bird's-eye perspective common in Chinese painting, *The Sun* invites the viewer to gaze upwards from Earth into the vast cosmos. This shift in viewpoint-looking from the ground toward the infinite sky-marks a powerful departure from traditional perspective. By showing both the Earth and the surrounding universe, the piece resonates with the Chinese philosophy of the unity of 'sky-heaven and humanity', which suggests a deep connection between humanity and the cosmos.

Overall, the exhibition showcases the revolutionary work of Cheung Yee and his contemporaries, all of whom played key roles in redefining East Asian art through their avant-garde approaches. Cheung Yee, in particular, masterfully blends Western modernist techniques with traditional East Asian spirituality and folklore. His work challenges the conventions of ink-on-paper painting while remaining deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of Hong Kong.

Image Credit: Cienna Jennings for Cherwell

ARTS CALENDAR

What's On.

STAGE

And Then There Were None – OUDS BAME Show (Michael Pilch Theatre, 7th-10th May)

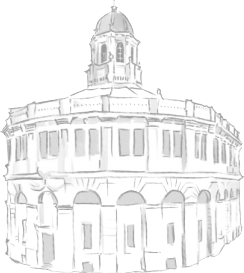
The Final Salome – Carfax Productions (T.S. Eliot Theatre, 15th May)

FILM

Myanmar Diaries Screening - Oxford Refugee Health Initiative (O'Reilly Theatre, 3rd May)

FASHION

Metamorphosis – Oxford Fashion Gala (Oxford Town Hall, 14th May)



The Source

Love Letter

there is no space for the sentimental –
the past a suitcase never to be unlocked.

when it clicks shut is out of your control,
you packed the important things

only to lose them. you cannot live two
lives; irreconcilable words, memories that

missed understanding. leaving begets
impermissibility. you forgot

a stamp cannot be used again,
only kept or discarded

KENG YU LAI

Copies

in the bookstore
sit a stack of two
illustrated editions,
nestled together.

we had trekked, a year
or two ago, around
every shop in London
to track them down.

and here they are,
not one but
two.

identical sisters.

I stand staring
in the cold.
they rest, watching,
warm through the window.
I should buy you a copy

but I don't.
I want them,
long after I leave,
to remain together.

YASMIN BEED

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Oxide Radio is a breath of fresh, musical air

Milo Man explores the talent and community passion that goes into making Oxide Radio run

MUSIC

Almost all music can now be listened to on demand online, if not smugly on vinyl, or smugly on CD. Sometimes it can feel like there's no room for more methods of consuming music, but here's why Oxford University's own Oxide Radio has earned a place in my regular listening habits.

Its highlight is undoubtedly the diversity of shows, reflected in its packed schedule. They're not always live in the traditional sense; during term time, about half of them are broadcast live from their studio on Worcester Street, while the others are pre-recorded and streamed over the website. While this could be argued to be needlessly complicated, this provides convenience for the hosts' busy term-time schedules and serves as an imitation of the kind of analogue inconvenience that drives some music-lovers wild.

Each show lasts around an hour and is hosted by its own student volunteer. They provide an expert's (or at least a passionate enthusiast's) insight into their own musical niche. For example, Radio Ant, the host of *Make Noise!?*, describes their show as "a place for all things weird, funky, strange, and unconventional", testing the boundaries of what is considered music. *Cállate* focuses on songs from "Latin America, Iberia, and beyond". *Funny Internet* experiments with exploration of the humorous and abnormal corners of the internet sonically. The theme of *Jamuel I. Jackson* is even more fluid, changing from week to week according to the host's whims.

The enormous variety of shows ensures appeal to every listener and expression to every host,

which station manager Luis Hewitt describes as their top priority. He told *Cherwell*: "Our top priority is giving students an uncensored platform over which they have full creative control. We have over 80 shows and each one is a student expressing the things that are important to them. We do not censor opinions, we do not edit or micromanage any shows, and we're not pretentious about what kind of content can air – we have everything from tipsy gossip panels, to experimental DJ mixes, to rich journalistic podcasts. During my two terms as station manager, I haven't rejected a single show proposal on account of its content, and don't plan to (though let me affirm that we wouldn't tolerate anything particularly hateful or incendiary)."

Of course, being run by a small group of busy student volunteers, it's not without its flaws. The automated transitions to and from shows can be stuttery. Additionally, the hosts are occasionally too quiet and difficult to discern behind their tracks, and the hostless Oxide Mix that plays in-between the shows is unfortunately short. However, considering the station acts as a "platform for students to [...] learn how to broadcast", difficulties are understandable.

In Hewitt's words, the Oxide Mix is a "chance for student musicians (and other local acts) to have their music played on Oxide." It currently features Keble College student Lucy Peer's 'Who Are You' – a moody and grounded rock song with dramatic bite and plenty of confidence, as well as Oxfordshire band The Scarlet Chevrons' 'Why So Robotic?', a funk song heavy on slap bass, sci-fi synth, and imitatively mechanical

vocals. EXHERMITT's (Hewitt himself) 'Creu De Gaudi' features as a more experimental and ambient track. Inspired by the temptation of the devout Catalan architect Gaudí, he wrote it to reflect the language of modern masculinity and the sentiments of the archetypal "stoic male". The mix is a way of engaging with Oxford's music scene and providing listeners with local talents, making the station relevant to its student demographic. It could definitely do with expansion, though, and Oxide's planned Trinity term campaign and future collaborations aim to deal with this.

In the future, Oxide Radio plans to get its show on the road, interviewing students live at big events in the Oxford calendar. Through another

of their campaigns, they also aim to be broadcast in some of Oxford's shared spaces, such as JCRs and local cafés, providing an opportunity for community integration. In addition, the next term should be populated with events hosted by the station.

Oxide Radio is genuinely impressive in its quality and dedication to the sounds of Oxford, be that what its people are producing or what interests they're sharing. While there are aspects that could do with some polishing, the station seems committed to its improvement. This free station is worth a listen.

