



Finding answers to Oxford's trashing question

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Each college's formal dinner – ranked!

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Queen's and Hilda's students run 200k for MND charity

LILLY LAW

Three Oxford University students completed four ultramarathons for charity last week: Thomas Milton (St Hilda's College), and Harry Kyd and Jack Harper-Hill (the Queen's College), ran in aid of Motor Neurone Disease (MND) research. Their route began in Oxford and ended at Big Ben, covering 85km the first day, 66km on the second, and 50km on the third. In total, they ran around 200km.

They were inspired by prominent rugby players, such as Doddie Wier and Rob Burrows, who had raised awareness of the correlation between concussions and development of MND. Kevin Sinfield was a particularly strong influence. Thomas told *Cherwell* how they admired his “unbelievable work over the years to raise awareness for this important cause”, and how “unreal” it had been to receive a text message from him supporting their efforts.

The idea for the ultramarathon first came in December 2024, “over a pint in Chequers”. Each of the runners had been involved in sport before, but not to the level of an ultramarathon – Jack said he had “only ever run a distance of around 5km before this”.

While Harry admitted that the planning process did begin on ChatGPT, they quickly sought “proper training planners”. In the end, an ex-Royal Marine, now online PT, helped them put together a plan. It consisted of 3 runs per week: one longer run over 30km, one recovery run at a slower pace, and one fast run at a “shorter distance” of 10-15km.

The run itself began at 3:30am, which Thomas said “made the whole thing feel really serious”.

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University drops disciplinary case against OA4P protestors after significant external pressure



Image credit: Zoë McGuire for Cherwell

- **Exclusive: Disciplinary case dropped by panel on “procedural grounds”**
- **Over 100 protestors gathered outside hearing on Tuesday**
- **Senior Proctor removed from case following conflict of interest allegations**

GASPARD ROUFFIN and ARCHIE JOHNSTON

hearings come close to 13 months after the initial sit-in on 23rd May 2024. The chair of the SDP also noted that the case initiated by the proctors lacked the expected procedural rigour, and that the students’ reputation had been damaged as a result.

The Senior Proctor initially in charge of the investigation, Thomas Adcock, was notably removed from the case after allegations of conflict of interest were made against him. He had co-signed a letter authored by Irene Tracey condemning the sit-in on 23rd May 2024.

Irene Tracey, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, was cross-examined by two King’s Counsels, Bryan Cox and Henry Blaxland, who were representing the students under investigation at the hearings on Wednesday morning.

This came after over a hundred students, staff, and local protestors protested outside the Careers Office – where the hearings were held – on Tuesday afternoon, calling for the University to drop the disciplinary proceedings. An open letter making the same demand had also garnered

over 1,000 signatures prior to this result.

Protestors gathered from 12.30pm outside 56 Banbury Road, at which the first day of the students’ disciplinary hearing was underway. They carried banners from the student organisation Jewish Students for Justice, and from several local trade union branches. One banner read: “Students, you make us proud! free Palestine! Shame on this uni!”

The sit-in in question happened on 23rd May 2024, at the University Offices in Wellington Square. Seventeen protestors from Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) entered the offices, demanding that the University agree to meet with them.

A statement issued by the University at the time called it a “temporary occupation”, saying students had committed a “violent action that included forcibly overpowering the receptionist.” An OA4P statement in response refuted accusations that the action was violent, and cited CCTV footage which contradicted the claim that protestors had “physically handled” a receptionist.

The seventeen protestors were arrested on suspicion of aggravated

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Financial disparities and uneven provision in student welfare

JANET LAU, NATASHA DRAKE, and ÉILIS MATHUR

Last Trinity Term, the Oxford Student Union (SU) conducted a University-wide Welfare Survey Analysis. Open to all students, it received 2,116 respondents. 93% of students reported experiencing stress at Oxford, and 24% said that their mental health had worsened since joining the University.

Respondents also shared their perspectives on the quality and availability of welfare support across the University and its colleges. Only 35% said they were satisfied with the wellbeing support provided. Many students described welfare services as “under-resourced and inconsistent across colleges.” This inconsistency is not just anecdotal. Rather, it reflects measurable disparities in welfare support, both financially and structurally.

Cherwell has analysed data from the welfare budgets of 30 Oxford colleges. These budgets include funds for students in JCRs and MCRs, money for welfare-related events, and payment for staff in welfare roles. It is important to note that there is no standard method to allocate these budgets. Additionally, each college organises their expenses differently.

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Live music venue ‘Underground Bar’ to open on George Street

ARINA MAKARINA

Underground Bar, a “grassroots alternative music venue” is set to open in the basement of 29-31 George Street. It will aim to support “local bands, independent music communities and alternative subcultures”.

The venue, previously home to Cirkus nightclub, is located below Gourmet Burger Kitchen. It will include a lounge area with fixed seating, a dance floor space with a DJ booth, and a cloak room. The bar will be open to serve alcohol from midnight to 2.30am every day of the week with “occasional live music” from 5pm to 11pm on weekdays.

Oxford City Council granted a license for the opening of the premises and the licensing for the bar on Wednesday 4th June.

The application was submitted by Yola Kucel, a former co-manager of Kiss Bar on Park End Street. Prior to Kiss Bar closing last December after 23 years of operating, Ms Kucel previously hosted the Goth night, “Intrusion” at the venue.

The George Oxford Hotel, which is located on the upper floor of the same premises, objected to the application, citing public nuisance and public safety as concerns. Thames Valley

Police also originally objected to the application due to concerns of crime and disorder, but no longer have any significant issues with the scheme, praising Ms Kucel for being “very engaging and very supportive” in running Kiss Bar.

As stated in the application, Underground Bar would be a place to “host those who like to socialise with like-minded people within a safe and controlled environment” to ensure they can “freely express themselves regardless of gender, race or sexual identity”. The venue will be a space for “the alternative music side of night life” hosting live “rock, metal, indie, goth music and other genres of music”. The bar is intended as a space “for all of Oxford’s residents, students and visitors alike”.

City councillor Anna Railton supported the application, saying: “If you value things you’ve got to protect them and that is true for live music venues for all genres.”

Oxford’s music scene was described by Railton as “part of [its] amazing culture”. Notable bands that originated in the city include Radiohead, Supergrass, and Glass.

This news follows the closure of many music venues in Oxford, such as SJE Arts and Atik.

Image credit: Noah Robson for Cherwell



Possible delay to Oxford’s only winter ball despite ‘committed’ students

CONOR WALSH

Merton College is understood to have asked students on the winter ball committee to consider delaying Merton’s Michaelmas ball in order to allow more time for planning. Despite concerns from the College, the organising committee is “committed” to delivering the ball in November as planned.

Speaking with members of the MCR committee, *Cherwell* understands that the College are “extremely concerned” that the planning of the ball is behind schedule despite it being over six months away. As a result, the College might vote to cancel the ball in its current form, requiring the organising committee to postpone the ball until Hilary term.

Merton’s Winter Ball is renowned for being Oxford’s only white tie winter ball. The ball takes place every three years and is organised by JCR and MCR students at the College. Postponing the ball to Hilary would be a first in Merton’s history.

In reply to concerns about the ball’s postponement, the organising committee told *Cherwell* that: “while it is true that there were some initial administrative challenges, particularly around clashes with college building works, the committee has made

significant progress and remains fully committed to delivering a memorable white tie ball.

“At present, the date of the ball is yet to be finalised, as we continue coordinating with the college and vendors to ensure the best possible experience for attendees. The committee has been hard at work behind the scenes and are assembling an exciting lineup of vendors and entertainment. We are confident that the final result will meet and exceed the high expectations traditionally associated with this event.”

The College events committee, comprising fellows and administrative staff, which will determine the fate of the ball is yet to meet, so no official verdict about the ball’s postponement has been reached. However, *Cherwell* understands that the College’s provisional calendar for the 2025/26 academic year lists the Winter Ball as taking place in November.

Merton’s last Winter Ball was held in Michaelmas 2022 and included headline acts from the singer-songwriter Dylan, as well as Capital FM’s Will Manning.

According to the committee, tickets for this year’s ball are expected to go on sale over the long vacation.

Merton College was approached for comment.

Oxford Union presidential candidate investigated by police over WhatsApp ‘smear campaign’ allegations

CHERWELL NEWS

Oxford Union Treasurer and presidential candidate Rosalie Chapman was identified by police as the owner of a WhatsApp number used to send anonymous messages which accused her Michaelmas 2024 election opponent of “inappropriate behaviour”. The messages were later deemed to be electoral malpractice by an internal Union tribunal, but no disciplinary action was taken because the sender’s identity was unknown.

This incident was also subsequently reported to Thames Valley Police which resulted in an investigation for harassment against Chapman. *Cherwell* understands that Chapman had a voluntary interview under caution with police earlier this year but exercised her right to remain silent throughout. Following this, police ultimately determined that there was not enough evidence to charge her for either harassment or an Online Safety Act violation.

The WhatsApp messages were sent

under the alias ‘Grace’, with at least 25 individuals sent messages by the number. These messages accused her opponent of behaving “inappropriately towards some of [my] friends” and of using an unofficial Postgraduate Union discussion group to campaign unfairly.

Chapman, who is running to be President in the Society’s upcoming elections said in a statement on Instagram: “I’ve stayed silent throughout months of relentless misogynistic abuse, harassment and slander – not any longer. Over the last 3 months, I’ve been dehumanised and humiliated in a place I once felt safe in.”

She went on to recount experiences of being “verbally assaulted” in the Union bar, saying: “This is not about accountability, it is about targeted, sexist and humiliating campaign designed to break me.” Chapman went on to say: “Such behaviour is never acceptable, and backing down from who I am and what I stand for will only validate those retrograde and regressive individuals and their beliefs.”

A motion of no confidence was recently



brought in Chapman, but it failed to reach the 150 signatures required under the Union’s rules to bring about a poll of all members on the matter.

Chapman was first contacted by police in early 2025, eventually attending a voluntary interview on 23rd April. The next day, on 24th April, police closed the investigation, stating that the evidence was not strong enough.

An email from Thames Valley Police, viewed by *Cherwell*, confirmed that “further enquiries identified Ms Rosalie Chapman as the owner and likely user of the ‘Grace’ profile”. However, they made clear that not answering questions “does not imply guilt in law” and that she remains “innocent from a legal perspective”.

Continue reading at cherwell.org
Image credit: Cherwell Photography

Queen’s and Hilda’s students run 200km for Motor Neurone Disease

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Parents, friends, and rugby teammates joined at various points throughout the 200km, which “made the whole thing so much more enjoyable”. The runners agreed, however, that the best part was the finish. Harry told *Cherwell*: “It was raining and cold and windy but just the thought that we’d actually completed [the run] made it the most incredible feeling”. Similarly, Thomas emphasised the “amazing feeling” of realising they’d completed their goals.

The journey wasn’t without its challenges. By the second day, Jack had damaged his tendon and Harry had torn his hamstring. Jack “had to straight leg walk some of the way, repeating just “left right left right” until the finish line”. He spoke of having to “make sure we worked as a team and set any egos aside, which was a really good opportunity to build ourselves.”

The goal of the ultramarathons was to raise money for MND research, but increasing awareness was of equal importance. On the route, Harry spoke of how “there were a lot of people that stopped us (after recognising our MND Association tops) to let us know that they had been affected by MND.”

Motor Neurone Disease affects up to 5,000 adults in the UK at any one time, and kills six people per day. It attacks the nerves controlling movement, preventing muscles from working, but generally leaving the senses unaffected. As a result, those with the disease are “locked in a failing body”, without the ability to move, talk, or, eventually, breathe. It currently has no cure.

Recently, research has pointed to a link between head injuries and the risk of developing neurodegenerative diseases like MND, with elite rugby players at a greater risk than the general population. Rob Burrow, former England rugby player, died aged 41 from the disease in 2022. He had been involved in fundraising with Kevin Sinfield, his former team-mate. Sinfield has raised over £7 million for MND.

Thomas, Harry, and Jack set their fundraising target at £5,000. At the time of writing, their JustGiving page showed £9,495 raised, almost doubling their target. Including Gift Aid, the total is over £11,000. The runners spoke of future fundraising efforts through further challenges, like a coast to coast run. However, for now, they said “they’ll stick with recovering and fundraising/

promoting this one.” They highlighted their gratitude to “all who came along the way”, who they “would not have done without”.

More information is available on their Instagram page, @westgate2westminster.

Before the runners had completed the ultramarathons, the MND’s Head of Community Fundraising Operations, Amy Kilpatrick said: “We are so grateful to Thomas, Harry and Jack for taking on this challenge and for choosing to support the Association in this way.”

Over the past five years, our Patron Kevin Sinfield CBE has done an extraordinary amount to not only raise money on behalf of MND charities but to raise awareness of MND as well and we are delighted the students have been inspired by him to take on a challenge of their own.

“The money raised will help us to improve care and support for people living with MND and their families, while also helping to fund important research into this devastating disease.”

“We wish them all the very best of luck with the challenge.”

Image credit: Jack Harper-Hill for Cherwell



MML Faculty cuts almost half of special subject paper options

CHERWELL NEWS

Over 40% of Modern Languages Special Subjects have been cut for those sitting finals next year, with up to eight out of eleven options being cancelled in certain languages. The options for Paper XII are dependent on teaching resources across languages.

Those reading Portuguese are among the hardest hit, as only three out of the possible eleven options are available. One of those options, however, is limited to ten places. Last year, those studying Portuguese were also limited to four out of a possible eleven options. Languages such as Italian, however, have had no cancellations to their original nine options. In fact, Italian have added a new paper on gender and sexuality in modern Italy.

In addition, students reading Slavonic are limited to just four options out of eleven, though two of those will not be taught. Last year, by contrast, Slavonic had double the number of options, and all of them offered teaching.

Some options have been outright discontinued, including the French Rousseau special subject, as well as others being suspended. Last year, no papers were highlighted to have been discontinued or suspended.

One third year MML student told *Cherwell*: “Given the ongoing confusion around changes to exams, a decreased choice of special subjects will probably make final year even more difficult for many students.”

Modern Languages students are made aware that Paper XII options are subject to change due to “the availability of teaching resources”, and special subjects are made available one year before examination. The MML Faculty refused to comment on this year’s cuts.

This announcement follows the Faculty’s decision to move to in-person, closed book exams due to concerns over AI and plagiarism. The shift in examination conditions will affect the same cohort as the Paper XII cuts, who will be sitting finals in 2026.

Oxford Bus Company urges County Council to curb ‘emergency’ congestion levels

ARCHIE JOHNSTON

Urgent action by Oxfordshire County Council to alleviate Oxford’s congestion problem has been called for by managing director of the Oxford Bus Company, Luke Marion.

Marion called for “urgent measures” to combat “emergency levels” of congestion in a post to the Oxford Bus Company website in March. He pointed to the closure of Botley Road for improvements at Oxford Station as a particularly important cause.

Marion told *Cherwell*: “Our own data tells us journey times on the Abingdon Road have increased by an average of 17% since the closure of Botley Road. Furthermore, services between Blackbird

Leys and Oxford City Centre have slowed by 33% in the last decade, and journey times from Wood Farm into the city have worsened by 15% since 2019.”

Botley Road was first shut in April 2023 to allow for improvement work at Oxford Station. The road was originally scheduled to re-open in October 2024, but delays to construction have meant that it is currently set to re-open in August 2026.

Oxfordshire County Council told *Cherwell*: “As highways authority, throughout this period we have done all we can to minimise the impact on the rest of the road network by working closely with Network Rail and our other partners, such as the bus companies, to keep the city moving.”

The County Council had planned to tackle congestion in Oxford in 2024 by es-

tablishing a system of traffic filters, which would have fined motorists in the centre of the city without a permit.

Labour MP Sean Woodcock and Labour county councillor Brad Baines have called on the Council to take advantage of new powers set to be granted to local transport authorities in the government’s Bus Services Bill.

Labour councillors were challenged by Green County and City councillor Emily Kerr, who said: “whilst Labour and the Tory Alliance say they want [decreased bus journey times], they’ve opposed the policy suggestions which will deliver it, such as traffic filters.”

Read the full article online at cherwell.org

Image credit: Lucie Fellwock for Cherwell



University drops disciplinary case against OA4P protestors



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trepass. They were all later further arrested on suspicion of ‘affray’, which means “the use or threat of violence to another which would cause a normal person present at the scene to fear for his personal safety”. One was also arrested on suspicion of common assault.

In August 2024, Thames Valley Police told the seventeen that no further action would be taken against them, at which point the University Proctors’ Office began its own disciplinary proceedings. Thirteen of the protestors are Oxford students, and had been summoned to a Student Disciplinary Panel (SDP).

The Proctors’ recommendations for disciplinary measures originally included “suspensions of indefinite length, fines, and formal warnings.” The open letter stated that the disciplinary process had been “opaque” and had involved the use of “racist language”. Specifically, it claimed that one University employee associated the keffiyeh, a traditional item of Palestinian clothing, with terrorism.

This claim was repeated at the rally, at which multiple students, faculty members, and local activists also spoke to attendees. The parent of one of the sit-in participants expressed support for his son, saying: “They occupied Wellington Square Office because Oxford University is complicit in genocide”, and called the SDP a “phony court.”

A spokesperson from Oxford Stop the War Coalition, which helped organise the protest, told *Cherwell*: “Oxford University has an endowment of nearly £9bn, and we know for a fact, that which is open for the public to look at, they’re invested in arms companies and they have partnerships with Israeli universities that are supporting the Israeli

military as it conducts war crimes that amount to a genocide.”

One sit-in participant no longer at the University also said to the crowd: “I do not trust this University to give my student comrades a fair hearing.” A sit-in participant leaving the building on a lunch break told the rally: “It is not a question for [the University] of justice [...] They are not interested. What they are interested in is silencing protest.”

A speaker from Jewish Students for Justice (JSJ) read out a message from the author Michael Rosen, an Oxford alumnus and professor of children’s literature at Goldsmiths University. The message supported the sit-in participants: “It seems that the University has judged them guilty before they’ve defended themselves at a hearing.” Rosen has been an outspoken advocate for Palestine. His poem “Poem for the Children of Gaza” was read out by another JSJ speaker.

Other speakers at the rally included members of the Oxford Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Oxford University and College Union (UCU).

The open letter ended: “We demand that the University drop the proceedings of its unjust imitation court and commit to fulfilling OA4P’s urgent demands for disclosure, divestment, and reinvestment. In making these demands, we stand unequivocally for the right to protest, freedom of conscience, and above all—for a free Palestine.”

Regarding Wednesday’s decision to drop the disciplinary case, a University spokesperson told *Cherwell*: “The student disciplinary process is confidential and the University will not comment on ongoing procedures or their outcome.”

Read the full article online at cherwell.org

NEWS SHORTS

Oxford quantum start-up sold for \$1.1 billion

Oxford Ionics, a quantum technology start-up led by Oxford University physicists has just been sold to a US tech company for over \$1 billion. Scientists Chris Ballance and Tom Hart are leaders in developing one of the most accurate quantum machines, and hope to see their company become the ‘Nvidia of quantum’.

Balliol elects new Master

Fellows at Balliol College have elected a new Master, Professor Seamus Perry, who will begin in July 2026. Perry has been a Fellow and English Tutor at Balliol since 2003. He described this as a “tremendous honour” and said that he looks forward to “working alongside my outstanding colleagues, our students, and all members of Balliol”.

SU Sabbatical Officers get new ‘Presidential’ titles

SU Sabb Officers have been given new titles to help “more accurately communicate” their responsibilities. The four roles will be retitled to ‘President for Undergraduates’, ‘President for Postgraduates’, ‘President for Welfare, Equality and Inclusion’, and ‘President for Communities and Common Rooms’.

Hot diggidy-dog: New stand for Oxford

Oxford Dogs, a French-style hot dog vendor, opened a new stand in the Covered Market last week. The hot dogs come in “crispy buns” with “perfectly paired sauces”. The stand also serves “sugar-free milkshakes for a delicious, guilt-free treat.” Oxford Dogs was established in 2024 by local Oxford resident Artur Niewiadomski who decided to open Oxford Dogs to “show people just how good hot dogs in Oxford can really be”.

CROSS CAMPUS

Cambridge colleges take out injunctions against protestors

Two Cambridge colleges have taken out interim injunction against Cambridge for Palestine (C4P) encampments this week. Administrators at St John’s College and Trinity College cleared the encampments on their land, fencing off the areas, and attempting to confiscate materials.

18 universities join motion protesting Harvard funding cut

Eighteen American Universities, including five Ivy League institutions, have been granted permission to file an amicus brief in support of Harvard’s motion against the Trump administration’s freeze on nearly \$3 billion in federal research funding. The universities argue that academic research is an interconnected exercise, and the impacts of this freeze will “inflict grievous harm that extends well beyond Harvard University”.



University launches new online resource for state schools

JOEL BUCKLEY

Explore Teach has been launched by the University of Oxford as a free online platform aimed at supporting academic enrichment in UK state schools. The platform offers ready-to-use activities designed to help students aged eleven to develop confidence and critical thinking skills, helping them to think like a “university researcher”.

This initiative is part of the University's broader access and outreach efforts to engage pupils earlier in their educational journey. They aim to encourage more applications from state schools through introducing the idea of Oxbridge at an earlier stage. The University has improved in its state school admissions over recent years with 67.6% in the 2023 admissions cycle. However, there is still a disparity compared to the 93% of the population in state education.

The team behind the platform told *Cherwell* that the programme is designed to engage their “established network of schools who are less like-

ly to send their students to Oxford”. They have been working with the senior leadership teachers at The Challenge Academy Trust in Warrington to create the programme.

The platform aims to tackle what the University calls the ‘leaky pipeline’ phenomenon, where initially high-attaining children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds at Key Stage 2 often cannot carry this through to GCSE or A-Level attainment.

Teachers can use the Explore Challenge within their timetables. They consist of a 45-minute session, which can be broken into four shorter activities, designed to be used at lunch or in after-school clubs.

The topics are designed to provoke curiosity and stretch students intellectually as they are often more philosophically inclined or research-based rather than the typical information-recall focus of their regular curriculums.

Image Credit: Kenneth Wong for Cherwell

Oxford City Council proposes unified Great Oxford Council

MAIR ANDREWS

Oxford City Council have released details on a suggested proposal to abolish Oxfordshire's six councils and replace them with three new ones: Greater Oxford Council, Northern Oxfordshire Council, and Ridgeway Council.

This proposal was in response to a government request for councils across England to suggest ways to simplify the structure of local government in their regions. The last time local government was reorganised in Oxfordshire was in 1974.

The reshuffling aims to redistribute administrative control to residents. The Greater Oxford boundary closely follows the line of Oxford's ‘Green Belt’, which spans from Bicester in the North to Abingdon in the South. Currently, almost all of the Green Belt sits outside of the city's administrative boundaries. The proposal for a Greater Oxford council would give local residents authority over the Green Belt for the first time since its creation in 1975.

Councillor Edward Mundy of the Labour Party told *Cherwell* that this unification would mean that “residents across the greater Oxford area get a say in the political decisions that impact them and where they live and work.”

