

Cherwell

Oxford's oldest independent newspaper, est. 1920

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3RD WEEK, TRINITY



Ladies at Lords: Women's cricket annihilate tabs

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Sue Black on the 'ludicrous' job of being John's President

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Over 10% of Oxford University offers come from the same 14 schools

AMELIA GIBBINS

Many schools across the country dream of sending just one student to Oxford. For some, though, it's an expectation.

The image of Oxford as a training ground for the elite has somewhat withered, and the stereotype of the likes of Eton and Harrow as feeder schools is arguably less persistent. This can, in part, be put down to the drive for equality of opportunity, recruiting the most promising students from a range of backgrounds. If this is true, however, why is it that of the 3,721 offers given out by the University of Oxford last year, over 10% came from just 14 schools?

The 14 schools that make up over a tenth of Oxford's offers are comprised of eight private schools, with the likes of Eton College and Westminster School, of course, placing highly. *Cherwell's* analysis of data from recent Oxford admissions cycles reveals an unsettling trend, where a few powerful institutions have a chokehold over the entire recruitment process.

Westminster School topped the list of schools with the most offers, an infamous fee-paying institution that has educated the likes of Louis Theroux, Nick Clegg, and Helena Bonham Carter, to name a few. Westminster received 38 offers last year, having submitted over 100 Oxford applications – its offer rate sits at 37%.

An alumnus of Westminster School, currently studying at Oxford, explained to *Cherwell* that “there is definitely a widespread feeling that Oxbridge is the goal. If you're sitting in a classroom, either you, the person to your left, or the person to your right is likely to get in, statistically”.

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University spends over £360k on pro-Palestine protest clean-ups



Image credit: Kenneth Wong for *Cherwell*

- **Exclusive: Uni racks up £367k bill from protests since Trinity 2024**
- **Vandalism of Blavatnik School of Government cost £250k alone**
- ***Cherwell* FoIs reveal the staggering extent of the damage caused**

AMELIA GIBBINS and GASPARD ROUFFIN

according to information obtained by *Cherwell*. Many of the listed figures are exclusive of VAT, and the University has indicated that some costs remain estimates or are subject to final confirmation.

The single most significant cost was £250,000, attributed to vandalism at the Blavatnik School of Government in February 2025 by Palestine Action, a group not officially affiliated with OA4P. Protesters had sprayed red paint on the entrance of the building, and smashed several window panes on the outside. A spokesperson for Thames Valley Police told *Cherwell* that a “28-year-old man from Oxford arrested in connection with this incident is on police bail while enquiries are ongoing.”

Vandalism of University offices at Wellington Square in October 2024 was another significant expense, with the University spending over £25,000 on repairs. A total of £4000 has been spent on removing graffiti from university buildings, the Saïd Business School and Examination

Schools.

OA4P encampments at the Natural History Museum and around the Radcliffe Camera in Trinity 2024 amounted to £44,699 and £19,771 respectively, in most part due to grounds maintenance and reurfing. At the Natural History Museum, over £500 was spent on repotting and caring for plants, lasting for six weeks.

Security measures added a further £11,848 to the University's bill, mostly covering overtime for Oxford Security Services staff managing the protests.

Responding to the high costs incurred, OA4P told *Cherwell*: “The University has paid their own private security overtime to monitor students, called the police on students peacefully protesting, built fences around both the Radcliffe Camera and the Pitt Rivers Museum, erected barricades at Wellington Square, and bulldozed the memorial garden in the Pitt Rivers encampment all on their own dime.”

A University spokesperson told *Cherwell* that all repairs were “carried out to a standard appropriate to the damaged properties”, though no further detail was provided.

First indigenous female student to be awarded posthumous MPhil

SOPHIE PRICE

The University of Oxford is set to award an MPhil in Anthropology to Māori scholar, Makereti Papakura, nearly a century after she began her studies. Makereti, also known as Maggie, is believed to be the first indigenous woman to matriculate to Oxford University, in 1922. She passed away in 1930, just weeks before presenting her thesis.

Makereti conducted her research at the Pitt Rivers Museum, with the Society of Home Students (now St Anne's College). Her scholarship centred on the customs of the Te Arawa people from a female perspective, with a particular focus on genealogy, childhood rituals, and domestic life. It combined academic research with her personal experiences in the rural community of Parekarangi. She also detailed observations from areas where she had worked as a tour guide prior to attending Oxford.

With the permission of family members, Makereti's friend and Rhodes scholar Thomas Kenneth Pinniman published her thesis eight years after her death. The Old Time Māori marked the first extensive work of

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Construction begins on £190 million science park

CONOR WALSH

Construction firm Bowmer + Kirkland secured the contract last week to build Fabrica, Oxford's largest commercial science park to date, with construction beginning at the end of May. The project is situated on Botley Road and is due to be completed in early 2027.

Valued at £190 million, Fabrica is one of the largest science projects to undergo development in the UK this year. The 180,000 sq ft site includes a five-storey building which will house a flexible combination of laboratories and office space. The project will also include 7,000 sq ft of public facing amenities, including a cafe.

The project originally received planning permission in December 2023 and is set to be Oxford's first Living Wage Building with the ambition to pay all workers a living wage or higher, as set by Oxford City Council.

Fabrica forms the second phase of a broader project by developers Mission Street and investment manager BGO to create a portfolio of life sciences developments across the UK. This includes developments in Oxford's West End, along Botley Road, which has been earmarked as the city's new central science district.

In the first phase of their life sciences portfolio, partners Mission Street and BGO delivered a similar project to

Fabrica in a disused retail unit at Botley Road Retail Park. The project, Inventa, opened in 2024 and accommodates 65,000 sq ft of offices and laboratories.

Mission Street told *Cherwell* that "Fabrica will provide five storeys of fully flexible laboratory, office, and collaboration space for commercial occupiers in the science and technology sectors with customisable floorplates designed for university spinouts, as well as established R&D companies."

"Local residents, the local authority and wider stakeholders were consulted extensively during the planning process over a period of more than two years, which included open public consultations."

Founded in 2017, developers Mission Street have built a property portfolio incorporating 1.5 million sq ft of science projects across the UK and recently secured a £180 million loan to fund its future projects.

Mission Street's partnership with BGO focuses on life sciences projects in the 'golden triangle' of Oxford, Cambridge and London. This focus aligns with the UK government's plans for the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor, where the government hopes to create Europe's Silicon Valley, and their broader goal to kickstart economic growth across the country.

Image Credit: NBBJ Architects via Mission Street



All Souls College receive permission to redevelop High Street buildings

ARINA MAKARINA

All Souls College has received planning permission from Oxford City Council for a project to "redevelop and revitalise" 10-15 High Street. Currently, these buildings are occupied by David Clulow Opticians, Caffè Nero and Whittards.

According to the press release, the project will aim to "renew these buildings sensitively, to provide much needed teaching and research accommodation for the College in the upper floors of the buildings, and to invest in the retail premises for the High Street."

The project will include three additional seminar spaces, including a 100-seat lecture theatre, studies and offices for the administrative team, and a roof garden. The spaces will be built primarily for academic use, but All Souls has indicated it is open to running public lectures as well once the building is open.

The college has also expressed plans to invest in sustainability. Refurbishment is intended to improve the energy efficiency of the historic buildings, "minimising the College's carbon footprint and moving as far

as possible to a net zero position".

Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) responded to the planning application saying they "welcome the restoration of the buildings, and particularly the works to the High Street elevation, including works to improve the appearance of the existing shop fronts". OPT noted that more information needed to be provided regarding the proposed roof terrace, as elements like lighting or area of seating "could impact upon how visible this area becomes within elevated views across the skyline".

All Souls' press release highlighted the "opportunity to work with neighbours, including the Covered Market". The college is planning to invest in improving the entrances and passageways into the Market. Further, the college will work to ensure that extensive scaffolding during the construction works causes minimal hindrance to visitors.

There have been preliminary works on site for two years. The main construction works, given All Souls goes through with the project, are expected to commence closer to the end of 2025. The project is estimated to be completed by the middle of 2028.

Blavatnik School of Government hosts Kyoto Prize Laureates

CONOR WALSH

Last week, the Blavatnik School of Government welcomed the 2024 Kyoto Prize Laureates, holding a series of lectures and public events to celebrate their achievements in science, technology and the arts.

The Kyoto Prize is an annual, internationally renowned award dating back to 1985. Awarded by the Inamori Foundation, it recognises visionary individuals who have made significant contributions to their respective fields. The three fields include science, technology, and philosophy and the arts, with one award presented for each field. Each of the prize winners is awarded a diploma, a medal and 100 million yen – equivalent to half a million pounds.

The 2024 Laureates were theoretical physicist Sir John Pendry, who was recognised for his work on metamaterials, including laying the groundwork for invisibility cloaks; geologist Paul

Hoffman who was celebrated for his 'snowball Earth' hypothesis; and choreographer William Forsythe, recognised for his experimentation with contemporary dance.

Since 2016, the Blavatnik School has hosted the Kyoto Laureates annually at Oxford. The School uses the opportunity to provide a platform for celebrating and learning about a "shared commitment to excellence, global understanding, and the public good" across science, technology and the humanities.

Professor Ngairé Woods, founding Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government, said: "We are honoured to welcome these visionary Kyoto Prize Laureates to Oxford. Their work represents not only the highest level of academic and creative excellence, but also a profound commitment to making the world a better place."

The Kyoto Prize follows the legacy of Kazuo Inamori, a Buddhist priest and the founder of the Japanese ceramics



and electronics manufacturer Kyocera, who believed that the future of humanity can lie in a balance between scientific progress and spiritual depth.

Shinobu Inamori-Kanazawa, the President of the Inamori Foundation who awards the prize in honour of Mr Inamori, said: "We are delighted that the Blavatnik School of Government provides a European home for the Kyoto Prize, creating opportunities for the brilliant young minds in the Oxford community and beyond to meet with the inspiring Kyoto Prize Laureates each year."

Image Credit: Andrew Bailey via Blavatnik School of Government

Trinity College dedicates new door artwork to renowned physicist

ELIZABETH HAMILTON

A door at Trinity College designed by acclaimed sculptor Antony Gormley in collaboration with UK Poet Laureate Simon Armitage has been dedicated to physicist Henry Moseley. The artwork forms part of the redevelopment of the College and its new Levine Building on site.

Moseley, who earned his bachelor's degree from Trinity in 1910, conducted research to establish the concept of the atomic number. Moseley's Law helped to reveal the structure of the atom and changed the arrangement of the periodic table to its current form. The scientist was set to win the 1916 Nobel Prize in Physics, but was killed at the Battle of Gallipoli in August 1915. This dedication was announced as part of the College's VE Day celebrations.

Trinity's president, Dame Hilary Boulding, told *Cherwell*: "We are thrilled that two such distinctive and admired artists accepted the commission to create a functional piece of public art. We set out to create something to enhance the public realm and to provide something intriguing and thought-provoking, next to one of the most photographed views in Oxford."

"The door is very much part of Trinity's desire to engage with the City's wider community and we hope that it will provide an additional point of interest for pedestrians in the city."

Gormley's design features a cutout in the shape of a silhouette walking, through which the viewer can look towards Oxford's science area. Antony Gormley said: "The idea of the threshold and the function of doors have been interests of mine for a long time; I want the physical engagement of approaching the door and going through it to be in balance with the door itself where word and material come together. Simon echoed the feelings I had about the door as the arbiter of inner and outer in a poem that gives the door a voice or a mind."

The aperture itself emphasises the passage of time; as it continues to rust, the patina will evolve as the seasons change, and the touch of people passing through the door will polish the surface naturally.

It invites passers-by to consider where things – the body, time, space – begin and end through a series of raised concentric rings radiating out from the central silhouette.

Armitage, honorary fellow of the college, also composed a poem, entitled 'Hinge' (which may carry slightly different connotations for some), to appear in relief on the door itself, reflecting the themes represented by Gormley's design. It highlights the two-way operation of the door, and the differing views which can be seen through the aperture. Armitage states that "the poem is advocating a dialogue

and a coming and going between formal and informal learning, between the heart and the head, and the need for a balance between the two approaches."

The pair have highlighted the focus on collaboration in an effort to link their respective artforms. Simon Armitage was approached in 2020 to write the poem with a view to incorporating it into a new door and he was interested to work with Antony Gormley. Trinity told *Cherwell* that "finding two artists who positively wanted to work together was an important step in creating a collaborative work of art."

Armitage said that Gormley's design "puts the human form and also humanity at the centre of the door and at the centre of the poem", while Gormley has emphasised the design's aim of "integrating words into an object" and how he hopes it will "generate thought and feeling both for the passer-by and the regular user."

The dedication ceremony included poetry readings and a flypast. It was attended by senior scientists from around the world, as well as Princess Elettra Marconi, daughter of radio inventor Guglielmo Marconi. A new portrait of Moseley is also to be unveiled, and the University is to announce the introduction of the Marconi-Moseley Scholarship for Science in the Service of Humanity.

Image Credit: Ian Wallman via Trinity College



First indigenous female student to be awarded post-humous MPhil

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ethnographic scholarship by a Māori author, and has been celebrated for combining formal academic study with an observational perspective.

In recognition of her contribution to anthropology and indigenous academia, the Oxford School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography submitted a request to grant Makereti a posthumous MPhil. The request, supported by St Anne's College and the Pitt Rivers Museum, was then approved by the university's education committee. The degree will be formally awarded by Vice Chancellor Irene Tracey at a ceremony later this year in the Sheldonian Theatre. Members of Makereti's family are expected to attend.

Professor Clare Harris, head of the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, praised Makereti as an "inspiring figure, not only to many in Aotearoa New Zealand but to students and scholars around the world."

Māori artist and guide June Northcroft Grant spoke on behalf of Makereti's family: "We are grateful to Oxford University for this tribute to Makereti's memory and to all those who have supported her story in the years since her passing.

"It is a testament to the lasting power of education, culture and the determination of one woman to ensure that Maori stories would not be forgotten."

The status of New Zealand's Māori population has been the subject of international news this year. The far-right ACT Party proposed a bill which opponents claimed would have undermined Māori rights. The bill was defeated in parliament 112 votes to 11 in April.

Cherwell approached the School of Anthropology for comment.

Oxford Union Standing Committee votes against flying LGBTQ+ flag for Pride Month

NOAH ROBSON

The Oxford Union has rejected a proposal to fly an LGBTQ+ flag for Pride Month every year. President Anita Okunde had put forward the Standing Order change but the Standing Committee – made up entirely of students – voted 7-4 against the move.

During a meeting on Monday 5th May, the motion was tabled which would have required the President to fly the pride flag "throughout June every year". It would have given the President the discretion to waive the requirement "in the event of the death of The Sovereign, or at such other time when public buildings fly their flags at half mast".

Opponents of the move made clear that whilst they supported the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community, they were concerned about the precedent that might be set. In particular, there were suggestions that passing such a motion could open up a "Pandora's Box" of demands for other flags to be flown.

After a discussion over the potential change, a secret ballot was held in accordance with the Society's rules. This then took place, with four members voting in support of the motion, and seven voting against (along with one spoiled ballot), meaning it failed to pass.

There was confusion over the history of the Standing Order's place in

the rules, with a suggestion that it had previously been included but had been "accidentally" removed. Despite this, the Committee voted against the reintroduction of the rule, with opponents claiming it would make "no substantive difference," given that the President could unilaterally choose to wave the LGBTQ+ flag regardless of the vote's outcome.

Following the vote, a private business motion seeking to reinstate the rule was posted on the Union's noticeboard, requiring 50 signatures to be brought to the House again.

Cherwell has approached the Oxford Union for comment.

Image Credit: Noah Robson for Cherwell



Ukrainian energy delegation meets Christ Church academics



JOSHUA MCGILLIVRAY

A delegation from the Ukrainian government visited Christ Church on Friday 25th April to discuss the country's energy infrastructure and to meet Ukrainian students at the University of Oxford.

The delegation included the country's Minister and Deputy Minister of Energy. Their time at Christ Church concluded a visit to the UK in which they attended the London International Energy Agency Summit and met both Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Ed Miliband, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.

The event occurred exactly 100 days after the Ukrainian and British governments signed an 100 Year Partnership Declaration, establishing cooperation in defence, security, and trade between the two countries for the next century.

In particular, the agreement states that the two countries will cooperate in the development of sustainable energy. Accordingly, at Christ Church the delegation reviewed the Strategic Hydrogen Integration for Effective Low-carbon Development in Ukraine (SHIELD) project.

SHIELD is funded by the Foreign Office in the UK government and is part of Ukraine's Resilience and Energy Security Programme (URES). It focuses on providing the country's government with models that can be used to weigh wartime energy requirements with a long-term transition to renewable energy.

Herman Halushchenko, Ukrainian Minister for Energy, noted Russia's attacks on Ukraine's coal-fired power stations and coal mines. He compared them to renewable energy refineries,

which he stated were both quicker to build and more durable, since they were distributed over larger areas of land.

SHIELD is managed by Stephanie Hirmer, Associate Professor in the Department of Engineering Science at Christ Church. She said: "Building a resilient energy system is not just vital for Ukraine's recovery – it is essential for its long-term sovereignty, security, and prosperity.

"At a time when Ukraine is in the global spotlight, it is inspiring to see its leaders not just planning to rebuild, but reshaping their energy future. Their ambition to decarbonise and build resilience marks a true watershed moment – and through SHIELD, we are proud to support this."

The ministers also met Ukrainian students studying for degrees at Oxford. Maryna Nosyk, a DPhil candidate in Experimental Psychology at Christ Church, said: "Major power cuts that the country faced last year affected not only the everyday routine but also the mental health of so many Ukrainians, which is hard to even estimate yet.

"That's why it was incredibly interesting, enlightening and inspiring to be part of the discussion on the energy recovery plan for Ukraine, and to know that even though we are still fighting for our freedom, independence and sovereignty at the front line, there are plans and strategies that are being developed right now to recover our energy system after peace has been negotiated."

Cherwell approached Professor Hirmer for comment.

Image Credit: Lucie Fellwock for Cherwell

NEWS SHORTS

Library books returned to Lady Margaret Hall

A Lady Margaret Hall alumnus has recently returned books to the college library... 20 years late. The books were returned with a note of sincere apology, asking the librarian to "please forgive me!" Lady Margaret Hall replied that "all was forgiven." Long overdue books usually incur a fine of £10, as well as the cost of replacing any lost books.

New tortoise for Brasenose College

Brasenose are set to have a tortoise compete in the upcoming annual Corpus Christi Tortoise Race for the first time in decades. The tortoise is "lined up and ready to go from another College," leading to much speculation over which rival has had their racer snapped up by a competitor.

Shirtless man spotted with python around him in Port Meadow

A man wading in the water at Port Meadow was recently spotted with a huge python around his torso on a Tuesday afternoon. Dog walkers expressed concern at the sight, though they will no doubt be reassured to hear that pythons are in fact capable of swimming, meaning its location could be, quite literally, anywhere.

Gender inclusive Latin passes before Congregation, bar certain words

Congregation, the University's governing body, voted in favour of changes to the Latin used in ceremonies. The changes passed by 22 votes, with 6 votes against the changes. The Latin terms "magistri" and "doctores" were to be replaced with "vos", though these ended up remaining in the ceremony following an amendment.

CROSS CAMPUS

Cambridge students don't like having fun

Several Cambridge colleges have cancelled their May balls. The colleges – including Robinson, Emmanuel and Clare – cited rising costs and, more crucially, low ticket demand. Clare cited to "changing economic events", even in spite of a 20% off flash sale in April.

Escape from Stanford? Robotics students build community escape room

Students at Stanford have built a space-themed escape room, partly inspired by students' internship at SpaceX. The room, which is free to use, is open until 17th May and took five weeks to build. Even before opening, the room has proven a resounding success with the first batch of tickets selling out within 15 minutes.



University admission tests funding plans raise concerns

NOAH ROBSON

Plans by the University of Oxford to stop subsidising admissions test fees have been criticised in a motion that was set to be tabled at the first meeting of the 'Conference of the Common Rooms' (CCR). The University has been conducting a consultation on the proposal, which would take effect from 2026.

Currently, Oxford's own admissions tests are free for all applicants, with the costs being covered by funding from the University. This is unlike Cambridge University, where admissions tests must be paid for by candidates, with the Engineering and Science Admissions Test (ESAT) costing up to £130.

According to the motion, colleges have been presented with the option of either taking on the costs of testing themselves, or charging prospective students individually. If the latter option were to be taken, a currently unspecified fee waiver system would be put in place for certain applicants.

Cherwell understands that Oxford had agreed to continue the funding arrangement with Pearson VUE – the

organisation which runs the tests – on a short-term basis for both 2024 and 2025, whilst a permanent arrangement was agreed.

The issue was set to be brought up at the newly-established CCR, organised by the Student Union (SU), on Thursday 15th May. If the motion were to pass, it would mandate the SU to advocate for alternatives to Oxford-only testing, such as the potential for "collaboration with other similarly selective universities".

The motion raises concerns that such a move might "exacerbate college disparities and disincentivise open offers". It also warns of impacts on the University's access policies, highlighting the importance of preventing the "psychological barriers to Oxford applications from becoming any higher than they already are".

In response to the claims, Oxford University told *Cherwell*: "A consultation is currently underway across the collegiate University in relation to 2026 undergraduate admission tests. The outcome of that consultation will be shared in due course."

Image Credit: Poppy Littler-Jennings for Cherwell

Oxford's DPIR issues guidance on United States travel for students

JOSHUA MCGILLIVRAY

Guidance on travel to the US has been shared with all postgraduate students in the Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) at Oxford University in light of recent measures which have increased checks on those travelling to the country.

This follows revisions by the UK Foreign Office of its US travel advisory after the detainment of a British national for over ten days at the border.

The document distributed by the DPIR notes that the country's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has the authority to examine electronic devices owned by those crossing the border, even those belonging to people not suspected of breaking the law or posing a threat to national security.