Image Credit: 'Small Bedroom Recording Studio' by Dejan Krsmanovic via Flickr / CC BY 2.0



The classism intrinsic to Oxford's favourite fashion aesthetics

EMMA HEAGNEY

Academia has a historic relationship with fashion, both officially and unofficially. The former manifests itself in Oxford's sub fusc – mounting costs and pressure of tradition aside, it's at least somewhat reassuring for us to be equally as pretentious as each other.

Unofficially, however, the class disparities reveal themselves. Sure, going to a college-wide formal dinner in freshers' week sounds great, but no one warns you about the dress code, the faux-pas you commit through a lack of cultural capital. In the same way, the visual language through which aristocratic fashion is expressed

is unintelligible to me. The intricate differences between white and black tie, appropriate horse-riding wear, the luxurious yet mysterious brands embraced by those with money. This wasn't my world.

Alternative subcultures certainly exist at Oxford – I've been seen a fair few times at Intrusion, Oxford's goth club night. Yet, the dominant discourse around fashion remains steeped in tradition, like most facets of Oxford life. The degree to which certain styles are socially acceptable is in complete contrast to what I'm used to. Back home, casually wearing a suit is more than enough to earn you the title of 'neek', and your collection of Nike tracksuits is a status symbol of much higher value. Swap *Saltburn* for

Top Boy, Adidas Sambas for Shoe Zone. Going to university subverted my stylistic sensibilities and demeaned my sense of self-worth – the culture of my family, friends, and peers is actively devalued, labelled 'chavvy' before anything else.

These tastes have trickled down to the general student population in Oxford, and even to the teen TikTokers who romanticise the University (just wait until they find out about the weekly essay grind). The intellectualism associated with

**“
The culture of my family, friends, and peers is actively devalued, labelled 'chavvy'...**

the 'dark academia' aesthetic is watered down and diluted into neatly divided visual categories, even identities – yet in the appearance of academic discipline is all that counts. What matters is if you look like someone who would read, who would study at a prestigious university, who would speak several languages, and so on. Think dark brown colour palettes, pleated suit trousers, too much plaid, satchel bags, heeled loafers, and the cosmetic use of glasses. Although related, this look is distinct from early 2010s 'preppy', an ideal of the all-American adolescent, not pretending to harbour intellectual merit. Academia is now an accessory. Yet, even this emulation of the upper and middle classes is a far cry from anything I had encountered back home, where the same style would probably just indicate that

FASHION



you were coming home from sixth form.

The vacation periods at Oxford are very long. Every time I return either to the city or the ever beautiful Croydon, it feels as though I must readjust myself again and again, especially in my fashion choices. Some solace is achieved in carving out your niche – finding your friends, the societies you want to join, the events you want to attend. Yet, systemic problems and social disparities dating back to the foundations of both Oxford and Cambridge seep into the everyday workings of student life.

*Image Credits: Muhammad Amair for Cherwell
Model: Alfie Edwards*



It's more than splitting the G

Beatrix Arnold discusses the performativity underlying the cult of Guinness drinking

The golden harp. The ritualistic three-part pour. The bravado of splitting the G. It always baffled me how a drink that is essentially liquid brown bread accumulated such lasting popularity. But in the modern world, branding is everything.

Guinness manufacturers have ingeniously built up what is almost a cult following around the stout. Not only a staple of pub culture, it has also long occupied an unquestioned position in popular consciousness. My grandmother was advised to drink Guinness while breastfeeding, and even nowadays I've heard gym bros extolling it as a source of iron (it's not really).

Guinness has enjoyed acclaim as a cultural symbol of Ireland since the 18th century, but has only recently made it big in Britain. Formerly typecast as an old man's drink, Guinness used to be a left-field choice. Now, swept up in the aesthetic renaissance of the classic British pub, it offers a chance for posh boys to cosplay at being salt of the earth (despite often being the most expensive drink on draught). The drink creates the illusion of an "in-club", cultivating an "if-you-know-you-know" mentality, especially concerning the sacrosanctity of the three-stage pour. It is this very performative aspect of Guinness that leads drinkers to consider themselves qualified to loudly pronounce judgement on a particular pint to an unlucky onlooker. The new cult of Guinness drinking, founded in the name of individuality, has completely obscured the traditional cultural significance of the pint for Irish people, and has subsumed it into an index of "laddishness" for young Englishmen.

The drink is undeniably gendered. With the online culture around Guinness being inescapably masculine, exemplified in content like the Schooner

Scorer, drinking it becomes almost a performance of virility, such that I've been told that I "wouldn't get it", that I should "stick to my vodka coke". Obviously, I could never reach the level of masculine vigour required to drink a 4.2% beer.

If there's any vitriol in my perspective, it's probably because of the hours of my life spent nodding noncommittally while men explain the correct ratio of head in their pint, or demonstrate their ability (or failure) to split the G. It's safe to say that I haven't had the best experience with Guinness drinkers.

For the cult followers of the stout, the iconography of the pint becomes almost a status symbol. Their vaunted ability to discriminate between different draughts of the exact same drink is worn like a badge of honour. What strikes me most about the Guinness drinker is their utter loyalty. No matter the range of options on offer, no matter how inappropriate the setting, the Guinness drinker will remain unswervingly devoted, the drink occupying a space somewhere in between their routine and their personality. Some refuse to go to pubs, or force their friends to leave, if the bar is out of their favoured pint. Such people seem to actively cultivate the label "Guinness drinker" as part of their personal brand, a deliberately manufactured personality trait that makes one wonder what exactly they're compensating for.

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Image credit: GUINNESS by diego_cue, via Wikimedia Commons/ CC BY-SA 3.0



Shh... here's the debrief on gossiping

Amy Lawson rethinks gossip's negative reputation

Some words in the English language – though they might have a neutral meaning in the dictionary – are instant red flags: empath, nice, devil's advocate. 'Gossip', though, has always been firmly amongst the ranks of the irredeemable; it's a word associated with idle talking and scrutinizing other people's business, often without their knowledge. At its worst, it isolates people, drives friend groups apart, and creates a hopelessly toxic environment for the ones left behind. So does this condemn our partiality for spilling the tea?