For a city like Oxford, which is not in a built-up or urban part of the country this loss of local agency could be particularly pronounced.

The proposed benefits for the county include 40,000 new homes to be built near existing jobs and community facilities by 2040, 16% of which would be

council homes. The Council also says it would extend public transport routes to reduce congestion, as well as widen the access of leisure and outdoor pools to all Greater Oxford residents rather than to city residents exclusively.

The proposal has met opposition within the county. Emily Kerr, Local Councillor for the Green Party, told *Cherwell* that this proposal is “simply a non-starter” unless the National Government's stated criteria for population size changes. Greater Oxford would cover a region with a population of about 240,000 people today, rising to about 345,000 by 2040. The Oxfordshire Green Party voted to oppose an Oxfordshire unitary authority, opting to support the ‘Your Oxfordshire’ suggestion which offers a new unitary authority on existing county boundaries.

Councillor Mundy also highlighted some disadvantages of the unified council system, but said: “To do nothing and submit no proposal was an option, but that would have effectively given up on Oxford having its own Council, possibly even on the continued public use of our Town Hall.”

Regarding the likelihood of these plans going ahead, Councillor Kerr told *Cherwell* that she hopes that either decision will “decentralise decision making” but “to a large degree, it will be out of our hands as it is a Westminster decision.”

Independent Councillor David Henwood also told *Cherwell* his thoughts on the restructuring. A single unitary authority for Oxford

Read the full article at cherwell.org

Brasenose and Catz JCRs launch ‘Safe Celebrators’ welfare scheme for post-exam celebrations

LAURENCE COOKE

A new student-led peer support initiative was launched this week by Brasenose College and St Catherine's College JCRs. The pilot scheme, Safe Celebrators, provides bystander support to students during post-exam festivities.

Student volunteers from a range of colleges will be on hand in Port Meadow from Week 7 to offer warm drinks, water, pastoral support, and signposting. Safe Celebrators told *Cherwell* that the volunteers were not there to offer first aid nor was it their job to police celebrations. They said their aim was to “help maintain a kind, welcoming atmosphere”, affirming: “we're not here to judge or interrogate anyone”.

The programme is not affiliated with the University's ‘Celebrate SMART’ campaign, which reminds students to stay safe and advises against participating in trashing to avoid incurring £150 littering fines from Proctors. *Cherwell* understands that prior to this week, a total of three fines have been handed out

so far this term.

The scheme comes in the wake of a tragedy involving a Brasenose student last year.

The lead organiser, Taona Makungaya, told *Cherwell* that “Safe Celebrators was born from deep grief - the kind of grief that is really just love with nowhere to go. In the wake of Wesley Akum-Ojong's tragic passing during post-exam celebrations last year, many of us felt a powerful urge to do something - anything - to honour his memory and to make sure no one else feels alone or unsafe in moments meant for joy.”

“What began in sorrow has grown into something collective and hopeful. Safe Celebrators is a student-led initiative grounded in care, community, and kindness - offering warm drinks, moral support, and a calm presence during high-energy celebration weeks.”

“This isn't about limiting celebration - it's about making sure it's shared, supported, and safe for everyone. The response from students across colleges has been incredible. Wesley's spirit - his generosity, his joy, his warmth - contin-

ues to guide us. This is one way we carry that forward.”

Brasenose JCR has taken a leading role in the plans. JCR President Rory McGlade told *Cherwell*: “The Royal Life-saving Society, who spoke to Brasenose College, recommended student peer-to-peer initiatives as a crucial way to improve water safety in university settings.”

“This isn't medical support, lifeguarding, or telling students off - it's about providing welfare support at a time that is emotional for many, ensuring that wellbeing during post-exam celebrations is prioritised.”

“The supportive response that this pilot has got shows that this is something that means a lot to students, and is something that we hope to continue in future years as well.”

The organisers have worked with College staff to identify key days for undergraduates finishing, achieving 75% coverage of all exams finishing in Weeks 8 and 9. Volunteers will be present on Friday of both weeks, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons of Week 8, and Thursday morning of Week 9.

University discipline statute retains ‘problematic clauses’ despite consultation

AMELIA GIBBINS

Proposed changes to Oxford University's disciplinary code have faced criticism for retaining “problematic clauses” that “remain at risk of overreach”, despite a year-long consultation prompted by backlash over free speech concerns. The power of the University to temporarily ban students from its land as a precaution, as well as limiting freedoms to protest, has been met with scrutiny.

The amendments will also enable the University to investigate more cases of serious misconduct without complaints having to first be lodged with the police. They aim to make the disciplinary process clearer and more accessible, according to a notice in the Gazette.

The proposals also address artificial intelligence, stating that the unauthorised use of AI in examinations is a form of academic misconduct. It clarifies that submitting “materials generated by artificial intelligence” is not considered a student's own work.

If passed by Congregation later this month, these changes will be enacted to Statute XI, which includes the code of discipline for all students. The updates would come into effect from September 2025, bringing university procedures

in line with Office for Students (OfS) guidelines that come into place this summer.

Amendments to the statute proposed in June 2024 were met with concern as a statement circulated which warned of “illiberal” and “alarming” clauses. Opposition to the amendments was noted by over 15 academics in a resolution submitted to Congregation, and over 30 academics backed a resolution in support of a working group. This led the University Council to withdraw them, and the working group was established to revise the proposals.

The authors of that statement, who have now come forward as Daniel Tate, Isabella Cuervo-Lorens, and Lara Hankeln, told *Cherwell* that there remain a number of clauses that “still continue to concern [them]”, despite some “notable improvements” as compared to last year.

One of the clauses in question stipulates that no member of the University or student member may “disrupt or obstruct” university activities. If the new amendments are passed, this will include disrupting or obstructing “the lawful exercise of freedom of speech”, including by visiting speakers. Protests permitted by the Proctors, however, will not breach

the disciplinary rules, though the University did not respond to how many had been allowed in the last two years.

Another clause introduces the power to temporarily ban students from University premises for up to 21 days. This can be used as a “precautionary measure” if there are “reasonable grounds” to believe that an individual “is likely or threatens to cause damage to property or harm to other users”.

The authors told *Cherwell* that both of these clauses “remain at risk of overreach, vagueness, and ambiguity.”

They asserted that these clauses, as well as another that pertaining to police arrests, could have a “chilling effect” towards freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and academic freedom.”

The authors told *Cherwell* that they provided recommendations on how to address these concerns to the Statute XI Working Group and to members of the three University committees reviewing the amendments. Although they are “relieved” at the improvements, they maintain that the updated proposal retains these “problematic clauses”.

Read the full article at cherwell.org
Image credit: Amelia Gibbins for Cherwell



INVESTIGATIONS

‘We need a culture shift’: Financial disparities and uneven provision in Oxford student welfare

Continued from Page 1

As such, colleges whose budgets do not account for salaries for welfare staff have been excluded to provide clearer analysis.

College disparities

The mean spending per student on welfare is £282 (figure 1), with St John's College spending the most. As the richest College in Oxford with an endowment of £790 million this is perhaps unsurprising. Their total of £317 per student is more than four times the size of Oriel College's (£78). Oriel's endowment of £101 million places them in the lower half of colleges by wealth. This suggests that drastic differences in endowment size may also translate to inequalities in student welfare support.

However, large endowments do not always guarantee higher spending. Among the middle 50% of colleges, per-student spending still ranges widely, from £159 to £307. This wide variation of £148 suggests there is no clear standard or benchmark for welfare spending across Oxford.

The Queen's College underscores this inconsistency. Despite having the fourth-largest endowment of all Oxford Colleges at £340 million, they spent the third least amount per student on welfare, FOI data reveals. At £97 they spend less than a third of what St John's College gives towards welfare, despite both being counted among the richest colleges in Oxford. This disparity among wealthier colleges suggests financial capacity alone does not always determine welfare investment.

“Some colleges still use chaplains as part of their welfare teams, while others have no staff employed in a religious capacity at all

Moreover, Blackfriars Hall – a Permanent Private Hall with approximately 70 students – has an estimated welfare “service value” of upwards of £60,000 each year. At £1,333 per person per year, that represents a much higher spend than other Oxford colleges. In an investigation earlier this year, Blackfriars' Regent told *Cherwell* that all students are known by name to the staff, creating an environment conducive to high student welfare. Clearly financial capacity alone does not determine the level of welfare provision.

A spokesperson for the SU told *Cherwell*: “There are disparities in welfare provision across colleges. A collegiate university structure, with colleges varying significantly in terms of resourcing, size, and internal approaches to welfare, inevitably leads to differences in what students' experience... Whilst these differences aren't always negative, they do contribute to inconsistencies in provision.”

No Budget, No Clarity

Not all colleges put their welfare services on an equally firm financial footing. Some colleges told *Cherwell* they have no designated budget for welfare, including Corpus Christi, Wadham, and Lincoln. Lincoln College told *Cherwell* that they do “not work on a ‘budget’ system, so no specific figure is allocated. The Welfare Coordinator works directly with the Bursar to request whatever funds are required for events and for infrastructure to provide welfare support.”

This approach was echoed by Wadham College, who provide their welfare support “as an integral part of many of its other activities” but do not have a set budget. A student at Wadham College told *Cherwell*: “Welfare at Wadham is significantly devolved to the College SU.” They described that student officers provide the week-to-week welfare support, and “are given much more than they are equipped to handle”. They added that the college's welfare team were not always the first point of contact and “not uniformly useful”.

Chaplaincy

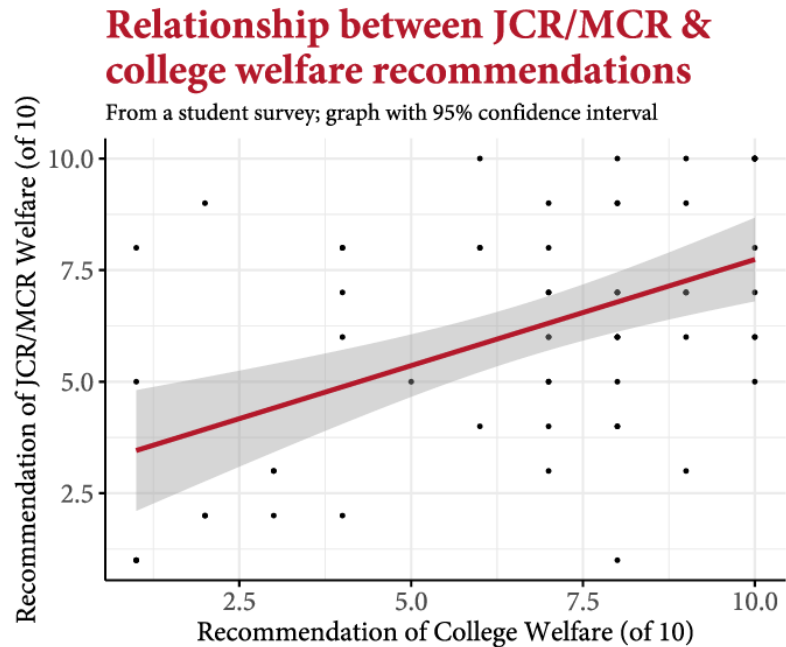
Another source of inconsistency is the involvement of college chaplains in welfare services. For some colleges, there is a clear link between the Chaplain's role and the provision of welfare services. At Oriel College, for instance, the Chaplain has always been a member of the welfare team. Similarly, Brasenose College's Chaplain supervises student welfare training and acts as both Welfare Officer and Link Officer with University Counselling Service. Brasenose told *Cherwell* that “[t]hese responsibilities have remained unchanged since the Chaplain was appointed”.

But this is not universal. Seven colleges – including Somerville and St Anne's – have no staff employed in any kind of religious capacity. Corpus Christi College's Chaplain was involved in welfare services until Michaelmas of 2023. Similarly, St John's employed the Chaplain as the Welfare Dean until Trinity term 2024, at which point a Head of Student Welfare and Wellbeing was appointed.

With many colleges opting to replace or, in the case of Regent's Park College, supplement chaplains holding welfare roles with secular Welfare Lead roles, it seems that a transitional stage is afoot with regards to the involvement of the chaplaincy in college welfare services.

These variations mean student welfare support is not just shaped by financial means but by the personal ethos of individual chaplains. Indeed, the impact of chaplain involvement on perceived quality of welfare provision ultimately hinges on the attitudes or beliefs of the individual chaplains involved.

In a survey circulated by *Cherwell*, one respondent who had faced anti-Semitic abuse found that their college chaplain was “one of the most kind and understanding people” they had ever spoken to on the issue, even despite their religious differences. Others, however, had far more negative anecdotes to share – with one,



“[feeling] mocked by” their college chaplain, as they claimed the chaplain refused “to even say words such as sexual assault”. Other students also voiced discomfort over the College Chaplain being a member of the welfare team, stating welfare “should be equally accessible to all students, regardless of faith”.

JCR welfare services

Another major facet of welfare provision in colleges are the services provided by JCR Welfare Representatives. According to a *Cherwell* survey, most college JCRs seem to provide a similar range of welfare activities, with welfare teas and wine-tasting events being the most popular.

However, many respondents expressed reluctance to go to Welfare Representatives directly for personal issues, mostly since they are fellow students who they know in a social capacity. One student told *Cherwell*: “I would feel more comfortable going to a professional with my problems than a student I know,” whilst another added that they would “find it weird” to go to someone they consider a “good friend” for personal welfare advice.

Ultimately, JCR welfare is viewed more as an extra opportunity for socialising within college than an avenue to address serious pastoral concerns. One respondent noted: “JCR welfare is predominantly for when you need a serotonin boost.”

Most students agreed that, compared to JCR Welfare Representatives, College welfare teams were better equipped to support students with serious pastoral issues. One respondent appreciated the “more professional setting” of their College welfare services. “Sometimes it's just nice to have a ‘grown-up’ who understands how hard Oxford is,” another student told *Cherwell*.

University welfare services

Given the inconsistent provision across colleges, the University's central welfare services are expected to provide a safety net. However, this is not always the case.

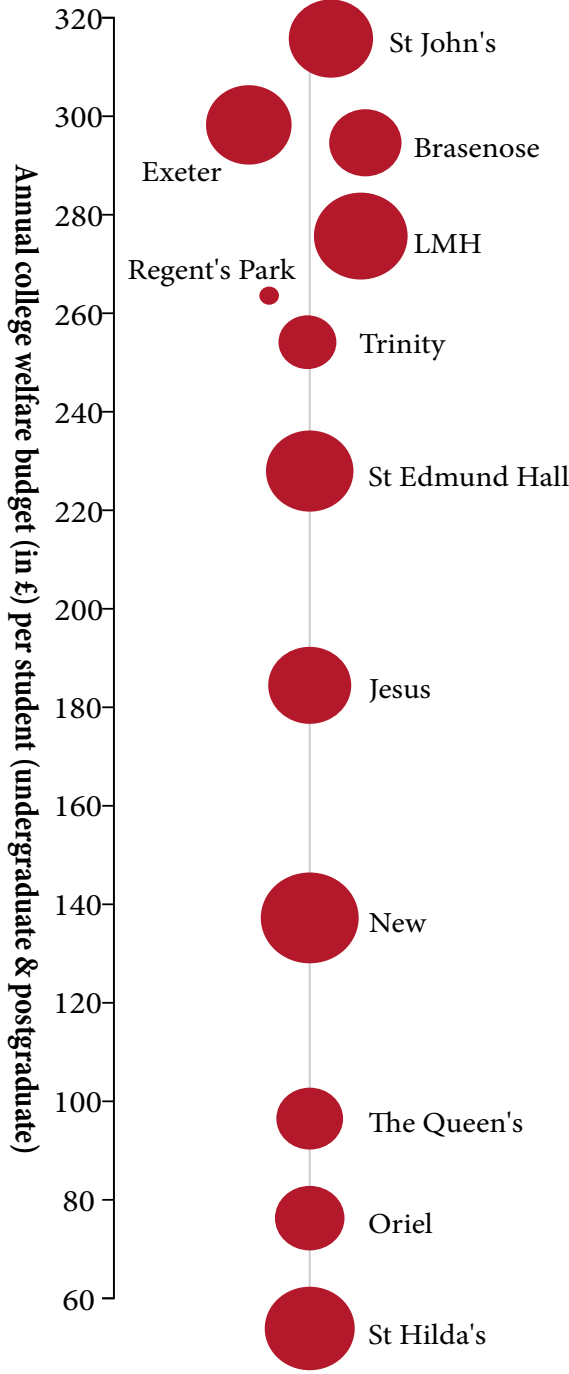
A spokesperson from Oxford University told *Cherwell*: “We take the wellbeing of our students very seriously and encourage those who are in need of support to access the extensive welfare provision available at both University and college level. A range of specialist support services for students is accessible via the Student Counselling Service and the Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service as well as college Welfare Teams. Oxford's Student Support and Welfare Services are committed to delivering timely, high-quality and effective support to all members of our student body who need information and support.”

However, in response to *Cherwell's* survey, multiple respondents

complained about University-wide services feeling too impersonal and overstretched. They cited long waiting times for counselling appointments and “dispassionate” email correspondence as reasons for their dissatisfaction.

Welfare spending per student

From FOI data; not all colleges are shown; only colleges with similar budget methodology; bubbles sized by number of students.



A welfare lottery

The overall picture is one of systematic disparity. Welfare provision at Oxford is a lottery, with each student's experience determined largely by their College's approach. These disparities cannot be explained by College wealth alone, nor are they adequately corrected by the University-wide services.

An SU spokesperson told *Cherwell*: “No system is ever ‘sufficient’ in the face of the scale of challenges young people are experiencing today. Oxford's environment is unique and high-pressure, and our welfare structures must match that reality. We need not only more robust provisions from both colleges and the central University, but a broader cultural shift in how welfare is prioritised across the institution – including among academics. Students need to feel supported not just in crisis, but throughout their time here.”

Laurence Cooke and Poppy Littler-Jennings contributed to reporting.

For the complete and updated version, go to cherwell.org

Image credit: Oscar Reynolds for Cherwell

OPINION

Trashing rules save face, not students

CHLOE SMITH

Trashing is banned. But what does the banning achieve except pushing students further from the centre to more perilous waters?

Recently, Brasenose students were threatened with £150 fines from the University for trashing on the grounds of littering. The Oxford University 'SMART' guidance states that "littering as a result of 'trashing' is illegal and will incur a £150 fine." Fining students is a deterrent. But attempting to stamp out trashing with increased patrolling and irregular fines for littering will not succeed and only addresses part of the issue.

It seems that the University isn't trying to help students celebrate exams safely and limit environmental damage but to save their reputation against an arrogant Oxford tradition. But trashing doesn't have to be obnoxious. It can be a carefully managed, safe, and fun way to cast off exams that comes at little cost to the environment and actually celebrates everything that is great about Oxford.

The two problems with trashing are that it creates litter, and it's dangerous. 'Trashing' is when students who have just finished exams gather near a water source. Their friends throw coloured powder, silly string, confetti, and shaving foam on them. Sometimes students throw food like eggs, flour, and even beans and soup at their friends. They are often

sprayed with alcohol like prosecco before jumping into the water in their subfusc.

Bottles and all kinds of litter can be left. Powder can stain pavements and all the crap students are covered in is washed into the waterways. The University's 2019 sustainability blog states that it costs "the University more than £25,000 each year" to clean up trashing debris. Moreover, trashing can be extremely dangerous. Crowds, alcohol, and inhibition near water can lead to fatalities. Last year, a Brasenose student died trashing in water at Port Meadow.

This is exactly why fining is so dangerous. Trashing is fun and will continue to happen, with students finding new locations to celebrate in. They will be pushed away from the centre to more remote areas to jump in or to have a celebratory swim.

There are ways to trash without littering: remove all packets and bottles, only use biodegradable materials, use products from EcoTrash – a business run out of Keble which creates biodegradable powders made from cornstarch which quickly dissolve, and trash in a limited area and clear up.

Stopping littering is important, but fining students seems like a surface level approach to save face for the University rather than ensure student safety.

Students won't be stopped from trashing and, in my view, they shouldn't be. Trashing has a cathartic element that can be achieved at a limited cost to the environment. Exams are awful, and stopping students from following traditionally hard exams with traditionally exuberant fun seems to lack the wonderful balance between hard work and hard play that Oxford attempts to strike. The University's 'avoid fines' advice in their SMART guidance states that "trashing" isn't an Oxford tradition, it's anti-social behaviour. I admit that trashing done badly is anti-social behaviour. But it is an Oxford tradition. The *Daily Mail* suggests that trashing

started in the 1970s, making trashing older or as old as admitting women to study at Oxford. Anywhere else, 50 years is a long time. Celebrate the tradition and simultaneously tighten college communities by allowing students to trash safely, in colleges.

This solution to the 'trashing problem' could be implemented very easily: it is already in practice at Jesus College and is being trialled at my college, Brasenose. Colleges could designate a spacious, less historic area away from the library with drainage, perhaps near the bikes or in a newer quad where the colleges' students can trash each other. This way, students' safety can be monitored and littering can be contained. Buckets filled with water can be chucked over students and reused. Colleges could enforce policies on only biodegradable materials like those sold by EcoTrash being used, stopping waste by excluding food products. Perhaps college JCRs could even link with EcoTrash and have a trashing levy (a Mansfield review recommends the products to all JCRs), so biodegradable products are always available to students.

The experience could be much safer for everyone. Looking away won't solve the problem. Forcing something underground only makes it more dangerous. So, make it safer – make it integral to the college experience.

It's reasonable that students would want to celebrate their exams as people have done before them. It's unfortunate that that tradition appears very similar to stereotypical images of rowdy, wasteful Oxford students with no consideration for the Town. The solution is easy, and it isn't a fine that will push students further from water easily accessed by the emergency services. It's organised trashing in college where college communities can celebrate their victories together. Because compromising student safety to save the University's face? That's trash.

Letters to the Editors:

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

Beauty without a purpose

SIR AND MADAM - In their piece 'Beauty without a purpose', Saskia Maini suggests Oxford students benefit from Oxford's green spaces, but "rarely (...) consider how we might give back." As a committee member for the Nature Conservation Society (OUNCS), I strongly agree – not only does engaging in conserving our green spaces improve their chances of longevity, but also deepens connection with the places and people around us. Oxford's town and gown divide is stark, and through OUNCS volunteer events at community-led projects around the city, I feel much closer to the 'town' of Oxford. I often spend weekend mornings with my hands in the soil at sites like Oxford City Farm, speaking with those much older and younger than me, connecting through our love for these spaces. I think we have a responsibility to act as fellow community members and give back to the green spaces we enjoy to help secure them for all.

Beatrice McWilliams

Biology, Hertford

Collier in Oxford: Prodigy or fad?

SIR AND MADAM - I thoroughly enjoyed reading Donovan Lock's article on Jacob Collier's visit to the union. Quite rightly, our author discusses the grave situation facing music education in this country, especially pointing out the wealth divide. Although there is public apathy to the arts in general, music is almost certainly the biggest victim. Spengler writes of the esoteric nature of music, which according to Lock, Collier tries to maintain, describing Palestrina and Bach's compositions as "never intelligible" to the average person, and goes on to say, "Faustian [western] art is not, and by very essence cannot be, 'for all.'" Does this not highlight the fundamental importance of understanding music as a part of a well-rounded education?