It advises students to only bring necessary devices, to remove sensitive data and apps that collect such data from their phones where possible, and to store all important files on a device separate from the one they are travelling with. It also recommends that students do not argue with CBP officers or attempt to interfere with the examinations.

Moreover, Information Security (InfoSec) at Oxford recommends that those considered to be at a high risk of inspection remove Outlook, OneDrive, and other related accounts from their phones and laptops, in order to reduce the likelihood of compromised research integrity or a data breach.

The guidance also encourages those travelling to the US on business to ensure that they have sufficient insurance and to book their flights through authorised channels such as Key Travel. It also recommends that students devote sufficient time to the preparation of their travel applications, as complications relating to the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and visa applications can lead to foreign nationals being denied entry.

The Head of the DPIR, Dave Doyle, told *Cherwell*: "The travel guidance we issued was in response to queries from students and staff."

"This guidance stressed that the risk of any incident at the US border remains very low but all those travelling to the US should be cognisant of increased enforcement at border points and it pointed travellers to the latest guidance from the University's Information Security Team."

"Our students and faculty travel all over the world, and we offer all of them the same support as part of our risk assessment and travel insurance procedures."

In an executive order issued on 20th January, President Trump declared that the Secretary of State would henceforth "vet and screen to the maximum degree possible all aliens who intend to be admitted [to] the United States."

Following this directive, the Trump Administration revoked the visas of over 1,000 international students across over 280 universities around the country.

Continue reading at cherwell.org

India Society cancels cricket match with Pakistan Society amid 'ongoing hostilities' between countries

LILLY LAW

Oxford India Society cancelled a scheduled cricket match with Oxford Pakistan Society on 10th May, citing the "ongoing hostilities" between the two countries.

In a statement posted to India Soc's Instagram page, they stated their belief in "sportsmanship and unity". They maintained that their opposition to the "Pakistani military's continued support for terrorism as state-policy" meant they were unable to "engage in a 'friendly' match". The statement ended with "Jai Hind", a slogan meaning 'Hail India' which dates back to the country's independence movement from Britain.

Tensions between India and Pakistan have risen significantly over the past month, following a terrorist attack in Indian-administered Kashmir that left 26 dead. On 7th May, Indian missile attacks killed 31 people in Pakistan, and the countries have both accused each other of firing missiles onto military bases.

India Soc posted a statement on 9th

May condemning the attacks in Kashmir. They stated their support for "decisive action against terror" while lamenting "the cycles of violence" continuing in the region. Pakistan Society also posted a statement, urging unity, and hoping for "peace, justice, and liberation" against "senseless state violence".

India Soc and Pakistan Soc have run events together in the past, including screenings of India-Pakistan cricket matches, and their own annual match against each other. Pakistan Soc's Trinity term card includes ice hockey with India Soc in Week 4. Whether this will go ahead is currently unconfirmed, but India Soc told *Cherwell* they "value the principle of mutual respect" and "look forward to collaborating [with Pakistan Soc] in the future".

An "immediate ceasefire" in the conflict was announced on 10th May after US-led discussions, which may further impact the societies' decisions.

India Soc told *Cherwell*: "We have taken the decision to call off the match as we believed it unseemly to flaunt our privilege of enjoying a 'friendly' match

whilst being sheltered in Oxford. We are sure that members of the Oxford Pakistan Society share our concerns about the safety of family members back home and like us would be unable to enjoy the Dev-Khan match in this climate."

"The Oxford India Society is the largest cultural student society in Oxford; we remain incredibly proud of the diverse range of experiences, beliefs and opinions held amongst the membership. The decision was taken following conversations with the committee and was informed by sentiments from the membership."

Since the decision to cancel the match was made on Saturday, disagreement within India Soc has ensued, with concerned members writing to the President, citing their disquiet with the fact that action was taken "without broad committee consultation or input from the student body". They advised: "[r]ather than stoking these tension, India Society should embody Oxford's tradition of open inquiry and solidarity."

Cherwell has approached Pakistan Society for comment.

'Oxford DIY Pride' to stage separate Pride event after criticising sponsorship deal

LAURA VAN HEIJNBERGEN

A new organisation has been set up as an alternative to the official Oxford Pride. Oxford DIY Pride plan to host their own pride event across Florence Park Community Centre and the Old Fire Station on 15th June, a week after the official Oxford Pride Event on 7th June.

Oxford DIY Pride objected to the sponsorship of Oxford Pride by Siemens Healthineers, a subsidiary of the German multinational technology conglomerate Siemens, in an Instagram post on 27th April. According to the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions Movement, which identifies corporations with links to Israel and Israeli military action in Gaza and encourages people to boycott them, "Siemens is the main contractor for the Euro-Asia Interconnector, an Israel-EU submarine electricity cable that is planned to connect Israel's illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory to Europe."

Oxford Pride told *Cherwell*: "With regard to Siemens Healthineers Magnet Technology Oxford (actually a subsidiary separate from Siemens), this partnership was terminated on 29th April 2025. This was due to concerns that their LGBTQIA+ staff could be subject to harassment by those pressuring them to cut ties with us. It is unacceptable that any individual

should feel threatened for supporting a Pride event."

Siemens Healthineers are currently developing a £250 million facility for MRI cooling technology in North Oxfordshire, which they claim will bring more than 1,300 skilled jobs to the local area. Siemens Global call themselves "allies and advocates" and feature testimony from LGBTQ+ and "ally" employees on a dedicated webpage.

Oxford DIY Pride acknowledged the "termination" of the partnership on their Instagram page. However, Oxford DIY Pride still plan to go ahead with the separate event, arguing that there is a "clear desire for a non-corporate pride" in Oxford, and that other corporations involved in the sponsorship of the main Pride event also have ties to genocide in Gaza. Oxford Pride told *Cherwell*: "We're aware of a small group planning an alternative event. We welcome all community-led initiatives, including those that focus solely on protest or expression."

Oxford DIY Pride claim that Oxford Pride deflected criticism over the sponsorship by arguing that they are "not political". Oxford Pride told *Cherwell*: "As organisers, we remain politically neutral and work hard to create a space that reflects the full spectrum of our LGBTQIA+ community. Furthermore, Oxford Pride is a registered

charity, and the Charity Commission clearly states that we are legally not allowed to take political positions that fall outside of our charitable objectives which are LGBTQIA+ rights within Oxford and Oxfordshire."

The Charity Commission states that political campaigning or political activity "must be undertaken by a charity only in the context of supporting the delivery of its charitable purposes." For these purposes, political activity is defined in terms of seeking to change government policy or legislation.

Oxford DIY Pride told *Cherwell*: "Caring about, promoting and celebrating LGBTQ+ people does not exist in a vacuum; our identities are interconnected, and the struggle of one oppressed people does not separate them from the struggle of another. Pride began as a protest, and now more than ever must continue to reflect that character, to demonstrate queerness and unity when our human rights are ignored, threatened or revoked."

When we look to Palestinians, whose human rights have been violated time and again over the past 77 years, there is an innate solidarity there. Pride is about defiant existence in the face of forces that do not want us to be here; Palestinians embody this every day."

Image credit: Kenneth Wong for Cherwell



INVESTIGATIONS

Over 10% of Oxford University offers come from just 14 schools

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The student told *Cherwell* that the admissions process for Westminster School itself is somewhat geared towards Oxbridge admissions in the first instance. Prospective sixth-form students sit a TSA, the same style of admissions assessment that Oxford uses for many of its courses, like PPE and Economics and Management. When it comes to university admissions at Westminster, students are supported by regular sessions alongside others applying to the same course, interview practice, and general preparatory aid.

Another one of the schools with the most offers was Harris Westminster, a state school situated just down the road from the aforementioned Westminster School. The school was founded in 2014 with the aim of achieving the same Oxbridge rates as its neighbour, which has supported Harris Westminster for the past decade. It is highly selective and students are chosen through a rigorous interview process.

The school had an impressive 32 offers, which amounts to more than the more traditionally prestigious Harrow, Rugby, Charterhouse, and Sevenoaks combined. One Harris Westminster alumnus who is currently studying at Oxford told *Cherwell* that “from my experience, the support was extensive but also quite high pressure. Unlike regular sixth forms, it was mandatory and scheduled into our weekly timetables for us to partake in societies as well as ‘cultural perspectives’ - two extra classes on a specific academic topic, such as feminist philosophy.

“As much as it was a privilege to partake in these, our days were already roughly 8:30-5 including (a half day of) Saturday school in year 13. A lot of teachers really pushed coming off as ‘well-rounded’ for our personal statements, but the timetables that we were on meant most people were generally exhausted and burnt out.

“There was certainly also a cultural dimension of the preparation for Oxford - our terms also had silly names, we grew accustomed to weekly assemblies in Westminster cathedral, and were held to a certain level of professionalism that I haven’t understood to be the case from any friends attending other sixth forms. The culture around Oxbridge was uniquely cut-throat at Harris - it wasn’t just that we all went to a selective school, but that many of us were low-income, first-gen, or generally from underprivileged backgrounds - we had the academic expectation of a private school but very often without the safety net of a well-off or supportive family.”

Another Harris Westminster alumnus, currently in their first-year at Oxford, told *Cherwell* that during the admissions process, “a lot of resources are available. Mentors are assigned, and you have talks about applying.” However, the student did not believe that there was pressure to apply to Oxbridge, and their form tutor even said that “Oxbridge was not the be-all and end-all.”

Harris Westminster benefits strongly from its relationship with its pricier neighbour – the former sends students to take A-Levels in the latter, in subjects that it cannot offer due to having less resources. Even on their website, Harris Westminster’s Executive Principal, Gary Savage, describes Westminster School as “the solid ground [they’re] built on”, and states that without their support, Harris Westminster would be “less scholarly [and] less confident”. Where, then, does that leave the thousands of other sixth forms that don’t have equal resources?

The inequalities

Of the 14 schools that constitute over 10% of offers, all but two are in the south of England. In fact, the school situated farthest north is King Edward VI School in Stratford-upon-Avon, just south of Birmingham, and the only other non-southern school is in Singapore. Six of the fourteen schools are in London – this can be, in part, blamed on population density, but the concentration of such powerful educational institutions in and around the capital points to a deeper problem – the disproportionate allocation of elite educational resources to the affluent south.

Oxford’s feeder schools are not inherently private, but rather, they are overwhelmingly southern, selective, and embedded in networks of privilege. This results in a de facto regional divide, where promising students from the north, regardless of talent, face a tougher climb to higher education. Oxford’s access efforts may be well-intentioned, but they continue to overlook structural disadvantages facing entire regions of the country.

Cherwell found that parts of the north of England were underrepresented in applications to the University, with applications from Yorkshire and the Humber making up only 5% of applications and 8% of the overall population. Moreover, *Cherwell* revealed that colleges’ outreach programmes did not reflect the regional underrepresentation in applications, with more colleges being linked to London and the South East than any other region, despite these regions’ overrepresentation in the statistics.

These inequalities have only deepened in recent years, and after 14 years of Conservative government, 70% of schools in England in 2024 had less funding in real terms than in 2010. Given its reputation for elitism and historical ties with the establishment, it is no surprise that Oxford comes under scrutiny for its access and outreach efforts given it lags behind the national average number of state educated students by over 20%. In fact, in 2021, it had the seventh lowest proportion of state educated students in the Russell Group. Within these abstract percentages, there lies an even more pressing issue that is difficult to solve – how Oxford guarantees diversity within the state sector itself.

The University has implemented outreach programmes like the UNIQ programme and Opportunity Oxford in the last two decades, and each college has their own outreach programmes in order to combat these issues. However, *Cherwell* found through Freedom of Information requests that despite individual colleges increasing their outreach to state schools, applications from state schools have barely increased, and admissions from state schools have stayed the same.

Education and the government

Secondary education in Britain received sustained investment under New Labour, whose top priority was “education, education, education”. When Blair came to power, schools were renovated for the first time in a quarter of a century, class sizes shrunk, and money spent per pupil doubled from 1997 to 2008. Blair had a vision – he wanted to transform all state schools to the point that even those affluent enough to send their children to private school would choose not to.

Blair took inspiration from a Swedish model of education, where schools are largely autonomous units that compete to be the best. A large proportion of the Labour party was still wedded to uniformity, and the word ‘choice’ shook the core of the party. The likes of John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister until 2007, feared that the



Blairite vision of academies would make them into grammar schools with a different badge, as the label of ‘good school’ is strong enough that middle-class competition becomes rife.

The left of the Labour Party were therefore wary of creating a ‘two-tier’ schooling system by introducing academies, though a multi-tiered system did already exist given the influence of faith, postcode, and region within the state sector itself.

One key figure in shaping New Labour’s education policy was David Blunkett, who served as Blair’s inaugural Secretary of State for Education and Employment until the next general election, when he was promoted to Home Secretary. Blunkett told *Cherwell* that when he was put in charge of education over 25 years ago, one of his missions was to “challenge the very narrow access to colleges at Oxford and Cambridge from across the UK”.

Blunkett explained to *Cherwell* that instead of providing funding to individual colleges, it was decided that the central University should be responsible for overall finance and developing access policies. Since then, all universities have been asked to develop such programmes, overseen by the Office for Students, which was set up under the Conservative government back in 2018. However, Blunkett lamented that “sadly, things have not worked out as intended!”

He told *Cherwell* that “gestures have certainly been made in the direction of engaging with very specific schools, ticking the box of ethnicity or deprivation, or both. In other words, to be able to say, that the University, and specifically individual colleges, have reached out to recruit students from sixth forms or sixth form colleges in the state sector, and to display just how well they’re doing.”

“It is not that admissions tutors don’t care, nor that the University haven’t tried. It’s just that it’s built into the DNA

However, for Blunkett, these attempts to widen access have merely been a facade, improving the chances of just small numbers of young people. “Unfortunately, this is all smoke and mirrors. Whilst some young people have benefitted – almost wholly from the south of England – the same old procedures continue to favour a slightly wider group of private schools than was true of the past, and a modest improvement in access from those educated in state funded secondary schools.

“But the overarching message remains the same. If your family has a historic connection with the University, if the school has built up a direct link with the University, and if you live south of Birmingham,

then your chances of getting a place will be substantially greater than an equally bright young person from a different background living somewhere else.

“It is not that admissions tutors don’t care, nor that the University haven’t tried. It’s just that it’s built into the DNA. If you think you’re doing the right thing, you can justify, in your head, just about anything. That is, of course, if psychologically, as someone employed at the University, you’ve made the necessary adjustments to affirm your own pathway to success, and the position you now hold.”

Next steps

The Student Union (SU) told *Cherwell* that these admissions statistics demonstrate the inequalities across the UK “that Oxford has not only been shaped by, but has historically upheld. While the University has made some strides in advancing access, the disproportionate number of offers going to a handful of highly resourced schools shows how far we still must go in dismantling systemic inequality”.

The SU also expressed that “it is crucial that Oxford continues to publish more granular admissions data, especially to distinguish between different types of state school. Transparency is fundamental to accountability and reform, and is something that we should encourage across the sector.”

An Oxford University spokesperson told *Cherwell*: “Oxford is committed to ensuring that our undergraduate student body reflects the diversity of the UK and that we continue to attract students with the highest academic potential, from all backgrounds. We know that factors such as socio-economic disadvantage and

school performance can make it difficult for some students to access their full potential before applying to university and therefore use a range of contextual information to help us to better understand students’ achievements.

“Oxford also offers one of the most generous financial support packages available for UK students, and around 1 in 4 UK undergraduates at the University currently receives an annual, non-repayable bursary of up to £6,090. In 2023, 511 UK offer-holders participated in Opportunity Oxford and OppOx Digital, our academic bridging programme developed to support students from under-represented backgrounds in their transition from school or college to our university.

“We continue to build on and expand our access and outreach activities in support of equality of opportunity for all talented students, and last year launched new initiatives in regions of the UK where fewer students currently go on to Oxford. We have also published a new Access and Participation Plan, approved by the Office for Students, which provides a renewed focus in attracting and supporting students currently under-represented.”

For many schools, an Oxford offer still remains a distant hope. The University can preach meritocracy, but as long as its doors are open only for a handful of privileged schools and remain shut to most others, that meritocracy remains a major work in progress.

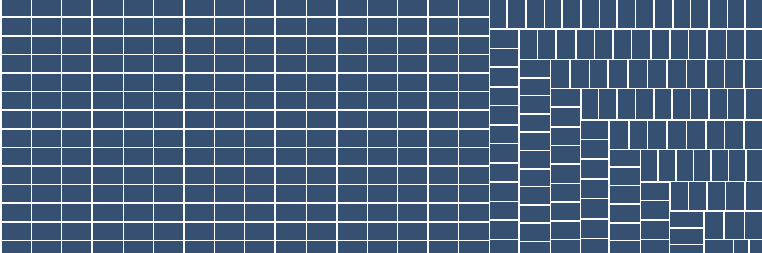
Additional reporting by Martin Alfonsin Larsen. Image Credit: Amelia Gibbins and David Hays for *Cherwell* (top), Oscar Reynolds for *Cherwell* (below), Martin Craft via Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA 3.0 (front page)

Top 10% & bottom 10% of schools by Oxford offers

Counting 10,921 offers given between 2021 and 2023; bottom 10% only considers schools which received 3 or more offers (due to data restrictions). 14 schools collectively received 1,123 offers from 2021 to 2023

Westminster School 129 offers	Raffles Junior College 102 offers	Harris Westminster 78 offers	The Perse School 68 offers	Brampton Manor Academy 63 offers	Hwa Chong Institute – Singapore 61 offers
	Eton College 99 offers	Peter Symonds College 78 offers			
Hills Road Sixth Form College 126 offers	St Paul's Girl's School 82 offers	St Paul's School 73 offers	King's College School 58 offers	Newham Collegiate Sixth Form 50 offers	
			Brighton Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College 56 offers		

375 schools collectively received 1,125 offers from 2021 to 2023



OPINION

Nature and the Oxford mind

SASKIA MAINI

Our recent spell of sunshine has offered a welcome opportunity to rediscover the natural beauty that the city of Oxford nurtures. Perhaps you've enjoyed a picnic by the river in Christ Church Meadows, played a game of frisbee in University Parks, or gazed at the horses in Port Meadow. You may have caught sight of a squirrel springing between branches or heard birdsong cooing among the trees.

Architecturally, Oxford is a beautiful city as well. With the exception of hotly contested brutalist architecture, much of Oxford's charm lies in how its architectural grandeur entwines with the natural environment – ivy climbs the walls of centuries-old buildings, while Oriel College's windows are bordered by flowers in full bloom. After a typically bleak Hilary term – when most of us were tucked away indoors, hiding from the grey skies and constant drizzle – this reappearance of life feels restorative. When the sun does finally come out, everyone takes notice. It's a quiet reminder that nature can subtly lift the weight of the term-time intensity. And haven't we all felt better for the arrival of spring?

Scientifically speaking, at least, we certainly

should have. It is popularly touted because it holds true: spending time outdoors in nature is good for you. Some theorists suggest that nature's inherent mathematical order may provide us with a subconscious sense of harmony and coherence. It is, perhaps for many, the rare situation in which fractals, the Fibonacci sequence, or Euler's number produces calm rather than anxiety. It's a compelling idea to consider how such underlying structures might influence our perception and wellbeing.

In fact, time spent in nature may even have improved the quality of your work. Research suggests that exposure to natural environments can enhance cognitive function by restoring attention and supporting sustained concentration. Combined with the physical benefits already mentioned, this creates an ideal setting for clearer thinking and more focused study. Taking a quiet walk to your favourite green area might be more than just a break. It could be the reset your brain needs to re-engage with the demands of academic life.

The philosophers agree that nature makes us feel better. Immanuel Kant delves into this in his *Critique of Judgement*, where he suggested that we find beauty in nature not because it serves a purpose, but because it doesn't. It simply is. In our world of deadlines and goals, natural beauty offers us an experience free from self-interest. While nature has biological roles which serve us that is not why we walk through Magdalen's deer park or linger by the Cherwell. We simply pause to appreciate.