Yapping is a historical instinct, it turns out. It hails back to before the twelfth century, where the word 'gossip' or 'godsibb' later developed from its original meaning of 'godparent' to describe anyone who was a close acquaintance, a confidant. As time went on, the word began to pick up an increasingly gendered undertone. The Wife of Bath, a Chaucerian character, frequently mentions a "godsibb" of hers, a close female friend with whom she shared her grievances about everyday life. The usage sounds relatively innocuous, but already, it was beginning to pick up a disparaging connotation. In many ways, it's hardly

surprising that what started out as a fairly harmless – dare I say, wholesome – term has become associated with being the neighbourhood or college busybody. After all, there is, apparently, nothing more threatening than women gathering together to have a chat.

Yet gossip is a term which encompasses so much more than just bad-mouthing other people. It doesn't always have to carry a sense of contempt. Of course, circulating rumours and delving into other people's lives without their consent, or even their presence, tends to break social bonds rather than establish them. Although I'd argue that gossiping – or debriefing, to use a less charged term – has an innate unifying power which, when used properly, can bring people together. It all boils down to the exchange of information, which is what society is built upon; a kind of social currency. When we express our opinions healthily in the company of people we trust, we understand each other better. Chatting, yapping, having a blether... however you'd like to put it, it can be a force for good.

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Image credit: Charles Haigh-Wood, via Wikimedia Commons/ CC0

A homely solution to stress

MORIEN ROBERTSON

Essay crisis, bad tutorial, no sleep. Everyone's had a time when you'd really rather be anywhere other than Oxford. The rigorous academic attention and miniature city size mean that Oxford can feel like a bubble which you would really prefer to just burst.

How can you deal with this? Let's assume that going home is off the table – unmissable class the next day, extortionate train fares, or an overwhelming fatigue. What to do then? Seek solace in friends, walk bleary-eyed round University Parks,

or get hammered at the club? All reasonable options. I propose a more modest solution: join your street's WhatsApp chat. If this isn't an option, get as close to this as you can.

I'll explain. In the madness of the first lockdown, my residential street in Bristol decided it needed a way of keeping in touch and figuring out how to adapt to being shut indoors. Hence a WhatsApp chat was born. Aside from being one of the few concrete hangovers from the pandemic, it doesn't seem very intrinsically interesting. And it isn't.

In fact, its brilliance lies in its unending surfeit of useless, prosaic, and oftentimes downright bizarre content.

Now I'm not really one to feel homesick: I've been back home once during my nearly two years of study, and that was to see a play. Oxford for me is a city of intensity, vibrance, and joy – I love being here. Even so, when the pressure gets too much, it's easy to long for some tethering amidst the chaos. This is where the chat comes in.

Opening it on any given day offers everything from thought-provoking questions about recommendations for a good plasterer, to tough issues such as a dad running out of baking paper for making his sourdough bread. Friendly neighbours desperately try to flog their unwanted gunk onto unsuspecting

victims. "Bag of cat litter available outside Number 80!"; "Help yourself to these Christmas books!" (posted in summer); "IKEA boxes – bit of a repaint and they'll be lovely" (said of some furniture that looks like it barely survived WW2).

Then there are moments of real danger: "Has anyone had their milk bottle box opened and a massive slug of milk drunk out of their bottle?" After a very long back-and-forth between some of the local sages, it's eventually decided that, contrary to the views of many, this abhorrent act of theft can in fact be attributed to the foxes.

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HOROSCOPES



Aries

Keep going! It will pay off.



Taurus

Dear friend, one vac photodump is enough.



Gemini

There is a world outside of college.



Cancer

Avoid playing devil's advocate.



Leo

Leave them on read.



Virgo

It's time to expand your horizons.

HOROSCOPES



Libra

Love won't be found at pres or afters.



Scorpio

Feel your feelings.



Sagittarius

Do it for Week 5 you.



Capricorn

Beware the financial chasm of Oxford ball season...



Aquarius

It really isn't that deep.



Pisces

You deserve a sweet treat!

Table for one: The quiet joy of solo travelling

BEATRIX ARNOLD

In the summer before starting university, with my place at Oxford secured, and the reality of the impending plunge into the unknown beginning to dawn on me, I embarked on a three-week long solo trip around Italy. Equipped with only a small carry-on, I hopped from one hostel to another, staying in eight different cities. My extremely tight budget did not hold me back; I kept myself busy with museums, art galleries, trips to ruins, and ate some of the best food of my life. I did, unfortunately, turn into somewhat of a pizza snob. Alternately unnerving and exhilarating (Naples is not the safest destination for a solo female traveller), the trip was the best preparation for starting university that I could have asked for, much more so than all that pre-reading that I was never asked about.

I am well aware that the opportunity to travel smacks of privilege. But this is not an exculpation of the 'gap yah'; I'm not advocating a trip to a resort in Bali to find yourself, safely cushioned by daddy's bank account and padded out with a dabble in voluntourism. This is a defence of the low-budget, high-reward solo trip abroad. It is now easier than ever to find affordable options for travel, accommodation, and food. By saving up from summer work, and developing indispensable budgeting skills, I was able to sustain myself abroad for a far cheaper rate than it costs to live day-to-day in Oxford, for example.

As travel abroad becomes easier to organise, solo trips are on the rise, particularly among women. Despite the daunting prospect, and the evident risks (strong enough to dissuade many), when done right it can be a vital act of self-assertion, and a prioritisation of autonomous pleasure in a culture which inculcates self-subordination. Chosen solitude shouldn't be seen as a sign of loneliness, or as an inherent deficiency, but as an active cultivation of the self. The constructive and restorative power of solitude, particularly in the context

of what can cheesily be termed an 'adventure', cannot be understated.