Furthermore, the general public's disregard for music can be witnessed just over the page, on the BNO list. Despite the vast and thriving music scene in Oxford, with an enormous number of ensembles and almost daily concerts, not a single composer, conductor, or performer made the list (the closest being DJs, whom have an entirely different skillset and appeal). Is this not contempt for what should be a huge part of our culture?

John Frame

Chemistry, Christ Church

Democracy by pie chart

SIR AND MADAM - Lloyd Doré-Green claims in his article that opinion polling "reduces complex political problems to simple emotional ones". Strange, then, that he also describes such polling – including *The Verdict* – as a "meaningless pie chart." What this neglects to consider is that emotionally-driven political conclusions are still highly meaningful. It's true that people do respond emotionally to current events, but I'm not sure anyone would qualify fear about Donald Trump, eco-anxiety, or anger at Brexit as mere "fickle whims of public opinion". Opinion polling acknowledges the force of choices made by actual human beings, rather than dismissing said choices as below the standards expected of idealised rational actors.

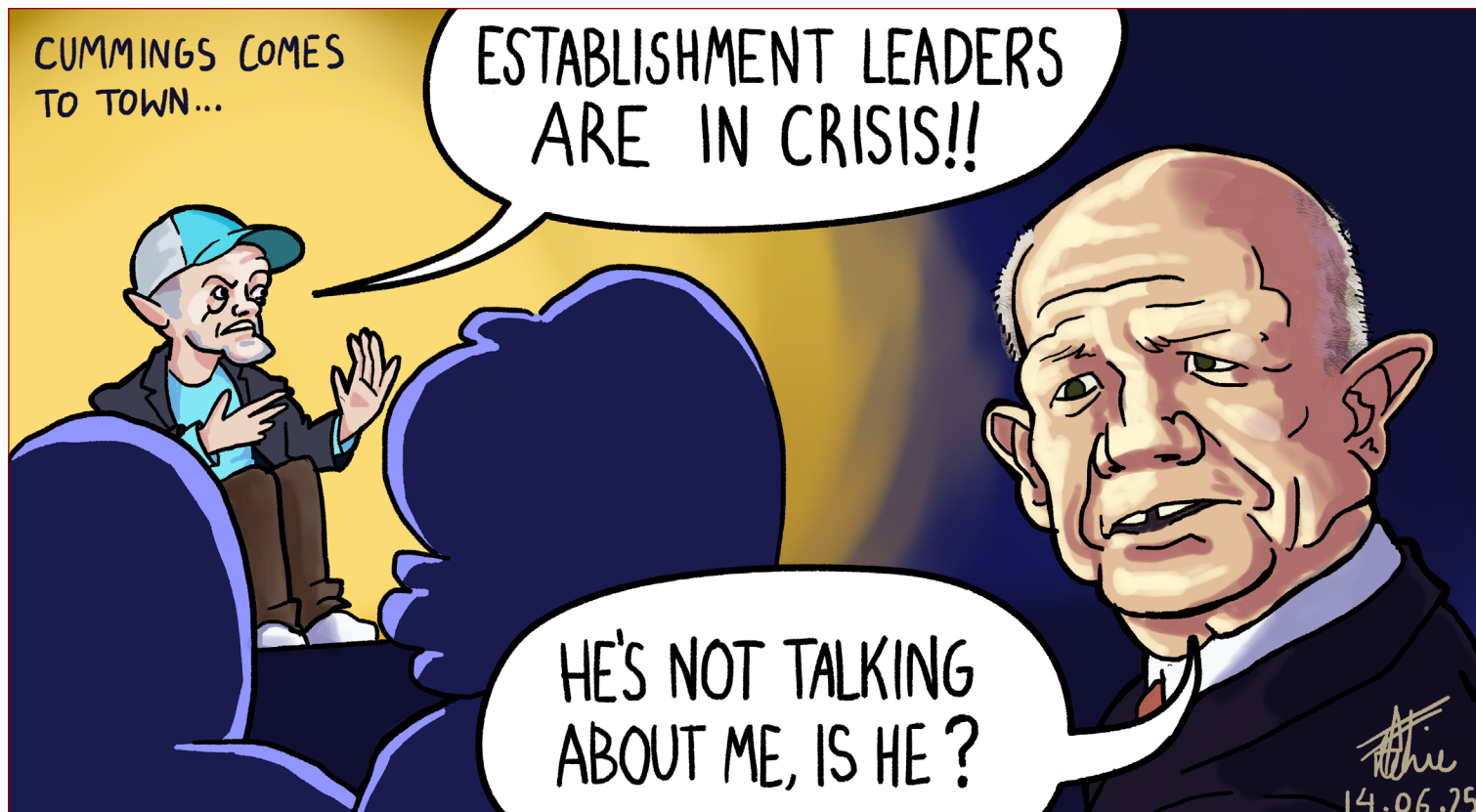
Moreover, democracy by pie chart is popular. *The Verdict* has been incredibly successful for boosting engagement with *Cherwell*. As editor, that is my priority. Nobody sensible would assume that our polling delivers "resolute certainties", and I haven't yet tried to send our graphs to *Ipsos MORI* for publication (yet). But when done properly, to ignore the role of emotions, and to ignore "what the majority thinks" on a wide array of subjects, just further patronises those disillusioned people who already feel their input is considered meaningless. Or how about we just govern the world by committee.

Laurence Cooke

Philosophy and French, St John's
Editor-in-Chief TT25

Academic imperialism and the war on Oxford (amended 11/06)

In our week 5 print, we incorrectly suggested that Magdalen College owned the land on which Oxford's Hollywood Bowl and Vue Cinema are located and that the College was involved in redevelopment plans on this site. *Cherwell* apologies for this inaccuracy.



The Language Faculty is promoting intelligence, not artifice

LLOYD DORÉ- GREEN

Isaac Asimov's fantastic short story 'The Last Question' has always struck me as vaguely implausible, not because of its depictions of the next trillion-or-so years of human evolution and civilisation, nor because of its wonderful twist, but simply because of what the 'last question', the hardest problem for the story's fictional artificial intelligence to solve, is. Tritely put, I thought that the 'last question' would be that of the meaning of life. Interestingly, Asimov agrees with me. The last question was a scientific one, rather than a more philosophical one, because he thought that the latter would be entirely outside of the purview of artificial intelligence. But current iterations of artificial intelligence are far from the masters of logic that Asimov imagined. ChatGPT can explain, in detail, how it is possible never to lose a game of noughts and crosses but, when asked to put this into practice, it plays with about as much skill as a toddler. What they are good at is usurping creativity, and human thought with thoughtless knockoffs. This is an attack which should be resisted.

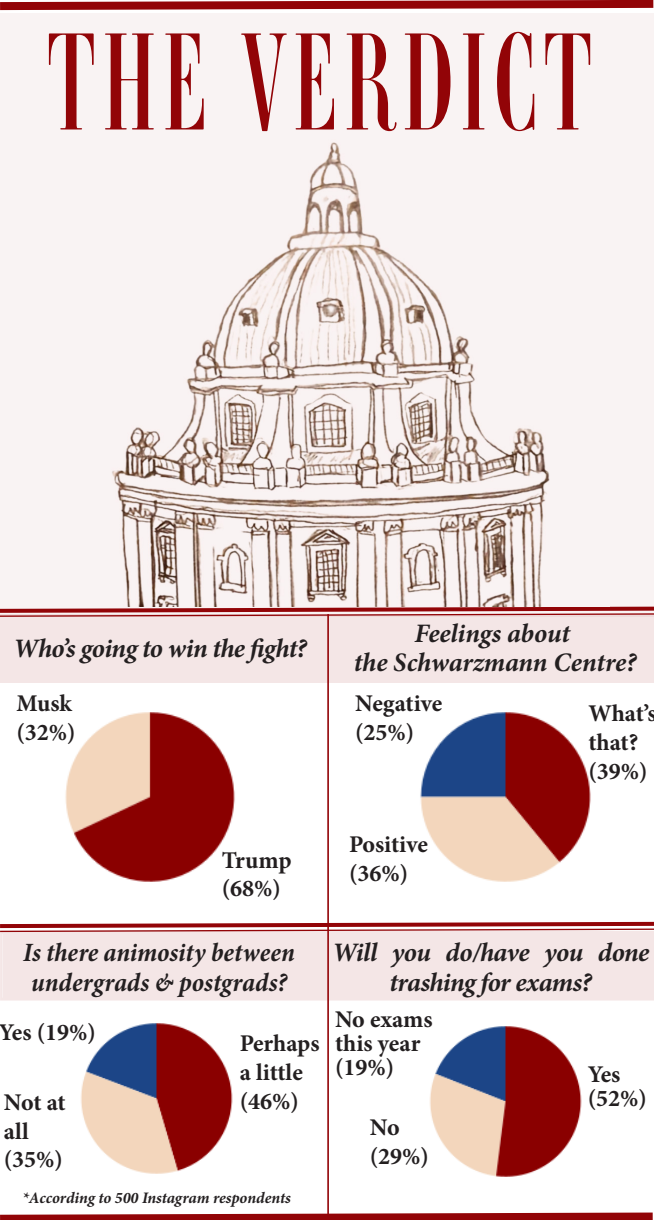
With this in mind, I admit to being baffled by reactions to the change in the format of finals examinations in modern languages. That the previous format of entirely open-book exams is not practicable in the current age of artificial intelligence is obvious.

There is, unfortunately, nothing stopping a student struggling in an exam from loading up ChatGPT and using it to plan or write an essay. Software which purports to detect AI-generated writing churns out far too many false positives to be reliable. And the academic arms race promoted by examinations means that any competitive edge, no matter how unscrupulous, will be taken by some. To allow this to go on harms both those who cheat and those who do not. Those who choose to cheat, by shouldering their preferred large language model with as much work as they can, surrender their thoughts to the mindless convulsions of an algorithm; they fail to develop the essential skills which a degree is supposed to foster. Those who choose not to will be at an undeniable disadvantage; their grades will suffer.

This raises an obvious question. If artificial intelligence really would improve people's performance, should we not be teaching and encouraging students to use it in a productive manner? Plausibly. As long as one is not outsourcing one's own thoughts to an artificial intelligence I see no real argument against its use, though, given its tendency to be confidently wrong, I have little faith in its research skills. When it comes time for exams, however, the options on the table are closed book or open book. One protects essential and important skills whilst, admittedly, underpreparing students

for the age of artificial intelligence. The other allows students to ignore and underdevelop these essential skills in favour of short-term gains in their marks. People who argue that this decision fails properly to prepare students for the future overlook the timeless skills that it is designed to protect and take their rightful place at the front of the queue of people ready to be replaced by computers. They are, as Milan Kundera put it, the allies of their own gravediggers.

I assume that, in many cases, the reactions are rationalised rather than rational. It is frustrating to get half, or three quarters, of the way through your degree only then to discover that you will not be able to flick your way through your notes if you forget a source or a quotation in the exam – or to learn that you are going to have to reacquaint yourself with the technology of a bygone era: the pen. The problem comes when such frustration is reimagined to be what it is not: a genuine critique of closed book exams. That in-person exams prioritise 'outdated' skills like memorisation is obviously a weak argument. Memorisation is not outdated but nor is it the most important skill being protected by in-person exams. To risk sounding like an egghead, this is a strawman. I assume that what is secretly being said is 'memorising material is such an unnecessary drag'. I sympathise. But this is not a principled stance and it should not be allowed to masquerade as one.



Only Oxford can improve access

STAN SMITH

The most rewarding thing I did in my first year at university was to sign up to Oxbridge Launchpad. During the Hilary break and in desperate need of something to take my mind off a sub-par Q-Step essay, I came across the initiative – a non-profit aimed at increasing the number of state-educated and underrepresented students enrolled at two of the best universities in the world. As a volunteer tutor, I was assigned to an extremely bright young person and we worked in free weekly sessions to develop her personal statement, practise for the entrance exam, and prep for her interview.

When the news came in January that her application was successful, I was buzzing. I by no means got her place for her but I felt my small effort had at least sent her into that fateful Teams call in December a little more prepared, having helped bridge the ‘information gap’ that means private school students are more aware of what’s needed to succeed than their state-educated counterparts. In a year of privilege and solipsism, dining in giant halls, dressing up for silly Latin ceremonies and fretting over the trivial concerns of my degree, it felt like genuinely important work.

So when an email arrived this March inviting me to a Zoom call to hear about the “exciting new chapter” for the organisation, I was naturally interested. What I found, however, left me less than stoked. We were informed that the organisation was becoming for-profit, putting its resources behind a paywall and charging £29.99 per tutoring session. They would now offer ‘community spaces’ (read: a Discord server) for paying customers to be in constant contact with Oxford students, in what very much resembles the money-for-connections network that the initiative was founded to challenge.

It is obvious that this is a betrayal of the organisation’s original *raison d’être*. Slapping a hefty fee on the tutoring makes the crucial information tutors provide drastically less accessible. Take the (at least) 22 hours of free tutoring I provided. It would now cost a student £660, a sum few have to splash on an application that may well be unsuccessful. Whilst the staff on the Zoom call cited issues with the old system (too many tutors and too little oversight) as a reason for this change, rectifying these does not require the introduction of profit. The founders could have created stronger vetting for tutors or introduced a small fee to cover administration costs, without yanking the prices as high as they have. The old website, now replaced by a sleek new model, declared that “our sole mission is to propel the brightest minds to

two of the most prestigious institutions in the world”, but clearly making a pretty penny has become a priority as well. Oxbridge Launchpad is now just another tutoring company, albeit one that is shrouded in the language of social justice. This, in the context of Oxford’s declining state school offer rate, is pretty depressing.

But I’m not here just to bash the organisation for its decision. Ultimately, these changes to Oxbridge Launchpad are a reminder that no-one can improve access to Oxford and Cambridge for them, they must do it themselves. As long as the disparity between private and state education remains, and it looks set to do so as Rachel Reeve’s budget indicates that no new funding is coming, only the institutions themselves have the means to correct imbalances. Crucially, they are also the ones with the real incentive to do so. Remaining a top university requires choosing the students with the most potential to excel in higher education, not those who have been molly-coddled to success at their secondary school.

Certainly, the universities are making some effort, for instance Oxford’s Astrophoria foundation year. But places on such initiatives are limited, and are not the widespread reform of the admissions process needed to correct the legacy the pandemic left on education inequalities. The current provisions remain exclusive, selecting those who have managed to already excel despite their disadvantages, for instance Oxford’s UNIQ program states that it “prioritises places for students with good grades.” More must be done to discover not only the already successful, but those with potential.

Many individual colleges do fantastic access work, but the problem is compounded by the fact that those most determined to correct inequalities often have the least means to do so. Mansfield, the only Oxford college whose ratio of private to state school students reflects national averages, has the smallest endowment. Meanwhile, many of the wealthiest colleges, such as Magdalen, remain happy to sit on their hands and accept the highest proportions of the privately educated. What’s required is a coordinated effort across colleges, and that will only occur if the central administration makes it happen.

External charitable initiatives are important. I for one have seen the difference they can make. But Oxford and Cambridge can no longer rely on them to do their access work for them. Oxbridge Launchpad’s prioritisation of profit over progress shows us that, if inequalities in admissions are to improve, the universities will have to roll their sleeves up and get to work.

Racism tarnished my European year abroad experience

For linguists and lawyers heading across the Channel in third year, an idyllic continental adventure is not the whole picture

PETER CHEN

We’re often told that a year abroad in Europe is meant to be the time of our lives. It can be both intellectually enriching and personally fulfilling to spend a year in a foreign country, learning a new language and connecting with a different culture.

As someone who spent a year doing just that, I can tell you that in many ways, I learned more during those twelve months away from Oxford than in the two years I spent there. I picked up rowing, learned Dutch, and explored areas of my discipline that were not on offer back home.

But for some of us, that’s not the whole picture. Because when you’re abroad and visibly different, even the most mundane experiences – like buying fish at a market – can turn into moments of confrontation, confusion, or fear.

“*Even the most mundane experiences can turn into moments of confrontation, confusion, or fear*”

This year, even though I was technically living in the Netherlands, I found myself back in Oxford more often than I expected. Partly because I missed my friends: many of them are graduating this summer, and I wanted to spend more time with them before they left. But there was another reason, one I don’t usually talk

about.

As a person of colour, I found living in the Netherlands unexpectedly difficult.

I want to be clear: I don’t claim to speak for anyone else. Everyone’s experience abroad is different, and this is just mine. But having lived in Leiden for nearly ten months, I can say I was racially harassed and abused on a regular basis.

Some of it was subtle. One afternoon in a shop, wearing my puffer jacket – the only warm coat I had – a man approached me. “Do you go to Oxford?” he asked.

I smiled. “Yes, I do.” As the first in my family to go to university, I carry enormous pride in that.

He frowned. “Well, that can’t be right.” I froze. “What do you mean?”

“You don’t look like you go to Oxford,” he said. I must have looked confused, because he scoffed and added, “You know what I mean.”

I didn’t reply. I walked away, unsettled and unsure if I’d imagined it. But I hadn’t.

Then there were other moments, uglier ones. Soon after I arrived, I visited the famous Saturday market in Leiden; in a tradition dating back centuries, farmers and fishermen would bring their fresh produce and set up stalls around Nieuwe Rijn – literally ‘New Rhine’ – with bikes and fresh tulips adorning the canal path.

On that visit, I had a handful of herring and hatred from the locals.

First, a group of young men screamed ‘Chinese’ (pronounced SHE-nase in Dutch) to me and my friend; we shrug it off. Then, an old man stopped me in my tracks, blocked the busy pavement, and started lecturing me with everyone else around us watching.

My mind went blank. What was happening? His speech was mumbled and hard to discern, all I could comprehend is something along the lines of how no one speaks Dutch anymore. Passers-by stared. I stood frozen. When he finally walked away, I did too, numb and shaken,



unable to understand what had just happened to me.

I stopped going to the market.

If you know me at all, you’d know that this isn’t my normal style. There are lots of reasons for that. Often, when minorities speak out about their experience of hatred and bigotry, they are simply met with more vitriol and abuse. Some will say I made this up; some will call me an attention seeker. At the same time, writing about these things is hard; it is both mentally demanding and emotionally exhausting to dig up something that I would much rather never have to think about, let alone write down.

Sometimes I also wonder why I have to do this at all. Why I need to remind people that Europe isn’t just cobbled streets and cathedrals.

That your experience in Burgundy or Bologna may not be the same as mine. That people who look like me move through the world differently. My friends, who spoke so fondly of their time abroad, meant no harm. I don’t blame them. And the vast majority of Dutch people I met were warm, kind, and patient with me as I struggled through conversations in my broken language.

All I want to tell you, dear reader, is that the next time your friend comes back from their time in Europe, in the quieter moments between the funny stories of that time in an Irish pub or failing that language exam, ask them gently: what was it really like?

Image credit: Emily Henson for Cherwell

FEATURES

Drinking the political compass



STANLEY SMITH

Oxford’s political societies cultivated generations of MPs and PMs. In an era of rising populism, a tour of their drinking events finds a drifting elite with few ideas

It’s a well-worn cliché that Oxford is the place where future politicians are made. The student party societies here are where Prime Ministers-to-be from Margaret Thatcher to Liz Truss first cut their teeth. But as the size of party memberships continue to fall and a populist surge increases the currency of being an ‘outsider’, what is the role of Oxford’s political societies in shaping British politics? Are these societies ready to grapple with modern politics or are they just another antiquated Oxford tradition? To find out, I spent four evenings this Trinity term drinking with the University’s wannabe politicians.

Beer and Bickering: Oxford Labour Club (OLC)

On a Saturday evening in early May, I walk into St Anne’s JCR to a gathering of no more than 20 people. I’m starting with the party in power as I want to see how they react to the numerous announcements from the government over the Easter vacation.

From the decision to slash Universal Benefit rates to Keir Starmer’s new conviction that trans women are not women – coinciding with recent interpretation of the Equalities Act by the Supreme Court – are student Labourites joining the government as it shifts to the right?

One quick notice before we get going. The welfare secretary stands up and implores us to avoid discussions of controversial ‘foreign affairs’ (translation: for the love of God don’t start talking about Israel-Palestine). One can understand why they are apprehensive, given Labour’s history of antisemitism controversies. But it also establishes that there will be strict parameters on tonight’s conversation.

There is a distinctly dour mood this evening and the cause becomes clear once the discussion of the first motion (‘this house would deprioritise economic growth’) gets going. Speaker after speaker gets up and expresses their despair with the economic policy of Starmer and Co. From the obsession with growth (“or whatever it is we’re doing,” as one man puts it), to the scrapping of the winter fuel payment (since reversed), Starmer’s decisions have distinctly dampened the excitement OLC members no doubt had this time last year.

As for what they would do differently? It’s less clear, but the need to rein in inequality and tax wealth are met with nods of approval. During the break I point out to one member that the arguments made sound a lot like the Greens’ positions, and ask why he doesn’t support them instead? “Ah well, I’m in too deep for that now,”

he tells me.

During the discussion of the second motion, I’m less taken by the content of the arguments (the consensus is pretty clear that there shouldn’t be ‘a national religion’) than by who is doing the arguing. The speakers are almost all men; at one point I count eight in a row. I point this out to a member, and he grimaces, explaining that it’s long been an issue for OLC. Although the social secretary and both co-chairs this Trinity are women, he tells me that Beer and Bickering remains “a sausage-fest”.

The rest of the evening passes uneventfully. The final motion (‘this house, as the Labour Party, would encourage strikes’) was again met with consensus: strikes are an essential tool but a last resort. As I walk home past drunken May Ball goers, I can’t help feeling that the lack of discord is somewhat by design.

There’s clearly a lot of discontent with the Starmerite project, but OLC’s only response is apparently to gather once a week to collectively agree on uncontroversial principles. A lack of imagination, or more likely an eye on an internship in the party, seems to nip in the bud any interesting and (God forbid) controversial discussion of real policy alternatives.

Port and Policy - Oxford University Conservative Association (OUCA)

A week later, I made an uncertain attempt at putting together a ‘lounge suit’ as per OUCA’s dress code. This feels like an unnecessary extravagance, given the venue: a dilapidated scout hut in New Marston.