Similarly, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant also looks at the theory that natural beauty makes us better people morally. Ultimately, the fact that we derive pleasure in something which is an end in itself may make us more open to being moral in general. The positive effect nature has on us can

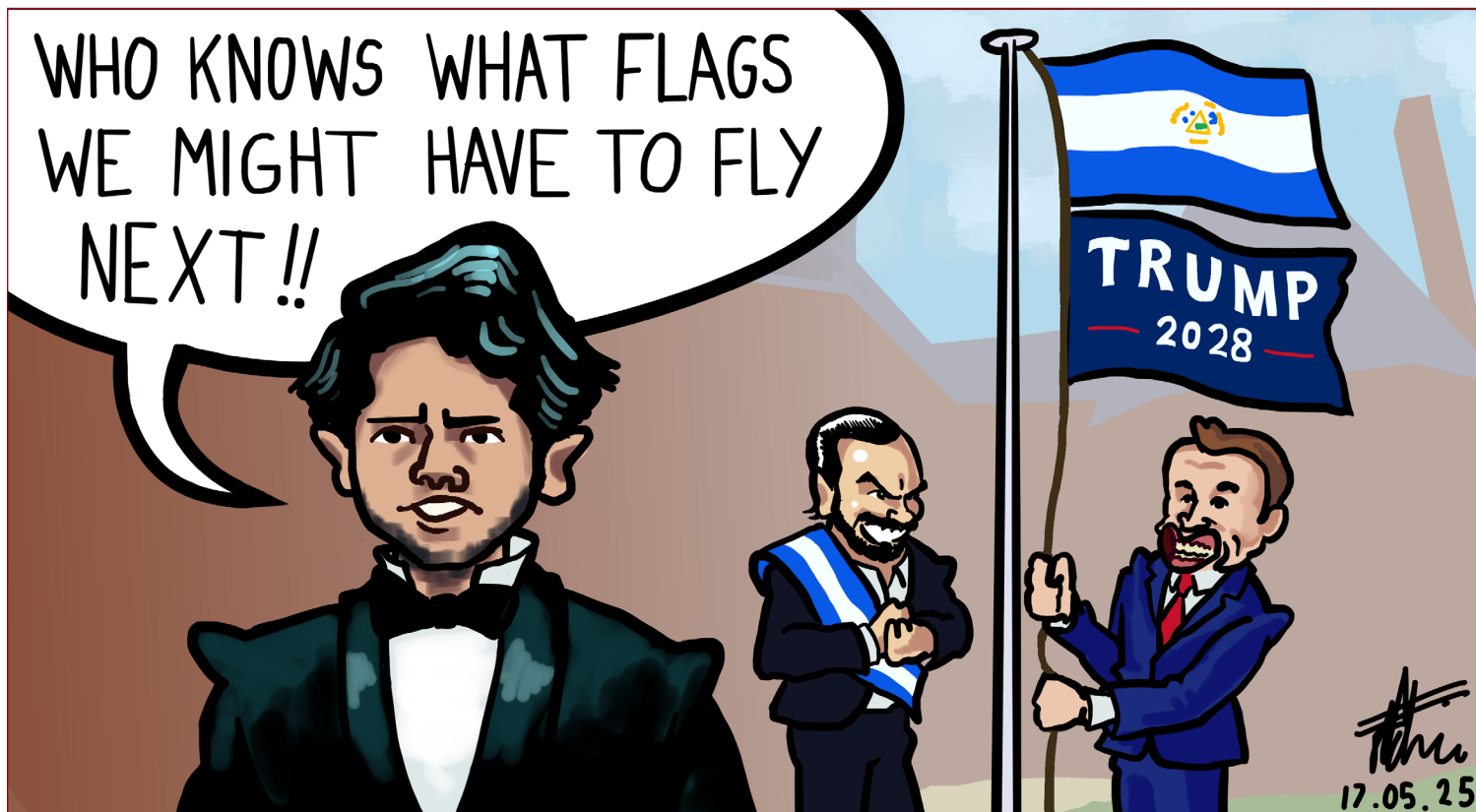
disseminate to other parts of life. On a societal level, we can conclude that it makes us more gentle in all parts of life. We become more moral, and the world becomes a better place.

Hopefully, we can carry this aesthetic disposition into other areas of our lives: into how we engage with friends, family, attend events, or pursue intellectual curiosities – not merely as a means to an end, but for the intrinsic joy they offer. Perhaps this helps explain the delight we feel when admiring Oxford's ornate stone buildings and the discomfort sparked by its more brutalist corners – think Somerville's Margery Fry and Elizabeth Nuffield House, or Keble Road's Denys Wilkinson Building.

Recent years have seen mounting threats facing our green spaces. Urban development and pollution increasingly loom over the green spaces we so enjoy. Despite our regular enjoyment of these environments, many of us remain unaware of their vulnerability. We picnic beside the Cherwell, have a croquet game in the college gardens, or read under the shade in University Parks – but too rarely do we consider how we might give back.

The preservation of Oxford's wildlife is not simply a matter of environmental stewardship, but a defence of something more intrinsic to the very nature of student life here. It is a matter of protecting those moments of outdoor tranquillity that punctuate the academic intensity of a library session. Perhaps it is the very aesthetic characteristic of nature which could ultimately help it save itself from us.

What is it, that Oxford's flora and fauna gives us? Oxford's natural spaces provide something essential: physically, psychologically, and philosophically. So, take time to visit your favourite green space, and consider the effect it has on you. Not just physically and psychologically, but morally.



Oxford's deathtrap – the semi-pedestrianised nightmare

OSCAR WHITTLE

To take a stroll down the quaint New College Lane, to bask in the beauty of a summertime stroll along the canal, to ponder (or procrastinate) your upcoming tutorial while promenading down Broad Street is what it means to truly enjoy being here at this university. What is equally quintessential, but far less enjoyable, is the nightmare that brutally tears you out of your daydream – the cyclist.

It was only the other day that I was nearly turned into a road traffic statistic by an over-keen two-wheeled menace on Turl Street. After having exchanged some choice words with this Evel Knievel wannabe, I strutted off, indignant (and looking rather undignified). However, after having gotten over the loathing I felt at the gall of the cyclist, who had not only nearly hit me but had dared to complain about my simple existence, I gradually turned towards a different conclusion. I realised that delightful interactions such as these are neither the fault of the cyclist nor the pedestrian, rather are the result of a structural issue that Oxford faces as a semi-pedestrianised city.

Oxford is undeniably a city of bikes. Before the current station was built, you would walk

out of the building only to be confronted by a sea of bikes chained up. Thankfully this is no longer the case, but given that the number of bikes being ridden across the city has increased with the expanded student population, it seems that this problem is not going to go away. They are without a doubt useful, I will concede, and I myself have even found myself borrowing one of the college bikes and riding it up to the sports ground whenever I have felt the need to terrorise my peers with some truly dire cricket or football.

The issue is not the existence of bikes (nor pedestrians) but rather the fact that many of the

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Trying to cross Broad Street has become akin to the Herculean task that Hannibal faced when he crossed the Alps

roads, especially in the city centre, have become near impossible to navigate because of the lack of clarity over who belongs where. Trying to cross Broad Street has become akin to the Herculean task that Hannibal faced when he crossed the Alps. As previously mentioned, Turl Street is another minefield, along with Cornmarket Street (despite the fact that bikes are supposedly banned there). The issue is that no one space is properly delineated for either form of transport. Queen Street, running along the main entrance to Westgate, is the most egregious offender of this battle for priority. Buses, bikes, pedestrians, horses – anything goes.

While it is a worthy effort to try and cut Oxford's emissions and make the city a generally more pleasant and less polluted place to walk around, the issue with the current halfway house is that it fails to be one thing or another. By failing to clearly indicate which spaces are to be used by bikes or pedestrians (let alone buses!), Oxford has found itself with several streets that are more a test of endurance and agility than enjoyable places to find oneself walking down. If we want to pedestrianise, then we must pedestrianise properly.

Letters to the Editors:

Readers of *Cherwell* respond to articles from throughout the term

New Mods: An infantilising step away from the fundamentals

SIR AND MADAM - As a fellow classics student, I agree with much of what the author says – totally abandoning the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* will only exacerbate the divide between those who studied such foundational texts at school, and those who didn't. Even now, I feel that I am at a disadvantage by only studying the *Aeneid* and therefore missing out on the Homeric context. Surely, a better solution is to allow all students to study both, even if one is in translation?

However, I cannot agree with the notion that prose composition is an essential part of the course. It is almost archaic, with Oxford being one of the only remaining universities to make it mandatory. Personally, prose composition at Mods was incredibly stressful and unnecessarily daunting for someone who had never studied Latin before. As the author acknowledges, faculty language teaching is at best uneven and at worst completely useless, and this does not seem to be changing any time soon. For instance, while my college offered Greek prose composition tutorials on a weekly basis, I (as a beginner Latin student) was left with occasional classes at the faculty which did not educate me to the same extent. As long as so many are at a significant disadvantage, whether due to the school they attended or the quality of faculty language teaching they receive, it seems unfair to expect that all students can acquire such a difficult skill on an equal level.

Emma Heagney
Classics, Merton

Twelve points to politics: Eurovision is more than it seems

SIR AND MADAM - Given the in-depth historical politics of Eurovision in the last paper, it was striking to see the “tensions” around “Israel's continued participation” described as simply “the war with Hamas”. Even the BBC, rightly critiqued for its lack of coverage of the genocide, refers to the conflict as the ‘Israel-Gaza’ war – no credible paper can use the phrase ‘Israel-Hamas war’ without expecting this kind of response. In the 24 hours before publication of this edition of the *Cherwell*, more than 40 Gazans were martyred in Israel's ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people, with the most conservative official estimates recording more than 52,000 people killed.

The national broadcasters of Slovenia, Spain, and Iceland have all contested Israel's participation given its ongoing genocidal campaign in Gaza. Russia was excluded after its invasion of Ukraine (a fact also ignored in your article) but Israel has faced no repercussions; indeed your article focuses more on the alleged death threats faced by Israel's representative last year than the reason for the outrage. To write a short pop piece on Eurovision would be understandable, but to write a full-length feature on its politics, without a genuine discussion of the two most pressing political influences on the programme, seems laughable.

Helen Ross
English, St Anne's

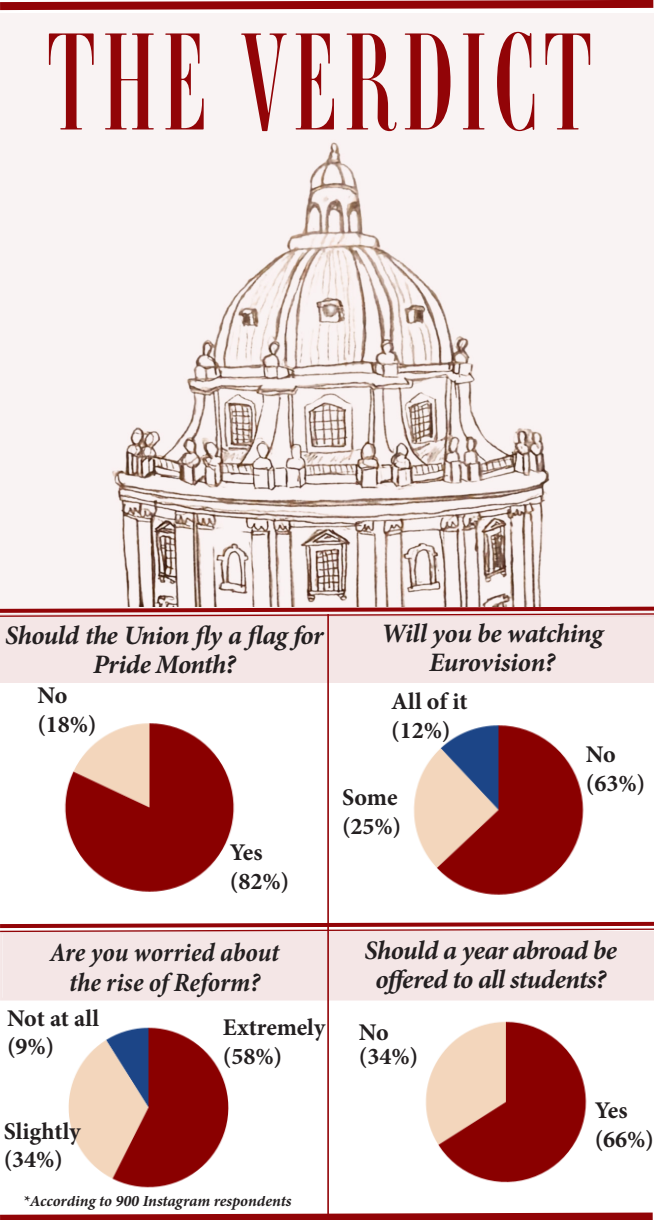
The infantilisation of young people in politics must end

SIR AND MADAM - Anish Kumar is right to identify the infantilisation of young voters as a serious factor in the general decline of our democracy, but they are not the only targets of this worrying trend. Trump may be America's oldest president by the end of his term but interviews and press conferences make it clear that White House staff treat him like an overgrown iPad kid and have him on a healthy diet of chicken nuggets, Coca-Cola and fake news. His temper, vocabulary, and policy positions are all appropriately toddler-esque. This is alarming for many obvious reasons but underdiscussed and underestimated is fact that where Trump leads society seems invariably to follow.

We are heading towards, and increasingly exist in, a world where nuanced understanding is scorned and the average voter patronised. As young people, and students, the fight back against the simplification (read: misrepresentation) of the truth and the desire for easy fixes to complex problems starts with us.

Lloyd Doré-Green
Philosophy and French, Magdalen

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



Kashmir: Radicalising a diaspora

ANONYMOUS

A recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, a town in the Kashmir Valley, has led to the escalation of hostilities between India and Pakistan. Most international students who live in the region have responded with fear, shock and confusion, calling home to hear about blackouts and air raid warnings. Concerning, however, is the tone of many diaspora students, raised in the West with no lived experience of conflict. It seems to reflect an uncomfortable enthusiasm for an escalation in violence. Fuelled by social media algorithms that report nationalistic framing of events on both sides of the conflict, those who have no memory of the Kargil War now appear to romanticise military conflict. I write this as a British Indian myself, concerned about the ease with which some are prepared to accept government actions that would bring about considerable human suffering.

Oxford's India and Pakistan Societies are among the University's largest – serving as a place for students to have a community away from home that keeps them in touch with their culture. The societies also play a political role; they are perceived as representing the collective opinion of Indian and Pakistani students. Whether or not this is fair, it remains the case that any public statement should be carefully worded and avoid deepening divisions. This is a serious responsibility, and one that was handled disappointingly. Pak Soc released a statement calling for “peace, justice and liberation”, while India Soc later responded by cancelling the inter-society cricket match, an understandable choice to avoid a scene at the game, but also condemning “the Pakistani military’s continued support for terrorism as state-policy and disregard for international law.” The latter statement serves only to fuel tension – it is irresponsible for a student society to make such claims, regardless of one’s view of them, in a University with a diverse student body which needs calming, not incitement. This is not to argue that student societies should entirely avoid politics, but instead to ask that those who have influence recognise their responsibilities. This was a missed opportunity to come together and release a joint statement that denounces violence and calls for peace – which would help students feel safe at University at such an emotionally charged time. It is these aims which both societies should work towards, rather than to act as pseudo-embassies of national governments.

Setting societies aside, the wider student response, largely driven by Instagram and TikTok, shows an ignorance of the true nature of war. The US-led misadventures in Afghanistan and Iraq are not memories for most students, but features of textbooks. The lessons of the past, that war brings devastation, suffering and instability, have been forgotten, and the mistaken conclusions reached by Blair

and Bush have re-emerged in mainstream discourse in both Indian and Pakistani national media, which has filtered through to students online.

Those who enthusiastically endorse escalation today are often those who have no memory of past wars, and forget the personal risk they face from a future one. It is their extended family in India and Pakistan who are threatened by a resumption of conflict, and to repost articles calling for “retribution” from the safety and comfort of a foreign country is to emotionally detach from the costs. War, as Tony Benn remarked in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, has become a “news item” or “computer game” for young people, rather than a lived experience.

Social media algorithms, and the decline of quality media coverage in India and Pakistan, threaten to become a vehicle for the quiet radicalisation of the South Asian diaspora in the UK. Many posts that have reached young people on Instagram stem from WhatsApp groups, which are the favoured campaign strategy of India’s ruling party, the Hindu nationalist BJP.

The creation of a feedback loop between WhatsApp propaganda targeting middle-aged parents, and duplications on Instagram and TikTok targeting Gen Z, has the potential to encourage sectarianism not only among students, but among older Indians and Pakistanis in the UK who are told that their children are at risk.

A frequently forwarded WhatsApp poster produced by Insight UK, which calls itself a “social movement of British Hindus and Indians”, includes a claim that “Hindu or Indian students are being targeted or harassed by other students, including those of Pakistani origin”. Meanwhile, political figures like Akhmed Yakooob suggest that the Indian government is engaged in a conspiracy with Israel, arguing that “Zionists want to take away Pakistan’s nuclear weapons.” Yakooob came within 3,421 votes of becoming an MP at the last General Election and, given the Labour government’s dire polling numbers, would be even better placed to win in 2029. Men who spread such views should not be in Parliament, but if young people follow their parents in voting on identitarian lines then many more like him will be elected at the next election.

This is not only an argument that concerns people from the subcontinent, but a broader comment on the normalisation of aggressive political rhetoric at universities. Student societies should not try to emulate the worst instincts of foreign nationalist governments; they have a responsibility to be a positive forum for solidarity and de-escalation. What students say may not affect the conflict abroad, but it will determine whether it is carried in our communities at home.

Hague is not fit to be Chancellor. Just look at his record

William Hague has spent a career looking out for Number One. Oxford deserves far more than a man governed by his own interests

EMILY HENSON

The transformative nature of Oxford, coming from a state comprehensive, and his commitment to “bringing the best people here irrespective of background” were all focal points of Hague’s interview with *Cherwell*. Ironic, I would argue, for a Tory who sat complicit through the austerity years, who voted to raise tuition fees, who – in his own briefing notes – refused to promise that school funding would not be cut. William Hague may proclaim his ambitions, his “objective” for Oxford, and it sounds very good in a press release, but he is betrayed by his own voting record. If Oxford hopes to move forward, Hague crying out “State school! In Yorkshire! Really I am very normal!” (paraphrased) to all who can hear is perhaps less effective than voting for someone who has shown an ounce of care and compassion towards our nation’s education in the past three decades. It is Oxford who suffers by being fronted by a spiritless politician. When Hague proclaims his main qualification as ‘state-educated Oxford grad’, he undercuts the years of work that made this a normal situation. Hague is out-of-step with the University, making hollow statements and conveniently skimming over his voting history.

Hague’s largest spring into educational reform

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Hague is a politician, no doubt about it, and the general public use the word ‘politician’ pejoratively

was as Leader of the Opposition, where he aimed to “sweep away the barriers” between state and independent education. This is an aim many, I am

sure, can support. Why should the wealth of your parents dictate the quality of your education? We are not speaking of the expansive sports fields and state-of-the-art pianos. Why should some children have to grasp multiplication from the back of a rowdy class of thirty, while others have careful tuition from day dot?

Perhaps his time in opposition weighed heavily upon him, as by 2010 his backbone seems to have been injured. As the coalition cut funding for Sure Start, as 88% of secondary schools saw real term cuts in the last Conservative government, as the ‘Building Schools for the Future’ program was scrapped, Hague remained eerily compliant.

To spend a Chancellor campaign telling anyone with ears that you attended a state school (as if it’s some kind of special skill) when you have shown no regard for them while in government is disgusting. Hague is a politician, no doubt about it, and the general public use ‘politician’ pejoratively. He has shown no interest in education, no interest in bettering the lives of those who come after him. He cares for a Tory safe seat, he cares for a foreign secretary job, a peerage, the Oxford Chancellorship. It is not a crime to want those things; it is not a crime to have ambition and to play a political game. I have no doubt he will make a good Chancellor: he will funnel questionably sourced funding into our programmes, he will appease donors and say the right thing at the right time, as he has been doing since 2010. Yet, nothing he says will be of any substance, for a glance over his track record will reveal a politician who has won a game and little more.

On March 10th 2003, William Hague MP voted to maintain a ban on the promotion of homosexuality in schools through Section 28. Some may argue he was voting with his time, or with his party, but this is incorrect. The vote was overwhelmingly in favour of removing the ban, and a significant minority of Conservatives supported it. Hague voted that schools should not teach the “acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”. Someone who thinks like this, even twenty years ago, is not



suitable to lead an institution in this century. Our Chancellor should have been intelligent and open-minded enough to not vote in a homophobic way. That is not an outrageous demand to have of a man who represents intelligent and open-minded people, as I know most at Oxford are, in spite of the stereotypes. It is damaging for the University’s reputation and reinforces the idea that Oxford is stuck in the past.

Hague lacks the ability to fight for something. “We are going to need to keep expanding those sorts of things [scholarships], particularly in an environment where fees are probably going up,” he told *Cherwell*. Has this been weighing particularly on Hague’s mind? Since when, I wonder? It did not seem to bother his conscience when voting to increase tuition fees. While I am sure some readers are screaming ‘he was following the whip, he was towing the party line’. There was scarcely a gun to his head. Should it have bothered him so

greatly, I imagine as Foreign Secretary an excuse can be feigned. Hague is a hypocrite. I, personally, believe the focus regarding access and finance should be around living costs rather than fees – a nuance that seems to have passed our Chancellor by – but the point stands.

Hague can scream from the rooftops that he was state-educated, he can speak about access to Oxford, he can push for scholarships, but none of this undoes his work when he had tangible political power. For years, he sat in Parliament and approved austerity measures that disproportionately affected children. This is inexcusable. To have him in the highest position at the country’s best University is embarrassing. Hague is a poor representative of Oxford. Either his strength of character is lacking and he just stumbled along with the votes, or he is morally disdainful. Oxford deserves better.