For me, after my relatively sheltered countryside upbringing, solo travel was a chance to construct a sense of true independence, so that the abrupt isolation of university life did not come as quite the jolting shock it would have otherwise.

A year and a half later, still absolutely reeling from my just-completed exams, I took myself off on a three-day solo trip to Athens, and was reminded afresh of the joys of independent travel. As much as I relish travelling with friends, going solo facilitates new realms of possibilities. With none of the compromise, none of the scheduling, and none of the inevitable anxiety of making arrangements on someone else's behalf, there is much greater scope for real relaxation. Besides – somewhat paradoxically, choosing to go alone makes it easier to form connections with others. I became much more confident in social – and even romantic – interactions with people I met along the way. Maybe it's

“Chosen solitude shouldn't be seen as a sign of loneliness, but as an active cultivation of the self in a culture which inculcates self-subordination.”

because I will likely never run into them on Broad Street.

Of course, the first time I walked into a restaurant by myself and timidly requested a table for one, it was an awful game of endurance, persevering through my own awareness of the oppressive sense of strangers' judgement. But comfort is cultivated; whether by talking to waiters or neighbouring diners, choosing more low-key venues or bringing a book, I adapted to deal with situations that previously seemed far too intimidating to even remotely consider. But with confidence progressively earned, my security in my own independence grew, so that now, a solo tute doesn't seem so scary.

CHERWELL-FED

Flash in the Pan Pan: Street-food style Asian tapas



BEATRIX ARNOLD

On quiet St Clements Street, Pan Pan, with a warm glow from behind an unobtrusive facade, promises a casual and comfortable dining experience.

As a chronically indecisive person, small-plates dining has always appealed to me. Pan Pan's menu comprises of a variety of street-food style Pan-Asian dishes. The small plates were a little expensive, but the quality made each worthwhile.

Pan Pan has cultivated a cosy and intimate dining ambience without claustrophobic intensity. The modern decor, warm tones punctuated with booth-style seating and tables, was appropriate to the menu's homage to street-food culture.

Between four people, we ordered six small plates and one large dish. The service was friendly and efficient; we waited less than ten minutes.

The seaweed salad was perfect; the addition of carrot and sesame really elevated the dish to make it flavoursome, light, and refreshing. The crispy calamari and the prawn gyoza dumplings (somewhat off-puttingly titled "Crispy Dump") had a really great texture, and the accompanying sauces matched each well. Though the Roti Canai seemed incongruous in the company

of predominantly Korean, Thai, and Japanese style dishes, the curried sauce was Thai inspired, not daal, so married well with the other dishes. Sichimi Tofu was a highlight, coated in crispy flavour with a delicately soft interior, which would have marketed the protein often unjustly typecast as flavourless to the most ardent carnivore. The bao bun was big enough to split into four, but I could have eaten my body weight in that pillowy dough. It was perfectly offset with chilli mayo, and a crunchy vegetable croquette. Hungry as we were, we also ordered the Spicy Tofu Bibimbap to share, and the generous portion size at a reasonable price was a welcome change from the small plates.

Eclecticism in restaurants is often a point of weakness. The broad-brush attempt to encompass such differing cuisines in one menu felt almost hurried. Though they resisted the fallacy of fusion food, there was no chance to fully appreciate one particular flavour profile when subsumed within a whirlwind tour of 'Asian' food. Trying to comprehend the entirety of a vast continent in a two page menu was admirable, but inevitably, fell short. The atmosphere seemed designed to encourage sociable dining. It's not exactly suited to a date, but perfect for a much-needed catch up between friends.

What we ate:

Food: £49.80 Drink: £4.90
Total: £54.70 (8 items, 4 people)

Agony Aunt:

I have a really intense crush on one of my friends who I've known for a very long time and I don't know what to do. We are really close friends and I'm scared that telling them would ruin our friendship, as I don't think they like me back. I feel like I have to tell them so I can stop being delusional, but I'm so scared of getting rejected. What should I do?



Sincerely,
Angry at Anne's

Dear Lovesick Undergrad,
Love is complex, but friendship is baffling. To deal with the awkwardness of unrequited love, or to feel the guilt of hiding your feelings from someone you trust with your deepest secrets? It depends on how long you've liked them and how willing you are to stay friends no matter their answer. If this is a new feeling, then maybe don't tell them yet – if the crush fades, you two can laugh about it in six months over a pint. I'm assuming that this is a long-held pining, though, so sadly we must enter the murky territory of comfort vs. truth.

You've been close for long enough, so I don't think you would fully lose your friendship, but be prepared for the nature of your friendship to change. It is disingenuous to not tell them – you're lying by omission, and it's unfair for them to go through your friendship when you are unconsciously expecting it to be more. Yes the risks are high, but if they do say yes, you'll be kicking yourself for not telling them earlier. Maybe they've been secretly pining and facing the same conundrum. If they say no, it would benefit you both from setting some boundaries to ensure they're comfortable with returning to your earlier dynamic. It is scary, but communication is key.

Lots of love,
Your Agony Aunt

SOCIETY

SPOTLIGHT

Pembroke Pimm's



Last Saturday, the much-anticipated Pembroke Pimm's took place in their very own Chapel Quad. While some were disgruntled at the excessive price for a pint of Pimm's and a hot dog (£18 for non-college members), apparently the vibe made up for it, claiming it was an afternoon overflowing with joy!

OXFORD

TINY LOVE

STORIES

At twelve years of age we held hands, and you joked that it made you nervous. I laughed it off, and only understood when I received your letter years later. "I cannot have you", you wrote as your father was arranging your marriage and you were arranging your escape. You know better than anyone that the distance between family and love was a no man's land.

In June when they flew the rainbow outside, I thought of you. For better or worse I am lucky to know you, and all the things you cannot speak aloud.

Anonymous

TikTok's "zero social anxiety" trend: Cool or cringe?