I’m greeted by an American post-grad in an expensive-looking three-piece suit who proudly explains that he will be ‘speaker of the house’ for tonight’s discussion and promptly returns to doing his ‘vocal warm ups’ (“BA-BA-BA!”). I

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The men are all strikingly similar: under six foot tall, dressed in chinos, blazers, and trainers with precisely combed hair

shuffle over to the side of the room, picking up a flimsy plastic port glass as I go, and watch as the OUCA regulars trickle in. The men are all strikingly similar: under 6 foot tall, dressed in chinos, blazers and trainers and with precisely combed hair. More interesting, though, is the fact that they don't dominate the makeup of attendees: the room is far more diverse in gender and ethnicity than OLC. It's also substantially better attended, which is impressive for a party with the worst national polling in its history, and

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If the voters went to the polls tomorrow, all evidence suggests that the Tories would be decimated, and OUCA members wouldn't bat an eye

given how far out of the town centre we are. I get to chatting with attendees. They quickly suss out that I'm new and I have bought membership (as I will for all the societies I visit) which lands me on the receiving end of some concerted networking efforts. Whereas with Beer and Bickering the conversation was pretty laid back, here I'm constantly asked for what my Instagram handle is and whether they've seen me before at the Oxford Union (they haven't). It's like everyone has just finished *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and is keen to put it into practice: “So tell me, Stanley, what EXACTLY is it that makes the food at Teddy Hall so great?”

I'm relieved, then, when the ‘speaker’ bellows out that the first motion of the night will begin. I look around, waiting for the room to fall quiet, but the conversation continues as if nothing had happened. Instead, the participants in the debate begin screaming their arguments at the top of their lungs to a room which is evidently not listening.

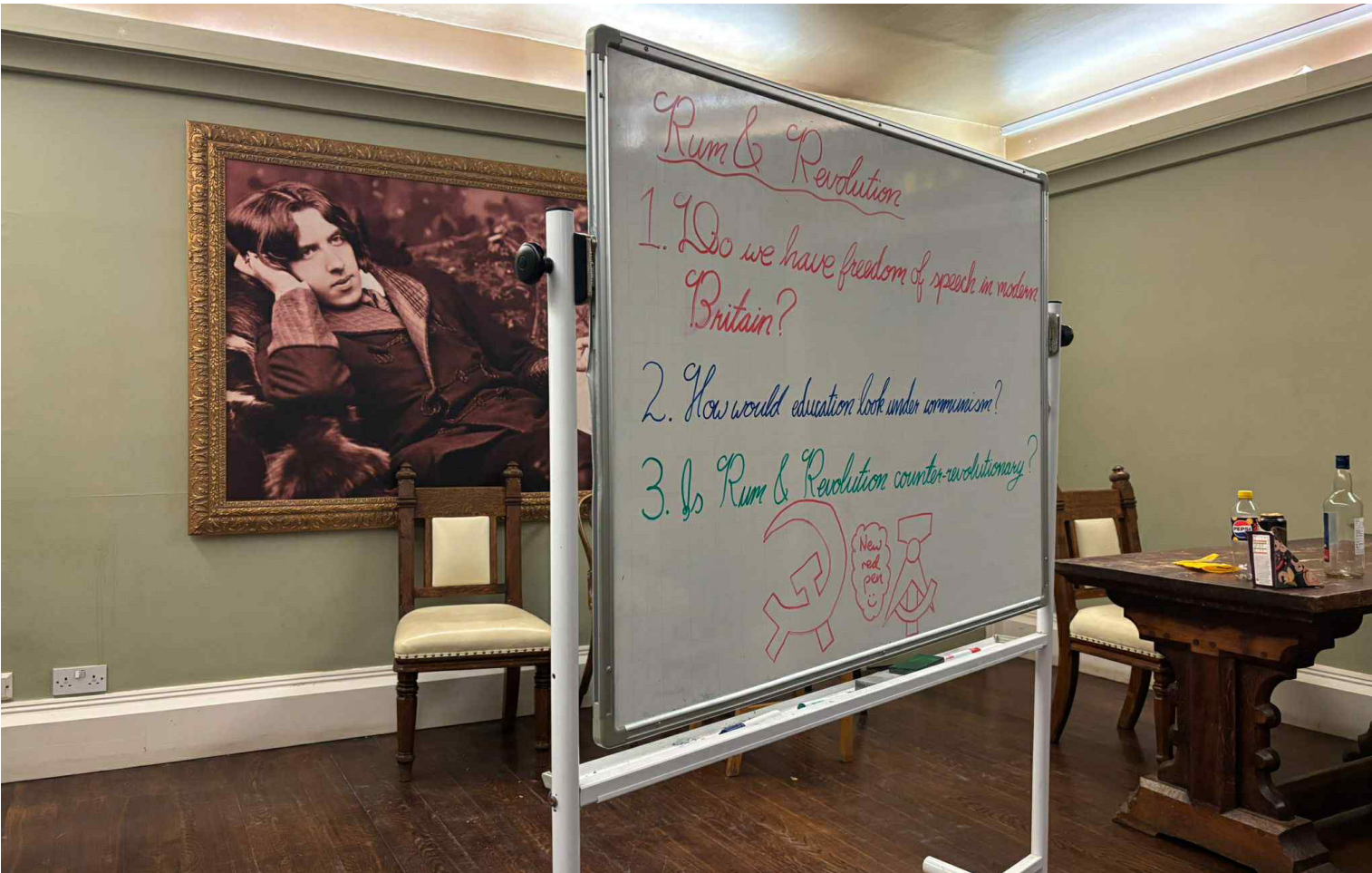
I move closer, trying to make out what they are saying, but I can't for the noise of conversation. The three debaters resemble the street preachers on Cornmarket Street, shouting at distinctly uninterested passersby.

Unable to glean anything from the participants, I begin asking questions of those around me. How do they feel about the recent local elections, in which the Conservatives lost 674 councillors? “I don't think people here realise that Reform is an existential threat,” one member tells me once it's just the two of us. It's hard not to agree with his assessment. In all the conversations I have, the national party – or indeed politics – is hardly mentioned. When I ask people why they are here, they often appear a bit sheepish. They claim that they just fell into it, that it's quite addictive, that it's for the social side of things. Even at OUCA, being a Tory isn't particularly cool.

This is with the exception of one man, who points proudly to his tie displaying the emblem of the Heritage Foundation – the think tank central to Donald Trump's election victories and behind the controversial Project 2025. I ask how he feels about the current ‘DOGE’ federal spending slashes, in particular on USAID. He has mixed feelings, there are some things he wishes they'd keep, “but others I'm happy to see go, like trying to get rid of HIV”. I wonder if I misheard him over all the shouting: “sorry, did you say you don't want them to fund AIDs treatment?” He gives me a confused look: “Of course”.

Before I have time to ask further questions, the debate, occurring primarily between two blokes (one of whom is brandishing a large stick that makes him resemble a Tory Gandalf) finishes. The members gather for a rendition of ‘God Save the King’ (they all know the second verse), followed by an equally boisterous recital of ‘Jerusalem’, and leave to clamber into Ubers.

I walk back to Cowley, lost as to what to make of the evening. I would comment on the motions chosen, the arguments made, but I couldn't hear a word of it. If the voters went to the polls tomorrow, all evidence suggests that the Tories, already much reduced, would be decimated and it seems that the OUCA members wouldn't bat an eye. Instead, the whole thing is just another fixture in the Oxford Union social scene: a rite of passage for ambitious Christ Church freshers and



a place for forming useful connections. The state of the Conservative Party, currently barrelling towards irrelevancy, is merely an afterthought.

Rum and Revolution: The October Club

The following Friday I join my proletarian brothers (it's all men) at a gathering of the communist October Club hosted in Magdalen, one of Oxford's richest colleges. The stately Oscar Wilde Room is quite the contrast from the rundown scout hut where the Conservatives mustered. I'm handed a Guinness (I'm enjoying the communal spirit already) and we get cracking with the first motion: ‘do we have freedom of speech in modern Britain?’

The formula, in which we chat first in little ‘breakout groups’ before sharing our thoughts with everyone, works well. There's none of the showmanship that comes with addressing a large crowd, so we're actually able to have a normal conversation. We discuss incitement to violence, no-platforming on campuses, Kathleen Stock and the recent terror charges against a member of the Irish hip hop group Kneecap.

Next up, ‘what would education look like under communism?’. At this point, it quickly becomes clear that there are very few actual communists in attendance. In our group is myself, an OLC committee member, and several Australian post-grads with distinctly liberal politics. The one actual October Club regular gets us started by voicing his objection to the “authoritarian power of the teacher” and advocating for a decentralised, communal approach to education: although he declines to flesh out what this would actually look like. The conversation is quickly steered to more ‘realistic’ aims, such as reducing the cost of higher education. During the whole group discussion, the faces of the committee members become increasingly downcast as they realise they are playing host to what is essentially left-leaning liberal chit chat, rather than real talk of revolution.

This divide comes to the forefront with the self referential motion ‘is Rum and Revolution counter-revolutionary?’ The Aussies, pretty inebriated at this point, are full of praise for the evening: “this is what we need, coming together to find common ground!” The communists are unimpressed, pointing out that sitting around talking placates us from taking real action. We might have affirmed our lefty values, but will we take part in any protests? Will we go down to the pro-Palestine encampment set up in the Angel and Greyhound Meadow? The fact that the room is entirely white and entirely male is raised, something that everyone agrees is a problem, but no one is quite sure how to address it. The evening ends with this tension unresolved.

Out of all the parties I visit, the society most anxious to stop talking and start doing, through its lack of careerism and its well-structured format, is actually the best conduit for a good

discourse. Unfortunately for the organisers, the conversation doesn't always go in the direction they would like.

Liquor and Liberalism: Oxford Students Liberal Association

The next Wednesday, I stand outside of the venue in New College. I pause before entering, mentally preparing for another evening of endlessly introducing myself. When I walk in, however, I realise I won't have to. Inside is every white man from Port and Policy, and one or two from Beer and Bickering as well.

The setup is two long tables positioned so that, when we sit down, the sides are facing each other. This gives the room a distinctly House of Commons feel, a vibe that is bolstered by the conduct of the members. As the ‘speaker’ for the evening walks to the centre there are cheers, banging of tables, and shouts of ‘resign!’

The first motion? ‘This house believes that Britain was freest between 1832 and 1918’. A man I recognise from OLC kicks off proceedings by pointing out the obvious: no, Britain wasn't ‘freest’ when women and working-class men couldn't vote. “Point of information” interrupts the guy sitting next to him, with a big grin on his

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What I witnessed was a small elite jostling for an inheritance that's long been spent

face. “Wouldn't you say that everything was just so much better then?” Roars of laughter.

I realise now what I'm in for. Each speaker offers their own brand of edgy humour. (Get the kids back in the mines! Rebuild the British Empire!) “It's basically just a stand up comedy club,” the bloke I'm sitting next to takes it upon himself to explain. This isn't eminently apparent to me as we endure a five-minute speech given in all sincerity about how the decimation of the “British officer class” during World War I put Britain on a path of terminal decline. As for the ‘comedy’, many of the speakers don't quite have the charisma to pull it off, nervously looking around the room and stumbling over their words as they quote a brain rot meme from TikTok.

During the second motion (‘this house would cut the foreign aid budget’), there are a few more serious speakers. An ex-president

gives an impassioned defence of foreign aid, while a committee member rails against it as an enormous waste before she is informed that we have, in fact, already slashed our spending. One member goes on a jingoistic tirade declaring that bombs, not nappies and bandages, are the way to assert Britain's power on the world stage. I'm sitting next to her, so I can see the faces of the guys opposite as they light up with admiration.

The evening continues in this manner, three silly speeches for every serious one. I feel increasingly awkward being there in my capacity ‘as a journalist’. This doesn't feel like a public political meeting of people brought together by shared values, certainly not by a commitment to the Liberal Democrats. Instead, I'm observing the goings on of a small friend group which just so happens to revolve around the Oxford political scene. In the same way I wouldn't sit on the sofa with a group of friends I don't know and stick everything they say in *Cherwell*, my presence feels like an unwanted intrusion.

Oxford politics: An increasing irrelevancy?

As with the national level, politics in Oxford seems more fixated with personality than party. Both Port and Policy and Liquor and Liberalism feel like another forum for aspiring BNOCs to mingle, rather than groupings with any sense of party identity. Beer and Bickering, on the other hand, seems to be suffering from the opposite problem. It's so hamstrung by its commitment to the national party that it dares not voice alternatives to the policies of a government it's clearly thoroughly disappointed in. Across the board, these gatherings are not even pretending to have carefully-considered solutions to the very serious public policy issues facing the British people.

So what about the alternative parties? If you're looking for a good discussion, I'm tempted to recommend the October Club, but they're not always so welcoming to those less enlightened than themselves. There are also clear gaps in the political landscape. Both of the insurgent parties, Greens and Reform, have next to no presence, although many members of OUCA expressed their belief that it won't be long before a ‘Stella and Stop the Boats’ is created.

Ultimately, the innovation which will shape tomorrow's politics isn't happening in Oxford anymore. British politics is no longer dominated by the friendships made by undergrads ready to take the reigns of powerful party machines. What I witnessed was a small elite jostling for an inheritance that's long been spent. Far more important in the politics of today are social media algorithms, fury at living standards that haven't improved since 2008, and a popular hatred of politicians. Wherever the politics of the future is, it's surely very far from here.

Image Credits: Archie Johnston for Cherwell [Left] and Stanley Smith for Cherwell [Right]

‘We need a different approach’: Oxford students on AI

From everyday tasks to academic work, AI is already embedded in university life. We asked Oxford students what they are using it for, what worries them most, and whether the current system can keep up

SUBHAN ASLAM

With the never-ending releases of new models, the question of generative AI looms large: where is the line between using it and relying on it? Between saving time and sacrificing learning? To find out what people really think, we brought together a focus group including eight students, left anonymous to discuss potentially sensitive issues. We asked them about their experiences, hopes, concerns, and predictions. The panellists seemed divided on what ‘ethical’ usage of AI really means, whether it can have original thoughts, and the extent to which we should be using generative AI in our degrees. There was, however, a shared anxiety as to what AI means for the future and a strong sense that Oxford is unprepared to tackle these problems.

Everyday uses

What sort of things do you use AI for in your day-to-day personal lives?
CompSci and Philosophy: I use generative AI instead of Google at this point. I also use it daily for coding my own personal projects. If it’s a simple enough app I won’t be writing a single line of code basically, and you can make some surprisingly sophisticated things.
Biology: Recently I was riding a bike and the chain fell off and I didn’t know how to reattach it so I just asked deep seek ‘How do you reattach a bike chain?’ and it gave me step-by-step instructions.

Is there a reason you didn’t use more traditional sources like YouTube or Google?
Biology: It’s a bit more tailored to the response. Like with the bike example, at first I didn’t know what was happening. I just told it that suddenly my bike stopped and you can’t turn the wheel anymore, and it tells you the problem and how to fix it. And then you have this back and forth that you can’t have with Google.
CompSci and Philosophy: Particularly when it’s a complex thing where you want to read a few different things and try to understand it. It condenses everything into one simple answer. Maybe it’s just me being lazy and not wanting to have to click on the website.
Philosophy and French: I’m interested in the things you guys search up, does it include political things, historical things?
CompSci and Philosophy: I guess it really depends on the topic. I think actually, for complex issues, ChatGPT’s deep research is really impressive. It’ll

generate a whole paper exploring the different angles and different interpretations of what people have said. Yeah, I guess I don’t have any reason specifically not to trust it.

The ethics of using AI academically

Raise your hand if you think there are situations where it is ethically okay to use generative AI.
8/8 raised their hands.
Raise your hand if you think it’s ethically okay to have AI help you with a piece of work you’re doing for your degree.
4/8 raised their hands.
Raise your hand if you think it’s ethically okay to give ChatGPT your notes and have it make an essay outline for you.
4/8 raised their hands.

Biology: For science, it’s really useful to get a preliminary overview of a topic. The alternative is going through a lot of very dense papers that you might not understand, especially if you don’t even know the basics yet. But with AI, you can pull together sources quickly and get a brief overview so you have a rough idea of how to structure things. I don’t think it’s advanced enough yet to write a really detailed or good essay. So, I use it just for the overview, and then I put the sources together myself.
Law with European Law: I’ve only really used it to understand cases. But it depends which level of ChatGPT you use. If you use the normal version, it can make up cases, which is grand, but when you pay for it, all those problems go away. I use it to help with understanding cases and academic articles, but I never use it for submitted work. To be fair, I’ve also been given some AI software through my Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA); stuff to make flashcards, and Grammarly, which is very AI heavy. So that’s quite interesting, even DSA is now using AI-powered tools for disabled students.
People seem to be comfortable using generative AI to structure essays and give overviews. Is there a reason people aren’t using it to write their essays?
CompSci and Philosophy: I have a funny story about this. For one of my philosophy essays, I very stupidly chose an argument that, when I tried to understand it, made absolutely no sense. One late, sleep-deprived night, I uploaded the PDF of my draft and asked the AI to continue writing my essay. What it gave was way better than what I could’ve written, and it would’ve taken me ages. I highlighted the AI-generated parts in red and flagged this at the top of my essay. When I showed my tutor, they didn’t mind. I think tutorial

essays are more for you than for them. It’s rude to hand in a fully AI-generated essay expecting a mark but you get what you want from the degree and your tutorials.
Would everyone feel comfortable doing the same thing and just labelling what was done by AI in red?
Law with European Law: I think for me there’s a sense of self pride, having come here off the back of my own hard work. I want to improve on my own skills and not have a robot do it for me, because if I suck at writing essays, that’s something I need to work on. If I struggle with essay technique, that’s a perfectly normal part of university life. But you don’t learn unless you make your own mistakes. Also, I just don’t feel proud, I feel guilty. I feel guilty, feel icky about it, because it’s not my work. It’s pure plagiarism, in my opinion.

University policy

If you all were advising Oxford University administration, how would you try and draw the line on an acceptable use policy for AI?
PPE 1: A big problem with making laws like that is that AI detectors are absolutely terrible, and because they are so bad at identifying AI, it would be a terrible university policy to say that if we detect AI in your work, you’re done for, because you can never be sure.
Law with European Law: To bring back the context again of disability usage of AI. If Grammarly is being used, you can’t really penalize a student for that when that’s been the tools that they have been given to be able to be on a level playing field with everyone else. It’s okay using AI to a minimal extent, for example spell checking, word choice, grammar, especially in a disability context. Again, I’d also say that’s fine. Going beyond that and using it in an actual essay or in an exam, I would say goes beyond academic integrity.
PPE 2: I think that in some ways, it’s kind of like an arms race. This is less true in Oxford, where essays individually are graded, but in other universities where each essay is graded work, if everyone else is using AI, it then becomes difficult to do it all on my own while everyone else is using this tool. So, on a university level, regulators should be thinking, what would I be okay with every single student in this university doing? I wouldn’t want every single university student to leave university having done all their readings through AI, having everything summarised by AI, and having written all their essays with AI.

CompSci and Philosophy: We shouldn’t just be thinking about the present state of AI, but also where it’s going. The fact is that this field is moving so fast, and I think we are going to have fundamentally radical transformations in the way our economy functions as a result of AI. We need a different approach to thinking about AI that equips people with the skills they will need in their future employment, rather than just sticking with what has worked for the past hundreds of years.
Biology: I think universities need to take an active approach to equipping students on how to use AI as a resource and a tool. For example, in biology AI is amazing at generating notes and resources, but at the same time it hallucinates and makes mistakes. Yet we are never taught how to use it. If universities say you can’t use AI for anything or discourage its use, then you lose out on learning this whole skill of working with AI. In the future, that is not going to be the case. We will not have future labs where all AI is banned.

Future job prospects

If you imagine the job you want five years from now... how do you think AI is going to change it?
Law with European Law: I want to do music and the industry does not care about creativity being lost. It is just looking for a sexy single. So, it will just get AIs to churn out what the charts want. There is no actual individual voice there, but the industry does not care. That is something I am worried about. I do not actually see it necessarily taking away from artists’ individual artistry yet, but it is a worry.
Biology: I think AI as it currently is does not have the ability to make massive changes. But I think the next system will replace a large number of principal investigators because AI will have knowledge from every single field. It will be able to identify new problems and directions much quicker and probably better than most principal investigators. It’s already doing that, but a culture change takes time.
Maths: Something I’m concerned about is that in the past we have had technologies that destroyed certain career options, like very few people are employed nowadays making saddles for horses. But it has always been the case that we were able to retreat to something else, like services and cognitive tasks. I am concerned

that maybe there will come a time, perhaps in the near future, when there are fewer and fewer options for humans to retreat to, to work in. I’m not sure about the economics of how this all works out, but just naively thinking about it is concerning that the economic power of individuals will be really reduced.
PPE 2: I read something similar to that, where in the past a lot of technological innovations that actually led to jobs going down were tools meant to enhance human ability. Whereas AI aims to mimic human abilities. So, I think it’s a very different kind of tool, where the end goal for AI is to replace the person, not just enhance their abilities.
Biology: But I think right now the economic incentives and everything are in line so that AI will be an agent replacing, if not all jobs, at least the jobs we would traditionally consider really high-status. It seems like there will not be much meaningful work left to do, considering the way the industry runs. The temptation will be there to just use it as a profit machine.

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I think there’s a risk it becomes a parasite that replaces human creativity entirely
”

creativity in society. I find it quite disheartening.
PPE 2: Based on what we’ve seen so far, it’s had a net negative impact on the academic space in general.
Law with European Law: I think it has positive potential, but is it going to be used in that controlled, assistive way to enhance human efforts? No, I don’t think so. Because of economic incentives, the goal is basically to save costs and have AI perhaps do everything. That is why I am quite worried about how far AI will go.
Classics: There’s definitely a tension between what’s a morally acceptable way to use AI and what’s an intelligent way to use AI.
Biology: A key issue that very few people seem to know about is what the future of AI will be. This is not talked about enough. People often focus on issues like AI taking away creativity but the idea of AI as more than just a tool that humans use, and how AI will be integrated into society along with the harm that could cause, these topics are rarely part of the wider discourse. I think this could potentially be very dangerous.
Maths: Today is the least capable that it ever will be. It’s a very urgent question of; how do we control this? How do we situate society in a way that is net positive?
CompSci and Philosophy: I think we are living through completely insane times which could be the most transformative period in human history. I don’t think anyone is really taking this seriously. Society is not prepared for what is coming. Policymakers don’t understand what is happening, and progress just keeps accelerating. Soon AI will be able to automate AI research itself. According to Google’s report this year, AI is already generating 30 percent of code at Google and speeding up AI research. We are approaching a point where these systems will be vastly superhuman, and that moment is coming soon.