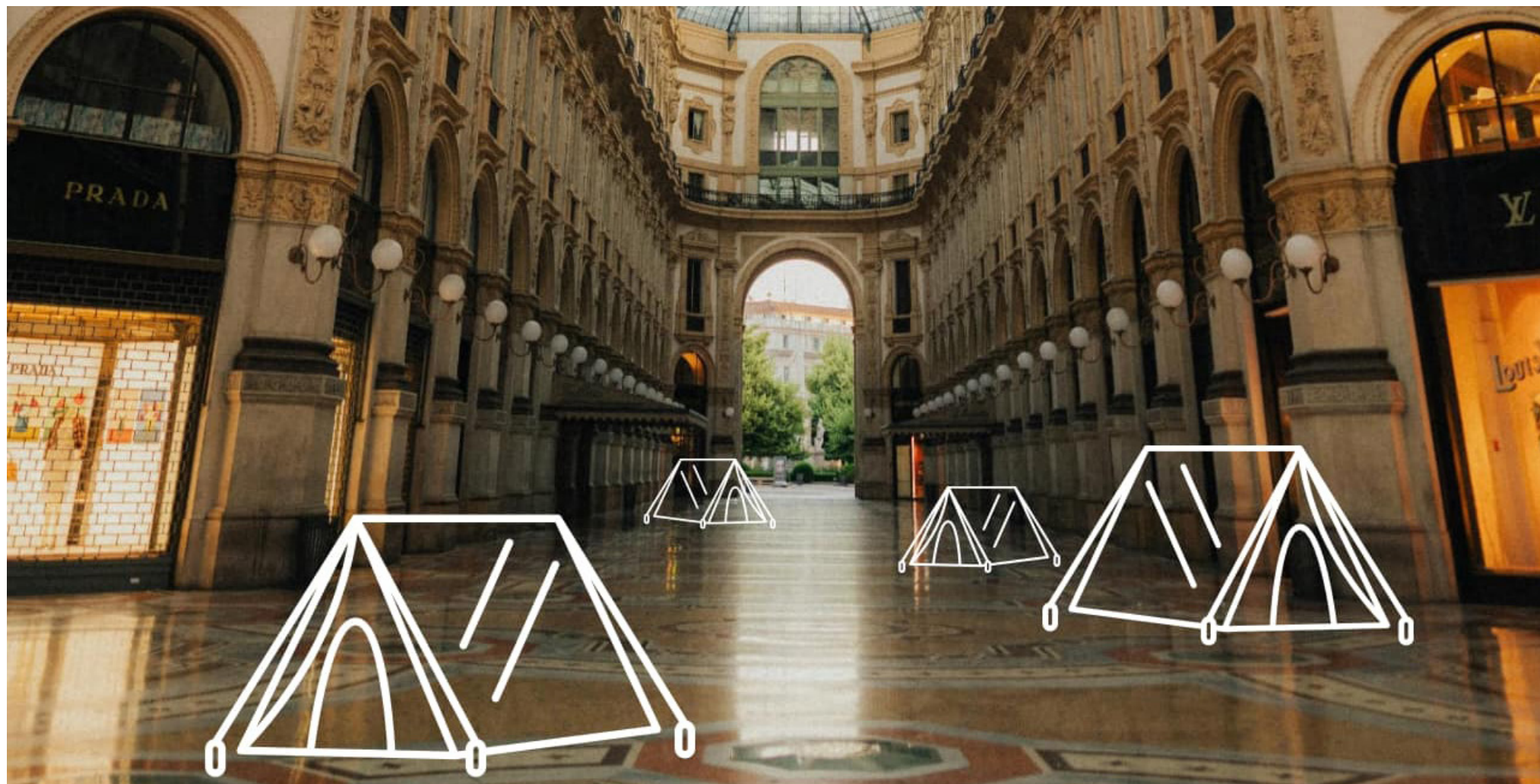
Image credit: David Hays for Cherwell

FEATURES

Helping the homeless: Volunteering or voyeurism?

SILVIA ANDREOLETTI

In Milan, people sleep on the streets where Europe's elites shop and dine. There are fraught ethical dilemmas in documenting it



In the depths of the spring vacation, with Finals and the looming emptiness of What Comes After staring at me from the near future, I decided to do some volunteering. The brilliant Turl Street Homeless Action had been a place of emotional refuge for me, so I sought a way to get involved in a similar charity helping the homeless in Milan, my hometown.

On the streets

I get there at 8.30pm and am immediately recruited to load water bottle cases off a van. 'There' is a glamorous covered shopping avenue one street away from Piazza Duomo, Milan's one architectural wonder and tourist hotspot. Shops closed, the street has been turned into a makeshift food kitchen, with stations where water, snacks, and warm clothes are being handed out to a gaggle of regulars.

The group, who have been meeting once a week for years, is a well-oiled machine. Within minutes we're packing up, moving supplies to shopping trailers and Ikea bags to bring to those who can't – or won't – move from their makeshift shelters scattered around the streets of Italy's fashion and luxury capital. A gaggle of Boy Scouts, formerly middle-aged women (the sciure, often stay-at-home wives or newly retired professionals, who keep Italy's non-profit sector running), and retired professional football players, we move between the covered walkways that by day serve as the open-air runways of aspiring models and gallery walls of fashion connoisseurs.

On our way to a bakery, which has kindly donated its leftover pastries to us to supplement the hot drinks and sandwiches, we pass one of the city's oldest, poshest restaurants. In the glass-enclosed patio, a couple in black tie are picking at a thimble-sized portion of what looks like truffle pasta. I wonder if I should offer the woman, at least 20 years her dining partner's junior, one of our sandwiches instead. Past the restaurant and

the bakery, a village has sprung up.

The picture is striking. Milan's portici, long a symbol of unattainable luxury, of slender bodies and fine fabrics inaccessible to the masses, has been reclaimed and transformed into a scattering of tents, cardboard shacks, and shopping carts holding all the earthly possessions of their owners. As we move between these elaborate makeshift homes and chat to their inhabitants, I recognise a few from the food kitchen I sometimes work at during the day. There's the handsome, freakishly tall, shamelessly flirty young man, probably a victim of Milan's ruthless modeling industry (which relies on undocumented immigrants and sub-human wages); the impeccably dressed elderly couple; the group of men charging their phones outside a high-end perfume store. One of them is on a video call with a woman and a small army of young children, speaking in a foreign language.

I want to ask about their stories, and I want to write about them – and photograph them. The brutal contrast – of high fashion and extreme poverty, of precariously built structures in front of boutiques charging a month's rent for a belt, of mannequins wearing 'distressed' fabric staring impassively at tents heavy with wear – would make for a brilliant photo essay. How such an enormous number of people – over 2,600 according to the latest census, nearly 1 in 500 people in Milan – slipped through the social safety net in one of Europe's wealthiest cities is something that should be investigated. Asking the people themselves seems like the fairest way to do that, and to refute the Italian right-wing's narrative that the vast majority of the homeless problem is caused by illegal immigrants newly arrived from Africa. Most of the people we meet speak Italian flawlessly, and many of them have gone to school in Milan; one used to be a primary school teacher in the suburbs nearby.

Lives through a lens

Some people would speak to me, I'm sure. More would if I became a regular at these Monday-evening volunteering outings; some might even let me take their picture in front of their makeshift shelters. But I can't help but feel that by taking my camera with me – even by asking for an interview – I'm stepping out of the shoes of a community member trying to help and walking into a territory that is much more predatory. Ultimately, I'm a student trying to go into journalism: I need a portfolio, and an investigation into Milan's homeless population would be a hit with papers while ticking some nifty virtue-signaling boxes in the process.

Volunteering has never seemed to me to be a transactional relationship: helping others is a fundamental part of belonging to a community and living with the understanding that, if I were ever in trouble, others would do the same for me. Doing the same as a journalist feels like fundamentally changing this relationship, placing myself as an outsider profiting off others' misfortune.

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**The brutal contrast
– of high fashion and
extreme poverty – would
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photo essay**

Many of the people I would be photographing are young; photos of them at their lowest moment could haunt them online long after they've started a different life. Older people would have decades of life immortalised in a single, unrepresentative snapshot of abject misery, which may be their only online footprint. There seems to be something inherently exploitative or opportunistic in using others' three-dimensional, complex lives and placing them in a 3:2 aspect ratio with a couple of sentences on why their plight supports my argument on Milan's homeless problem. In a city built on capitalising off photos of skeletal bodies and cheap labour, this feels even more pointed.

The National Press Photographers Association's Code of Ethics helpfully advises journalists to “intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see.” Does a life spent at the fringes of society count as a “private moment of grief”, if it is in the nature of homelessness for lives to play out entirely in the public, not private, sphere? Is even just asking for an interview ethical? Is writing this story itself, a meditation on the morality of (student) photojournalism just as predatory as it sounds, an effort to build the aforementioned portfolio?

Turning the corner to finish our round, we pass the restaurant, where the same couple is still staring morosely at the same plate of tagliatelle. A few metres away, a man is lying face down on a single layer of cardboard, his nose squashed against Milan's cold marble. He is sheltering from the drizzle in the covered walkway of a high-end furniture store, where the cheapest chaise longue is on sale at €1699.99. As we move to offer him a bottle of water, all I can think is, *this would make a great cover page.*

Image credit: Daniel Gutti via Pexels, modified by Cherwell/Silvia Andreoletti using Canva

Pagans and Presbyterians: Dispatch from an only somewhat secular age

SACHEL WALTON

We've long heard that the world is becoming a more secular place. From Kent to Greece, it's not quite that simple for Gen Z

Outside a teepee in rural Kent, a woman waved a smoking bundle of herbs around me, as if I was getting extra attention while going through airport security. I dipped my hand in a bowl of water and dabbed some on my forehead. As instructed, I stepped into the tent, sprinkled tobacco in the fire, and said a prayer.

I was surely the only Presbyterian at this neo-pagan ceremony, a four-day event of fire tending and singing and storytelling to commemorate friends and relatives who had recently died. This made me stand out not just in the teepee, but also in my own country. In 2018, Pew Research Center found that there were more Americans who identified as pagan witches than there were members of the Presbyterian Church (USA). In the seven years since, the liberal-leaning denomination has only continued its long decline, alongside so many other churches across the Western world.

The statistics hardly need repeating at this point. Across the West, people's participation in religion, its importance to them, and their belief in it have all declined. Oxford's college choirs keep singing and chapel bells keep ringing, but only a third of English people in their 20s identified as Christian in the last census. But even as the West becomes less devout, many still experience the world as a deeply spiritual and enchanted place.

The days of miracle and wonder

For many intellectuals, religion has been falling out of fashion for centuries. The great German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher ran in a circle of friends in the 1790s so secular that he prefaced his book by acknowledging that it would shock them that he defended religion, something they "so completely neglected". Thomas Jefferson happily predicted that by the middle of the 19th century, every American would renounce the superstitious elements of Christianity and become a more rational Unitarian. The future Christian apologist C.S. Lewis wrote that during his first years at University College, he was "busily engaged (apart from 'doing Mods.' and 'beginning Greats') in assuming what we may call an intellectual 'New Look'. There was to be no more ... flirtations with any idea of the supernatural, no romantic delusion."

Despite religion's continual death in the academy, Christianity and Islam have hardly ever been so alive as they are now in much of the Global South. Devotion is strong in Africa and Asia, continents with the large majority of the global population. But even in the supposedly secularised West, spirituality has signs of life – though it can look quite different from centuries past.

Yes, an all-time high of 30% of Americans are 'nones' – that is, they claim no religious affiliation. But when you probe them, many are deeply spiritual. In a recent survey, less than a third deny the existence of spirits, most believe in God, and most are open to the ideas of heaven and hell.

There is more reason for Enlightenment rationalists like Jefferson to despair. Half of Americans say they definitely believe in religious



miracles, and another quarter say they probably believe. And substantial majorities now say they definitely or maybe believe in a whole range of supernatural phenomena you wouldn't hear about at Sunday school, like Karma, psychic abilities, and (non-Holy) ghosts.

Edward A. David is an associate member of Oxford's Faculty of Theology and Religion and a lecturer at King's College London. In a recent pilot study, he analysed how young people from countries across the world understand religion and who they see as spiritual role models.

David told *Cherwell*: "I'm coming to view religion – at least perceived by Gen Zers – as being a deeply emotive, affect-based phenomenon, not so much doctrine-based or rationally-based, but very much 'How does this make me feel?' and going from there."

Dr. David's participants from the Global South – both Christian and Muslim – tended to have relatively conservative and traditional religious views. But even in England, traditional religious practices show some signs of revival among Gen Z since the pandemic.

Recent data find a large uptick in churchgoing among young people in England over the last six years, especially among young men. As in the US, young men now outnumber young women in churches – an unusual pattern, as women in Christian societies have historically tended to be more devout than men. In the same report, commissioned by the Bible Society and conducted by YouGov, the 18 to 24 cohort was the most likely to definitely believe in God, the most likely to pray regularly, and the most likely to participate in other spiritual practices like meditation.

Many among Gen Z see religion as something of a set of self-help practices. Even those who claim a religious affiliation often draw from a variety of spiritual traditions.

"Gen Z is a generation of authenticity and personalisation, which informs their identities, so their notion of categorisation is much more fluid," David told *Cherwell*. "They might land on a certain religious affiliation, but I think if you were to actually ask them, there'd be a much wider spread in terms of religion or spirituality from different traditions informing how they view the world."

Life and death and life

There were only about a dozen people at that pagan ceremony in Kent – but that was nearly as large as the weekly attendance at the 13th-century Anglican parish in the nearest village.

Five weeks later, I was in a much more vigorous ceremony on the other side of the continent. Greeks were flocking to central Athens for Holy Week, kissing icons and crosses, lighting candles, and crowding the streets for a midnight procession singing "Christos Anesti" (Christ is risen).

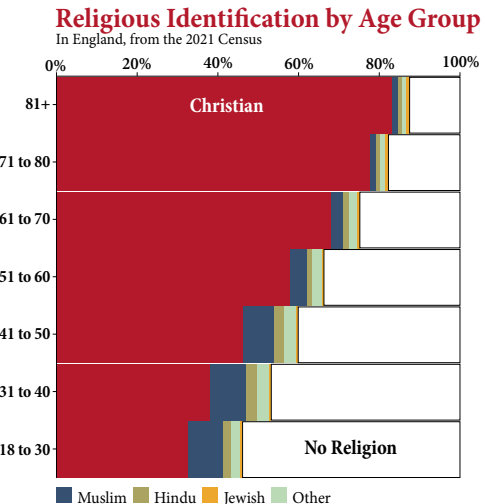
Did the people squeezed into churches for the Easter vigil skew old, or is it just that Greek people are on average more elderly? Was this an impressive display of the faith of Europe's most religious country, or a pittance compared to the devotion of previous decades and centuries? I couldn't tell. The most important bits were all there – the emotion on the faces of old women as the incense came by, the spirit with which the priests read the Byzantine-era liturgy, and my own persistent doubts about whether a word of

it could be true – but they couldn't be readily quantified.

While in Greece, I met a nice young Anglican who is set to be ordained this summer. He told me that he is one of 19 seminarians in his program at Cambridge, where there used to be over triple that number. We talked about the state of our college chapels, and the political weaponisation of Christianity in America, and the Church of England's declining number of clergy. More importantly, along with thousands of people, we sang Christos Anesti.

Image credit: Lucie Fellwock [Top] and Oscar Reynolds [Bottom] for Cherwell

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Even in the supposedly secularised West, spirituality has signs of life – though it can look quite different from centuries past



Child prodigies: Too young for bops, old enough for a first

There are 237 Oxford students aged 17 and below. In the past, some have dramatically crashed out in the public eye, but many precocious scholars thrive in the spots they've earned

MARTIN CONMY

On the surface, Jim Yeung might seem like any other undergraduate. A second-year maths student at The Queen's College, he got a first in his prelims, looks forward to postgraduate study after his degree, and spends much of his free time playing the piano.

Only one thing sets him apart from his peers: he started studying at Oxford when he was only 15 years old. According to a Freedom of Information request made by *Cherwell*, that makes him one of the 237 Oxford students aged 17 and below.

Children, legally speaking

Universities in the UK permit undergraduates of any age – although under-18s are prohibited by law from engaging in the clinical contact required in the first year of most medicine degrees. Usually, however, universities put plenty of safeguards in place. Oxford Brookes, for instance, frequently offers deferred entry to students who apply for courses not 'appropriate' to their age; at the University of Bristol, underage students are barred from holding 'positions of responsibility.' Oxford does things differently. As Ruth Collier, then spokesperson for applications, told *the Guardian* in 2005: "If you're the best student for the place and are 14 years old, then the general attitude is 'so be it.'" Jim told me that tutors, lecturers and other students treat him the same as they treat his coursemates – exactly the way he wants it.

What few restrictions Oxford does place on underage students are usually the result of UK law. Students under the age of 18 are defined as children by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; colleges do not act in loco parentis ('in the parent's place'). To study at Oxford as a minor, you'll need parents or other trusted

adults living in the Oxfordshire area. You can also pay for a service like Oxford Guardians. For £945 a year, along with a £1,000 deposit and £170 registration fee, the Guardians will carry out most of the student's logistical work for them, as well as granting the parents a termly visit and monthly updates. Underage students are also barred from living in student accommodation. In Jim's case, there was one solution to both these problems: his family relocated from Hong Kong and purchased a home in Oxford, where Jim lives with his parents alongside his studies.

The pitfalls of prodigiousness

But does Oxford go far enough in protecting the children among its student body? Alcohol can often pose particular problems, as college bars do not routinely check students for their ID. Usually, barmen are given a list of underage students from that college they are prohibited from serving before the academic year begins. But this system is far from perfect. One student who started studying when he was 16 told *Cherwell* he found an easy solution; going to other colleges' bars, where he was seen as just another undergrad. His bod card was usually all he needed to get into college bops and club nights.

Student societies, meanwhile, have no safeguards in place at all. Back in 2015, Oxford University Labour Club reached national news after a 17-year-old got so drunk at an event he threw up on college property, shouting 'Vote Labour' and reciting Latin, before ending the night unable to walk. This incident was especially embarrassing since also in attendance was then Oxford East MP Andrew Smith.

Researching them, it's hard not to notice just how many former child prodigies go on to reach not spectacular heights of achievement, but instead deep craters of despair. Not only are young geniuses disproportionately likely to have developmental conditions like autism

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Jim said that tutors, lecturers, and other students treat him the same way as his coursemates – exactly the way he wants it

spectrum disorder and mental health issues like depression, they can often find the unbearable pressure of high expectations too much to handle. Socialisation can be a particular issue; burying your head in GCSE textbooks from early adolescence might be good for your grades, but it's rarely as positive for your social abilities. As one former prodigy wrote: "I regret all the ways I never got to be a child because I was too busy being a child prodigy."

Places for preteens

There is no Oxford child prodigy nearly as famous as Ruth Lawrence in her time. She won a place at St Hugh's when she was only ten years old in 1981 and went on to get a First in her finals and finish her degree a year early, making her the youngest graduate of Oxford in recorded history. She quickly became nationally famous, her face and story plastered on the pages of every tabloid in the country.

But it never really seemed like she was in control; instead, her father, Henry Lawrence, was the one in the driving seat – literally, as he took her everywhere in a tandem bicycle. He had always banned her from having friends of her age, out of a worry that their "trivial conversation and pointless playing" would stunt her academic development. He went with her to lectures, classes, tutorials, and social events – at least until he was banned by the St Hugh's JCR from their common room. After she followed up her undergraduate degree with a DPhil in Mathematics, he went with her to Harvard, where she became a fellow at 19 years old.

Ruth finally left her father behind in 1997, when she married Israeli mathematician Ariyeh Neimark and moved to the Jewish state. She now lives a much more private life as a professor and a mother of four. She says she wants her kids to be "normal," and to mature "naturally."

Still, Ruth says she enjoyed her time at Oxford. When I asked her about whether she thought that Oxford did enough to protect students like her, she told *Cherwell*: "It's a complex topic, and probably best that I don't get involved in answering. I was very happy with my experiences at Oxford, but ... depending on how young the student and the situation of their family, there are clearly potential dangers, and it is not clear whether the university or colleges want to get involved."

One child prodigy whose time at Oxford was unambiguously unhappy was Sufiah Yusof. She won a place studying Mathematics in 1997, when she was only 12 years old; one year later, her 12-year-old sister and 16-year-old brother began studying at Warwick.

But after she took her final exams, she disappeared. Found after a 12-day search, she refused to return to her parents, describing her father as having created a 'living hell' for her. She accused him of a litany of abuses – allegedly, for instance, he had forced her to work in freezing temperatures, since the cold supposedly better stimulated her brain.

For the next few years, she remained out of the media spotlight – until, in 2008, a journalist from the *News of the World* tracked her down, and found she was working as a prostitute in the backstreets of Salford.

She certainly hasn't been coy when it comes to giving her opinion on those tabloids. Her website accuses the British media of releasing

"a tsunami of spiteful, dishonest, and abusive articles and pieces" about her.

Who is old enough for Oxford?

Stories like these were what led the Blair government to consider a blanket ban on students under the age of 18 going to university. But Olivia Smith, the Deputy CEO of Potential Plus UK – an organisation that supports highly gifted children and their parents – was glad these proposals were abandoned.

"We don't like the idea of people being held back," Smith told *Cherwell*. "We encounter parents that are struggling, because their children are doing their GCSEs but they're writing at degree level, and GCSEs aren't designed to accommodate that. We've got to say to people to level their answers down, and stop enjoying learning ... It could be that holding the child back is more emotionally damaging than letting them get on with and trying university."

For Potential Plus, decisions about sending under-18s to university are usually made on a case-by-case basis. On the one hand, university can be far more intellectually fulfilling for them; on the other hand, "we've got to consider social development," as Smith put it. Usually, Potential Plus first encourages their clients to find intellectual stimulation outside of formal universities – taking extra A-Levels for instance, or using online resources like the Open University.

Smith was also keen to stress that, despite the stereotypes, people who go to university earlier than usual aren't always being driven by their overbearing parents.

Smith told *Cherwell*: "Often the kids are driving it, and the parents are there having to manage their kids' expectations."

In some ways at least, Oxford might be a better environment for young prodigies than any other university. Younger students may need more support than most of their peers; other, poorer universities can't hope to compete with

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It could be that holding the child back is more emotionally damaging than letting them get on with and trying university

welfare services available here. And there are certainly few other places where eccentricities are accepted as readily as in Oxford.

I'll admit, before researching this article, I had a fairly crude view of child prodigies, as socially awkward eccentrics unwillingly pressed into academic excellence by their overbearing parents. Certainly, that's sometimes the case. But talking to Jim and Olivia, I realised how plenty of Oxford's early birds are simply enormously talented and self-driven, and find in Oxford a place they can fit in better than anywhere else.

Back in the 1990s, after Ruth Lawrence's story brought enormous publicity, colleges found themselves in a kind of arms race; who could find the youngest student to let in? Thankfully, that has mostly ended by now. With today's greater emphasis on student welfare and mental health, the youngest students at Oxford tend to be clustered more in the 15 to 16 age range, rather than the 12 to 13.

So, should children be allowed to study at Oxford? On balance, perhaps so. As history shows, though, there is good reason for colleges to keep a very close eye on their welfare.

Image Credit: Ife Edgal for Cherwell



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With warmest thanks to
Oxford Student Publications Limited

Archives: How to appear well-educated in one evening

This week we discovered a copy of a 1990 edition of the paper mysteriously sitting on a table in the office. Self-proclaimed 'student paper of the year', it was a bargain at just 20p. Most useful is the pullout guide on what to do if you're "sat next to a don" who is much cleverer than you. The guide can be "hidden in your pocket" and is ready for all kinds of subject needs. Linguists are told to just say the magic words "Eclat, Eclair, Bella, Ragu, Bundesbank" and PPEists to declare "I've always been a Liberal Democrat myself". Historians are to

talk about revisionism (but "ONLY with tutors under 65") and to ask whether "your work has been vindicated by the events in Eastern Europe?"