Ben O'Brien addresses how this content impacts our expectations of social interaction

If you're anything like me, you will have often wondered what the world would be like if there was no social anxiety in it. As far as my own life is concerned, I like to imagine things would have turned out very differently. With a bit of luck, I would have been a Marvin Gaye-style R&B singer, with a string of number one hits and an enormous bank balance to show for it. I would have had a worldwide fan base, and it would have been difficult to walk down Holywell Street without my security guards, due to the crowds. The fact that none of these things happened is only due to the fact that I have a horrible fear of singing and dancing in front of other people. In a social anxiety-free world, none of that would have been a problem. There would have been nothing to hold me back.

With all this in mind, it was with great interest that I recently stumbled upon a new TikTok trend which promised to reveal to me exactly what the anxiety-free world would look like beyond my own narrow Marvin Gaye-centered perspective. The premise of "POV: zero social anxiety" is a simple one. A man (and for some reason it is always a man) films his day POV-style as he walks about a random town or city making himself known to the people he comes across. He fist-bumps and high-fives everyone he passes in the street. He goes into shops and tells elderly ladies that he likes their flowery jackets. He walks into pubs and asks a man watching the football alone what the score is. Once told, he does a loud friendly laugh, shakes the man's hand, and leaves.

The trend's message is clear: if only we'd all act as the real us wants to, we'd see that other people are less scary than we think – and, in actual fact, everybody would like us. The only problem with the message is that it's undermined by reality. As the videos show, yes, some people are glad to be high-fived in the street by strangers, and some are happy to be stopped for a chat, even when they are in the middle of filling up their car. But what the videos also show is that just as many people don't want to be bothered while they're going about their daily lives. Sometimes the man watching football alone in the pub really does just want to watch football alone in the pub. Sometimes the man staring confusedly at



his shopping list really doesn't want a fist-bump. There's no two ways about it.

What the trend unwittingly shows, of course, is that there are good reasons why we don't all act like zero-social-anxiety-man, at least not all the time. The reasons have less to do with social anxiety than with simply being able to read another person's body language. When we don't talk to other people, sometimes that's just because we know they don't want to be talked to, not because we're scared about what will happen if we do try and strike up a conversation. Sure, we might get it wrong some of the time, usually by erring too much on the side of caution. But most of us are better judges of social situations than the zero-social-anxiety trend would have us think.

However, perhaps the bigger problem with this trend is the idea that getting rid of social anxiety once and for all is an achievable aspiration in the first place. As psychologist Tracy Denning-Tiwary points out, though being overly anxious is of course a real problem for many, it is also a normal part of life to have some degree of social anxiety. It is our brain's response to uncertainty about the future. We get climate anxiety because

we aren't sure if the planet's future is good or bad. We get career anxiety because we aren't sure the Oxford degree, which was supposed to get us a job when we leave here, will actually do so. Social anxiety is just another example of this: we can never be completely sure how people are going to respond to us, and the idea that we can be is plainly false.

None of this is to say that the no-social-anxiety trend does not have some good to it, or that the creators themselves don't have good intentions. If trends like this help people see that others don't always react badly to a friendly hello from a stranger, for instance, then surely that's a good thing. Nevertheless, that shouldn't take away from the fact that the premise of "zero social anxiety" is a problematic one. Even if he is well-meaning, what zero-social-anxiety-man seems to be implying is that if we don't all behave like him, there must be something wrong with us. In doing so, he turns what's in actual fact normal human behaviour – not fist-bumping every single person we come across – into something 'abnormal'. In other words, we are the ones that have the problem, not him.

Image Credit: Archie Johnston for Cherwell

Cherpse.

[Drinks at the White Horse between two politics nerds. Will they become the next Bill and Hillary Clinton?]

Oxford blind dating.

Mr Work Experience:

First impression?

As per the instructions she was wearing red, which I, alas, failed to do, in the absence of any red clothes.

Did it meet your expectations?

I didn't know what to expect really, I've never been on a date before.

What was the highlight?

Seeing a picture of her with Nigel Farage at the Conservative Party Conference 2023.

What was the most embarrassing moment?

An obese, shaggy dog kept wagging his tail against the seat of my trousers and we had to relocate.

Will there be a second date?

I enjoyed the date but unfortunately I don't think there'll be a sequel.

Ms Dog Lover:

First impression?

He was incredibly passionate about politics.

Did it meet your expectations?

My expectations of romance and chemistry were sadly unmet, but engaging conversation was had nevertheless.

What was the highlight?

His impression of Rory Stewart, and when I told him the story of me meeting Nigel Farage.

What was the most embarrassing moment?

He was such a sweet guy but it was his extreme aversion to an adorable golden retriever in the pub.

Will there be a second date?

No second date, but I will get in touch with him if I ever need work experience!

SPORT

Schalke, stickers, and social shifts in Germany

How the rise of far-right politics is creating division amongst the Divisions

JACK DANSON

When you think about German football, several images doubtless spring to mind – Bayern players drenched in Paulaner after winning another Meisterschale, the ‘Yellow Wall’ in Dortmund, or perhaps the greats who have donned Die Mannschaft’s famous white jersey. You probably don’t think about lamp posts.

Across the nation, concrete-grey urban landscapes are broken up by flashes of colour. There are splotches wrapped around lampposts, gleaming on street signs, even fixed in the endless loop of the U-Bahn escalators. Everywhere you look, you’re greeted by stickers emblazoned with football badges.

Throughout the nation’s fractured past, football has been a constant, something that all demographics have been able to rely on. The proliferation of stickers in German cities and towns represents how football is woven into the fabric of communities and the country itself.

But the best example of this connection between city and club exists in Gelsenkirchen.

Situated squarely in the Ruhrgebiet, Gelsenkirchen is known as the Stadt der tausend Feuer: ‘the city of a thousand fires’. The nickname refers to mineshafts and blast furnaces, symbols of the coal industry which fuelled its economic and population growth.