Image Credit: Leon Moorhouse for Cherwell



Cherwell

TT25 STAFF

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

‘Hard as f*cking nails’ and Chair Victim

SENIOR EDITORIAL TEAM

The Littler, Additional reporting, the Lonley Dep/Wel-fairy, Yapper-in-Chief, Sell-out to medicine/Imported talent, Lord Capulet, Bicycle Waddler, Dr Who, The Rest is Cherwell #1 , OXO acapella, and All-nighter

NEWS STRATEGY

Mulletproof Strategy, Editor-in-Absentia, and The Byline Barrister (NB: not a real barrister)

NEWS

The Littler and Additional Reporting with The Rest is Cherwell #2, MML’s #1 opp, Councillor Walsh, MAGA, Hinge Victim, Fireman Sam and Picasso

INVESTIGATIONS

Lonley Dep/Welfairy with Friend from abroad, Experi-enced hand, Features defector, Protest pro, and Fossil fuel’s hero

OPINION

Yapper-in-Chief with Big Elections Nerd, Last Minute Literature, Spell check, Centrist Dad, Oedipus in the McDonald’s queue, and Rage bait buddy

FEATURES

Sell-out to medicine/Imported talent with Mr Across the Board, Popeless and Passportless, the ‘Ex’posé’, Vox Populi Vox Dei, and Hell’s Angel

PROFILES

Lord Capulet with The One Who Who Me, From the Rus-sia, For Your Epee Only, and The Living Oxford Spotlights

CULTURE

Bicycle Waddler and Dr Who with InDesign apprentice, From Sports to Stage, Coursework survivor, Bookstagram elite, Wordpress warrior, Cherwell veteran, At the races, #1 at remote lay-ins, Triple dipper, Chief commissions creative, Ace novelist, Frontline OFG reporter, Queen’s Confluence contact, Professional photographer, MIA, Borrowed from the states, Corpus rep, and Writer-in-Chief

LIFESTYLE

The Rest is Cherwell #1 with Creative Cupid, Mr Lifestyle, Mrs Lifestyle, Section Heirloom, Culture Deflector, The Veteran, Haribo Hyperfan, and The Protege

SPORT

OXO acapella with Mallet Man, Suavecito then hurler/UCBC’s biggest defender, and Ila’s nepo baby

PUZZLES

All-Nighter with Cryptic Queen, and All-staff yapper

CREATIVE

Photographers: The Veteran with Creative Goat 3, the Grown Up, the Drone Operator, Creative Goat 2, Trusty Lens, and JCR x photography

Illustrators: Always punting with data, Creative Goat 1, and Fashionista

Data Consultant: Always punting with Cupid

With warmest thanks to
Oxford Student Publications Limited



Archives: Student’s eighteen-month spewing spree

Your wildest night out at Bridge has nothing on this Oxford graduate student. Across 18 months from 2005-2006, they threw up in all the 39 Oxford colleges which existed at the time, triggered by a bet with a friend.

Although the student only spewed in twelve colleges in 2005, the pace soon picked up, with the article revealing that in the following year, “in one Chardonnay-fuelled night, the student vomited on University, All Souls, Brasenose, Lincoln, Jesus and St Cross [sic].”

Other notable vomiting locations included the rack of bicycles outside Mansfield College, through the Somerville mail slot, and on the doorknob of the Master’s residence at Balliol.

Although it had been suggested that this mission may have gone against a Proctor’s restriction on the intentional destruction of University property, a spokesperson, when asked, simply told *Cherwell*: “I don’t want to dignify it by commenting on it.”

So next time you have a bit of a messy night out, count yourself lucky!



John Evelyn

Rule 33 is a wonderful thing, isn’t it? Suppos- edly, it’s what keeps elections civil, conduct appropriate, and the unwashed masses not too angry at their hack course mates. Most candidates, however, have taken each subsection as a checklist. Here’s a highlight reel.

Shakespeare is turning in his grave. Regan has thrown her opposition to the wayside, her claim to King Lear’s fortune unopposed by her sister-in-grift- ing. Which is very surprising, given how it was Goneril who wrote the no-con against Regan in the first place. And then condemned her own words as misogyny.

Looking at the pre-election PR jobs themselves (and the ensuing Instagram story crash-outs), one might even forget about what happened to the Prime Minister Without Portfolio last month, and particularly, Regan’s direct involvement. Whoopsies.

In Goneril’s place should have stood Hux- ley, ready to usher in a brave new era, but he spent too much time having his Epsilons and Deltas give speeches, leaving no time for him- self. His World Slate fallen apart; it has turned to ACS Jay Cartwright to fill his shoes. Despite being banned from both Hinge and Voi scooters, he is seemingly still not banned from Frewin Court.

And what of everyone else? Ckalm’s Ckuck was spotted spying on phones during scrutiny, fearful of criticism levied against his queen for calling “bring your parents to work day” a confirmed speaker. Bondage Baby has once again tried quoting from his autobiography, “Why I Totally Didn’t Go To Radley” as a Librarian manifesto, to shocking success. His opposition takes the form of the Apex Predator, the only man close enough to freshers to directly contest his PV. Even more shockingly, Ben Bella is unop-



posed. Yes, the same Ben Bella who lost 1:0 to a rainbow flag currently hang- ing out of a Gladstone room win- dow.

Did committee take the Welfare Officers’ termly advice to heart, and not turn the Union into a tox- ic cesspit over elections? No, but at least it’s funny. Sayonara.

Editorial



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

So that’s it. The end of term. The end of the year. Your Trinity Week 7 print comes to you amid exams, elections, and protest revelations. We’ll be back in print next Michaelmas, with new Editors-in-Chief Morien Robertson and Éilis Mathur at the helm. We are confident that the paper is in very safe hands with them!

You’ll find everything you need in this print to relax and enjoy being ‘trinifree’ or take a welcome break from exam revision. Take a walk in your college gardens and enjoy our Puzzles on page 24, or turn to Lifestyle (page 21) to explore what it means to be addicted to sweet treats.

While we’re aware you deserve a break with some more relaxed stories, we have endeavoured, as ever, to bring you objective, high-quality news journalism, including the revelation of the Oxford Union Treasurer having previously been investigated by the police over an alleged ‘smear campaign’ against an election candidate (page 2). Elsewhere, we bring you news of a JCR initiative to provide welfare support for students during post-exam cel- ebrations (page 4) and MML special subjects being cancelled at a remark- able rate (page 3).

As we come to the end of our term as Editors-in-Chief, we want to ex- tend the warmest thanks to our whole staff – from illustrators and pho- tographers to editors and reporters – all of whom have made our term so special. Whether in podcasts, news strategy, or data consultancy, every sin- gle person at *Cherwell* has contributed. We are particularly proud of our wonderful Senior Editorial Team, who are the ones who keep the whole operation going. Every lay-in and social has been so much fun, and a real highlight of our time here at Oxford!

We’d also like to praise the courage of everyone working at *Cherwell*. Producing independent, fact-checked, local journalism is quite the chal- lenge when we are ultimately all still amateurs, without years of profession- al experience behind us. In the face of intimidation from myriad different sources, we at *Cherwell* and OSPL are proud of our continuing ability to be independent of all other institutions in Oxford. Our only allegiance is to the truth. With no ‘adults’ in the room, we are reliant on trust in each other and our own judgment to deliver the facts to the best of our ability. The profes- sionalism with which every reporter and editor has conducted themselves has done the whole paper proud.



Sebastian Page
Deputy Editor, Sport

Like a wise man once said: “*Cherwell* is a priv- ilege, not a right.” Chat, it’s been a privilege; to write, to edit, to bring you Oxford’s stories piece by meticulous piece. At times in this print, we may be “[...]hard as f***** nails” (legally), but it also opens up our softest, most intimate core. Our staff have let down their walls, opening their now-vulnerable minds to the beauty of this city. Dear- est Chat, I hope that you too may open your hearts and minds towards the final print, that we humbly submit for the mercy of your judgement.

Regrets, I’ve had a few, but then again too few to mention. I regret not trying harder to get onto the BNOC list. I regret not treasuring each fleeting, transient moment that I’ve let slip by on Wednesday mornings during SET lay-in. I regret not campaign- ing harder for the eventual successor to my sectional throne. I regret that the “perfected Opinion section” (Sage, A Wise. 2025. *Conversations with Friends* (Oxford: Tudor Pret)) could not maintain these elite standards, albeit I have nothing to do with that sec- tion, even remotely.

The light is stymied at the end of the tunnel and I feel myself drifting off into the sweet goodnight of retirement and the long vac. You may too, Chat. But don’t slip away. We have one more print for you. Let the [quality] journalism reinvigorate your enthusiasm for life. There is light at the end of your academic tun- nel, and according to the Style Guide™, it must be *italicised*.

“What does this even mean, O writer?,” you may ask. I don’t know. Let it wash over you, but do not treat these words as Gospel. This is an offering, for your evaluation. Treat it as such, and read with the vigour and scepticism it warrants.

PROFILES

“Everybody’s dream was to make it in America

Cherwell spoke to iconic English rock band **The Who** ahead of their final U.S. tour

DYLAN BRENNAN

In a quietly emotional press gathering at Iconic Images Gallery attended by *Cherwell*, The Who formally announced their final curtain call. Formed in the smog-choked backstreets of 1964 London, four angry young men from Acton chose to hurl their post-adolescent fury through amplifiers into the ears of a changing Britain. Now, they prepare to take their final bow on American soil.

The 16-show tour marks the conclusion of a six-decade transatlantic love affair – one last lap of honour from the sonic architects who birthed the rock opera, pioneered the art of instrument destruction, and turned windmill guitar strums and primal screams into defining iconography of rock rebellion.

“Everybody’s dream was to make it in America,” reflects singer Roger Daltrey. “Every young musician’s dream was that act. That’s where the first pulses of rock music came from.” There’s a tender reverence in his tone when discussing American audiences – an acknowledgement of completion, of a circle closing. “It meant so much, and it’s been so loyal to us. And I hope we’ve given back to it in the same manner. But it’s got to come to an end one day, and it would be great to do it while I can still sing the songs in the same key, and Pete’s still playing great guitar, and the music’s still got that vitality to it.”

With a touch of wistfulness, the conversation shifts to memories of the band’s first arrival in the country. “It goes back to 1967 in New York. Murray the K’s ‘Music in the Fifth Dimension,’” begins guitarist Pete Townshend before Daltrey cuts in, reaching further back: “Even before that, we had a show in a school gym in Ann Arbor, Michigan. We turned up, set our equipment up in this little part of the gym, went about playing our songs. And the audience just kind of stood over the mouth of it. We didn’t know how we’d be received. But when we smashed the guitar at the end, they went absolutely

nuts. So we thought, well...there’s hope.”

That hope, however, demanded persistence. Their American conquest was not immediate, nor was it without struggle. “It took a lot of schlepping,” Townshend told *Cherwell* wryly. “A lot of tour buses and cheap motels before we actually made it. An awful lot of work went into doing it. And it wasn’t until our record *Tommy*, which eventually led to us playing Woodstock, that we were really surrendered into American pop culture.”

Another early turning point was the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, where the band shared the bill with Jimi Hendrix. “I felt it was wrong for The Who to go on after Jimi, to be honest,” Townshend admits with characteristic frankness, “because I felt he was a superior performer, and certainly a better guitar player. Though I won’t say he sang better than Roger, because he didn’t.” Such humility from one of rock’s most celebrated guitarists speaks volumes about the genuine respect these musical titans held for their contemporaries.

Those early American shows cemented a special relationship with audiences, particularly in New York. “They came and they had a good time and they shouted and screamed, but they really, really

“***These days, a lot of people have got memories of meeting their future husbands and wives at Who shows, and they bring their grandchildren to see us***

listened,” the band recalls with fondness. “We had experienced that in universities here in the UK. We played in lots of common rooms, and the students would sit down and have a drink or roll a joint and really listen. And now these days, a lot of people have got memories of meeting their future husbands and wives at Who shows, and they bring their grandchildren to see us. Us being out there performing for the last time is really just to say thank you.”



Discussing their setlist planning, Daltrey reveals the challenges of modern touring: “It’s very difficult. I can’t tell you what we’ll play.” Townshend adds that the technological demands of contemporary performances have transformed how they approach live shows: “Running a show these days is totally different from how it used to be. We used to turn up with a load of amplifiers, a PA that we set up on the stage. We knew what songs we would start with. And then as we went through the show, we would feel the emotion of the audience. And I used to shout out to the guys the next song. But in today’s technology world, where you mix the sound from out front, you have a light show and all that everyone seems to expect, it’s impossible not to have a setlist. Because you’re working as a military unit. The gun batteries rely on the infantry.”

When asked which songs he’s particularly excited to include, Townshend mentions ‘Love, Reign o’er Me’ as the track he’d most like to be remembered for. Daltrey, after some hesitation, suggests ‘Behind Blue Eyes’ is the best song he’s ever written, though he confesses he finds it impossible to pick just one favourite from their extensive catalogue. The tour is named “The Song Is Over” – a title that Townshend calls “Roger’s idea and I think it’s brilliant”. The song from their 1971 *Who’s Next* album might feature in

the setlist, though Townshend admits that they are still learning to play it.

Daltrey, when asked for advice he might offer his younger self after six decades in rock and roll, responds with a practical quip: “Yeah, read the contracts.” But he proves equally capable of deeper reflections when asked about how he feels he has evolved as a vocalist: “I can still sing songs in the same keys as back in those days, but it’s got a totally different quality. That’s because there’s 60 years of living coming out in that voice. Even though you’re saying the same word, the expression that’s being connected is just that bit different.” When describing the emotional connection he feels to the music, Daltrey becomes almost mystical: “It’s like an energy comes through me that I can only get when I’m singing songs that I love to sing and I’m passionate about connecting. There’s a feeling... I don’t feel whole unless I’m singing. That’s when I’m most comfortable in my life because I’m almost on another planet.”

While fans might expect the famously guitar-smashing Townshend to have a deep relationship with his instruments, he surprised the interviewers by describing guitars simply as “tools”. “I don’t have a relationship with a guitar,” he confessed. “It’s a tool ... a slab of wood with



Ex-Student spotlight: Max Morgan on his up-coming films *May Day!* and *Breakwater*

Morgan, who read English at Christ Church and graduated in 2024, speaks to Billy Jeffs

Cherwell: Can you tell us a little bit about *Breakwater* and *May Day!*?

Morgan: *Breakwater*, for some context, is the first feature film to be produced by students at the University of Oxford since *Privileged* in 1982. It's about the relationship between an Oxford student called Otto and his romance with a retired angler on the east coast of England. It's about connecting through seemingly nothing but everything. *May Day!* is a documentary about Britain's oldest tradition of May morning, and the epicentre of that in Oxford. It guides the viewer through all the cultural eccentricities and the different parts of May morning.

Cherwell: How did you assemble a crew to make these films? Where did you find the students across the university, and how did you get the funding and the technology?

Morgan: I wanted to make *Breakwater* with a group of mostly students, and so we did a massive call out on the OUFF [Oxford University Film-making Foundation] Facebook group, which is such an amazing resource full of people who want to get involved in projects like this. We had a really overwhelming response to the idea of making a feature film, and we pulled most of our crew from that. The other way we found crew was through connections that Jemima [Chen, *Breakwater's* co-producer] and I had made from working on slightly bigger professional sets. We found our director of photography, a guy called Evan Bridges, through one of Jemima's friends from work – Evan was a student at the University of Westminster at the time, studying cinematography. He brought on board his own camera crew who were all students at Westminster or working in the industry professionally. For *May Day!*, that was a bit smaller, but again we went through the OUFF Facebook page after Isaaq Tomkins, the co-producer, and I developed a core crew from people we'd worked with.

Cherwell: What have been the main obstacles that you faced in terms of getting those films made, and the problems in the pipeline of Oxford student to filmmaker?

Morgan: *May Day!* and *Breakwater* are such different films. On *May Day!*, we were running around with a camera and trying to capture as much as we could. And that was a lot more free range – we were just documenting what was in front of us. That still came at a cost, and fortunately it was funded by the Oxford Research Centre for Humanities, which really helped us make it.

I think one of the barriers for students making films in Oxford, and for filmmakers in general, is just the cost of making a film. You think you can low-ball it, but when you consider things like transport, additional equipment, lighting gear, covering people for expenses and food, location fees, and insurance, it really starts to rack up. For *Breakwater*, we did a crowdfunder, and Jemima also came up with the ingenious idea of doing a student art auction, which we turned into quite a big thing. We also managed to get donations from professional artists like Steven Appleby and a really cool painting from Maggi Hambling, who is this fantastic East Coast-based artist. Her scallop sculpture features really heavily in *Breakwater* as a symbol, so that was really cool.

Cherwell: Can you tell us a bit about the post-production life of *Breakwater*?

Morgan: Post-production took about 18 months. We were editing that film from Trinity of second year all the way through mine and Jemima's third year, and finished in December 2024. That was a process of working with various editors who came on board, and each one shaped the film in a really fantastic way. At the start, that was with some students, who were still involved throughout the process, and then at the end, with a professional post-production house called Box Clever. But the score is all composed by students, it's being coloured by some students, sound edited by students, so there's student involvement throughout the process.

We always knew that we wanted to submit to this iconic British film festival, the largest independent film festival in the UK, called Raindance. That was our goal from before pre-production. Last month we were invited to have our world premiere at Raindance, which is incredibly exciting for us. We have five nominations, which is really exciting because our film, which is in the grand scheme of things really tiny, is competing against much bigger, high-budget productions. We're screening on the 23rd and 24th of June at Vue Piccadilly for our world premiere. We're hoping to use Raindance to make as much noise about *Breakwater* as we can, with the end goal of trying to get a limited theatrical run and some distribution at the end of the project. We've watched the film pretty much every day for the last two years, but for some people who worked in it during production, they hadn't really seen it until we did a little private screening a couple of months ago. It will be really nice for them to finally see the film how it was intended, after putting in a couple weeks of work ages and ages ago.

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

Image Credit: Max Morgan with permission for Cherwell

strings." This practical approach hasn't stopped him from testing new models, however. "Recently, I bought two guitars online. I bought a Paul Reed Smith guitar, and a guitar called a Jackson, which is made by Fender now, I think. Both those guitars, I played them and they completely blew me away. But on stage, I have to go back to something which is proven, which I know is going to do the job and which isn't going to fall apart in my hands because I'm pretty brutal."

It's a strangely utilitarian view from the man who elevated guitar destruction to an art form. The iconic image of him smashing a perfectly good Rickenbacker against the stage floor became as much a symbol of rock rebellion as any anthem in their catalogue. There's something almost paradoxical about Townshend – the mania onstage masking a deeply thoughtful composer offstage. When asked what's kept him going all these years, he looks inward: "Creativity has been what sustained me rather than performing. For me, it's the link between the creative stuff and the performing. Whatever we play, the chances are I will have written it. So there's that sense of closing a circle, having one last grab at trying to bring that thing to life."

When pressed about a potential UK farewell

show, both musicians remain noncommittal. Daltrey, having just completed a solo tour in Britain, notes the contrast, particularly in terms of travel logistics: "Touring America is a damn sight easier than touring the UK because for some reason or another the UK has decided to make it as difficult as possible to go from A to B. In America, you seem to want to make it as easy as possible." Townshend acknowledges potential options – perhaps a week at the O2, a couple of weeks maybe at the Albert Hall – but points to their need for recovery time between performances, with Daltrey adding: "I've been ordered by my throat specialist to say you have to have a day off after every gig and after every three gigs you have to have two days off. Because otherwise you will wreck your voice and you will not be able to sing."

The North American Farewell Tour begins on August 16th in Florida and concludes on September 28th at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. No overwrought farewells, no excessive spectacle – just two survivors of music's most volatile era, raising a toast to the country that gave them back their echo. The music will never die, but this particular song is, indeed, over.

Image Credit: The Who, with permission for Cherwell

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Review: *The Great Gatsby* – ‘Dazzling indulgence’

STAGE

The Trinity Players’ production is an extravagant, energetic celebration of all that makes Fitzgerald’s work so enduring

PETER CHEN



Sophia Eiden’s production of Simon Levy’s F Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* is an undoubted triumph. I was, if only for a moment, transported back to the roaring twenties; to a bygone era of excess, extravagance, and endless exhilaration. The setting of Trinity College gardens only heightened this sense of temporal dislocation. One could easily imagine such scenes playing out there a century ago. The costume and set design team, led by Mikela Persson Caracciolo and Naomi Flexman, struck a delicate balance: faithful to the period yet refreshingly tasteful to the modern eye. Most impressive of all was the live band – a rarity in student theatre – which injected the performance with an energy and vibrancy that elevated the entire production.

Directors Izzy Moore and George Loynes have coaxed exuberant, nuanced performances from the cast. Isabel Clarke imbued Daisy with such quiet anguish that even the glint in her eyes seemed to ache, pulling the audience into her heartbreak. In her, I could feel – and I don’t know whether this was intentional – fragments of a certain Princess of Wales, who was equally trapped in a loveless marriage. Alexander McCallum brought a nervy, moral intensity to Nick Carraway, exposing the shallowness of the Jazz Age with each incredulous glance. I was left utterly terrified by Gillies MacDonald’s Tom Buchanan, whose handsome rage was both palpable and authentic, whose silence often spoke louder than his words.

Less convincing, however, was Dominic Murphy-O’Connor’s portrayal of the titular character. At pivotal moments, his performance faltered; not for lack of talent, but for a want of emotional depth. Some of his most charged scenes were undermined by audience laughter, and the lack of chemistry between him and Clarke made their supposed romance



difficult to believe. I was, however, moved by the love affair – albeit brief – between Nick Carraway and Tessa Yates’s Jordan Baker. Yates’s performance was sharp, poised, and deliciously sly; her Jordan had McCallum’s Nick chasing his own tail.

As great as the rest of the production was, I must express some misgivings about the choreography. The problem isn’t that Elektra Voulgari Cleare and the directors failed to create convincing movements that utilised the extraordinary space they were provided. Quite the contrary, in fact. The overall flow of the play and complete immersion of the audience from all directions were huge

strengths of the production. However, the cast – especially the leads – did not seem to be very committed to the few dance sequences, and it gave the impression that dancing was a box to tick rather than an extension of the performance.

The true standout performances of the show, however, were those of Jane Brenninkmeyer and Fynn Hyde. Brenninkmeyer’s short but powerful portrayal of Myrtle moments before her death sends shockwaves through your bones and brought me to the verge of tears. I could feel her (and George Eustance’s George B Wilson’s) desperation in their circumstances and the feeling that they’ve lost

control over their own lives. At the same time, I was completely mesmerised by Hyde’s Chester McKee. Though the role was minor, Hyde brought compelling complexity and fantastic flair to a character who has long intrigued readers, myself included, and he offered a version of McKee that was richly idiosyncratic. In some ways, Hyde was exactly how I had imagined Mr McKee, and more.

Altogether, this production is a dazzling indulgence, a celebration of all that makes Fitzgerald’s work so enduring. Everyone involved should be deeply proud. For those lucky enough to catch it, this is a *Gatsby* worth getting lost in.

Image Credit: Izzy Moore, with permission

‘Refusing to play by the rules’: Previewing *The Writer*

PHOEBE DAVIES

Oxford’s production company system means that staging *The Writer* here, where budgets are tight and expectations are even tighter, becomes a central part of the play’s urgency and relevance.

Tucked away in a room at Worcester College, I sat in on a rehearsal of Ella Hickson’s *The Writer* (2018), which Fennec Fox Productions is bringing to the Michael Pilch theatre this term. My immediate thought? Anyone even remotely interested in theatre has to see *The Writer*.

Even from the few scenes I watched, it is clear that this is not an ‘easy play’. The play begins with a seemingly straightforward encounter between a young female writer (Rose Martin) and an older male director (Christina Hutchings), yet this is quickly revealed to be part of her script-in-progress. What follows is a series of layered, at times surreal, scenes, which uncover more about the writer’s life and artistic

project. The cast have the difficult task of moving between multiple roles and navigating various layers of reality. It is knotty and difficult, challenging traditional theatrical form while exposing the power structures embedded within it. The production team are leaning into this tension by staging the entire play on the diagonal. In other words, the Pilch will literally be tilting off its axis.