Medics are prompted to compliment "that suit must have cost you an arm and a leg!" and English students are to just throw around words like "deconstruction" and "empirical" and all will be fine. Classicists are to intonate "cathartic, chthonic, mantic, pedantic, oral formulas". 'Mellalurgy' is also listed as a potential degree, which confused us quite a bit.

Imagine you've been invited to sit at high table. You are seated next to a don who is an expert in a completely different subject to your own. You begin to sweat. You go white. And then you remember. You have the *Cherwell* guide to 'How to appear ridiculously well educated in one evening' hidden in your pocket...

John Evelyn

Our Great Prime Minister without Portfolio's term is now in full swing, but you jobless cretins really couldn't go three weeks without causing a controversy, could you?

In their infinite wisdom, over half of TSC have chosen not allowing pride flags back into the rules as their hill to die on. This has gone exactly as well as you'd have expected. Evelyn has heard reports of The Trousers failing to explain to people that Bondage Baby voted in the exact opposite way to reality. Bondage Baby himself is apparently too occupied fitting whole crisps in his mouth to explain himself. Regan, too, has been caught retconning her takes. But who's under the spotlight?

For the second time this century, goodbye Ben Bella. OverworCCed has re-emerged from his student journalism hobbit hole to spill the beans to

the national press. Three years of power for one, three weeks for another. Pandora's Box has been opened. Between his weird (!!!) tirades against Change in the TSC group chats, and his questionable methods to flip seccies, he has fought to retain his honour in Facebook comments. It serves as great proof that if all goes wrong, he'll have a great career gifting on X. Poor form.

Elsewhere, the jewel in England's crown himself, Seventy Kilograms of Gammon, has decided to revive perhaps everyone in the Union's favourite topic, rules reform. Imagining himself the modern day, freakishly unemployed Martin Luther, he has nailed his 95 theses to the notice board, expecting people to care. Evelyn reminds the member that, despite the hilarious implications of the rules passing, his finals are in a few days.



And finally, to our dearest Change. Thank you for the minutes, the leaks I'm seeing. Thanks for all the joy they're bringing. Who can live without it? I ask in all honesty. What would life be? Without leaking IC, what are we? So, I say thank you for the minutes, for giving it to me.

Editorial



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

As we get closer to the halfway mark of this frenetic Trinity, another jam-packed issue of *Cherwell* is here to guide you through all things Oxford from the last fortnight. It's been a busy time, as usual, with full steam ahead on our podcast, social media collaboration, and breaking stories. The team have also been busy organising our termly staff dinner as well as a quiz night social. We don't publicise our socials to the wider public as we're not an events society but in fact a newspaper! Nonetheless, our packed term card is another reason to consider applying for *Cherwell* as an editor in future. Those applications will open towards the end of term, but do consider writing for us in the meantime by checking out our commissions pages on Facebook and Instagram. New commissions will be out shortly.

We also had the interesting experience this week of being interviewed as part of a pan-European academic study of how journalists are navigating democratic backsliding, the rise of AI, and changing funding models. Since *Cherwell* is more or less unique in the UK for its organisational model, I'd like to think we're certainly an interesting data point in the survey.

You'll find lots of interesting journalism in this print, from revelations of protest costs, school statistics, and admissions test fee changes to society controversies and landmark University milestones. Beyond News and Investigations (pages 1-5), there is wider analysis, reflection, and reaction on our Chancellor's voting record and the place of child prodigies in Oxford. Turn to page 11 to hear from another hero in the city, the man behind student favourite wrap stall, Najar's.

Elsewhere you'll have the usual favourites, including everything from Cherpse and Selina Chen's new 'Tiny love stories' to a deep-dive into our archives and a slightly meta Evelyn. Our Puzzles are back on the back page to give you a different kind of problem sheet and Culture provides a round-up of theatre and art reviews from page 15. As usual, our fantastic team of photographers and illustrators have supplemented these articles with engaging (and occasionally provocative) artwork. Whatever you pick up a copy of *Cherwell* for, we hope you enjoy the content we've got for you this week.

Oh, and one final thing – please do see our advertisement for the BNOC list, which is coming to print in fifth week. And if you've received our email to say you've been longlisted, please do reply.



Noah Robson
Deputy Editor, News

There aren't many places at Oxford where you'll spend the morning scouring city council documents to find out when the new McDonald's closing time will be and the afternoon researching specific clauses in counter-terror legislation. But it's that bizarre mix of everything from the hyper-local to the internationally relevant that makes the *Cherwell* news section so exciting to work in.

Along with my fellow Deputy Editor, Poppy, we lead a fantastic team of News Section Editors, all of whom aim to ensure that if there is something happening in Oxford that we think students care about, then they will get that information as quickly and accurately as possible.

The balance between speed and detail is always a tough one to strike, but when it works it leads to (in my opinion) some of the best journalism in Oxford. Of course, there's also often a national interest in many stories happening at this University, so the chance to be the primary source on an event is always a brilliant motivation too.

If any part of this sounds like something you might be interested in, we'd love to see you at our weekly News Meetings, on Saturdays at 5pm at the *Cherwell* office. Or, if you'd prefer to contribute in a more... subtle way, tips can always be sent to cherwellnews@gmail.com too. Either way, I hope you enjoy the stories we put out this term and find them just as interesting to read as we do to write about.

PROFILES

“I was up to my elbows in blood and guts and gore and I loved it *Cherwell* spoke to forensic anthropologist, award-winning writer, and St John’s College President, Sue Black

LAURENCE COOKE

CW: *Violence*

Professor Lady Sue Black, Baroness Black of Strome certainly has a title which precedes her. The President of St John’s made her name as an academic and forensic scientist who worked to identify victims in conflict zones including Kosovo and Sierra Leone, and then later the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami. I sat down with Sue Black and asked her to give me a “whistle-stop tour” of her life and career, which might have been the most difficult question I asked that morning.

First of all, Black paints a picture of someone whose childhood remains an integral part of their story: “Both my grandmother and my father were great storytellers, and so everything I have is a story, and it has been really useful for me as [I] get older”. Born in Inverness, Black grew up on the Scottish west coast, a native speaker of Gaelic.

That upbringing planted the seed of her future career. “My father, as it happened, was a tremendous shot. I was his little shadow. And so when he would go out shooting [to eat, not for sport, she reassures me], I would carry home the dead rabbits and pheasants. I would sit at the back door with my father and he would teach me how to skin them.”

From a very young age, Black “thought nothing of having blood up to my elbows. It felt completely normal”. At thirteen, when her father, ever the Presbyterian, asked her what job she would get, she decided to work in a butcher’s shop. “So when all my friends were selling makeup in the chemists or selling clothes, I was up to my elbows in blood and guts and gore and loved it.”

Once at university, Black didn’t like zoology, genetics, chemistry (“my god”), or botany. But anatomy, that’s just the butcher’s shop: “I walked into the department and knew I was home”. There was never any doubt: “My Biology teacher said I was going to be a scientist, so I had to be a scientist.”

“I still have huge imposter syndrome [that says] my governing body is going to wake up and realise what a mistake they’ve made... so I never get to a point where I think, my goodness me, I’ve really made it.” When I probed to ask whether this makes her a good model for first-gen and state comp students for whom the idea of Oxford seems so alien, she just expressed her amazement at the students who “are all so much smarter than I am. I’ve got here through hard work, not through raw intelligence.”

She marvels at the intensity of the eight-week terms, and how people can balance their studies with other roles. We’ve talked about jobs, so I mentioned what happened in Kosovo. There, Black was one of the first to work on identifying victims of war crimes committed in the Balkan Wars. Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević later became the first sitting head of state indicted for such crimes.

Shielded by the UN, her team entered across the Macedonian border. Scottish to her backbone, she never realised she was British until she saw the Union Jack painted on a tank coming right towards them and felt “the sheer sense of relief that says it’s ours”.

That didn’t end the nightmare, though, for their

“*I still have huge imposter syndrome [that says] my governing body is going to wake up and realise what a mistake they’ve made*

job was to enter a crime scene. 43 dead bodies, people rounded up into rooms “sprayed with Kalashnikov fire”. She tells me that the criminals “stood at the window, threw in straw, threw in petrol, [and] torched the building. [The one survivor] had to lie underneath the dead bodies of his friends and his family who were burning above him.”

I ask how she can possibly work with such a sense of moral disgust. The solution: block it out.



“It’s not your fight. You’re a scientist. Your job is to find the evidence, recover it, analyse it, report on it, and go home. And so I can’t allow myself to empathise and sympathise.”

When I ask about the Lords, I expect the usual answer about people being out-of-touch, of not doing real experience in the field, as Black does. She recognises the perception of “old people asleep on benches and having a nice lunch”, which she also had on arriving in the role, but claims “that was totally wrong”. She applied after being told that more scientists were needed in the Lords, and more women scientists in particular.

“Blown away by the breadth and depth of knowledge” in the House, she believes Crossbenchers in particular can offer important oversight. I press, though: should the Lords be abolished altogether? Black has changed her views on the House, and sees “a genuine commitment to trying to do the right thing”, especially when they sat till 3am to debate the Rwanda Bill, a remarkable feat given the age of some parliamentarians. But of course, she adds, “I suppose if that’s what we vote for, that’s what we vote for.”

Being surrounded by death in her line of work, I figure Black will have some thoughts about the Assisted Dying Bill. She will vote in support, pro-

vided she is “convinced that the safeguards are in place. I feel that I am sufficiently comfortable with death, that when it is right for me, I want to be able to have that choice.”

The application to St John’s came across her desk, and much to her surprise given outside stereotypes about Oxford, “humanity, humility, and a strong moral compass” were the desired qualities. Why would she have thoughts on the tutorial system when she never went to Oxford?

That honesty carried her all the way to the role. Even bluntness seemed to help. In a video each candidate had to make as part of the selection process, Black said “I feel really sorry for St John’s, how awful it is to be known as Oxford’s wealthiest college. Wouldn’t it be better to be known as its most welcoming or its most innovative, or its most enlightened, it’s most diverse. Anything has got to be better than being the wealthiest.”

I ask her for the weirdest thing she has to do as President.

“Oh, lordy. President of St John’s College. [Today] I’m going to go away and look at new samples for chairs in the chapel, and then later on in the week, we will go for a perambulation up to Bagley wood, and later on in the summer, we will go and have a perambulation to one of our farms. It’s the



most ludicrous job I've ever done in my life!"

I warned at the start of my interview that there would be some difficult policy questions, and it was at this point that I shifted my focus to buzzwords in Oxford: AI, free speech, and similar. Having attended the inauguration of Lord William Hague as Chancellor, I too heard him talk up the potential of artificial intelligence as a tool for exceptional change at the University.

She notes that AI has changed the face of her own line of work. "We have trained the computers to identify where the hands of the perpetrator are in a video [of child sexual abuse]. We've been able to train computers to identify what is the vein pattern on that hand? What is the freckle pattern, the scar pattern, the skin crease pattern, and extract those, convert them into a multimodal biometric... we would never have been able to do that manually."

This, however, is "white box" AI, where the reasoning process is still visible to human engineers. What is more concerning is "black box" AI, where the computer does not show its working. All the same, Black is "supportive of AI in the way in which it will help us to do things that we have not been able to do before, just by the limitation of our own ability. I couldn't look at 5 million images." What that isn't is letting a chatbot write your essay.

"Are you cheating yourself when AI writes your essay for you?" she asks – "you are."

AI done, free speech next. Hague mentioned the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act in his admission address. With a perception in some quarters that higher education needs more protections to ensure that people can speak freely on university campuses, I'm curious to know what Black's experience across Dundee, Lancaster, and Oxford has shown her.

"I fully believe that people should be able to voice their opinion as long as it is not inducing hatred or aggression of any kind, because we all have our views and it is really the most rewarding in a debate, when you have these different views. It's one of those great human freedoms of being able to listen to a tapestry of perspectives and views, in a way that educates you to come to your own decision."

"We just need to watch that the legislation doesn't impact negatively on that ability. But I support it, 100%." For Black, free speech is a vital enabler of the student experience: "you're never going to be more critical of institutions than at your age. That's what being a student is all about!"

Image Credit: Paul Wilkinson Photography, by permission of St John's

Oxford spotlight: Masood Najar, the owner of the beloved local falafel spot, Najar's Place

*Najar speaks to
Sydney Walter about
family, cooking, and the
future of Najar's Place*

Those unfamiliar with Oxford may not understand why there's a queue extending down the street for a refurbished cabbie shelter on St Giles'. But to those in the know, that small blue shelter is the Lebanese restaurant Najar's Place. To those really in the know, it's *Masood Najar's place*, and he has been the man behind the magic of Oxford lunchtime, dinnertime, and sometimes even breakfast, for twenty years.

Masood Najar is 47 and has been in Oxford since 2004. It was in 2005 that he put the 'Najar' in Najar's Place when he took the business over from his friend. Propped up on a counter which faces the street to speak with me, Masood told me that he makes everything himself.

"When you're cooking food, what are you thinking about?"

"About love."

"About love!"

"I love cooking. I love doing it with my heart. I don't want nobody else to do it."

Originally from Aleppo, Syria, he moved to the UK because, as he puts it, he didn't like Middle Eastern culture:

"The culture there is all rules.

Not just rules against you, but you know, your freedom. You don't have

freedom for yourself. You don't have a right. You don't have a say. Or everything is limited, and you can't do lots of things you do here and in Europe. So I always wanted a free society, a free world. I mean, everything is available. Yeah, always. Like this."

He gestures outside at the street behind me. But it wasn't just this feeling of being free which made Masood want to come to the UK; it was also the opportunity of education: "I wanted to feel free, of course, but, you know, the learning as well. You know, I learned a lot here. Yeah, I lived in there, like in back home, maybe 24 years, and I've been here for 23 years, and I learned more here than when in school."

Masood believes deeply in four things: hard work, determination, kindness, and learning. He wants to learn as much as he can about the world. From animals, to the potential of life on other planets – "We are just a dot in this universe! There is no way we are the only ones" – he hopes that he is passing that love of

learning on to his three kids, too.

Learning is one of the things most important to Masood because it's being educated, he says, that opens up all the doors. A father to three kids, Najar's Place supports his entire family and in that way, it is a family-owned business. However, he doesn't want his kids to take over when the time comes for him to retire:

"I want them to be educated, you know, education, there's no substitute. I want my family to go to study in universities, my kids, that would be great. And if I can buy them houses and stuff. I have been saving them some money, so hopefully when they are eighteen, they'll have some deposit for the house."

He sighs.

"And if I can't, oh well, at least I tried. Unlike my dad. My dad never tried anything."

Masood laughs and taps the counter with his thumb.

"All [this] I did myself."

A typical day for Masood starts at 4:00 AM when he comes in to begin roasting four legs of lamb and fifteen kilos of chicken, all of which will be finished by the end of the day. I suppose 'typical day' is fitting, as Masood works every day of the week. He doesn't like to take days off, and if he sleeps too much, he complains that his back hurts.

For Masood, he doesn't know what would come next for Najar's Place were he not to run it. But he does know, and feels deeply, that if the day were to come for his retirement, Oxford would miss him and Najar's Place immensely. His relationship with the customers is what he prides himself on, almost with the same energy that he talks about his kids:

"You know, I have students coming from 20 years [ago], they still come to me. When they finish [and] visit Oxford, they still come to me and see me, sometimes with their kids."

His customers, he says, are the backbone of Najar's Place. They keep the business afloat with their patronage and give Masood purpose. His number one rule for his employees is that:

"They don't have to respect me, but they have to respect the business and the customer. That's it. Because of this little place, five people working here and [supporting] five families, you know? And this place, nobody expects anything from it, but I show you can make [food] fresh and cheap and you still make [a] little money. And it's all not about money, it's all about happiness."

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Review: *An Anthology of Pairs* – ‘Two’s a Party’

STAGE

A trio of duologues chart the fault lines of love, faith, and family with aching realism, refusing to offer easy answers

MERCEDES HAAS

There’s a particular theatrical magic that comes from two people simply talking in a room. No stage tricks, no elaborate plot devices – just language, chemistry, and the slow unveiling of character. Juliet Taub’s *An Anthology of Pairs* leans into this stripped-back power, offering three duologues that still feel more sprawling and expansive than many plays with a full cast and multiple set changes. What begins as a conversation between lovers blooms into a meditation on faith, culture, womanhood, and the hard-earned wisdom of generational conflict. It is a masterclass in intimacy, both emotional and theatrical, quietly echoing the kind of psychic architecture Virginia Woolf spent her life mapping – the way rooms, and what’s said inside them, shape who we are.

We open with Rach and Tai – university students wrapped up in the sweet, familiar mess of early love. The scene unfolds in Rach’s student accommodation (the university itself is never specified). The audience’s position feels almost voyeuristic – like we’ve wandered into the living room of two real people and haven’t yet been asked to leave. Rach (Caeli Colgan) and Tai (Ezana Betru) have an undeniable spark that makes the early back-and-forth jokes about boring essays and awkward professors feel improvised, even lived. But Taub’s script knows exactly where it’s going. The lightness curdles slowly, and before we realise it, we’ve stumbled into a minefield.

Rach, culturally Jewish but spiritually adrift, bristles at Tai’s relationship with Islam, which she sees as selective, even convenient. Tai shoots back, accusing Rach of weaponising the very people-pleasing persona she claims is just self-effacing. The debate is painful in its realism: not polished, not didactic, but jagged, like all good arguments are. They circle questions of compromise, of who is allowed to change and why. The most powerful tension isn’t between their religions but between how religion lives inside each of them: part inherited, part chosen, all tangled.

Then it happens – they say they’re each other’s favourite person. For a second, you believe that maybe this is the part of the story where things work out. But Taub is far too honest for that. Love,



An Anthology of Pairs reminds us, is not always enough to outrun difference. They break up, and you’re left dazed in the silence that follows, like the moment after a door clicks shut. Familiar, final, and oddly private.

A scene change jolts us: we’re in an airport. A new pair, a new room. Rach’s mother, Sarah, played with aching restraint by Lorna Campbell, is crying next to a stranger – the character of Mike (Luke Bannister). Mike is a witty, slightly jaded gay man who introduces himself as a freelance journalist, though we suspect the “freelance” part might be doing a lot of heavy lifting. The scene begins like a setup for a joke: woman crying in an airport, man offers tissues, and yet what unfolds is a beautifully paced unravelling of Sarah’s life.

Campbell’s Sarah is a study in contradiction:

devout but disillusioned, maternal yet deeply lonely, fiercely intelligent but emotionally stunted by years of silence. Her line, “I love my husband the same way I love the colour of my childhood bedroom” is a tiny detonation – equal parts nostalgia and resignation. Mike, with his outsider status, becomes the unlikely confidant she never knew she needed. Bannister keeps the tone light without ever flattening the stakes; his charm masks the same bruises Sarah carries, just arranged differently.

This middle scene is the play’s most formally traditional, even a touch sentimental in its “strangers sharing secrets” dynamic. But it earns its pathos. As Mike gently prods Sarah, asking the quietly devastating, “Do you like your daughter?” we begin to see the cracks that stretch far beyond the mother-daughter disagreement over God or

culture. Sarah’s religious life is both her shield and her shackle. Her children don’t speak to her. Her husband won’t talk about her affair. The silence between them is deafening, and its weight hits all the harder now that we understand the agonising roots of Rach’s own estrangement.

In the final scene, five years later, Sarah visits Rach in a new apartment. Time has passed, but the wounds haven’t scabbed over entirely. Sarah, still devout, wonders aloud whether she still has a place in Rach’s life if Rach no longer believes in God. It’s the play’s central question, and perhaps its most quietly devastating one. If our parents represent the foundations of our world, what happens when we remodel? Can love outlast the scaffolding?

Image Credits: Frequent Fliers Production

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A Closer look at intimacy in Labyrinth’s new production

FAYE CHANG

“After a one-and-a-half hours of intense rehearsal, the return to a strong sense of camaraderie when we sat down for an interview, although abrupt to me, seemed to come very naturally to the cast.”

Labyrinth Production’s upcoming production, Patrick Marber’s *Closer*, is a novel step up in the kinds of physical and emotional intensity that the Oxford student drama scene has previously engaged with. The play follows the intertwined lives of Alice (Catherine ‘Catty’ Claire Williams-Boyle), Dan (Vasco Faria), Anna (Vita Hamilton) and Larry (Robert Wolfreys) in their flirtations, affairs, and entanglements with each other over the years, as they fall in and out of love again and again, breaking each other’s hearts.

Directed by Rosie Morgan-Males and produced by Natascha Norton, *Closer* brings a distinctly challenging level of intimacy for the cast and crew to contend with. Luckily, I had the chance

to sit in on one of their rehearsals, and chat with the team about how they were able to deal with the difficulties.

From the moment I stepped into Cohen’s Quad in Exeter, it was clear that Rosie ran a strict rehearsal room, but the cast and crew were still very comfortable with each other; they jokingly reminded each other to “lock in, lock in” before the start of a scene. After one-and-a-half hours of intense rehearsal, in which the cast scream, fight, and betray each other in character, the return to a strong sense of camaraderie when we sat down for an interview, although abrupt to me, seemed to come very naturally to the cast.

When I asked them to talk about the scenes they had just been rehearsing, for example, Vasco

started providing a comprehensive summary of the plot intricacies, before the other members of the cast started ribbing him to cut it short.

“I think from a dramaturgical point of view...” Rosie interrupted, as the rest of the cast laughed, “...it’s the first time that we see a scene that has all four [characters] in it. It’s the first time you can go, ‘oh, okay, I see two relationships side by side; how are they different, how are they going to cross?’”