Now, Gelsenkirchen looks derelict, ravaged by a rapid deindustrialisation process. Since the Wirtschaftswunder in the 1960s, the average yearly income has slid to less than €18,000 – the lowest in Germany – while unemployment has skyrocketed to over 14%. The city has been unable to maintain or modernise its infrastructure as many fans discovered at last year’s European Championship, having to wait up to three hours for post-match trams.

In 2008, the last of the famous collieries ceased operations, now casting a long shadow over a crumbling city.



However, Gelsenkirchen’s most famous association is still reflected in the cityscape. The streaks of royal blue that adorn virtually every façade are the calling cards of one of the most passionate fanbases in football. But much like the city it calls home, FC Schalke 04 are in freefall.

“
When you think about German football... You probably don’t think about lamp posts

Once a stalwart of the top division and a regular in continental competition, Schalke have recently lingered in the lower reaches of the 2. Bundesliga. Last season, the Knappen even flirted with relegation to the 3. Liga, before clawing their way to a mid-table finish.

Off the pitch, their financial troubles are well-doc-

umented, worsening to the point where extinction became a very real possibility during the 2023/24 season.

But the support of their fans never wavered. In fact, it only improved. Their average home attendance in 2023/24 was 61,438, outnumbering the typical turnout for European giants like Liverpool, Atletico Madrid, and Arsenal.

Through all their troubles, the club has remained the beating heart of Gelsenkirchen. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, mayor Karin Welge called Schalke the ‘social putty’ that holds the city together.

However, a more sinister force has threatened to usurp the passion for the Royal Blues as the overriding sentiment in Gelsenkirchen and destabilise the foundations that Germany itself rests on.

The 23rd February 2025 saw a snap election following the dissolution of the ‘traffic light’ coalition. Two flecks of light blue on the map of constituencies caught people’s attention, the first-ever regions in the West to vote for the far-right Alternative für Deutschland party.

One of these light-blue specks was situated in the middle of the Ruhrgebiet.

The question of whether football can enact socio-political change is often thrown around given the numerous controversies that the sport has become entangled in recently. But how about the other way round? Is it possible that radical shifts in the modern-day political landscape affect how we experience the beautiful game?

This much was evident in the reaction to Elon Musk’s takeover of X (formerly Twitter) and subsequent involvement with prominent xenophobic figures and movements, including the AfD. FC St. Pauli were the first German club to leave the platform in November last year, decrying its transformation into a ‘hate machine’...

*Read the full article online at cherwell.org
Image Credit: Omar Ramadan (top) via Pexels with permission and Joao Castro (bottom) via Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 1.0*



MATCH OF THE WEEK

Finalists decided for the JCR Plate as St Hugh’s/Wadham take down St Anne’s 6-4

Two own goals from St Anne’s were the difference after hat-tricks from freshers Matt Fanfield and Tom Fairbanks cancelled each other out. Spectators were treated to a ding-dong battle in the Men’s Plate semi-final at the Wadham sports grounds.

Victory in the tie rewards the joint St Hugh’s and Wadham team with a trip to the MGroup Stadium – Oxford City’s home venue – for the final, where they’ll take on Brasenose, who beat Balliol in their respective semi-final to book a spot to play at the non-league outfit’s ground.

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

Nicholls and Choudhary’s half-centuries see Gown beat Town

Henry Nicholls and Saqlain Choudhary put up 115 runs between them as the Men’s Blues took victory over Oxford CC in the Town v Gown showdown.

Nicholls opened with 55 from 44, eclipsed only by Choudhary’s 60 from 23. The Women’s Blues won by six wickets (in game two) on Sunday to make it a pair of wins for Gown over Town.

Only Georgia Munro notched the 50 mark for the women over two games, but tight bowling gave them the win in the second.

HALL OF SHAME

City Bumps round up: Drastic falls in Summer Eights’ dress rehearsal

St Hugh’s Boat Club had an absolute shocker on the Isis, dropping nine positions from Open Div 1 to 2, losing to St Hilda’s of all colleges.

Hertford lost seven positions, plummeting to the bottom of Women’s Div 2 like a billionaire’s submarine looking for Atlantis, and St Anne’s secured the dubious honour of Women’s Div 2 headship – dropping 5 places from Div 1 to become ‘sandwich boat’ between the Divs.

With the warm-up over, the pre-Summer Eights tension has never been higher...

SHOE THE TABS

Oxford quite literally fight back after Varsity defeats

Oxford came out swinging in Varsity martial arts, leaving Cambridge on the ropes. Oxford men’s Karate secured a two-point victory with 22 points to 20, whilst Oxford Amateur Boxing beat the tabs 9-4. Down for the count was Cambridge’s Shuresh Saheli, as Oxford boxer Ciaran O’Loan won his bout in dramatic fashion with a knockout in the opening seconds of the fight.

Going to watch a Varsity or Cuppers match?

Email sportcherwell@gmail.com to write up a match report

UPCOMING Summer Eights

Wednesday 28th - Saturday 31st May
@The Isis

Cricket (T20)