Director Joshua Robey told me: “I was really drawn to it because it’s got some quite scathing things to say about theatre as an industry in general.” But it’s not just about ‘Theatre’ with a capital T. First performed in 2018, Hickson’s play spoke to a range of pressing issues, from #MeToo to Trump – all issues which remain

alive today. Theatre becomes an extension of the broader social arena; foregrounding questions of who gets to be heard, and who is expected to stay silent.

“This is not going to be like anything anyone’s seen in Oxford before,” Robey assured me. “There is a radical argument running through the play which is balanced by a sort of pragmatism and realism. We are letting the play speak for itself.” With such complex material, it can be tempting to fall into analysis before even starting to rehearse. Robey explained how the production team had been cautious not to get bogged down in questions of meaning or interpretation.

Read the full article at cherwell.org

FILM AND TV

Editors' Picks

IN THEATRES



THEPHOENICIANScheme
A whimsical caper featuring Wes Anderson's quirky sense of humour and satisfying symmetry that makes his repertoire so special.

TO STREAM



HER
Set in the not-so-distant future, Her is a heartfelt look at how loneliness pervades our relationships, through the story of a man who falls in love with an operating system.

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[Her] - Harald Krichel / CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons

DAYDREAMS INTO REALITY

SASKIA MAINI

The character Walter Mitty was first brought to life in James Thurber's short story *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, published in a 1939 issue of *The New Yorker*. At its essence lies the eponymous figure: a man stuck in routine, escaping into vivid daydreams to find meaning beyond his mundane daily life. The short story resonated strongly with readers, resulting in the 1947 film adaptation (though this version strays far from the original). Over time, it even led to the addition of the word 'Mitty-esque' to vernacular American speak in economic, artistic, and literary circles, denoting a person who indulges in escapist daydreams and fantasies.

Most recently, the story was reproduced in the 2013 film of the same title, directed by and starring Ben Stiller. This is the version which most captured my attention and remains one of my favourite films. I believe it can offer some meaningful takeaways for us all.

Meet our protagonist: Walter Mitty. He's a mild-mannered New York office worker, whose humdrum, grey life is defined by routine and restraint. Employed as a negative assets manager at Life magazine, Mitty's days are uninspiring and predictable. In a half-hearted search for love, he signs up to eHarmony. But when customer service worker Todd Mahar rings him – trying to finish setting up Mitty's profile – he meets a dead end. Walter Mitty's profile is just... boring. He has nothing notable to say. Nothing, that is, except for his elaborate daydreams.

This comes with no lack of irony: the magazine Mitty works for, *Life*, champions adventure and discovery. Yet it appears to be the very thing which limits his life. Based on the real-life *Life* magazine which has the motto "To see life; to see the world", the fictional version of the magazine elevates this ideal one step further. Multiple times throughout the film, we are reminded of the adapted version of the magazine's inspirational motto: "To see the world, things dangerous to come to, to see behind walls, draw closer, to find each other, and to feel. That is the purpose of life."

And yet Mitty – despite working under these

“
The word 'Mitty-esque' now denotes a person who indulges in escapist daydreams

very words – seems to live in opposition to this philosophy.

But one day, everything changes when one of his negative assets goes missing: negative #25. It's an important image taken by the magazine's elusive photographer, Sean O'Connell. It's due to be on the front cover of the final issue of Life magazine; the photographer believes it captures the "quintessence of life". Without the negative, Mitty risks losing his job under the watchful eye of his arrogant, corporate-minded manager,

Ted Hendricks, a walking caricature of soulless capitalism.

Determined to locate the lost negative and track down the aloof O'Connell, Mitty undergoes some extraordinary adventures. He leaps into ice-cold shark-infested waters, hikes through the snow-laced peaks of the Afghan Himalayas, and skateboards through the expansive Icelandic countryside. With every stage of his journey, Mitty seems to develop the very ethos his magazine heralds. Through new adventure, risk, and true human connection, the viewer believes that maybe Mitty is discovering what O'Connell saw through his lens: the quintessence of life.

In this article I'd like to examine three questions which I believe the average office worker (or hard-working Oxford student) should take from this film to consider.

First: Does our productivity-focused society turn being 'Mitty-esque' into something negative when, in fact, it isn't negative at all?

We often hear people described as having their 'head in the clouds' or being 'away with the fairies'. These phrases usually carry a note of subtle condescension. They imply someone is not grounded in 'real life' and that is frowned upon. But is this not precisely what creativity demands? His boss, Ted Hendricks, cruelly mocks Mitty for zoning out, referring to Mitty as 'Major Tom' during one of his escapist episodes, to earn a cheap laugh amongst his colleagues. Hendricks even reprimands Mitty for this daydreaming.

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

Exploring The Oxford Cinema & Café

LUKE BROWN

The opening of The Oxford Cinema & Café marks a new chapter in Oxford's cinema scene: a move further towards independent cinema. Of the four central Oxford cinemas – Curzon Westgate, Phoenix Picturehouse, The Ultimate Picture Palace (UPP), and The Oxford Cinema – there is now an even split between independents and franchises. Located on Magdalen Street, the new cinema is in the very heart of central Oxford and, tickets being currently only £4.99 plus an online booking fee, it is in prime position to thrive where, seemingly, the Odeons did not.

Originally known as the Oxford 'Super' Cinema, the venue had its grand opening on New Year's Day, 1924, screening the silent film *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. In 1930, the cinema introduced Oxford to "talkies", showing *The Broadway Melody*, which took home the second ever Academy Award for Best Picture. Having undergone countless name changes, including Super Cinema, ABC, Cannon and MGM, the cinema will have been remembered by most as an Odeon. A Grade II listed building, the venue was vacated by Odeon in 2023, just over a year before the company left Oxford completely by closing their cinema on George Street in January 2025. Whilst the building on George Street is reportedly to be demolished in order to make way for an aparthotel, the Magdalen Street cinema has found a new lease of life.

As is to be expected with the opening of a new business, the cinema has not been without teething problems, primarily regarding sound

in the auditoriums. Nevertheless, sitting on the balcony in the quite enormous, theatre-inspired screen one for the first time is an unforgettable experience. A further benefit to the immense scale of the screen is that it boasts approximately 650 seats across both floors, which, given its position tucked away on Magdalen Street, is very impressive.

Given that The Oxford Cinema has only two screens, as does the Phoenix Picturehouse, it is only able to run a limited slate of films. For the most part, the cinema's film schedule is made up of the latest blockbusters (currently *Lilo & Stitch*, *Karate Kid: Legends*, and *Ballerina*), supported by a few smaller films. Though there is not a massive emphasis on foreign and auteur films, they are neglected. The cinema also holds events, such as a special screening of the drama documentary thriller *Comrade Tambo's London Recruits*, followed by a Q&A with the director.

In the modern age of technology, a good app is essential for attracting customers (especially young students). Despite having only recently opened its doors, the cinema already has a very user-friendly app, Oxford Cinema, which can be downloaded on the App Store. It is rare that new apps work exactly as expected, but this appears to be an exception. Notably, however, there is no option to select where you sit, which means that arriving in good time to secure the best seats is a must if a screening is particularly busy. Thankfully, the app provides users with the remaining capacity of the screen, so this should not be a problem.

This is all without mentioning the other side of the business: the café. Quaint, well-furnished,

and friendly, the café is the perfect place for the obligatory post-film debrief and Letterboxd review. It is even equipped with chess boards so you can challenge your friends whilst you make your next cinema plans.

So, where does The Oxford Cinema & Café find itself in the tumultuous world of cinema in Oxford? For those who miss the low prices and central location of Odeon George St., this new cinema is perfect. Ticket prices are just as low (if not lower) and its position puts it within easy walking distance of most colleges. For those who prefer to support independent cinemas, such as the UPP and the Phoenix Picturehouse, which, although a subsidiary of

Cineworld, manages to maintain the impression of independent cinema, The Oxford Cinema is a great new option. Finally, those who frequent the Curzon or venture all the way to the Vue at the Ozone Leisure Park to watch the latest big hits, will find that the new cinema caters to their wishes at a very reasonable price.

In short, Oxford's newest cinema is certainly worth a visit before the end of term. Open seven days a week, The Oxford Cinema is the perfect place to escape from the stress of exams or the impending Long Vacation and immerse yourself in film.

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

Image Credit: Milo Man for Cherwell



What the book you're reading says about you

Aayah Aslam 'psychoanalyses' Oxford's most popular reads and what they say about you, your degree, and your personal brand

In an institution as prestigious as Oxford, every book you pull out in public is transformed into a portable personality test, a hard launch of your favourite academic, and the cover art of your personal brand. So whether you're the one reading a Colleen Hoover romance in the Rad Cam, or annotating an 800-page Russian novel in Pret, or casually flipping through a suspiciously perfect Penguin Classic in University Parks, just know that I see you, and I'm sorry for being honest. So here it is, the 100% judgment-full review of what the book you're reading says about you, dear reader.

The Nietzsche Reader – What it says: You stick to dark colours, drink coffee at 1 am and constantly remind everyone that you “absolutely cannot stand TikTok”, yet spend hours curating the perfect low-exposure Instagram story to seem enigmatic. Please, for the love of God, increase the phone brightness so I can see your Iced Americano and wired earphones clearly. **Your degree:** PPE, Philosophy, and Maths.

Fantasy Romance – What it says: You should be focusing on your many essays and annotating medieval texts, but instead you spend hours highlighting each enemies-to-lovers scene with glee. You romanticise your life at Oxford but secretly wish a fae prince would arrive and save you from that 2:1. Yes, you are obsessed with winged warriors and morally dark men, but at least you believe in love, which is more than can be said for the average Oxfordian. **Your degree:** Any of the Humanities, but also Biology and Geography.

Atomic Habits by James Clear – What it says: The self-help book warrior. Look, it's great to have ambitions and focus on self-improvement, but maybe start with cancelling your conservative society membership. You are that one Union hack who invited freshers to coffee in week one with the promise of a “really great Junior appointed position!”,



only to ignore them once elections were over. I'm not sure if it's a curse or a blessing that you chose Oxford over Hustler's University. **Your degree:** PPE and co.

“**In an institution as prestigious as Oxford, every book you pull out is transformed into a portable personality test.**”

The Secret History by Donna Tartt – What it says: You totally falsely romanticised Oxford, hoping it would be a chance for you to wear Doc Martens and turtlenecks and have complicated relationships with guys called Henry. You're always skimming in libraries like the Duke Humfrey's or the Taylor Institution instead

of doing actual reading, and you refer to your tutorial partner as your ‘academic rival’. You probably also have an Instagram page full of staged pictures of colour-coordinated book tabs and cigarettes that you pretend to smoke. **Your degree:** English, History, and Classics.

Normal People by Sally Rooney – What it says: Only texts in lowercase and has a spotify playlist named ‘yearning’. You confidently claim you enjoy being utterly devastated by a plotline because it makes you feel emotionally intelligent. Arriving at Oxford, you hoped for a deep romance full of wistful looks and rainy quad walks, but instead got awkward tutorials and a situationship from Christ Church who is scared of commitment. **Your degree:** English, Psychology, and Modern Languages

[Read the full article online at cherwell.org](#)

Image Credit: Kenneth Wong for Cherwell

BOOKS

A Saltburn for ‘The Other Place’

MAYA HEUER-EVANS

In the underbelly of Hong Kong, a Goldsmith-Sachs Vice President invites a woman back to his penthouse apartment for sex. Once there, he tortures her hideously for days, filming it for masturbatory purposes and eventually hiding his victim's corpse on his balcony when she succumbs to her injuries. This opening to *The Wykehamist*, poet Alexandra Strnad's first novel, is a brutal introduction to a book filled with misogynistic violence, gluttony, and obsession.

Above all, Strnad is interested in privilege: Vice-President Lucian is a privately-educated Cambridge-graduate whose psychopathy has been facilitated by the ease with which people turn a blind eye to the actions of the beautiful and wealthy. Admittedly, when we meet him next in Hong Kong he's less lucky, now in prison for the serial killings of a string of vulnerable women. It's as his visitor that we're introduced to Clementine, an accomplished journalist and fellow Cambridge alumni who has been obsessively stalking Lucian since he first walked by her outside Trinity College Library.

The blurb describes the book as a cross between *American Psycho* and *Saltburn*, and the similarities to the latter are clear. But just as *Saltburn*'s attempt at social commentary fell flat, *The Wykehamist* does a better job at exemplifying entitlement than interrogating it. Clementine's complicity with Lucian robs the novel of the opportunity to critique the systems it lays out: like Oliver in *Saltburn*, Clementine really just wants a cut of the system, rather than its take-down. But it is ultimately, like *Saltburn*, unsatisfying. Strnad is certainly a talented poet, and *The Wykehamist* indicates she has great potential as a novelist.

[Read the full article online at cherwell.org](#)

What's Oxford reading?



LA VITA NUOVA Dante Alighieri

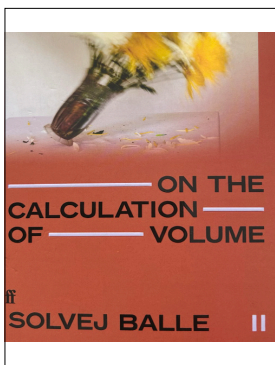
A treatise on the art of poetry exploring how far we can push the barriers of medieval poetic convention and how best to write from experience. A true insight into one of the greatest poets in history.

Image Credit: Polina Kim for Cherwell

ON THE CALCULATION OF VOLUME Solvej Balle

A fresh Nordic take on being stuck in one day forever, and the attempt to find novelty, and in the process find yourself. Balle brings uniquely human and poignant takes on November and new journeys.

Image Credit: Polina Kim for Cherwell



Milan Kundera's meditations on Slowness

LLOYD DORÉ-GREEN

Sometimes it takes a new word to express an old feeling. Until the age of around fourteen I spent many of my evenings brokering complex agreements with a God I thought I believed in. I never really meant any of the promises I made, but God was a willing dupe. And so it continued, until I was converted by listening to a talk by Christopher Hitchens and realising that atheism, a lack of belief in God, was even on the table. I felt that an old, deep feeling had finally been given a voice.

The most recent comparable addition to my vocabulary has come from the bibliography of Milan Kundera, the Franco-Czech novelist most famous for *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Despite his persecution at the hands of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Kundera's novels remain surprisingly apolitical. Their world is one of relativity and uncertainty. As he put it himself in *The Art of the Novel*, “every novel says to the reader: ‘Things are not as simple as you think.’”

His works are not passive, however. Tendencies which would undermine the nuances and ambiguities of the novel are frequently criticised. In *Immortality* and *Slowness*, it is the modern world's breakneck speed, the desire for convenience rather than complexity, which is named and

analysed. Professor Avenarius, a character in *Immortality*, calls it “Diabolum”. This describes anything which demonstrates our need for speed, but also refers to the abolition of anything which might make us feel like we are wasting our time.

In *Immortality*, this is the substitution of silence with perpetual noise, the replacement of in-depth radio with jingle-ridden nonsense and the oversimplification of complex ideas to reductive images. Kundera's novels, which show us the beauty to be found in life's shades of grey, show us also what we stand to lose in the rush to cram as many things as possible into every moment: life itself.

Slowness, Kundera's first novel in French, picks up the gauntlet thrown down by *Immortality*. At the end of the novel, Kundera compares the homebound journeys of two unsuccessful lovers. The 18th-century Chevalier will return to Paris by the slow trot of a carriage; 20th-century Vincent will hurtle back on his motorbike. Vincent wants to outstrip his memory. But, by rushing forward, he will not feel, process, learn or grow; he will only forget.

In our desire to do and achieve everything, we often forget that slowness too is a virtue.

[Read the full article online at cherwell.org](#)

Shifting religious imagery from classic to controversial

Isheta Ahmed explores the evolution of religious imagery and how the meaning, purpose, and effects of religious imagery have changed throughout history to its modern-day approach

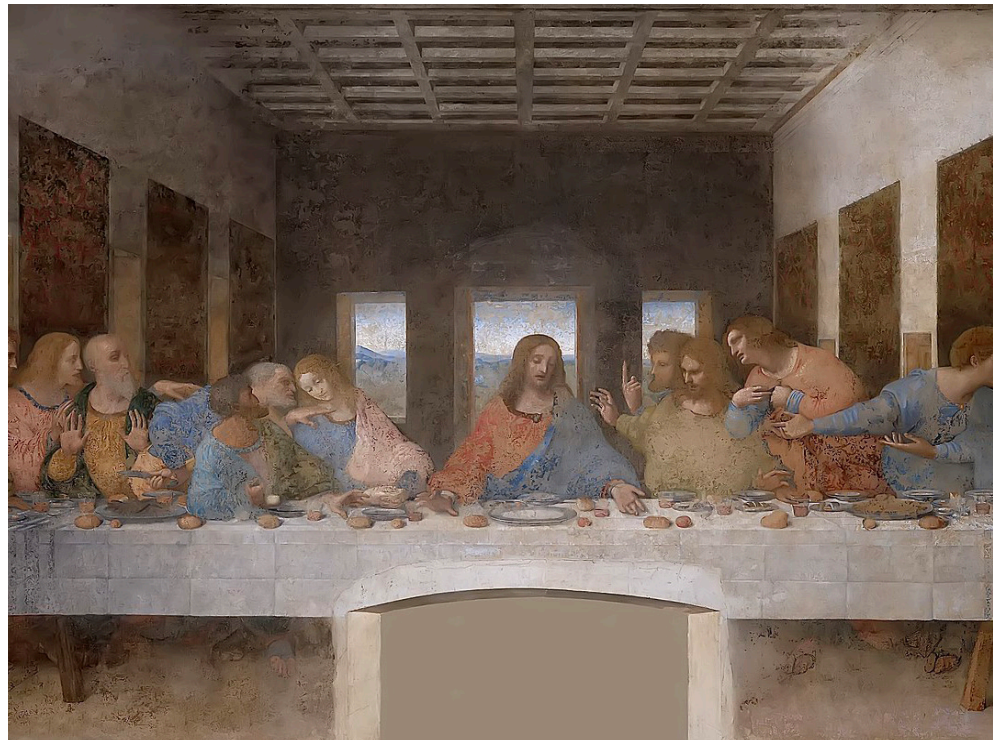
ART

Religious imagery has evolved – from an appreciation of spirituality to a damning critique of religion's role in society. Significant contributions have been made by artistic eras of religious imagery, including the Medieval and Baroque to modern twists. Yet, does this evolution suggest a pivot from ascribing importance to religion to a slow denigration of its past ideals?

As just one aspect of visual culture, religious imagery has played an instrumental and influential role on society over time. Religious sentiments have long been communicated through cultures in the form of artistic imagery, denoting the historical era and geographic location of a time period. What this imagery communicates can cultivate the environment it inhabits, influence contemporary beliefs and structure people's identities.

When recalling early Medieval works, the heritage of iconography from the early Christian church is noticeable. This era underscores distinct craftsmanship and innovative stylistic choices representing Christian symbolism in art across Europe. The iconic image of Duccio's Madonna and Child (13th–14th-century) is an evocative picture of devotion and intimacy between Mary and the Christ Child. Unlike typical Byzantine iconography, Duccio's attention to objects such as the parapet, the careful expression of the Virgin and the childlike manner of Christ reveals a palpable closeness. This is a touching incision that lets the viewer into their sacred relationship.

To the spiritually enticed, the features of



Byzantine influence, seen in the oval shape of the Virgin's face, embody the divine and sacred in art. Religious icons were carried by the spread of Christianity from the empire. The spiritual adherence to icons could no doubt be credited to their aesthetic style, symbolic imagery and rich colours. As the time period shifted into a storm of iconoclasm, the sacred continued to be appreciated, but with an emotional depth that mirrored or perhaps exceeded the Virgin's hopeless expression.

The period of iconoclasm (regarding the

destruction or removal of icons in images) saw a mass censoring of religious art, as the Renaissance period took shape. Just after da Vinci's mural, The Last Supper (1495–1498), was produced, iconoclasm emerged from German and Swiss territories in 1521. In his book *Reformation and the Visual Arts: The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe*, Sergiusz describes people performing ritual acts of destroying images to preserve their old faith. Whilst the realism of da Vinci's renowned work resonated with so many,

hostility to religious imagery surged in parts of Europe and beyond.

Regardless of the measure of erasure, there was a gulf between the Christians who developed polarising relationships with religious imagery after the Medieval period. By refining perspective, spatial acuteness and anatomical accuracy, da Vinci nonetheless conveyed an intricate emotional landscape. It sprung forth to mind a fear-struck devotion, with a classic hint of betrayal. This type of religious imagery was engaged in daily admiration.

Oxford is also home to many religious artworks. Keble College holds William Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* (1853). Inspired by the Renaissance, this pre-Raphaelite painting has toured the world and is known to be one of the most viewed art pieces of the 20th century. The works of Rubens, da Vinci and Veronese also feature in the Picture Gallery at Christ Church. The Ashmolean has a beautiful collection of religious pieces, such as Fra Angelico's *Virgin and Child with Saints* (1390/95–1455), exhibiting a Renaissance presentation of the Virgin that contrasts with the Baroque depiction.

In an increasingly secular world, conveying religious meaning traditionally is regarded as an archaic echo of the past. To emulate Medieval, Renaissance, or Baroque religious zeal would be considered unfitting to today's religious environment.

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

Image Credits: *The Last Supper* by Leonardo Da Vinci via Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0

ARTS CALENDAR

What's On.

STAGE

Crocodile Tears – Labyrinth Productions (Burton Taylor Studio, 10th–14th June)

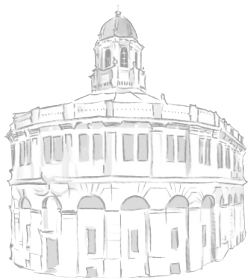
The Writer – Fennec Fox Productions (Michael Pilch Studio, 11th–14th June)

MUSIC

Gro-FM's Summer Party – GroFM (The Bullingdon, 14th June)

ART

Young Artists Exhibition – Oxford Art Society (Pembroke College JCR Art Gallery, 9th–14th June)



The Source

W.H. Auden at the Bus Stop

AVA DOHERTY

It's a damp Tuesday afternoon, and W.H. Auden is waiting patiently at the bus stop, umbrella forgotten on the ground beside him. He's been there seventeen minutes. No one speaks to him, but everyone seems to know who he is, at least they think they do. He doesn't say a word. The 148 is cancelled again. Still, he stays, unmoving, rain misting his collar, not impatient but vaguely amused. Not quite waiting for Godot, that would be gauche, just the bus that never comes.

The clocks tick on, but time feels adrift. A kind of metaphysical delay hangs in the air. And Auden, tweedy and abstracted, does not resist it. He leans against the bus stop, a man perfectly at home in suspended time, a philosopher of missed connections. Around him, students rush to collections and clutch tattered library books like shields against the wind, whilst tutors dart toward High Table. But Auden waits like the human form of a footnote: tangential, though necessary, and often overlooked.