“If Scene Five is like planting the seeds of the contracts that need to be made,” Catty also explained, “when you enter into Scene Six, those contracts are being finalized and you can see the dissolution of everything, which is then to be rebuilt in Act Two.”

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FILM AND TV

Editors' Picks

IN THEATRES



WARFARE

Co-directed by Alex Garland and Iraq War veteran Ray Mendoza, this new film recreates the memories of a platoon of Navy Seals during the 2006 Battle of Ramadi.

TO STREAM



CONCLAVE

More topical than ever, this political thriller follows the search for a new Pope.

Image Credits:
[WARFARE] - 'Will Poulter' by John Sears via Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0
[CONCLAVE] - 'Ralph Fiennes' by Hofendis via Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0

SEPTEMBER 5: JOURNALISM DRAMA DOESN'T QUESTION THE FACTS ENOUGH

JANIK PEETERS

Set during the 1972 Munich Olympics, Tim Fehlbaum's *September 5* tracks the ABC Sports crew's coverage of the Israeli athlete hostage crisis in the Olympic Village: the first terror attack broadcast live to the world. It's determined to give us a realistic depiction of the journalists' work, led by newly-promoted Geoff Mason (John Magaro).

Near-everything happens in the team's broadcasting rooms, whether it's the painstaking editing of tapes smuggled through Olympic Village security, or Mason cueing shots from a bank of square monitors. There's a deep reverence for the physical work these journalists do, coupled with a powerful hit of nostalgia from constant close-ups of wires and machinery – unflinching commitment to historical accuracy.

The film largely disregards the politics of the event, as Fehlbaum has said he was focused on the act of journalism, not politics. It's hard to begrudge him for that artistic choice, especially knowing the film was fully edited before the October 7 attacks and the atrocities that followed. Having said that, placing such heavy emphasis on his film's depiction of journalistic work means Fehlbaum may have ended up creating a rod for his own back. For *September 5*'s perspective on journalistic ethics in many ways falls just as short as its politics.

Geoff Mason is at the heart of the film's attempt to tackle those challenges. It is his decision to track the police's first rescue attempt with a balcony camera, realising too late that

the captors are watching their footage on TVs in the athletes' rooms. They're lucky it doesn't result in a death, but still he presses on. It is also his choice to lead on news of a successful rescue before he receives confirmation from other sources, directly against the words of his superior Marvin Bader (Ben Chaplin). These are both significant failures. They lead directly to the devastating moment presenter Jim McKay turns to camera and says that the hostages were not in fact rescued, but killed in a police shootout.

Fertile grounds for examining the ethics of broadcasting, then. But it never feels like the ABC crew has to reckon with those mistakes.

“ Having said that, placing such heavy emphasis on his film's depiction of journalistic work means Fehlbaum may have ended up creating a rod for his own back

After their filming sabotaged the first rescue attempt, German soldiers storm in and order their broadcast to be shut down. Within

minutes, they're back to reporting, with no consequences, and no second thoughts about the effects their coverage might be having. The film seems to assume we'll be on ABC's side, but it's difficult to argue with the Germans' attempt to keep their operation viable.

One journalist's later decision to hide from a police search of the surrounding buildings escapes comment entirely. And, though we end with a shot of Mason slumped over his car's dashboard, his flawed approach is in fact rewarded: Boone Arledge (Peter Sarsgaard), the head of *ABC Sports*, leaves us with no uncertainty about Geoff's impending promotion.

In some ways, the film's devotion to the historical record seems to restrict it at moments like these – it ends up being about the broadcast, and little else. The minor characters display a little of the effects of that relentless focus. The crew's translator is given a thin anti-sexism plotline; Bader's Jewish heritage is briefly mentioned: otherwise, near-total silence. The impression we get is ultimately that the news matters more than the stories. ABC's journalists are beyond reproach, for they are simply recording history, not making it.

September 5 is in many ways a frustrating watch. It's a frantic, tense, and exceptionally well-crafted film. But in its attempt to perfectly recreate the events of the 1972 Munich massacre, it forgoes a far more foundational aspect of the craft it so reveres: holding to account those with the power to shape the narrative.

I'm Still Here: An exploration of memories

FREDDIE BEDDINGTON

I'm Still Here follows a mother and her family as they deal with the disappearance of her husband at the hands of a military dictatorship. They have to cope with his loss, without knowing when or if he will ever return. The impossible question the film asks is: how long do you wait for? At what point do we become merely a memory?

One of the first things to become clear about the family is how they try to preserve the present as much as possible. They try to see the time they spend together as a perfect memory that can last forever, even while they are experiencing it. We see how much they try to hold onto their time together. One of the daughters, Vera, is constantly filming her car journeys and trips to the beach with her hand-held camera. The family's outings are captured in polaroids, often revisited by the mother, Eunice. They capture their experiences in physical objects to return to: immediately fossilising them as memories. The grainy colour palette, evoking the sand and sun of Brazil in the 70s, makes their surroundings seem representative of the very particular place and time they are living in; a picture would perfectly capture the memory through these colours.

When the father goes missing, the mother continues this idea and tries to preserve the life they had with him. To the younger children, she pretends that he has only gone on holiday and will be back soon. Letting a future without her husband take its course would be too painful for them. Her struggle at this point is one of trying to hang on to the memory of Rubens vicariously

through her children, while realising that dwelling in the memory can only bring harm.

Hanging onto the memory only tarnishes it. In one scene, after Rubens has disappeared, Eunice and her children have ice cream in a shop. The children are enjoying themselves, but Eunice is reminded of an earlier scene where they were there with her husband. She looks around the area, seeing families talking, and cannot help but cry. In hanging onto the past, we are only reminded of what we have lost. In this way, a memory takes on a different meaning. Our memories are not perfect, immovable representations of the past: their meaning is equally formed in the present as well.

Hanging onto a memory only makes Eunice realise their necessary imperfection. Eventually, all the family have to remember their father by are some faded polaroids, and some grainy homemade films. The past happens, and it is never re-experienced. Perhaps, when Eunice was in the shop, it was this realisation that moved her; she will never truly relive that moment with Rubens there, no matter how much she tries to.

It is difficult to live reliant on past memories, yet we are dependent on them. In one scene, one of the children loses a tooth. She and Rubens bury the tooth in the sand, and he says that they will go back to that spot and find it. His trick is that he waits for her to leave and digs it back up. After Ruben's disappearance, Eunice finds the tooth at his desk. She gives her daughter the tooth, who wonders how her mother found it in the sand. What this scene perfectly articulates is how, in living with someone in our memory, we can bring them back to life. Maybe this is the meaning of the title. Either way, it shows that even in leaving the

past behind Eunice continues the spirit of Rubens.

The film makes it clear that Eunice is entirely a product of her past, and carries it with her through her memories. As she is taking the posters off the wall during her packing to leave home, the camera lingers on the wall covered in marks the posters have left. We are forced to carry our memories with us; the signs of the past cannot be erased.

This idea becomes interesting when contrasted against the imperfection of memories. Eunice lives for someone who was taken from her, and eventually all she has to live for is a distant and forgotten feeling. By the end of the film, Eunice has grown older. Her memory is fading. Her only way of remembering Rubens is through aged polaroids. In the final scene, we see her watching

a documentary on the military dictatorship. Rubens' face, in a grainy black-and-white photo, pops up on the screen. We see recognition in Eunice's face, but also surprise. It is like seeing a face for the first time. The tragic beauty of Eunice's life is that it has been influenced so much by Rubens, but now Rubens is merely a picture – some pixels on a screen. We get a sense throughout the film of the particularity of a moment; a moment is gone as soon as it happens, and a memory can never truly recreate it. Eunice's story seems to be showing us that the only way we can keep going is by thinking of the ones we love, even if we cannot truly grasp them in a thought.

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On the shelf: What do Oxford's professors read?

Harriet Breakey interviews various academics to inquire about their reading habits and investigate if students and tutors are so different

In a discussion of 'the great man theory', Professor Dominic Scott outlined his recent reading – *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy – during his lectures on Plato's Republic last term. Where Tolstoy and Plato stand on the great man theory has somewhat escaped me; the more interesting takeaway was Scott's choice of reading material. I imagine a thick, intimidating, leather-bound volume which is bound to be full of archaic language. Scott himself mentioned that it was necessary to read *War and Peace* twice to fully get to grips with it. It sounds like a slog.

Of course an Oxford philosophy professor is reading such classic literature as *War and Peace*. But how usual is this? And what do our professors read? Is the mass consumption of classic literature a trait unique to our humanities professors? Or is this more widespread amongst the academics?

To quench my curiosity, I reached out to several tutors to ask them about their current reading. I received a surprising number of responses, and some tutors had kindly spent a lot of time detailing their reading habits and favourite books. As one might expect, there were far more responses from the humanities professors compared to those in STEM subjects, yet this is not to say there was no engagement from that field. One Computer Science professor got in touch to let me know that he sadly doesn't not have much time to read anything other than scientific papers.

I asked these professors whether reading is an escape from their field of study or another way to remain immersed in their subject. Their responses overwhelmingly favoured reading as a form of wider research. Associate Professor of French, Simon Kemp, shared that he had been reading *Mathématiques Congolaises* by In Koli Jean Bofane. Written in French by a Congolese



author, the story follows a young man who uses maths to make sense of the world around him.

“*Even if what he reads isn't used for research, it's all literature, and sparks ideas and comparisons*”

reflected that even if what he reads isn't used for research or teaching, it's all literature and sparks ideas and comparisons as well as informing us of the diversity of literary culture around the world.

Karen Margrethe Nielsen, Associate Professor of Philosophy, had several intriguing recommendations. *Drive Your Plow Over*

the Bones of the Dead by Olga Tokarczuk is a murder mystery novel set during Polish winter. Nielsen also mentioned her recent reading, *Armand V* by Dag Solstad, a Norwegian writer who sadly passed away last month. *Armand V* follows Armand as he grapples with his duty to support his country in foreign wars and his private aversion to combat. While Nielsen does not read philosophical novels, she enjoys when the main characters grapple with a philosophical question as these things are best addressed when “immersed in human life”.

The literature our tutors partake in seems both accessible and varied and I was refreshed by their eagerness to share this; it seems students and tutors may have more in common than one might expect.

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BOOKS

The art of literary retellings

SASKIA MAINI

Love, betrayal, justice, jealousy: these are timeless themes, woven into the human experience for millennia. It's no surprise, then, that they have shaped our literature for so long. They reappear time and time again, in the works of Homer and Shakespeare, Dickens and Austen, Orwell and Woolf. They never grow old – and why should they? Humans haven't fundamentally changed. So why should our stories?

Retellings permeate culture. From operas to ballets, films to theatre, and novels to children's fairy tales, we are ceaselessly reshaping the old into the new. In childhood we absorb these familiar stories unawares. *The Lion King* (1994) borrows from *Hamlet*; *She's The Man* (2023) took inspiration from *Twelfth Night*; and *Gnomeo and Juliet* (2011) – well, that one is admittedly less subtle.

But even translations are, in my view, a form of retelling. Translations do not map onto the original word-for-word; there is (as those of us who know the tribulations of translating can well attest) no accurate method of mechanical linguistic translation. Direct translations sometimes simply cannot exist. There is no precise equivalent to the Spanish 'sobremesa', the Portuguese 'saudade', or the German 'Waldeinsamkeit' in English. Each term encapsulates unique cultural experiences.

But why do we then continually retell the same stories, repackaging them for new audiences?

Much of our love and affinity for such stories is rooted in what may be termed the 'Volksggeist': the cultural consciousness or collective spirit of a people. It stems from the workings of cultural memory: these stories help to shape how a society views itself, and how it is remembered.

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What's Oxford reading?

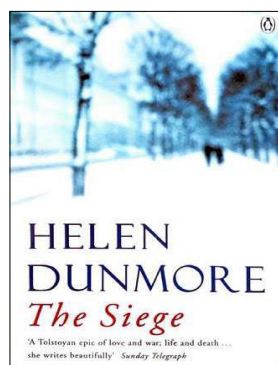


THE MIRROR AND THE LIGHT Hilary Mantel

The third in Mantel's series charting the career of Thomas Cromwell, this novel is a masterclass in brilliant historical fiction. Having masterminded the beheading of Anne Boleyn, the final instalment recounts in rich psychological detail Cromwell's slow yet inevitable spiral towards a similar fate.

THE SEIGE Helen Dunmore

A rich historical romance, set during the WW2 Siege of Leningrad by German forces. The novel follows the parallel stories of the young Anna and Andrei, and Anna's novelist father and the actress Marina, as they struggle to survive the winter.



Periodisation and the problem of now

AVA DOHERTY

Periodisation, the act of dividing literature into eras, is how we order the chaos of literary history. But today's literary landscape hangs in a liminal space – between the softness inherited from post-1960s idealism and Gen Z's digital-era defiance. In an age of self-publishing, algorithms, and Twitter threads, how can we honestly claim to define this moment in literature by any single unifying trait?

Our present increasingly disavows binaries, but the act of periodising demands the rigid structure we've been taught to interrogate. And literature has long been a space of ambiguity, of multiplicity. It is intertextual by nature, always pointing to something beyond itself.

If this moment needs a name, it might be 'anti-period'. One in which the lingering influence of Romanticism, with its grandeur and ornamentation, hasn't been replaced by a distinct new mode, but by a rejection of form itself. Sentences now stretch or shatter, as in the work of Claudia Rankine or Jenny Offill, where fragments mirror fractured psyches. It is a quiet resistance, a refusal to be boxed in.

Instantaneous fame, viral visibility, micro-narratives – these fragment the literary canon. Perhaps this fragmentation is the most honest form of literature we can offer. Think of Toni Morrison, who famously resisted traditional chapter structures

in *Beloved*. It wasn't just a stylistic choice, but an act of deconstruction, a challenge to the Western, white literary tradition, and a reminder of older oral traditions.

Even in Oxford there are undercurrents. Some students stick closely to the classics; others remix them. Footnotes live beside fanfiction. Shakespeare shares desk space with Emily Henry. But do we need to periodise to understand? Or can we accept what Keats termed “negative capability”: the capacity to dwell in uncertainty and doubt without feeling any itch for fact and reason?

Keats' concept, centuries old, feels radical now. It is precisely what literature demands of us: the courage not to know, to sense, to feel, to intuit meaning. We didn't need to understand *Jane Eyre* to feel its resonance fully, nor dissect Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* line by line to understand the echoes between them.

This may be what defines our era: an era of resistance to era. It is a moment when the label 'post-postmodern' no longer satisfies, where the urge to categorise gives way to something looser, stranger, unstable, more human.

The paradox is that even as we resist periodisation, we continue to toy with it. We are at once inheritors and rewriters of literary time. And perhaps that is the only unifying characteristic of now: the refusal to be unified.

[Continue reading at cherwell.org](#)

Exhibition 004: Oxford artistry across all mediums

Dara Mohd takes a walk through Worcester College's Exhibition 004, exploring the polyphony of Oxford artists' visions – one garment, photograph, and suitcase at a time

ART

When I first walked into *Exhibition 004*, my gaze was immediately met with Magda Adamczyk's *Nightmare*. A demon, swirling with hellish strokes of red, invades. It conquers the viewer's mind, through the floral dream of the foreground, and then swallows them all into the darkness, tongue first.

To escape, I glanced rightward, chasing a way out of the nightmare, and Aman de Silva's *Window Shopping* installation of garments and printed photographs roused me awake. What particularly caught my eye was a shirt – wet-looking and glistening, as though it were still clinging to a rain-soaked body. De Silva told *Cherwell* that he achieved this effect by moulding a shirt to his body with slow curing epoxy resin. Next to it, a Union Jack fashioned dress and waistcoat – “bizarre white middle-class British uniforms”, De Silva said – both white-colored and contrasted against brown. De Silva explained that this piece was inspired by the “anti-immigration riots” which generated a dissonance in his once-comfortable British-Indian identity.

Visual Arts Worcester's *Exhibition 004* showcases art across all forms and mediums. While being only two artworks in, I began to think that I was already knee-deep in its immersive diversity. However, unbeknownst to me, the exhibition had already begun before I even knew it. Upon entering Worcester College, I passed a cello drawing made against the cloisters. Lewis McCulloh, president of the Exhibition 004 committee, told *Cherwell*: this was a “live drawing from the launch night”,



created by Rowan Briggs Smith in collaboration with the playing of cellist Matthew Wakefield.

Tiger Huffinley, Head of Installation, told *Cherwell* that “there was a large variation in the mediums”. As a result, a priority of the exhibition was to find a configuration that would make the pieces complement one another. Huffinley also told *Cherwell*: “We were lucky with the space we were given to make that happen” – that is, the Sultan Nazrin Shah Centre in Worcester. The idea here is to integrate the diverse mediums and

thereby create a sense of balance.

The concept of culture and identity is prominent in Exhibition 004. Right on the mark is Camilla Albernaz's photograph *Carnival in Salvador: A Celebration of Culture and Identity*. The outsider is dropped straight into Salvador's Carnival, a deeply rooted Brazilian tradition, becoming another among the colorful, laughing, singing people. The photograph calls both sonder and oneness to mind; the people dance together yet each to the sound of their own respective tunes. Albernaz

told *Cherwell*: “I aim to offer a new perspective of Brazil.”

Lisha Zhong, too, reflects identity and culture in the eye-catching piece *Like a thousand cranes*. The artist used their mother's suitcase to build a bridge between British soil and their ancestral Chinese home. Inside the suitcase, Chinese immigration cards hang from a laundry rack, airing out their lineage in the sun and illuminating it. But as Fern Kruger-Paget's *My F**king House* shows us, in the form of polystyrene and knitted panels, displacement, at all levels, is never easy.

Our memories can then be begged by Kian Swingler's *Witnesses*: he organizes photographs of memories – loving and painful, unforgettable and forgotten – on white fabric, hung in the air with red string. These memories make us who we are. In the same vein, Oliwia Kamieniecka preserves their memories as visual poems – this is uniquely shown through *Sand Alphabet*, a 16-second stop motion animation completed on a printer scanner and displayed on a television. Paper bag poems are just as enthralling: Julia Strawinska suspends memory in time, the clock hands pointing to the liminal space between love and pain. Julia too speaks of dreams, but in all capitals this time: “...I'VE BEEN DREAMING OF YOU ALL SUMMER.”

To me, Exhibition 004 is a love letter to the raw artistry that comes out of this city, from both students and other artists, and it bleeds through every canvas, stitch, and shutter-click.

Image Credit: Hilla Sewell for Exhibition 004

[Continue reading at cherwell.org](http://cherwell.org)

ARTS CALENDAR

What's On.

STAGE

Suddenly Last Summer – Analogia Productions (Oxford Playhouse, 20th-24th May)

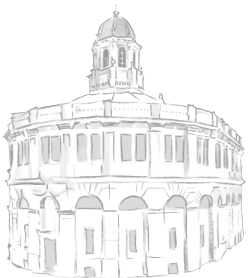
So Far So Good – The One That Got Stuck Productions (Michael Pilch Studio, 28th-31st May)

MUSIC

The Simple 12 Hour Street Party – Simple (Tap Room Social, 25th May)

ART

Oxford Inverted – Revd Doctor Erica Longfellow (Pembroke Art Gallery, 27th May-1st June)



The Source

“The costume smells like vinegar. I don't know why; it just does.”

Matted, white fur is draped across my upturned arms. I take an experimental, cursory whiff: vinegar, body odor, stale caffeine, and a hint of mint. Easter Bunny, my ass – this is a medieval torture chamber.

“And, don't ask for a spray. It is a tried and untrue method. You're just gonna have to deal with it.”

My new boss gives an unapologetic, “sucks-to-be-you-but-what-can-I-do” shrug. He adjusts his name-tag – a metallic clip-on with engraved “Benjamin (Ben) Moore, Public Relations Manager” – with all the double-edged arrogance-insecurity of a workaholic. Wasn't an “empathic disposition” a prerequisite for this job?

“The school arrives at noon, with the scavenger hunt beginning at one, so the morning will be slow. But, don't expect to be sitting around doing nothing. The moment the costume goes on, you're on, understand?”

I give a firm nod, satisfying Ben who proceeds to explain the scavenger hunt event in more detail and the associated duties and ethics of donning The Easter Bunny Suit.

In the life of a broke and aimless recent college graduate (in English, no less), the Easter Bunny life didn't choose me; I chose it. Living with my parents, with no prospects or lofty goals, and equipped with the lexicon of someone who has read a bit too much Victorian literature, it is safe to say that I needed to fill all this free-time somehow. And, as my father insisted, I might as well earn some cash before actually making money.

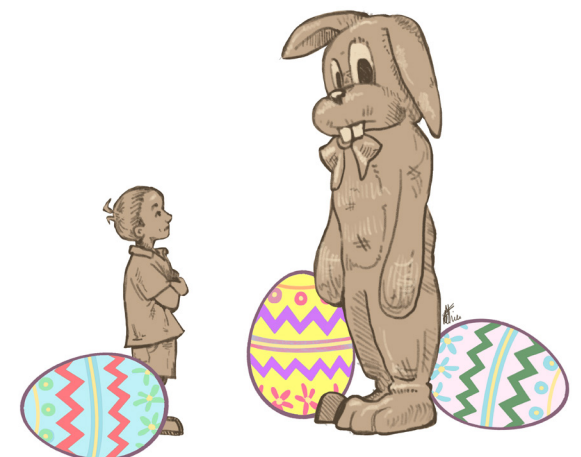
So, an opening at Riverside Playland – a small and local amusement park at the edge of town – for costume characters was perfect.

Image Credit: Archie Johnston for Cherwell

[Continue reading at cherwell.org](http://cherwell.org)

Easter Eggs

MORGAN HODOROWSKI



The struggles of modernising Bizet's *Carmen*

Eleanor Hamilton Clark and Francois Cloete discuss Oxford Opera Society's adaptation

MUSIC

If you recall Pixar's *UP*, a comedy where an old man balloons with his dog to South America, a funny moment appears in Carl's morning routine: the agonizingly slow stairlift in his house. What makes this scene funny is the tune we hear, all its tension, frustration, and sauciness – and that tune comes from *Carmen*.