Friday 9th May
@Lords
Captains: Justin Clarke and Elodie Harbourne

Athletics

Saturday 17th May
@Cambridge
Captains: Ella Fryer and Lemuel Crentsil

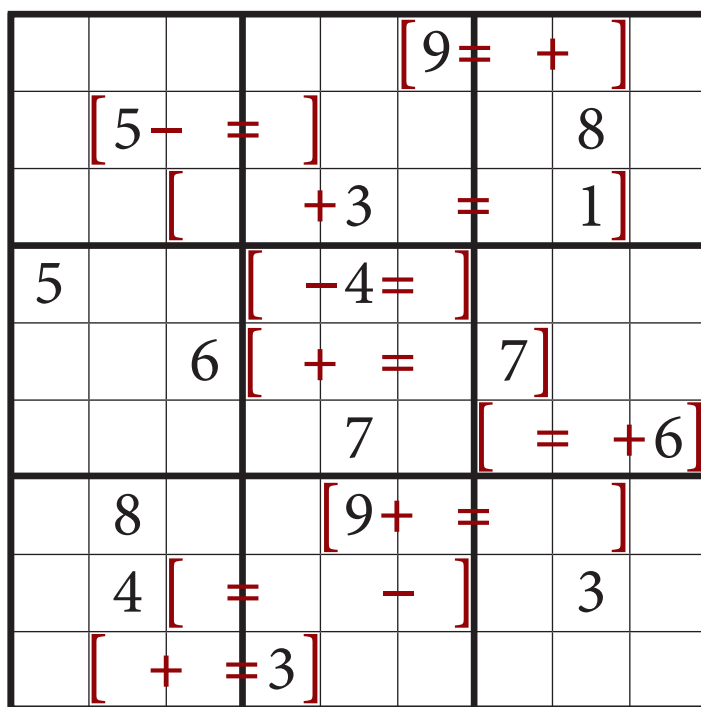


Coffee break with Cherwell

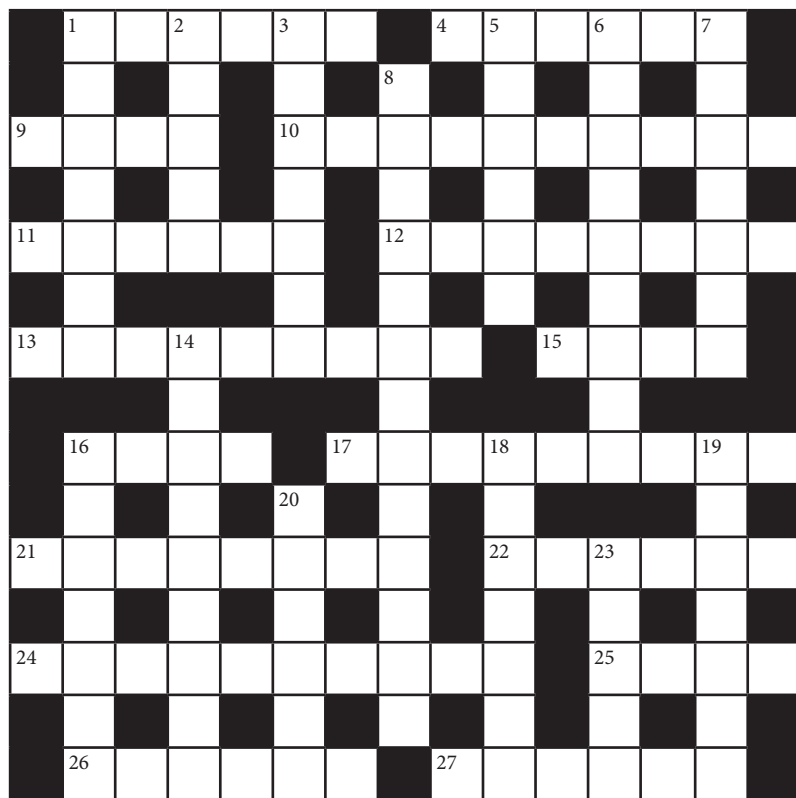


Arithmetic Sudoku by Julian Xiao

Classic sudoku rules apply. In addition, equations enclosed in brackets must be satisfied. Equations may contain double digit numbers.



Cryptic Crossword by Alessandra Edwards



Across:

- 1) Sorry excuse (6)
- 4) Positive with own preservation (6)
- 9) Monumental electronic photo (4)
- 10) Freudian slip about first school-run charity event (10)
- 11) Seizure of power by the French pair (6)
- 12) Most disgusting setter interrupts cute Sky production (8)
- 13) Tumultuous half-century where football club lost—that's abnormal (9)

- 15) Give a red or yellow vehicle key (4)
- 16) Dweeb's lair welcomes redhead back (4)
- 17) Food prepared past eight (9)
- 21) Subtle difference outside is an annoyance (8)
- 22) Worker catches STI from close friend (6)
- 24) Art, if left to accommodate one organisation, becomes insincere (10)
- 25) Not working, so indulge every now and then (4)
- 26) Strikes eye protection (6)

- 27) Evaluate part of class essay (6)

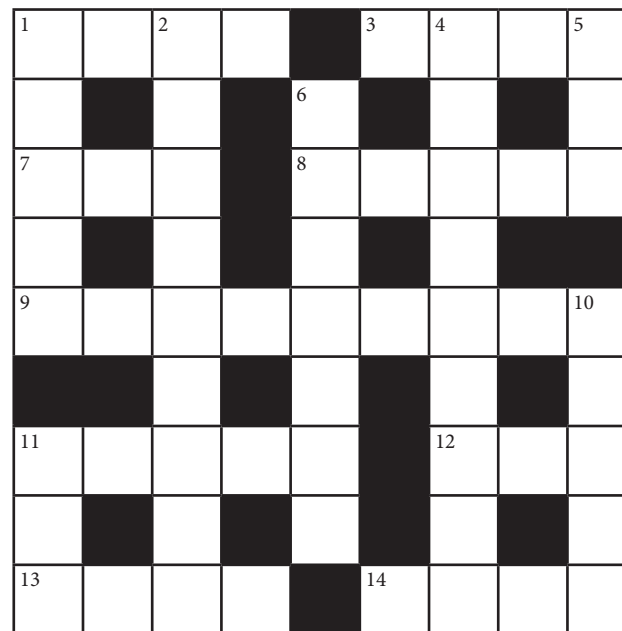
Down:

- 1) Snack for Spooner's saucy police film (7)
- 2) One that sets the tempo backtracks for summary (5)
- 3) Unusual mouldy snack stuffed with a piece of beef (7)
- 5) Constant suggestive crime (6)
- 6) Reversing one mile north had to end (9)
- 7) Argue about point's content (7)

- 8) Al Capone got mixed up with dicey keeper of information (13)
- 14) Horizontal clue covers Twitch poems (9)
- 16) Lukewarm temperature during cooking, unreal! (7)
- 18) Goes to get Brazilian butt lift that eats! (7)
- 19) Attempts to host formal empty of trivialities (7)
- 20) Performing well in Lit (2, 4)
- 23) Nice sounding rooms (5)

Reverse Psychology by Zoë McGuire

In this variety cryptic crossword, exactly half of the answers should be entered into the grid backwards.