He would not look out of place in Oxford now. You could imagine him dawdling past the Taylorian, rain soaking his cuffs, pausing outside the Rad Cam to scowl vaguely at the architecture. His shoes would squeak down St Giles as he muttered a half-rhyme about exile. He might even be seen in the Upper Reading Room of the Bodleian, scrawling something illegible on an index card, then promptly losing it forever. His spectacles might fog slightly, but he would not mind.

Oxford is, after all, a city designed for delay. There are buses that never come, travel grants that never arrive, theses that never resolve. The system seems built not to accelerate thought but to gently mulch it in slow, damp bureaucracy. Like Auden's bus stop, Academia is a space of sustained anticipation. You wait for funding, for feedback, for permission to begin. You wait to be noticed. Or worse, understood.

We tap our bus passes, hoping something will validate us.

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

Emotional connections in musical vibrations

Maya Mukherjee explores the ways in which the music we listen to connects and divides us

MUSIC

Charles Darwin puzzled over the idea that “neither the enjoyment nor the capacity of producing musical notes are faculties of the least use to man” and eventually concluded that music evolved “for the sake of charming the opposite sex”. 150 years later, we have tweets proclaiming that “A girl following him on Spotify is a hundred bodies”. Clearly, music is a profound force driving relationships; shared music taste is one of the fastest ways to develop mutual respect and feelings of compatibility.

Scientists have been associating music with cooperation, social bonding, and empathy for decades. One of the ways music causes this effect is through promoting ‘self-other merging’ – a phenomenon where we begin to relate to other people so closely that their identity and experiences begin to overlap with our own. Even the term itself is evocative of just how powerfully music can bring people together. Music takes many different forms in the social sphere, from small orchestras rehearsing together to the masses dancing at a festival. It’s the mingled sweat and anticipation inside a venue as your favourite artist first takes the stage, the excited chatter as you flood out afterwards. It’s the feeling of community that drives us to buy band tees and to smile when, unprompted, somebody else puts on your favourite song.

The depth of emotion that can be found in music is responsible for much of its power – sharing your music with someone always feels deeply personal and revealing. As time goes

on, this process has become easier and easier – we’ve moved from making mixtapes and burning CDs to tapping a button and having Spotify automatically ‘blend’ together songs from both your accounts, seemingly at random. The Spotify blend is, frankly, soulless and rotten. It destroys the thrill of painstakingly selecting songs that you think the other person will enjoy but that also (and often more importantly) manage to show off the full range of your own excellent taste. Music, after all, plays a critical role in representing to others the kind of person you are. That’s why “so what kind of music do you listen to?” is a standard first date question, and why I personally feel a cloud of stress descend whenever I’m given the aux at pres.

Online streaming has even begun to socialise the more isolated aspects of listening to music. Every October, people begin to lament that they’ve been listening to ‘embarrassing’ music and will be exposed by Spotify Wrapped. Not sharing your Wrapped is, of course, not an option. It’s simply too tempting to imagine that people are nodding their heads approvingly and letting out whistles of appreciation at the cold, hard evidence of your listening habits.

The intense vulnerability that artists often reveal in their songs is responsible for many of the ways we can connect to music. However, it can also lead people to develop a parasocial attachment to the artist, feeling that they know them and their situation personally. Across the world, the largest and most devoted fan groups follow musicians in a way that very few artists

across other mediums have managed to replicate. These fan groups often reveal the darker side of the potent social bonding arising from music. Obsession with chart success and sales drives dynamics similar to those found among sports fans who pore over statistics and denigrate other teams at every chance. This kind of thinking means that external validation of the group, some sign that their dedication has been a positive use of time, becomes significant.

At the same time, bonding through music is a critical part of being human. It plays such an involved role in our lives that it’s often impossible for people to imagine a time before recorded music, when life was conducted without the background of 100,000 minutes listened per year on Spotify. Leonardo da Vinci considered

music to be inferior to painting because it “evaporates in an instant”. Nowadays, of course, you could argue that being able to continuously and indefinitely repeat a song negates this point.

But that isn’t how we tend to listen to our favourite songs – we crave a live, communal experience, because the ephemeral nature of music only heightens the effect of hearing it together. Long after the final notes of the song have faded or the band has left the stage, the emotional effect lingers on in you and the people around you, united by the knowledge that the feeling is both shared and unique to that moment.

Read the full article online at cherwell.org

Image Credit: Listening devices exhibit – Smithsonian Museum of American History by Tim Evanson via Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0



Cultural fashion at the Queen’s confluence dinner

MARI-MAY OZKAN

Not often do I get to break out the Middle Eastern kaftan hanging idle in my wardrobe; it is simply too lavish for a two-course second sitting, yet not quite formal enough for black tie and port-sipping. Therefore, when signups opened for the annual Confluence dinner at my college, the excitement was immediate. My kaftan’s gold embroidery could finally see the light of day.

We started the evening with bubbly flutes of champagne in The Queen’s College Old Taberdar’s Room, a quaint room that certainly

appeals to the dark academia romantics out there: plush leather couches, an overwhelming amount of carved wooden furnishings, and the college arms painted above an antique fireplace. However, instead of a sea of dark blazers and white shirts, the room was lit with fabric swathes of intense emerald, yellow, and red. Glasses clinked as students guessed where each piece of clothing hailed from, admiring the clean lines of black kohl and meticulous folds of saris.

Using my privileges as a *Cherwell* Fashion Editor, I had the opportunity to photograph fellow Queen’s students adorned in their cultural dress. Standout pieces included a blue qipao with lush navy trimmings, a radiant gold

sari embellished with crystals at the hem, and a traditionally-patterned yellow A-line dress hand-sewn in Nigeria.

The menswear was not to be glossed over either. First-year law student Alex Sidebottom told *Cherwell*: “My dad’s sherwani has a couple stains, but it’s nice to wear something he wore on his wedding. Even if the threads are coming loose.” Also spotted in the men’s department was a keffiyah scarf on a dusty grey matching

“*Instead of a sea of dark blazers and white shirts, the room was lit with fabric swathes of intense emerald, yellow, and red*”

set. A welcome change to the rather stale black suit and tie sported at every single formal occasion.

The dining hall may have been the same, with your standard three courses (fish as the entrée, in classic Queen’s style), but the stories told across the table were suddenly more intimate. I felt proud when one of the server staff asked where my dress was from – more so than if I’d been wearing my usual Hot Topic attire. My kaftan is different to the threads I typically throw on before hurrying over to the China Centre for a lecture. Traditional clothing is a celebration of where we’re from, stitched delicately into where we are now.

FASHION



The term ‘mixing pot’ is one often heard in reference to the UK. As cliché as it may sound, it is undeniable that our culture has been shaped by hundreds of others – I still giggle every time I hear a rogue mashallah. Why shouldn’t that apply to our dress sense too? As I sat in the hall, finishing my third glass of wine for the night, I mourned the loss of opportunities to wear a shalvar, or that very kaftan. Rest assured, it will no longer hang endlessly in my cupboard when the next second sitting rolls around.

*Image Credit: Mari-May Ozkan for Cherwell
Models: Joan Alabi, Emily Li, Aina Kapferer,
Mari-May Ozkan*



The sibling dilemma

Beatrix Arnold reflects on being one of five, how university changes family dynamics, and surprise gatherings at Bridge

It is no revelation that growing up with siblings necessarily shapes character, their influence less deliberate but often just as enduring as parents. As the middle child of five, I've never known life without them – not to mention my extended family, which, since my mum is one of eleven siblings, always promises a chaotic Christmas.

As we progressed academically, rivalry was inevitable, and the compulsion to compare was not assuaged by my parents; I definitely don't miss the side-by-side comparisons of school reports that had such a seminal influence on my teenage development. My older sisters, with their uninterrupted string of perfect grades, set the precedent, and when the eldest graduated with a First from Cambridge, my fate was sealed. In spite of this, we've always been close. A sheltered countryside upbringing and proximity in age made us constant companions by default, so that the shift as we each leave for university is freshly disorienting every time.

Between us, we cover the spectrum of communication styles; we'd make an ideal sample set for a psychological study. The eldest, with frequent phone calls, updates on her crochet projects, and requests for pictures of our dog, has never felt far away. Paradoxically, going our separate ways has brought us closer together; distance makes you appreciate those aspects of a person which continuous proximity tends to dull. The second oldest couldn't be more of a contrast: her default setting is radio silence. None of us know her whereabouts at any given moment. I'm still reeling from the night when I bumped into her in Bridge, without even knowing she was in Oxford. A reaction on the group chat, or, if we're lucky, a photo every few months, are the few fragmentary glimpses we're afforded into her external existence, otherwise kept discrete from her home life. Each has adapted to independence in a drastically different way.

I like to think I strike a good balance, calling regularly enough for mutual reassurance, while maintaining the right level of separation to foster self-sufficiency. Whenever I go back home, no matter the interlude, it's easy to slot back into its unbroken rhythm, as if resuming a conversation we've been having for years. The fallacy of a space frozen in time overrides all complications; I find myself stubbornly ignoring the extra centimetres my brother has gained in my absence, out of a desire to find him unchanged. Home feels like a constant: the march of time, which, at university, sweeps me up in its progression, seems to decelerate when I'm back in the milieu of my childhood. My youngest sister, who never says "Goodbye", or "Welcome home", provides comforting continuity. Even if I've been gone for months, I can expect the same rapport, balanced with a unique ability to antagonise me, the same secondary-school gossip, the same caustic judgement of whoever I'm dating at the time.

Despite its appearance of static progression, things do change at home. But no matter the developments that come with moving out, no matter the level of communication we maintain while apart, I've never felt estranged from my siblings. It's comforting to know that they'll continue to be witnesses to my life – getting on my nerves and stealing my clothes – whether we're in the same nightclub, or halfway across the world.

Image Credit: Anthony DeRosa via Pexels / CC0



Intellectual manspreading? Male students of feminism

Ben O'Brien shares a pertinent but rare male insight

If I had to choose one, I'd say my favourite part of studying a paper in feminist theory was reading *The SCUM Manifesto*, written in 1967 by the New York radical feminist Valerie Solanas. By 'SCUM', Solanas meant "The Society for Cutting Up Men" – and indeed she is still probably best known for her attempted assassination of Andy Warhol, whom she shot and nearly killed as they hung out in his New York studio, rather than for her work as a feminist. Her book came with a content warning about misandry. In the first sentence, Solanas argues that men are such a waste of time, women would be better off just destroying them. Moments later, she calls maleness a "deficiency disease". "To call a man an animal is to flatter him," she goes on, "He's a machine, a walking dildo. It's often said that men use women. Use them for what? Surely not pleasure." I couldn't help laughing.

I was reminded of Solanas's book recently when reading about new research which shows just how many men are scared of feminism. It's not just that men don't like feminism or don't consider themselves feminists – though a great many of them don't – but rather that they see feminism as a real threat.

Indeed, according to the research, which was carried out by King's College London, over half of millennial and Gen-Z males think we've gone so far in promoting women's equality that we are now 'actively discriminating against men'. And to make this more depressing, things are getting worse, not better. For, despite the common belief that younger generations are more progressive than older ones, in fact the reverse is true: Baby Boomer and Gen-X males are more likely to be feminist than their younger counterparts. The world is getting less feminist, not more.

Do these anti-feminists have a point? Of course, when you read texts like Solanas's, it's not hard to get the impression that feminists don't like men. I myself was wary about taking a paper in feminist theory, for obvious reasons. After all, feminism is about women first and foremost, and a man taking a feminism paper might be seen as just another example of manspreading, not to mention mansplaining. I imagined the nine other people taking the paper, all of whom were women, saying to themselves, "Is there anything men *don't* think they have a God-given right to get involved in?"

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Image Credit: Ife Edgal for Cherwell

How to quit social media without losing your mind

NGOC DIEP (ALICE)

The harms and benefits of social media have been well-documented – both addictive and socially beneficial, it feels like a toxic relationship, and many struggle to break up with it. That's where I, as a 'social media ex-girlfriend', come in. My relationship with social media has gradually faded over the past six years, and now I can confirm that I lead an almost completely social media-free lifestyle. Here are four tips on how to break up with toxic technology.

1. Change your environment: We are what surrounds us. When my five-

year old phone broke down, I bought a smaller one, partly because I love being able to fit my phone in my pocket, but, above all, because the smaller the screen, the less I was drawn to it. Long scrolling sessions are noticeably less comfortable.

2. Assign specific tasks to each device: My Kindle for reading; my phone for calls, messages, and music; my tablet for notes and drawings; and my laptop for professional use and casual browsing. My phone has only a few messaging apps, along with news apps. My iPad is devoid of social media apps, and my laptop takes on any remaining functions, including Netflix and shopping.

3. Withdraw slowly: Six years ago, I

deleted my TikTok account. It was hard at first, going from being the cool girl at school who knew every dance trend, to an outdated, boring kid with nothing to scroll. But now, I'm practically indifferent to it. My friends have grown accustomed to me knowing nothing about the latest trends, so they've stopped bringing it up, and my life continued. Facebook was challenging because it's the primary social media platform in Vietnam, where people share life updates, run businesses, and post news. I compromised by using it solely on my laptop, where there was considerably less temptation to scroll.

4. Balance is key: I struggled to leave YouTube because I enjoyed the

music, lifestyle content, and, most of all, comedy skits. But it was a slippery slope; I've often been tempted to sneak in a YouTube short while listening to music. The problem is that, with the abundance of short-form content, we've lost patience for more enriching media – like books, newspapers, and longer videos. To counteract this, I started to rebuild my relationship with longer content. I began by assigning myself two or three articles per day, and scrolling on Substack became the target of my eager thumbs. A year or so later, I can read a book in one go, or multiple articles in a day without losing focus.

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HOROSCOPES



Aries

Vitamin C is your friend.



Taurus

Some deep talks are coming your way.



Gemini

Get ready for some college drama.



Cancer

How can you be more whimsical?



Leo

You're being tested, so study up.



Virgo

Watch out for cobbles this week.

HOROSCOPES



Libra
Resist the urge to be a control freak.



Scorpio
It's a perfect time to book that trip.



Sagittarius
You're already stunning, but get some beauty sleep.



Capricorn
A newcomer may unsettle you.



Aquarius
Tone down the thirst.



Pisces
Don't get a fringe.

When a small sweet treat becomes a big problem

ELLIE CLARE

I can't walk past the Covered Market without feeling inexplicably drawn to Moo-Moo's. The array of servers at Knoops have my order memorised. Even the staff at Fuwa Fuwa have begun to greet me with "lovely to see you again".

I would definitely consider myself at least partly addicted to sugar, or at least the concept of sweetness. But aren't we all? In a city where boba shops seem to be multiplying by the hour and JCRs keep churning out new excuses to supply sugary freebies, there's definitely enough demand. If you've managed to avoid a dependent relationship with this everyday drug at Oxford, then I applaud you: you're a stronger soldier than me.

What started as an innocent addition to the revision experience soon became a diehard dependency. I began to associate essay-writing so strongly with sipping sticky gloop that I eventually couldn't revise at all without the support of a sugar IV. I knew all too well how unhealthy this was, but I was too far gone to stop. I think I went to Costa more than I entered a library. Somehow, I had trained my brain to believe a sweet treat was indispensable for the revision experience, as necessary as pen and paper. It was bad.

I wish I could tell you my sugar dependency was a past fancy, a silly habit of a silly fresher, but I shudder to admit that it has only accelerated in my third year. For reference, in Hilary, my housemate was thoroughly shocked to walk in on me eating fruit for the first time in our months of living together. Fruit contains what I consider 'healthy' sugars and thus obviously doesn't count.

I gave up fizzy drinks in plastic bottles for Lent in the hopes it'd reduce my sugar intake. However, I desperately found solace in an alternative evil: fizzy drinks in cans. At least I'm consuming fewer microplastics? These days, if I'm not devouring can after can of Dr Pepper Zero, I'm planning a trip to the Lindt chocolate museum.

I'll get a Knoops on Monday, a Moo-Moo's on Wednesday, and, if I'm feeling particularly adventurous, I'll even venture out to Costa for an iced tiramisu whipped latte on Friday. I started going

to libraries more often this year too, as soon as I discovered I could bring sugar into the Old Bod as long as it's protected in a KeepCup.

Yes, these drinks do often make me feel slightly nauseous and cause my heart to beat like it has just survived a particularly tremulous circuit in a Regent's Park College tumble dryer. But pain and adrenaline are staples of the uni experience, right?

Alongside the impact on my health, my sugar obsession has a more obvious impact elsewhere: my wallet. Let's do the maths: if a sugary drink costs approximately £5 and I have around five sweet treats a week, that's £25 spent willingly poisoning myself. That's £200 in a term. £200 that could buy me so many things: a new laptop, a plane ticket, my own lightsaber. But I invariably choose instant gratification.

So why does sugar have me in such a chokehold? I think many use the burst of energy it provides to replace caffeine. Sweet treats are also romanticised on social media. Celebrities endorse sugary drinks they've definitely never tried themselves and images of teenage girls

“What started as an innocent addition to the revision experience soon became a diehard dependency”

solving algebra problems with an iced matcha swarm Pinterest and Instagram.

I recently started following a YouTuber whose entire brand depends on her ability to chug sugar and caffeine to survive all-nighters. I find her videos fascinating and, dare I say, inspirational? There's something intoxicating about watching her consume a ridiculous amount of sugar whilst studying for hours on end. I've even considered replicating her efforts, but my desire for rest and relaxation always triumphs in the end.

Maybe graduating will alleviate this dependency – perhaps, even, I'll evolve into someone who only drinks water, sugarless tea, and makes smoothies in my very real blender. Maybe.

CHERWELL-FED

My friends and I ranked (almost) every college formal



AMANDA LI

After three years, I've realized that I am nowhere close to beating the Oxford formal challenge. Luckily, my friends and I collectively only miss five colleges, all of which are postgrad, and one of which is All Souls. Here is our ranking – we only include normal formals to even out intra-formal disparities. For the formals I haven't been to, Max and Juliette have compared them to colleges where we overlap. Our ranking criteria are: 1) food quality, 2) ambience including themes, 3) price. No PPHs – sorry, Regents!

Top five

St Peter's – Amazing! They make unique combinations like chocolate and butternut squash work, and have never lacked in seasoning. Penchant for honeycomb shaped things on desserts. The bread is the best – no notes! Their custom mint chocolate is also unforgettable.

Worcester – Good food and pretty hall. Yay baby blue! Bread never misses. The gardens are perfect for pre-dinner, and I'm still thinking of the crunchy topping on the leek soup I had once.

Anne's – The ambience is unexpectedly nice, given it's Anne's. Candelabras! Points taken for assigned seating. Food is always nice; the duck and red meat always tastes good. I had prosciutto as an appetizer once.

Trinity – The fried brie with cranberry sauce at steak nights is my favorite appetizer at formal. Once, they even had scallops. Looks much better now that it is not in a tent – another baby blue win!

John's – Unbeatable for getting your money's worth. Food is reliably nice, you don't pay that much, and you can bring a bunch of friends. International themed formals are well-intentioned and executed well!

Good

Somerville – Food was good; the fish had crispy skin and was well-seasoned. In Trinity, the sun sets during formal and the lighting in the hall is perfect.

Exeter – Pork belly texture was great. Braised beef had a nice red wine jus that beats out other formals. Love the lighting and the portraits, and the renovated hall looks amazing.

Teddy – The food is great, given their Michelin chef, though not worth £27. The unique butters are always great. Thanksgiving formal left a bit to be desired.

Mansfield – So many points for it being in the chapel, but it doesn't happen often, so it's hard to go. Max: the food was "unmemorable; not too good, but clearly not bad either."

Kellogg – I loved the dauphinoise potatoes, and the free port and wine!

Continue reading at cherwell.org

Image Credit: Amanda Li for Cherwell

Agony Aunt:

I recently moved into a house-share with a friend, but he's so messy, I'm starting to find it unbearable. How can I say something without ruining our friendship?



Sincerely,
Person Who's Sick of Cleaning Dishes

Dear Person Who's Sick of Cleaning Dishes, It's completely normal to have problems once you take the plunge and start living with someone, even if you are already friends.

My suggestion is that you talk to your friend openly and honestly. Explain to him exactly how you feel and that's it not fair for you to have to clear up after him. It's likely to be the case that he's more absent-minded than malicious, and, if that's so, he shouldn't have a problem with you raising the issue, as long as you do so reasonably.

Indeed, maybe this will prove to be a turning point in your friendship. After all, being able to speak to someone openly and honestly is actually the sign of a truly strong friendship. Maybe having a frank discussion with your friend could be the catalyst, not only for him washing up his dishes, but also for your friendship growing stronger.

Lots of love,
Your Agony Aunt

SOCIETY

SPOTLIGHT

The Isis launch party



A launch party celebrating one of our sister publications? Yes please. Head on down to The Oxford Retreat at 8pm on Tuesday 17th June, to celebrate the launch of a new issue of *The Isis*, with some pretty cool people.

OXFORD

TINY LOVE

STORIES

I started rowing not for athletics but for aesthetics. On the river I loved watching the playful water birds, lavender sunrise, and, once, quiet snowfall. Sports, to me, was coloured by the ‘jock vs nerd’ dynamics of high school where they cheered on the American football team, and I was the quiet girl with a book. But at Summer Eights they cheered us on even as we lost. Maybe it’s because we all are nerds at Oxford, or maybe, because sports can be something more. I row for the matching ribbons in our hair and the synchronicity of our teamwork.

Selina Chen, Corpus

The performance of productivity

Ava Doherty discusses the busyness epidemic, and how this path to validation is ultimately harming us

We tell ourselves stories in order to live, said Joan Didion in *The White Album*, or something of that sort, though, as she herself confessed, these stories are often more fabrication than fact. The narratives we cling to, especially about ourselves, are rarely the untarnished truth. In other words, even the grand architect of art acknowledged that our self-mythologising can be a bit, shall we say, flexible.

This admission is pertinent when considering the modern phenomenon of productivity performance. The act of doing has become less about actual achievement and more about appearing busy, as if the mere spectacle of activity confers something desirable – perhaps it’s status or value, but always comes with the elusive badge of success. It is an epidemic that affects us all, even you, the individual boasting that the essay is “basically finished, just need to do the citations.” The “I’m almost done” chant has become a ritualistic performance, a signalling device in the theatre of academic and professional life.

Why this compulsion to perform productivity? Because, in a world addicted to instantaneous gratification, slow-burning achievement is about as appealing as a cuppa without the tea bag. The delayed rewards of hard graft lack the immediate dopamine hit of boasting about how many words were typed this morning or how many Zoom calls survived before lunch (because lunch, naturally, is for wimps).

Beneath this lies a fundamental human need to be seen, acknowledged, and recognised. Without recognition, we risk becoming invisible to others and ourselves. The performance of productivity becomes a means to fill this void, a way of signalling “I am here, I am valuable”. Like a child seeking approval from a parent we parade our ‘busyness’ in hopes of external validation. This public recitation does two things: first, it convinces others that you are on the right track, and second, it reassures you, or at least tries to, that you have not been entirely useless. The truth, alas, is less flattering. This performance is not merely harmless signalling; it fuels an endless comparison cycle, a slow poison to self-esteem and social cohesion.