Set in southern Spain, the opera follows a Gitano woman, Carmen (Milette Gillow), and her complex relationships with two men, the soldier Don José (Robin Whitehouse) and Escamillo (David Bicaregui) the bullfighter. Unable to handle Carmen's rejection, Don José murders her at the very end, just before Escamillo enters the bullring. The Oxford Opera Society's Friday night performance of the opera in the Sheldonian gave us an entertaining performance, looking past a few musical and logistical issues, but their faithful approach to *Carmen*'s problematic stereotypes raised questions about producers' responsibilities today.

There were certainly many laudable moments; one of our personal favourites was the incorporation of dance into a number of scenes. Elizabeth Lee, Lilly Law, and Rosie East delighted us with graceful twists and turns in nostalgic 'character dance' skirts, reminiscent of primary school ballet. The fight scene between Don José and Escamillo was also enjoyable, with impressively slick flips and glanced blows.

The soloists certainly had their moments too. Act 1's 'Habanera' was particularly captivating, as Carmen taunted infatuated soldiers with

vocal portamento and her commanding stage presence. In Act 3, we heard Michaëla (Lucy Elston) pleading with her aria 'Je dis que rien', accompanied beautifully by Tommaso Rusconi on horn. *Carmen*'s hit tunes drew generous applause between numbers.

Although peppered by scintillating musical talent, the opera did leave much to be desired. Starting with some practical issues, the orchestra seemed thin on the ground for string players, blasted out by trombones in the 'Overture'. At times the players seemed completely lost, such as during the tra-la-la flute number, or the offstage brass in the finale (half a beat behind). Our stellar singers were missing some key structural support from the orchestra, dragged along by rather pompous conducting. *Carmen* may be an opéra comique, but its passionate arias may have benefited from a little more flexibility.

Staging and lighting choices were equally confusing. A multipurpose minimalist set was awkwardly moved around for each new scene, with a couple of screws going missing in the process. Lighting was stark and abrupt – who wants mustard yellow for a love scene?

To be fair, a seventeenth-century theatre is no ideal substitute for a modern opera house, with all its technical riggings. And don't get us wrong: we were definitely entertained. Some of the production's best moments came from its ingenious use of props to focus on key moments. The addition of tequila shots during the party scene was a modernising and fun addition. Carmen's impressive castanet skills while she flirted with

Don José helped draw us into the scene's sexual tension.

But overall, the heart of *Carmen* seemed to have been missed. Carmen's journey from commanding and powerful to objectified, used, and ultimately murdered, could have been a perfect platform to address issues of sexualisation and violence against women. Instead of critically engaging with the opera's bullring of nineteenth century attitudes, Oxford Opera Society preferred to recreate them.

Take the production's costuming, for example. Carmen's transitions from yellow to red foreshadow the act of her murder and remind the audience of the violence to be committed against

her. Carmen's sexual liberation is her undoing, prophesied by fortune cards, and we are left with the message that unruly femininity kills. Compare this with Michaëla in her old-fashioned blue dress: Michaëla is the 'ideal' domestic feminine, the 'right' woman for Don José as she pleads him to return home in Act 3, but José is led astray by the unruly Carmen. The duality between the two women, at least in this production, seemed to align the audience with Michaëla, and condemn the dangers of women's freedom and empowerment that Carmen represented.

Read the full article at cherwell.org

Image Credit: Milette Gillow for Oxford Opera Society



Oxford Fashion Gala's theme reflects the beauty of change

EMMA HEAGNEY

The Oxford Fashion Gala was back and bigger than ever, with a larger venue, more ticket sales, and a grander vision. On Wednesday 14th May, the Town Hall was host to a night of ethereal glamour and exceptional young talent. Designers and models came together under this year's theme of 'Metamorphosis', which had been teased through the Gala's Instagram and Pinterest.

Before any further information came out, the Gala's Pinterest was already a great sneak preview for what we could expect to see. Inspiration ranged from Iris van Herpen to Björk to

Ancient Greek vases, and of course, butterflies. Think ethereal, think draped, think flowy.

A week prior, your *Cherwell* Fashion editor was lucky enough to get a chance to start building a concrete sense of the designs through a sneak peek of the show at their dress rehearsal. Gearing up for the big day, the organisers of the Gala were on top form, thinking carefully about the right music to fit the theme and experimental ideas for the runway setup. It was delightful to see the range of models, from their diverse appearances to their different approaches to 'the walk'. Of course, even in their rehearsal outfits, the models were still incredibly stylish.

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During the rehearsal, I sat down with one of

“Metamorphosis allowed him to express his tragedy through something beautiful”

the designers at this year's Gala, Axel Roy Lee. His interpretation of the theme is incredibly moving, with a recent bereavement inspiring him to channel his loved one's distinctive style into his designs. Metamorphosis and change allowed him to express his tragedy through something beautiful, and pay homage to someone who had changed his life for the better. This touching sentiment reminds us of why fashion is so important to so many, providing a platform for us to connect emotionally through the medium of design, and proving that beauty lies as much in the concept as it does in the final product.

At last year's Gala, Axel put his foot through the door of fashion design, and this year he planned to impress once again. Inspired by

FASHION



Paco Rabanne's innovative "metal dresses", his second piece reflected the scales of a snake, which are another major source of inspiration for the designer born in the year of the snake. When asked for a preview of the show, Axel fittingly told *Cherwell*: "Sparkly!"

Fashion enthusiast or not, this year's Oxford Fashion Gala was definitely not one to miss. With music provided by Nightschool, The Booksellers, and Rough Edge Brass Band, the occasion was both visually and sonically thrilling.

Image Credit: Axel Lee Roy and Olivia Moore with permission



Being loved in a loveless environment

Ava Doherty reflects on university connections

You overloved me. These are the words Maggie Marshall utters to her parents in *Everything I Know About Love*. With thick, long brown hair and panda-ringed eyes, Maggie embodies the archetypal home counties girl – her life comfortable yet adrift, with no apparent reason for her poor choices. While our circumstances differ slightly (no matter how hard I try, I’ve never successfully had bangs), Maggie’s declaration about the problem of overloving resonates deeply with me. It jolted me out of a haze of late-night energy drink-fueled productivity – a chaotic frenzy to finish my never-ending backlog of work. I felt like I was living the epitome of modern exhaustion in those moments.

It’s a universal truth that you don’t realise how fortunate you are until something changes. For me, that awareness came through my relationship with my parents. Thankfully, they are still alive, though my mother often jokes that I’m driving her into an early grave. But leaving home for university was a monumental shift. Experts would say that separation is essential for growth – I embraced it enthusiastically, confident in my independence and secure attachment to them. Yet, despite my readiness, university unearthed some brutal truths.

One of the most jarring was this: nobody cared about my opinion, not in the way my parents, peers, or teachers once had. Attention wasn’t given; it was earned. It sounds narcissistic, I know, but that wake-up call made me realise just how privileged my upbringing had been. The greatest advantage in life, I now believe, is having good parents and emotional stability. This foundation enriches every aspect of your life, but with that blessing comes a challenge – it sets your standard for love incredibly high.

My parents’ warmth, security, and unwavering support created an

expectation that the world simply couldn’t match. And it didn’t – particularly at Oxford. When I arrived, I had unknowingly set myself up for disappointment by imagining friendships, romantic relationships, and deep emotional connections that never quite materialised. For months, I pretended otherwise. Whenever someone asked how I was finding Oxford, my voice would go an octave higher. I’d chirp, “Well, I am loving it!” – as if auditioning for a McDonald’s ad. It wasn’t that I disliked Oxford itself – it was more that the emotional side of life hadn’t developed at all.

Despite countless late-night conversations in Spoons about people’s lives, hopes, and dreams, I struggled to form meaningful connections. I could understand others, but they couldn’t quite reach me. The problem was that I expected to be understood in return. I spent so much time chasing a kind of love, whether platonic or romantic, that mirrored the ease and reciprocity I’d known at home, that I overlooked the quieter, more subtle offerings of connection around me. Maybe love wasn’t unattainable – just different. Slower. Less certain. More ordinary. I searched for an ideal instead of accepting reality. And that was okay.

Continue reading at cherwell.org

Illustration credit: Archie Johnston



Five ways to ward off hacks

Ava Doherty lists much-needed tips on how to say safe

Yes, dear reader, you read correctly: five ways to ward off Union hacks – and no, this is not a metaphor for removing malware from your laptop. If only it were that simple. Oxford Union hacks are far more persistent, slightly more self-righteous, and arguably harder to uninstall.

Whether you’re on your way to a tute, fleeing Pret before they spot your sixth free filter coffee of the day, or simply trying to enjoy the rare pleasure of a socially undemanding quad crossing, you may find yourself cornered by a hack. You’ll spot them easily: lanyard on, clipboard in hand, smile taut with suppressed ambition and not a soul behind the eyes. They’re not bad people – just possessed. Here’s your essential guide to surviving their advances without being guilt-tripped into supporting something that sounds suspiciously like the Model UN-meets-Etonian cosplay.

1. The Romantic deflection

When you see the hack approach, eyes gleaming with determination, flash them a look of urgency and say “I’m so sorry, I have a boyfriend/girlfriend” – a classic. The sheer confusion this generates is unparalleled. No hack thinks they are flirting, which is

precisely why suggesting they are stops them dead in their tracks. Bonus points if you lean in conspiratorially and whisper, “I promised my therapist I wouldn’t get involved with anyone from the Standing Committee again.”

For maximum impact, flip your hair (regardless of length), toss them a look of pity, and strut away like you’re on the Union chamber floor – mid-debate – and they’ve just been ruled out of order. Confidence, after all, is the true enemy of canvassers.

2. The Euthanised Grandmother

If the hack begins their usual pitch, nod sympathetically and interrupt with, “Sorry, I’m off to euthanise my grandmother”. Use with caution. This is not for the faint of heart or those on committees with an ethics clause. But as a last resort, it’s a showstopper.

A friend of mine used this once, and the poor hack was left blinking like they’d just been caught quoting Burke at a freshers’ social. They muttered something about thoughts and prayers before backing away – slowly, reverently – as if you were about to perform a pagan rite in the Worcester JCR. The absurdity disarms them.

Continue reading at cherwell.org

Image credit: Lucie Fellwock for Cherwell

HOROSCOPES



Aries

A raucous night out is on the horizon.



Taurus

Set a Trinity budget.



Gemini

Move on. You deserve better.



Cancer

You hold the cards.



Leo

Don’t just keep up appearances: lock in.



Virgo

Put yourself out there.

C-Sunday: Cambridge and their mastery of day-drinking

BEATRIX ARNOLD

It’s 10.30am. As we trudge down the stairs, loaded with bags, we pass someone carrying a heavy pint glass filled with Guinness. A trolley hurtles across the street conveying a shirtless man, his head wrapped in a large bag. A gaggle of toga-clad students bustle by. On any other day I’d think I was hallucinating.

‘Caesarian’ or ‘C’ Sunday is a Cambridge tradition which originates from a 20th century annual skirmish between the Jesus College drinking society, the “Caesarians”, and the Girton “Green Monsters”, until its eventual

prohibition in 2014. By comparison, its present-day iteration is a lot more tame, but nonetheless promises unique sights, as hundreds of Cambridge students gather on Jesus Green on the Sunday of May Week for picnics, initiations, and, above all, day-drinking.

When we reached the Green just before midday, groups of students were beginning to pour in, the crowd splattered with a palette of fancy dress. The drinking societies were unmistakable; each came clad in their own uniquely insane attire, to complete their own uniquely insane initiation rituals. My friend points out the “Alleycatz”, the all-women’s drinking society at St Catharine’s, dressed in neon

orange jumpsuits and chugging from shoes. The epicentre of the crowd buzzes with activity; for those not participating in drinking societies, it’s preferable to pitch your spot on the outskirts. Narrowly avoiding the flight path of a series of men racing on all fours, dressed head to toe in pink, we claim our position, and enjoy what my friend dubs “a picnic with a view”.

As most Cambridge students head into exam term, C-Sunday constitutes a final hurrah, expending all their energy before knuckling down. The spirit of revelry, somewhere between a Bacchanalia and a large-scale fraternity party, was infectious. Over the course of the day

we witnessed the relentless attempts to scale the central lamppost around which much of the activity throngs (with only one success story). The day offers endless opportunities for people-watching – it turns out I know far more people in the other place than I had previously thought. Everything was infused with a sense of unity, with distinctions between colleges, year groups, and subjects blurred – if you can ignore the sporadic tabloid photographers, and the occasional police officer, both circling the Green like vultures, eager to fashion a tale of excessive debauchery out of what should be a harmless day of letting off steam.

Continue reading at cherwell.org

HOROSCOPES



Libra
Steer clear of wishful thinking.



Scorpio
Try a Hinksey dip for some cold water therapy.



Sagittarius
Look after your tonsils.



Capricorn
Avoid society infighting this week.



Aquarius
It's time for a fling.



Pisces
A long-lost friend will grace your DMs.

Superstitions: The good, the bad, and the bizarre

NAOMI HUGHAN

With exams around the corner, good luck charms, trinkets, and affirmation routines are on the rise. Manifestational tendencies emerge in reaction to soul-draining exam anxiety. Conducting a small college survey, I found that nearly one-third of students have some kind of superstition, routine or charm to bring them luck during exams. But at what point do these seemingly harmless practices become destructive? And why do we rely on such menial rituals to ensure our success?

Superstitions can be a method of anxiety relief, manifesting a sense of control and acting as an outlet to externalise fears – they are ultimately an escape. Displacing nerves onto an object can have advantages in the case of examinations. Good luck charms and superstitious rituals can allow us to get into the right headspace, such as by listening to a particular song before exams. This does have its downsides, which I have personally experienced – whenever I hear “Mr Blue Sky”, my pre A-Level get-in-the-zone song, I have a visceral reaction and am transported back to those sticky exam halls. Nonetheless, superstitious manifestations, rituals, and fortune tokens can get people in the examination mindset and manifest positive energy. They are there to absorb our stress and calm our nerves. Superstitions give us a sense of control, stability, and reassurance, which supports our confidence, leading to better results.

Superstitions allow us to shake off feelings of guilt and accountability when exams don't go to plan. Blaming poor results on forgetting to wear your long, overdue-for-a-wash lucky socks shifts the responsibility. Perhaps we use superstitions as a scapegoat and coping mechanism – we are unwilling to accept that poor performance is not in fact the fault of seeing a black cat, but rather the three hours of TV consumed the night before the exam. We don't want to face the music (Mr Blue Sky or otherwise) and take accountability.

Forgetting to perform superstitious habits can negatively impact performance. Not bringing your favourite

crystals into an exam hall won't actually make you forget all you have learned, but it can lead to an overwhelming sense of anxiety – and mental state is crucial to exam success. Neglecting superstitions can significantly impede someone's psychological state. Take me, for example: if my wrist was not decked out in auspicious jade bracelets, not only would I be on the verge of hyperventilation, but also would be convinced that poor exam results were set in stone. I'm not saying that bringing my bag of charms into my A-Level exams is what got me into Oxford University, but a part of me does feel if I hadn't had my trinkets as a backup, I would have struggled.

So at what point do we become obsessive about superstitions? When exactly do positive affirmations become fixations? Is it when we genuinely believe we will fail an exam if we do not bring our charms with us? Catastrophising when certain rituals are not performed could be the first sign we have crossed the line. Becoming obsessive, to the point where superstitions create unprecedented amounts of anxiety rather than being an

“
At what point do we become obsessive about superstitions? When exactly do positive affirmations become fixations?”

outlet to project anxieties onto, would suggest that these behaviours have become compulsive and destructive. When superstitious rituals interfere with daily function, they cease to be coping mechanisms – they're damaging.

While certainly conjectural, superstitions are generally a net-positive stress management technique. Despite being easily dismissed as trivial rituals, they can still play a role in keeping us sane under the weight of exam pressure that many of us are bearing this term. But proceed with caution: taken too far, it's certainly possible to become too reliant – maybe even addicted – to our lucky charms. For any desperate finalists, perhaps a dose of superstition is exactly what you need; but use carefully, sparingly, and only when really needed.

CHERWELL-FED

Italiamo Trattoria: A restaurant that's tasty and traditional



AMANDA LI

There are so many Italian restaurants in Oxford that I'm sick of going to for special occasions, so it was nice to finally be able to try the Italiamo Trattoria on Broad Street. An expansion of the Italiamo we love, the trattoria is a sit-down experience focusing on traditional Italian food. Unlike the cafe filled with students getting calzones to go, the trattoria was good for a slow meal.

Italiamo's cafe gives me anxiety solely because of the sheer range of the menu – arancini, pastries, pasta, pizza, the list goes on. The trattoria's smaller menu allows for a nice family meal without overwhelming, and every dish seemed to pair well with the others. The vegetarian options and vegan options even appealed to my carnivore boyfriend. We ordered the Italian sausage, pecorino, and saffron pasta, along with the Italiamo mix pizza as our mains. To begin, though, we decided against the delicious arancini for the butter-fried calamari.

Perhaps it is my fault for abandoning arancini, but we got only five pieces of squid – five small, though deliciously battered rings sat on a bed of wild rocket, but five rings either way. My partner wolfed half of his down before I could even blink, and even with lemon and unarguably rich mayonnaise, I felt as if something were missing – maybe the other half of our

dish? The rocket, though strong, seemed like an insufficient consolation prize.

The mains luckily did not suffer from size issues. The pizza was delicious – Italian sausage, fior di latte, ham, pepperoni, and salami, with a nice chewiness to the dough and a crunchy crust. The flavor of the sauce didn't show through compared to the toppings; the Italian sausage was a strong note. I liked it, though the prices are a bit higher than the cafe's pizzas. The pasta felt well-balanced, with no overwhelming sense of cheese that other pastas fall victim to. The saffron came out in the aftertaste, and the sausage here added a salty note that felt welcome in a sea of tomato sauce.

Many of the trattoria options are the same as the cafe's, so if it's past 7, get your fix there. Dessert options are plentiful; save room for tiramisu.

I quite liked Italiamo – the only reason why I wouldn't say it is perfect is because of a mixup at the next table over, where a vegetarian was accidentally served meat. The environment was relaxing, with traditional music playing and warm lighting illuminating each table. Come here for a romantic date and great food.

Image credit: Amanda Li for Cherwell

What we ate:
Calamari fritti (£9.50), Malloreddus alla Campidanese pasta (£16.50), Italiamo mix pizza (£16.95).

Agony Aunt:

Dear Cherwell, I have an agonising Agony Aunt addiction. Help.



Sincerely,
Down bad and desperate second year

Dear down bad and desperate second year,
I am not sure I know what having an agony aunt addiction exactly entails. If it means being addicted to asking for advice from reputable sources, such as myself, I can't imagine why you would be looking for a cure! However, if you are really desperate for independence, I would suggest intermittent agony aunt fasting. Allow yourself to peruse a single agony aunt column every two weeks and submit a maximum of one call for help a term. If you begin experiencing withdrawal symptoms, I advise adding a bit of the Cherpse column to your reading diet! The path to recovery won't be short, but in time I trust your obsession with agony aunts will fade into a mild, steady affection.

Lots of love,
Your Agony Aunt

SOCIETY
SPOTLIGHT
OUPS

★★★★★

The Oxford University Poetry Society did not hold back with their term card this Trinity. It's chock full – with a lino cut poetry workshop in week 1, a film screening in week 6, and even an event with the legendary Stephen Fry in week 4. Not to be missed!

OXFORD

TINY LOVE
STORIES

After he left England we became summer – or, winter – friends, because that's when the holidays are. When we meet, we'd forensically trace the shadows of our past selves that once said, "I'll see you when I see you".

But as time passed, we were just summer friends, and then we were just... friends. What he doesn't know is that he's never just a season – he occupied every bookshelf, road sign, and country path. So, when I sent him my notes on 'The Bight' by Elizabeth Bishop, what I really meant was, "I love you, awfully but cheerfully."

Jennifer, St Hilda's

The money gap: Can you afford to belong at Oxford?

Ngoc Diep (Alice) addresses the pernicious socioeconomic barriers to feeling included and at ease

C

oming from Vietnam, a developing country six time zones away, I had braced myself for how money would shape every experience, even before I landed. The British pound is one of the strongest currencies in the world, and Oxford is one of the country's most expensive cities.

I recall when my program asked me to dress in black tie for Keble's first formal. I panicked, stared into my suitcase, and Googled: "Can I wear jeans and a T-shirt to an Oxford formal?"

I did not bring any dresses to Oxford. Any. My suitcase of clothes was packed with three pairs of jeans, two padded jackets, one sweatshirt, a large grey winter coat, and plenty of casual T-shirts. The other suitcase contained all my notebooks, stationery, and skincare products, which I knew would cost a fortune in the UK. I had imagined a quiet life at Oxford: from dormitory to library, and back again. No one mentioned I needed to dress nicely for an impromptu dinner in my college dining hall.

I was deeply anxious as I hadn't shopped for myself in years. Most of my clothes were hand-me-downs from my mum or relatives, so the experience felt somewhat nerve-racking. I had never "dressed to impress" and now I was expected to, just to be accepted. Still, I was lucky: I found a great white dress for just £10 and felt proud of my little victory. However, that night at the formal, feeling quietly triumphant, I realised that every other girl wore a black dress. None of us had planned it, but somehow, I was the only one who hadn't received the memo: it wasn't just a dress code. It was a reminder that I had missed the memo on how to belong.

There is an insurmountable gap between me and Oxford, wealth and prestige simply represented by money. The money gap divides me from my friends, my dress from theirs, the small city in Southern Vietnam where I grew up, and Oxford.