Across:

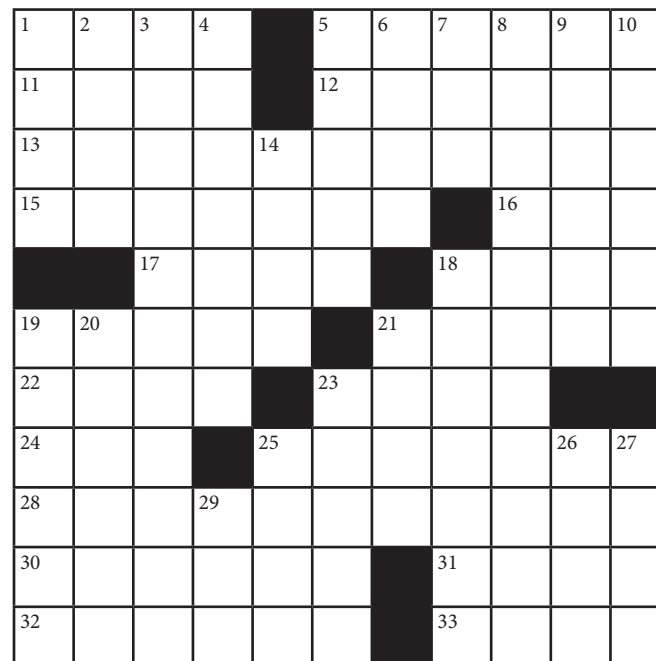
- 1) Lawyer's assignment, as in church (4)
- 3) Feast leading to noise by European (4)
- 7) Sushi ingredient without right crystal (3)
- 8) Messiah finally done away with by Rock, for one (5)
- 9) Despise hire that's detestable (9)
- 11) Monster is perfect, attaining an A (5)
- 12) Select helicopter part (3)
- 13) Topless parties, regretfully (4)
- 14) Confused user's regrets (4)

Down:

- 1) Revolutionary way to pirate's target (5)
- 2) Acids came dissolved for scientists (9)
- 4) Point to the front of Arctic location (5, 4)
- 5) Gloomy and initially such a downer (3)
- 6) Sun god emerges from crust for Egyptian beetles (7)
- 10) Performer that's conditioning on a hill (5)
- 11) Santa skimmed for a bug (3)

One Offs by Jaden Lee

Each answer in the grid is missing a letter. The numbers after each clue indicate the lengths of the words in the true answers, as well as spaces and punctuation.



Across:

- 1) Leaps (5)
- 5) Marathoner's identifying number (4, 3)
- 11) Circa (5)
- 12) One whose history is set in stone? (7)
- 13) Walkman insert (8, 4)
- 15) It calls for cake and candles (8)
- 16) Grassy feature in most colleges, for short (4)
- 17) Common sans-serif typeface (5)
- 18) Furry aquatic animal (5)
- 19) Turn ____ (6)
- 21) Celebration with strawberries and prosecco (3, 3)
- 22) One who has accepted a job offer (5)
- 23) DJs make these at the booth (5)
- 24) Raises one's hand at an auction (4)
- 25) Trim a bush, perhaps (8)
- 28) Give one side an unfair advantage (3, 3, 6)
- 30) Pill to put off the pounds (7)
- 31) Writer's ____ (5)
- 32) Dubious (7)
- 33) Humanities student's assignment (5)

Down:

- 1) Biblical figure later renamed Israel (5)
- 2) Tourist-centric emirate (5)
- 3) It sticks to the letter? (7, 5)
- 4) Rays that brighten your days (8)
- 5) Real (6)
- 6) Snide (5)
- 7) Like half of all whole numbers, of

- which only one is prime (4)
- 8) Makeover sites (6, 6)
- 9) Ran through, say with a spear (7)
- 10) One way to describe overcooked chicken (4-3)
- 14) A podium placer wears (and sometimes bites) it (5)
- 18) They fare well in large cities? (8)
- 19) Long-coated dog, whose name comes from Chinese for lion (4, 3)

- 20) The woods and Woods have many of these (7)
- 21) Classic Christmas pie filling (5)
- 23) Ronald McDonald, e.g. (6)
- 25) One doing a six-year program (5)
- 26) Nut native to the southern US (5)
- 27) Mildly bothersome (5)
- 29) Light at the end of the tunnel (4)

Want to contribute to the Puzzles section? Cherwell will accept open submissions for variety word puzzles. We are looking for well-crafted word puzzles with creative rules. To learn more, or to submit a puzzle, email puzzlescherwell@gmail.com.

Week 0 Answers: Cryptic:

ACROSS: 9) Dormitory, 10) Urine, 11) Ick, 12) Inoperative, 13) Inspire, 14) Au pairs, 16) Earth-shattering, 20) Sinks in, 21) Waddles, 23) Retaliation, 25) Chi, 26) Bingo, 27) Test match. DOWN: 1) Additive, 2) Brakes, 3) Diminishes, 4) Morose, 5) Typecast, 6) Aura, 7) Firi piri, 8) Repels, 15) Pseudonyms, 17) Ringtone, 18) Hen party, 19) Gaslight, 20) Scrubs, 21) Whimsy, 22) Locate, 24) Loot

Malware Mystery:

Corpus Christi: CHRIST, Green Templeton: PETERMEN, Hertford: FORHOO, Somerville: MELVILLE, Linacre: RAIN
Metapuzzle: By removing all letters from a college's name that are found in that college's puzzle's answer, there will be three letters remaining from each college. Arrange these letters in the order written by the colleges' names to get COLLEGE DROPOUTS.

Cryptogram:

E=0, B=1, R=2, T=3, U=4, Y=5, L=7.
10025 x 1740 = 32475 + 17411025

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