Consider the world of tech start-ups, where productivity performance has reached operatic heights. The stereotypical ‘tech bro’ – with an espresso in one hand and a spreadsheet in the other – dazzles with the illusion of mastery. Slack messages ping incessantly, and buzzwords flow like champagne at a launch party. But beneath this frantic ballet lies a familiar truth: not everyone is, in fact, on a rocket ship to greatness. Some are simply spinning their wheels, desperate to look like they are.

It is crucial to remember that not everyone’s goals are the same. The would-be writer agonising over their first draft in the Bodleian, the future diplomat practising their suave handshake before the Oxford Union debate, the budding politician memorising parliamentary procedure – each follows a path unique to their aspirations. The folly lies in using someone else’s pace as a yardstick for your own worth, or attempting to outperform a mythical baseline of busyness to prove your value.

Ironically, this compulsion to keep busy often leads to the opposite of productivity. Attempts to impress observers often results in mediocre output and mounting stress. Productivity guru

Tim Ferriss once remarked that “being busy is not the same as being productive,” a sentiment we continually ignore. We perform productivity for an often imaginary audience. It is the unseen college peer, the faceless supervisor, the ghostly tutor whose approval we crave yet rarely obtain. We craft our narratives, not necessarily to deceive others, but to convince ourselves that our story is worth telling.

Of course, there is an upside. By articulating progress, even if exaggerated, we sometimes kickstart actual productivity. The very act of telling the story may nudge us forward, much like a tutor’s scolding compels a reluctant student to finally open a book. But the danger lies in letting the performance become the point rather than the doing.

So, the next time you’re in the company of the chronic productivity performer, or worse, find yourself mouthing the tired mantra of busyness, take a step back, and reflect on Didion’s wisdom. What matters is not the performance but the authenticity of the journey, however slow and unglamorous.

Lunch is not for wimps – but for the wise.

Image Credit: Archie Johnston for Cherwell

Cherpse.

[Drinks at the King’s Arms. Will the bookworms open a new chapter?]

Oxford blind dating.

Virginia Woolf:

First impression?
Tall. I’m a tall girl, but he towered even above me too. Cherpse found a good match in terms of matching two book freaks (although I’ve stuck to my stance on Salinger that he’s a red flag. Oh – and he hasn’t properly read Dostoevsky.)

Highlight?
I found out he’d watched the Minecraft movie – that was probably the highlight of any date I’ve had.

Most embarrassing moment?
Admitting I don’t like pubs and then blurting out that I hate the London metro, to find out he’s a London boy.

Is a second date on the cards?
No second date, but at least he knows why the London subway is poor urban planning?

J. D. Salinger:

First impression?
I remember seeing her order wine at a pub and thinking that probably said a lot about her – in some strange, ineffable way this assumption proved true.

Highlight?
Probably breaking out into an impromptu performance of an anime theme song from my childhood – it made us both laugh.

Most embarrassing moment?
I had so many opinions on the film and book *Crazy Rich Asians* that I genuinely could not articulate them properly in any coherent order.

Will there be a second date?
No, I don’t think so – as much as we got along fairly well.

SPORT

Away days for a tenner (plus hand luggage) *A fool's guide to football in Prague for anxious social secs*

OLIVER SANDALL

You probably know Prague as the boozy city break loved by British teenagers and stag do-goers alike. But did you know you could also attend a game at one of four Prague first division teams for less than the cost of two pints in Oxford?

Cheap football getaways are gaining popularity; social media is filled with people heading to Poland, Germany, and even Lithuania, watching games for a fraction of the price of one Premier League ticket. One content creator even makes a point of seeing whether he can go abroad for a few nights and catch a local game for cheaper than a return train ticket from Glasgow to Brighton. So, if you're looking to get away, experience a new city, and watch some decent football, here is my brief guide on Prague football.

There are four first-division teams (as of the 2024/25 season) from Prague. The two you have likely already heard of are Slavia and Sparta. Then there are also Bohemians 1905 and Dukla Praha, but I will exclude Dukla from this as it's a bit further out and, in terms of popularity and accessibility, probably not quite up there with the others.

Sparta are the record champions and arguably the biggest club in Prague. The epet ARENA is a proper city ground, now over thirty years old in its current iteration, having initially been opened in 1917. Sparta fans are local, loyal, and friendly.

If you're in Prague for only one game, make it a Sparta one. The Czech league is very varied, with the top five teams (which almost always include Sparta, Slavia, and Viktoria Plzen) far outperforming the bottom five. The quality of football really varies, but watching Sparta and Slavia is always a safe bet.

The atmosphere in Sparta games is generally good. I am quite critical of stadium atmosphere, with most of my viewing experience being in the infamous 2. Bundesliga which has arguably some of the strongest fanbases, often outperforming the



1. Bundesliga simply on numbers. Yet, Sparta is decent, with the 'ultras' creating a fair amount of noise throughout the match.

Pros: Good atmosphere and club vibe, good quality football, international (can easily get by with just English), cool old-school stadium.

Cons: Older stadium (not as accessible), limited food choice, difficult to buy tickets (weird website and log-in needed).

Atmosphere: 5/5 Football: 4/5 Food and drink: 3/5 Value for money: 4/5

"If you're in Prague for only one game, make it a Sparta one."

Boasting the biggest football stadium in Prague, Slavia's Fortuna Arena is a modern but basic stadium. As with most stadiums in Prague, it is easy to get to, doesn't have long queues and offers the most 'comfortable' stadium experience. It even has a McDonalds outside next to the fan shop.

Whilst Slavia ultras are known for their extravagant tifo, the overall atmosphere in the stadium is lacking. With that said, the tifo is some of the best I have ever seen, even having only visited on a mid-week cup tie. Pyro, flares, banners, choreo – you name it, they have it.

The football is also some of the best in the league. If you've only experienced Premier League football and you're mainly interested in watching a decent game in an accessible and modern stadium, go to Slavia. If you want to see some proper physical European footy in a grotty stadium, you'll probably be a bit disappointed.

Pros: Relatively easy to get tickets, great tifo and pyro displays, modern stadium.

Cons: Limited atmosphere, feels a bit commercial. Atmosphere: 3/5 (only due to tifo) Football: 4/5 Food and drink: 4/5 Value for money: 4/5

Loved by expats and locals, Bohemian's one-of-a-kind stadium is nestled in between apartment buildings and gardens. There's one main stand and also a standing area for the 'ultras' and those who want to soak in the most of the atmosphere.

Tickets are easily bought online once you figure out the website, with decent seats costing around a tenner. Bohemians are by no means at the same international level as Slavia and Sparta, but what they lack in football prowess they make up for in character.

Bohemians has been my favourite visit so far, always offering a funny moment whether it be the (near to) collapsing main stand or the cult-like ultras in Peaky Blinders-esque suits. Beer and food are plentiful, with lots of beer stands and a decent choice of food for Czech standards. Across the street from the stadium, a couple of bars also offer criminally cheap pints. A great day out guaranteed..

Read the full article online at [cherwell.org](#)
Image Credit: Oliver Sandall with permission; and Bohemian via Wikimedia Commons (bottom) CC BY-SA 4.0

MATCH OF THE WEEK

Brasenose secure the netball coppers double

After taking down Keble in the final of Women's Cuppers earlier this term, Brasenose secured the double, after beating the same foe once again in the Mixed Cuppers final.

Despite being down early on, they came back to end up winning 13-9, thanks to some stellar play from Jess Connolly (the OUNC player of the season), Sierra Warnes (also of the Blues), and Seb Stevens. This caps off a remarkable run that saw Brasenose go 22 games unbeaten this academic year.

Read the full article online at [cherwell.org](#)

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

Vereker and Clarke hit hundreds for OUCC

After a reasonably long wait, we've finally had the first two OUCC centuries of the season, after Jemima Vereker and Justin Clarke tonned up against Nottingham and Cardiff UCCEs respectively. Clarke outlived a few partners before bringing up his measured century off of 114 balls, before falling shortly after.

Vereker, however, absolutely blasted the Nottingham attack to all corners, ending on an incredibly impressive 179*, off of an almost unbelievable 98 balls with 29 fours and 5 sixes, accounting for almost 70% of Oxford's runs.

HALL OF SHAME

Rector left licking wounds in Exeter croquet battle

Pitched by Exeter Croquet's Instagram page as the sport's answer to the FA Cup, the Speirs Cup saw croquet hopefuls go head-to-head in a knockout tournament for charity. Congratulations go to 'Croquet-flix and chill', consisting of Ruben Treslove and Linton O'Riordan, for securing the £150 first prize, but a critical eye must be cast on the performance of Exeter's own rector, Andrew Roe. Paired up with Speirs himself, the team was dismantled by Charlie Gray and Ella Day in an exhibition match. As the Instagram page described it, "the less said about Andrew Roe's performance, the better."

SHOE THE TABS

Polo team helps Oxford go into the summer on a high

Just when you think you've finally run out of Oxford victories to write about, polo comes in to save the day.

The team ran out 5-2 winners over Cambridge at the La Martina Varsity Day, hosted at the Guards Polo Club in Windsor. This marks a tenth varsity victory in a row for Oxford's polo side, with the club having recently celebrated 125 years of polo varsity matches and 150 years of existence.

Oxford's team of four featured Sufiyan Alim, Matthew Byrne, Harry Rourke, and Camilla Hyslo.

Going to watch a Varsity or Cuppers match?

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



UPCOMING

Cricket (4 Day)

Friday to Monday, 4th - 7th July
@Fenner's, Cambridge
Captains: Elodie Harbourne and Justin Clarke

Tennis

Saturday to Sunday, 28th - 29th June
@Moor Park
Captains: Anna Jones and Brendan Emmanuel

Golf (Cuppers)

Wednesday, 18th June
@Oxford Golf Club
Captain and Cupper's Sec:
Niall Curwen



Coffee break with Cherwell



Christian Bale, This Is Your Life

by Zoë McGuire

In this themed American crossword, clues to themed answers are in italics.

Across:

- 1) ___ Poetica
4) Appreciate
7) Newton's fruit?
10) Brazenness
12) Farm females
14) Rely (on)
15) Antioxidant berry
16) Saxon precursor
17) They're sometimes liberal
18) *Arthur Stewart*
21) Moody genre
22) Wolfed down
23) Midwife (sort of)
25) Digital-disabling devices
27) Police plan, or The Police performer
31) Spit bars, perhaps
32) Part of a journey
34) Vader, to Padme
35) Desire

- 36) *Bruce Wayne*
40) A nice sight for a sixth former, perhaps?
41) Yours truly
42) Globe
43) Nord, Express, or Surfshark
44) They might be draft or craft
46) Klutz' cry
49) Mathematical snake?
51) German article, or Cowboy Bebop corgi
53) Fools' day mo.
55) *Patrick Bateman*
60) Uptight
61) Henry or Jane, on the silver screen
62) Used to the last drop, as shampoo
63) American crime drama

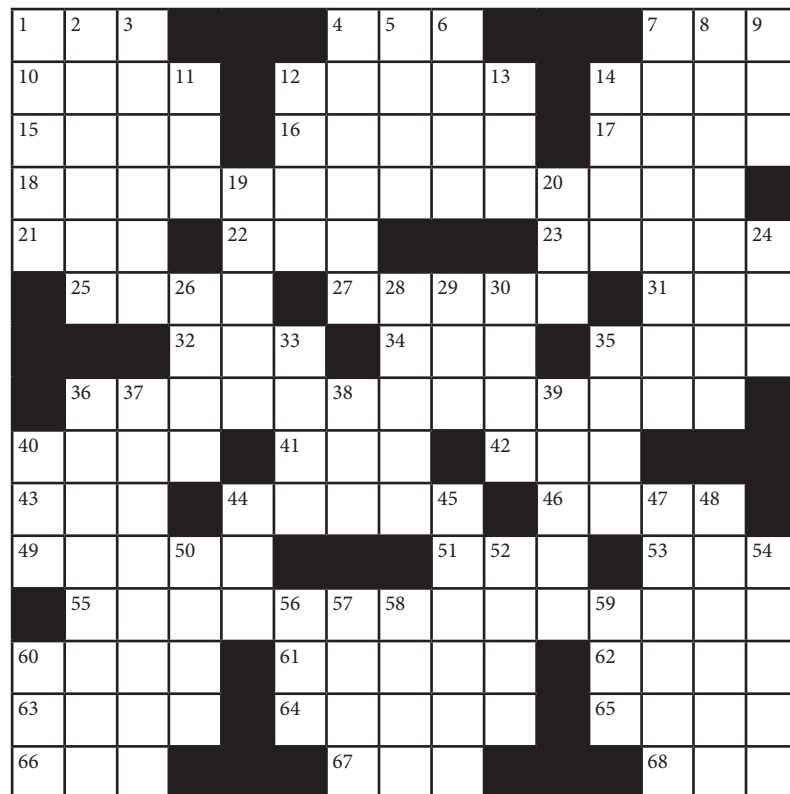
- 64) Chance a ticket
65) Current carrier
66) Irish father
67) Farm female
68) Red-pilled character

Down:

- 1) Tequila source
2) Part of a flower that appears to be a challenge from a runner
3) Ski event
4) Indian river
5) Hence
6) Let the cat out of the bag
7) Region close to the Arctic
8) Converse
9) Net protectors, for short
11) Fifty-four, to Caesar
12) Damon that acts

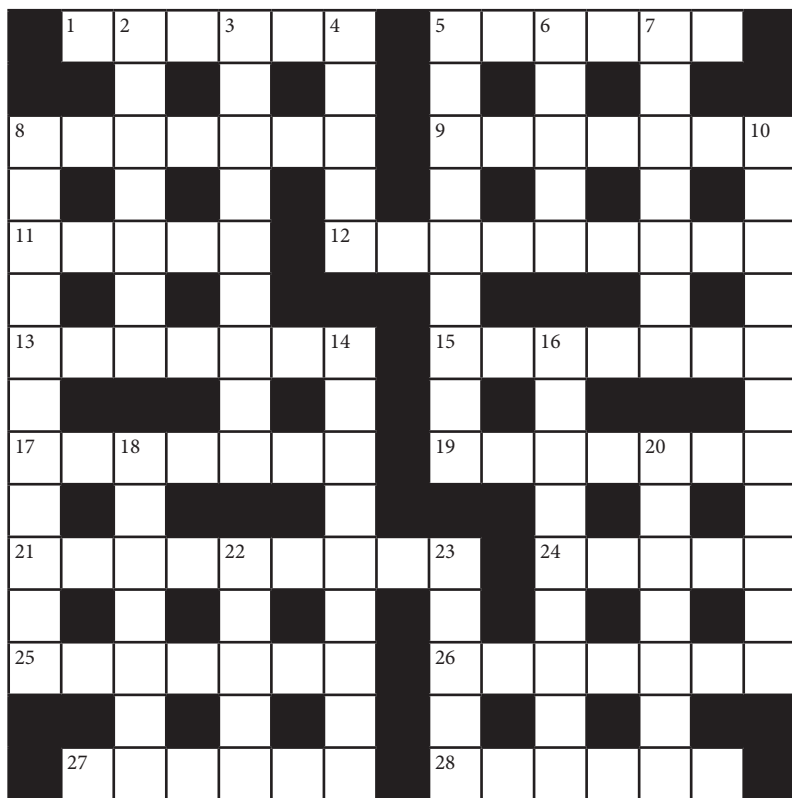
- opposite Bale in "Ford v Ferrari"
13) Turf
14) Fisherman's need
19) Soothed
20) Food additive
24) Metric motion measurement
26) Appeal
28) Pickpocket, perhaps
29) Squid's ammunition
30) El ___, ocean occurrence
33) Take a long look
35) Nigerian language
36) Hoof around?
37) Female servant from a Margaret Atwood book
38) Wade opponent
39) Fairway clubs
40) "Kings & Queens" singer Max

- 44) Repeated word in Italian brainrot's "Patapim"
45) Someone who gets the message
47) Cram tight
48) A football, but not a rugby ball
50) Slippery swimmers
52) Apple's tablet
54) "This ain't my first ___"
56) Hypotheticals
57) Manage
58) Freshly
59) Evergreen tree
60) Industrious insect



Cryptic Crossword

by Nat Elder



Across:

- 1) Tender punches (6)
5) Declines two of party's starters with triple sec containing drug (6)
8) Pirate's parrot is lost—we overhear many lines (7)
9) Orchestrating choir oddly in chant (7)
11) Execute former bill (5)
12) Sad cradle hat in bishop's home (9)
13) Extreme fan beginning to exaggerate (7)
15) Nothing to fix amid detailed paperwork? (7)
17) Starmer succumbs to

- Reform to get seat's left or right support (7)
19) Fruit is a must with a starter of Swiss roll? (7)
21) Scheduled appointments for Spooner's gloopy babies (4, 5)
24) Incompetent, loveless nepo in IT (5)
25) Thirst for cordial on gin; gimlet, essentially (7)
26) Six flatbreads returned to guest (7)
27) Study seriously or shut up! (4, 2)
28) Cutting it fine playing games with the devil? (6)

Down:

- 2) One takes left avenue to get away (2, 5)
3) Horrifying headless horseman on horse (9)
4) Child initially in charge gets video game (5)
5) Spots sulphur and iodine in magic potions (9)
6) Told useless spouse to finally pack and leave (5)
7) Country's victories regularly secured in historical age (7)
8) Point out rot, decay left by extinct reptile (11)
10) A travelling sort! (11)
14) Aunt got to edit with

- permanent marker? (6, 3)
16) Natural and trendy to cut ends off string and stitch oddly (9)
18) Viral video now beginning to become relic (7)
20) Left over uniform to clean (7)
22) Holy man Mark produces a foul odour (5)
23) Kept trimmed with no head of hair (5)

Week 5 Answers: Cryptic Crossword:

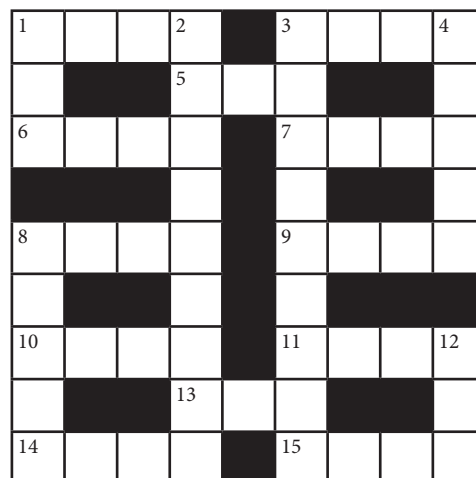
ACROSS: 8) Well-to-do, 9) Horror, 10) For example, 11) Sick, 12) Velcro, 14) Naysayer, 15) Meanest, 17) Twister, 20) Regrowth, 22) Ordeal, 24) Garb, 25) Immaculate, 27) Educated, 28) Encroach.
DOWN: 1) Denote, 2) Glue, 3) Nonagons, 4) Company, 5) Cheery, 6) Trespassed, 7) Concrete, 13) Centre back, 16) Eye candy, 18) Woodcock, 19) Chamber, 21) Weirdo, 23) Antics, 26) Lion.

What is This: (for space concerns, only across answers are written)

ACROSS: 1) Disc, 5) Neath, 10) Ass, 13) Omen, 14) Igloos, 16) Sew, 17) What on earth?, 19) Two, 20) No notes, 21) Rarer, 23) What's the word?, 27) Esteem, 30) Head-on, 31) Starr, 32) Sack, 33) Lose, 36) Auk, 37) Say what?, 40) May, 41) Uber, 43) Urns, 44) Adele, 46) Naenae, 48) Exerts, 49) What's the time?, 52) Hypes, 53) Elapses, 57) Ada, 58) And then what?, 62) RRR, 63) You see?, 64) Eire, 65) Fat, 66) Token, 67) Balm

Sounds Write

by Ella Reynolds



Across:

- 1) Oxford University resources originally belonging to us (4)
3) Stop top three in Australia getting into PE (4)
5) Aura starts augmenting insane rizz (3)
6) Source of inspiration found in hippopotamus (4)
7) Icon in Miami Dolphins (4)
8) Dragged, tied down, messed up and lost most of mind (4)
9) Present finally posted (4)
10) Lack of nitrogen released frenzied tiger (4)
11) Little life was inside (3)

- 13) Golf equipment is a bit steep (3)
14) Pink and awfully sore (4)
15) Single, perverted Elon (4)

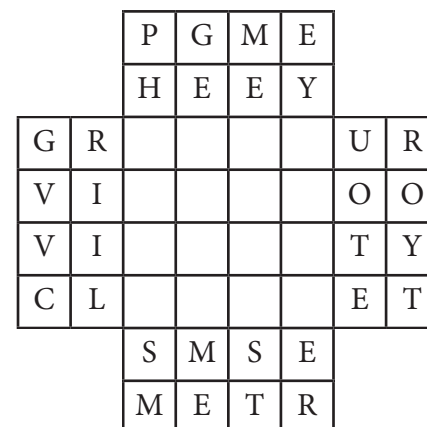
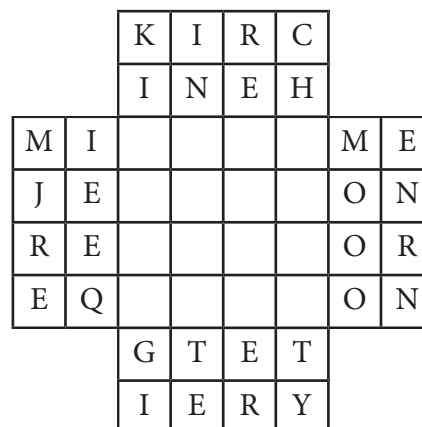
Down:

- 1) Carol perhaps initially had your man's number (3)
2) While moving I screened house (9)
3) Rule is a mess, RIP pencil (9)
4) Apartment messy, use it (5)
8) Note written, nervous within (5)
12) Individual is headless clone (3)

Crazy Eights

by Julian Xiao

Complete the grids to form valid eight-letter words.



Solve our weekly mini crosswords on cherwell.org

Follow us on Instagram @cherwelloxford

Track and Field: Right on Cue: Answers contain snooker ball colours. Reorder by the value of the ball in points, then index that many points into the other word in the clue. Redhead, Yellow Submarine, Green Card, Gordon Brown, Bluebottle, Pink Panther, Blackberries -> HURDLES. Talking Heads: Answers start with a letter phonetically. Reorder by word length and read off the heads. Jail, Agent, Venial, Eastern, Elements, Eyeballed, Enterprise -> JAVELIN. Evolution: Answers are animals with their first letter changed. Reorder by original animals and read the changed letters. Reaver, Eat, Luck, Ax, Yam -> RELAY. Double trouble: Answers contain double letters. Sort alphabetically and read the double letters. Bedding, Skiing, Tossed, Vaccinated, Vacuum, Yassified -> DISCUS.