As I only had one nice dress, I barely went to my college's formals or accepted my friends' invitations to theirs. I also withdrew from most of the balls and black-tie events, as I knew I couldn't afford another outfit, even if I stumbled upon a lovely bargain again.

The money gap even swept me out of certain



academic spheres at Oxford. The Oxford Union's fee of two hundred pounds per term for visiting students was the most apparent financial barrier. Two hundred pounds can sustain me for a month here, and that was just the entrance fee to dress smartly and set foot in the Union's hall. But what matters more is the "hidden fee" of belonging: buying books, dressing smartly so you're taken seriously, joining casual pub outings, or travelling for society meetings. All of it costs.

The money gap did not entice me to leave Oxford while I was here, but it had marked me as an "outsider" long before I arrived at the University.

I often could not engage with other students' conversations. Money and privilege tore us apart from the beginning. I came from a country where we did not read Shakespeare or Jane Austen at school. No Greek or Latin classes were offered; instead, schools provide English language classes, which do not give us an edge in Britain. We speak English with the intonations of our homeland, not the polished manner customary here. I have never worn a suit or attended a prom, let alone an academic ball. I just cannot relate to them, and neither can they.

At Oxford, access is not just about admissions


but also about being aware of unspoken codes, being able to afford full participation, and possessing a kind of cultural capital that money alone can't guarantee.

However, at my lowest, when I nearly grew to hate Oxford and almost dropped my course, I felt at home again in the books, in the classroom, in the tutorial readings. I comfortably debate critical academic topics in my field with my peers, and my voice became more unique when discussing the subject. For example, in Philosophy of Language, my voice as a woman speaking a South-East Asian language would challenge many theories proposed by Western philosophers, who developed their ideas based on their European native languages.

Though we come from different backgrounds and wear different clothes, we still sit in the same group tutorial room, united in our excitement or confusion about the topic of discussion. We share the same reading lists, libraries, and even gossip about tutors.

While you can't pay your way into belonging, you can read your way in.

Image Credit: Selina Chen for Cherwell and Frank Bernard Dicksee /CC0



Cherpse.

Oxford blind dating.

Mr Superintelligence:

First impression?
I thought she was very pretty and I liked her style!

What was the highlight?
Having my intellectual energy matched is my biggest romantic turn on so that was extremely fun.

What was the most embarrassing moment?
At some point I brought up AI safety... infodumping about why we might all be dead in five years time may not have been a particularly romantic or first date-y topic.

Three words to describe the date:
Whirlwind, satisfying, fulfilling

Will there be a second date?
Perhaps – would love to get to know her better, who knows where this might go.

Ms Whirlwind:

First impression?
Honestly I was just surprised at how tall he was because people in my college are SO short.

Did it exceed your expectations?
Way better than expected – we spent about four hours together probably because the conversation was genuinely interesting!

What was the most embarrassing moment?
Tbh I did mention medieval birthing girdles, which might have been too niche/odd for a first date, but fortunately he seemed to take it well.

Three words to describe the date:
Four. Hour. Conversation!

Will there be a second date?
It felt like friendly vibes to me. Still, I'd absolutely see him again in that context.

SPORT

Ladies at Lord's: Women's cricket annihilate tabs

Hannah Davis and Evie Mayhew lead the way to huge 71-run victory

SEBASTIAN PAGE

Taking the long walk out through the Long Room is a dream that the vast majority of cricketers can barely even imagine. For those of us who thrive in the college, or village, scene it seems a whole world away. But for the elites of Oxford University Cricket Club, it's an opportunity that comes around once a year. With just 20 overs each, barely more than three total hours, you're tasked with leaving an imprint on a ground that's seen World Cup victory, Ashes victory, and 111 years of passing greats. Joe Root, Tammy Beaumont, Jimmy Anderson have all taken to those same steps, perhaps even with the same feelings that pulsate through our athletes now. Cricket is a game of big players, and even bigger moments - where one player can come in and take over a game almost single-handedly. For this year's Varsity matches, which saw two pretty convincing wins split between the universities, Oxford and Middlesex's Hannah Davis starred with a stunning 55 off 37 with the bat; and 4 for 9 off her four overs.

The women opened the day with an 11am game, and Oxford headed out to bat first. Hannah Sutton and Annys Thirkell-Jones played their way in patiently, allowing Cambridge to rack up the extras with some loose bowling. But as Cambridge's spinners applied the squeeze, Thirkell-Jones fell to a smart catch from the Cambridge captain at cover. In came Davis, with Sutton already somewhat established, moving along calmly. The two would consolidate, allowing the spinners Payne and Robinson to end their spells with some fairly economical figures. Hofmann and Brown were not quite so lucky. Davis took a particular liking to Hofmann, depositing some wayward straighter balls a good few rows back in the Mound Stand with some ease, eventually leading Oxford to 129-4.

The defence would be comprehensive to say the



least. In just the first over, both Cambridge's opener and their captain would be back in the shed, courtesy of some beautiful bowling from Evie Mayhew, and with some help from her opening partner Sutton, the pair would rip through the top order. At 27-5, it couldn't have gotten much worse for Cambridge. Their top order was decimated, Mayhew had ended on 4 for 13 from her spell, and the game looked over already. But then it got even worse. Davis came on and terrorised the middle and lower order somehow even more than her predecessors had done. Her four wickets all came clean bowled - accounting for

“
At 27-5, it couldn't have gotten much worse for Cambridge

just nine runs at the same time. She had four attempts at the Cambridge number 11 to clinch her fifer, but was thwarted in her attempts to secure the landmark that would typically land you on the Honours Board: “I think it is difficult for anyone

who has taken 4 wickets to not have a 5 wicket hall in the back of their mind... credit must go to the Cambridge number 11 who had a solid defence. More importantly in my mind at the time was the match winning wicket. But it worked out well in the end with Sophie taking the final wicket. Sophie has been a very consistent bowler for us and a lovely person to have in the team so I was very pleased for her to get the wicket she deserved.”

Off the back of this momentous collapse that would have put the Holy Roman Empire to shame (and some great pressure at the pavilion end from Bea Jones), Sophie Goodman wrapped up the Cambridge innings before any of their bats could accrue even seven runs individually.

The men's side didn't quite warrant as much attention from an Oxford perspective, although they put up considerably more of a fight against Cambridge than Cambridge women did against ours. So call it an overall Oxford victory?

It was the Cambridge spinners that really did the damage in the Oxford innings - Spanish international Seb Hughes-Pinan picked up two crucial wickets to swing the game in Cambridge's favour but the pick of the bowlers was Tom 'Skezza' Skerrett who picked up three wickets, including that of captain Justin Clarke, and a run-out in to keep Oxford at an indefensible 106 off of their 20. For a moment, the indefensible almost looked defensible as Norman lobbed the first ball of the Cambridge innings to Vivek Narayan on the short boundary, but it was little more than a fleeting hope. Kottler, pushed up the order for the T20, hit a brisk 52 off 35, including three sixes, one of which nearly taking my poor, unsuspecting dad's head clean off. His 52 accounted for Cambridge's 68 runs at the time, but the damage was already done. Ferreira and the suitably named [piece of] Cake would walk Cambridge over the line in just 15.1 overs, with eight wickets still in hand.

Image Credit: Luella Davis with permission



MATCH OF THE WEEK

Friendly fire for Oxford's Company of Archers

The day began well for both teams, after some sharp shooting from the Oxford B team yielded an impressive victory over Bath. Meanwhile, the A team topped the rankings with a fantastic score of 806. This let Oxford's A team advance to play their own B team! Though they gave it their best shot, Oxford's B team were beaten comprehensively by a dominant performance from the A team who won with a remarkable 16-6 victory. Unfortunately, they would meet their fate in a semi-final against Birmingham's A team, ending fourth behind Warwick.

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

New College's Greyhound leads team to dominant win

This week's accolade goes to Oscar Cobb, of New College. When not shoe-ing the Tabs with the 'Hounds, he's representing New on the rugby field, which he did in style at the Cupper's Union finals, as posted on the Oxford University Rugby Football Club (OURFC) Instagram.

After what OURFC described as a 'tense final' New pipped the combined Magdalen College x St Hilda's College team 39-13, New's second consecutive men's title. Cobb helped carry New over the gain-line and the finish-line.

HALL OF SHAME

Wolfson and St Cross hit seven against St Antony's

St Antony's College futsal team suffered an unfortunate 7-2 loss against a joint Wolfson College and St Cross College side. Wolfson and Cross followed this up with 3-0 same-day win over Rhodes Scholars. Futsal is a fast-paced form of five-a-side football played indoors at Iffley Road. The scoreline, though impressive, remains some way from the all-time record - Brazil's 76-0 victory over Timor-Leste in 2006. Wolfson and Cross will take on St Peter's College next, who have also won both their fixtures so far.

SHOE THE TABS

Winning at a canter - Oxford Equestrian waltz to varsity win

Blues, twos, and threes all secured victory over Cambridge at Warwick International School of Riding on 4th May. A few Oxford athletes achieved individual golds: Naomi Young, Charlotte Stuart and Julia Strawinska; Naomi has also recently qualified for a national competition.

Varsity equestrian incorporates both dressage and showjumping. University riders use unfamiliar horses at competitions (similar to Olympic Modern Pentathlon), creating an additional layer of challenge. The Oxford University Equestrian Instagram page described the eventful day as “possibly one of the best in club history”.

Competitive Dance

Saturday 17th May
@Cambridge
President: Josh Redfern

UPCOMING Summer Eights

Wednesday 28th to 31st May
(Week 5) @The Isis

Athletics

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

Going to watch a Varsity or Cuppers match?

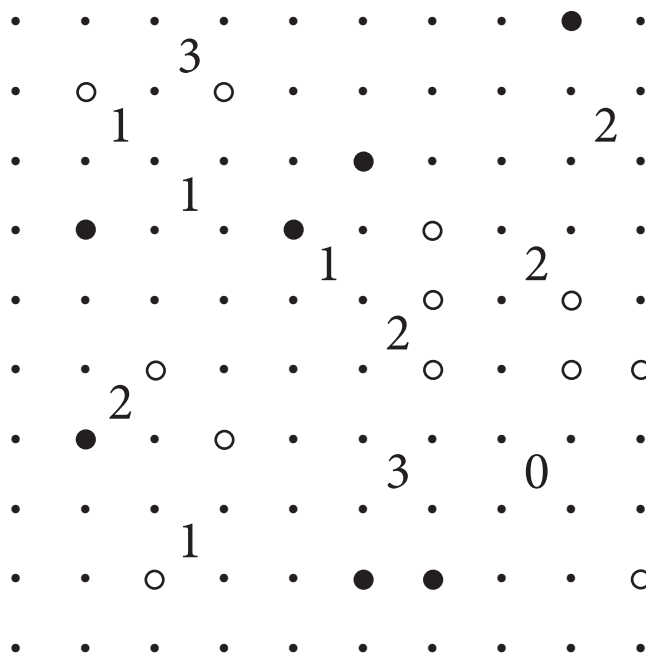
Email sportcherwell@gmail.com to write up a match report



Coffee break with Cherwell

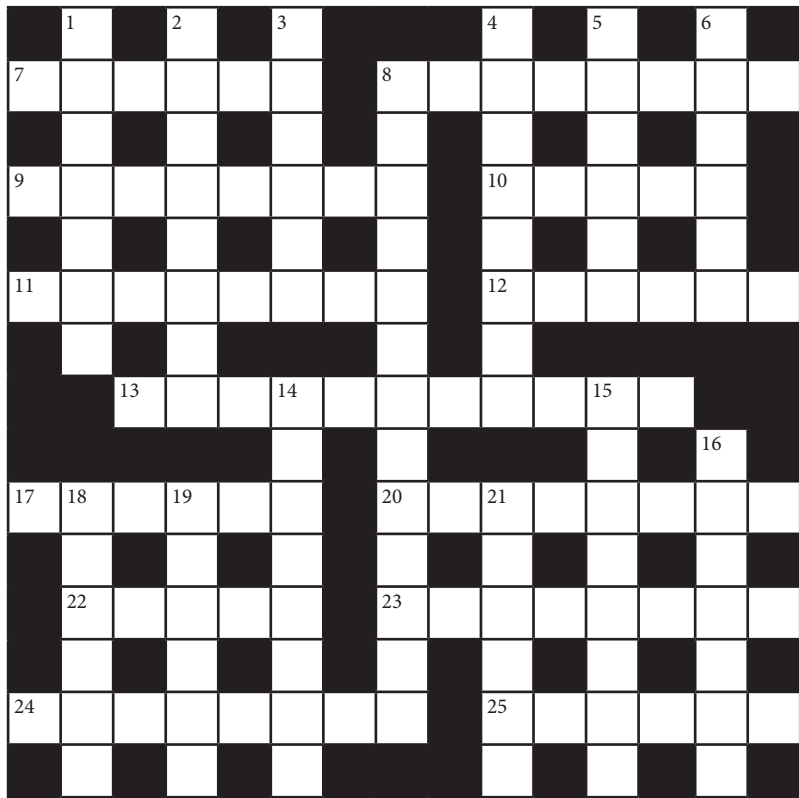


Masyulink by Zoë McGuire



Draw a closed loop connecting some but maybe not all of the dots in the lattice using horizontal and vertical line segments. The loop does not intersect itself. Additionally, numbers inside a square of the lattice show how many of the square's sides are segments of the loop. The loop must pass through all black and white circles. On white circles, the loop cannot turn, and it must turn in the previous and/or next dot in its path. On black circles, the loop must turn, and it cannot turn in both the previous and next dots in its path.

Cryptic Crossword by Nat Elder



Across:

7) Father added to lease for mother, perhaps (6)
8) Starter of country pub: essentially, scampi on spice (8)
9) Commitment to video editing: it's central to Schoon-maker (8)
10) First woman leads by two points—it's a fifty-fifty chance? (5)
11) There's one way out for Labour leader amongst wrongly accused (3-2-3)
12) An inexperienced pirate struggles with these river dogs (3-3)

13) A reach about colon's innards leads to thousand year old study (11)
17) Preserve a body to a degree inside tree (6)
20) Had a gift for story telling, beginning in revolutionary den (8)
22) Silky material is oddly smart and fashionable (5)
23) Phone setting for insolent criminal (2, 6)
24) Before us are two cans connected end to end—it's ringing! (8)
25) Being in total agreement is reportedly down the drain (2, 4)

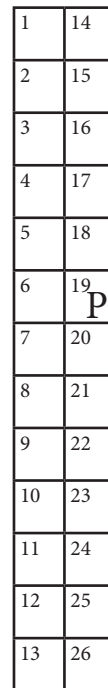
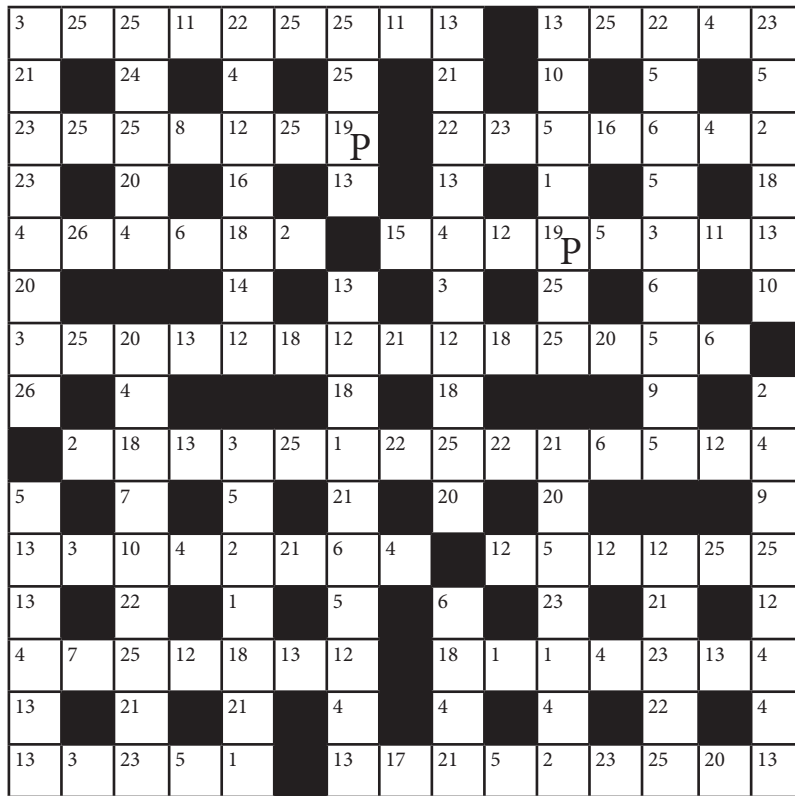
Down:

1) Some of the public are fully attentive (7)
2) Spectator to take in booze (8)
3) Cishet performs good principles (6)
4) Just under half of internships cut back in police agency (8)
5) Manufacture lipstick and blush (4, 2)
6) Rumour that's passed in Monopoly piss-up (6)
8) Honourable scientist not finishing contracting Oxford University following argument in opposition (13)

14) Compassion is sort of a uni myth (8)
15) General Gogol finally established (about time!) as most sensitive (7)
16) Lead-free washing is an Italian tower's description (7)
18) CIA going back after months to see pattern (6)
19) Interim government's beginning to pass legislation at the House (6)
21) Look! Setter is in firm crack (4, 2)

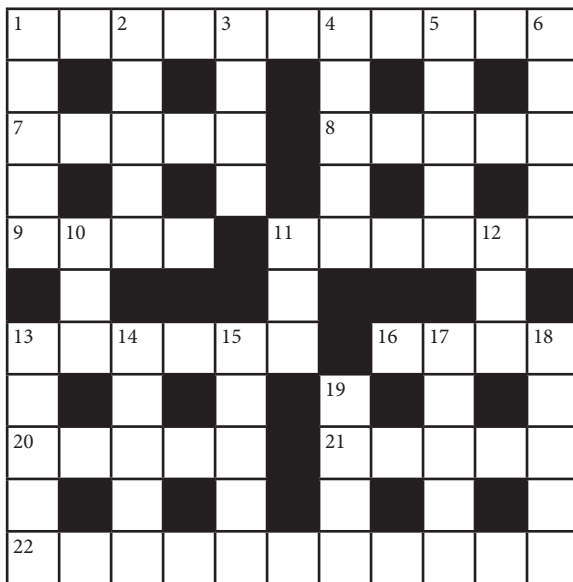
Codeword by Julian Xiao

Each letter of the alphabet has been substituted for a number from 1 to 26. Deduce the identity of each number to reveal a complete grid of valid words.



Cryptic Ingredients by Alessandra Edwards

In this cryptic crossword, some of the answers are ingredients for something. Solve the puzzle to find out what they make.



Across:

1) *A motto went wrong by spirit's comment (6, 5)
7) *Bread winner brings this home in reversing taxi... concerning (5)
8) Board of souls agree in France and Germany (5)
9) And others return late (2, 2)
11) *Cringe revolutionary smuggled drugs south (6)
13) Drunk a decaf for

pretense (6)
16) Register me and you in old church (5)
20) *Love to endure light tan (5)
21) *Expression of disgust after party reveals funds (5)
22) Strangely, it seems more like a movement detector (11)

Down:

1) Propose story about boy (5)

2) Beverage mother drinks in old church (5)
3) Fish and a nut on the counter (4)
4) Cook lost hour to laziness (5)
5) Link to untie when it's twisted (5)
6) Cancel Taylor Swift's tour (European) (5)
10) Squad lost member to gossip (3)
11) Nudge and hit balls with it (3)

12) Wicked function? (3)
13) Failure to follow female dentist's advice (5)
14) *Spicy bit editor left out from dancing ceilidh (5)
15) Want to be armed everywhere (5)
17) Elements of dinner, upturn and boil over (5)
18) America: woman's guide (5)
19) Man: a controller of water flow (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 1 Answers: Cryptic Crossword:

ACROSS: 1) Pardon, 4) Upkeep, 9) Epic, 10) Fundraiser, 11) Couple, 12) Yuckiest, 13) Unearthly, 15) Card, 16) Nerd, 17) Spaghetti, 21) Nuisance, 22) Bestie, 24) Artificial, 25) Idle, 26) Lashes, 27) Assess. DOWN: 1) Popcorn, 2) Recap, 3) Offbeat, 5) Piracy, 6) Eliminate, 7) Pleased, 8) Encyclopaedia, 14) Acrostics, 16) Neutral, 18) Gobbles, 19) Trifles, 20) On fire, 23) Suite

One Offs: ACROSS: 1) JUmPS, 5) rACE BiB, 11) ABouT, 12) CAVEMaN, 13) CAS-SETTE tAPE, 15) BiRTHDAY, 16) qUAD, 17) ArIaL, 18) oTTER, 19) SIGNaL, 21) MAY DaY, 22) HIREe, 23) MIXeS, 24) bIDS, 25) MANsCAPE, 28) TIp THE SCALES, 30) oZEMPIC, 31) BLOCk, 32) sUSPECT, 22) eSSAY. DOWN: 1) JACoB, 2) dUBAI, 3) POSTAGE StAMP, 4) SuNSHINE, 5) ACTuAL, 6) CATTy, 7) EVEn, 8) BEAUTY Sa-LoN, 9) IMPAIED, 10) BoNE-DRY, 14) mEDAL, 18) TAXiCABS, 19) SHIt TZU, 20) BIRDIES, 21) MINCe, 23) MASCoT, 25) MEdIC, 26) PECaN, 27) pESKY, 29) HoPE

Reverse Psychology: the < symbol indicates that the answer is backwards in the grid. ACROSS: 1) Case, 3) Dine<, 7) Ice<, 8) Chris, 9) Abhorrent<, 11) Beast<, 12) Opt, 13) Alas, 14) Rues<. DOWN: 1) Chest, 2) Academics<, 4) North Pole, 5) Sad<, 6) Scarabs, 10) Actor, 11) Ant<.
Solve our weekly mini crosswords on cherwell.org
Follow us on Instagram @cherwelloxford