

VOLUME 22 NO 2 | HILARY 2010

Oxford Today

THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



**Staking a claim
for the future**
Sir David King on
greening society

**A bright new
Ashmolean**
Museum reopens
after £61m refit

**Perils from
the past**
Margaret MacMillan
on abusing history

Python's progress
Terry Jones on
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Editor: Greg Neale
 Designer: Richard Boxall
 Head of Publications and Web
 Office: Anne Brunner-Ellis
 Editorial Assistants: Janet Avison,
 Martin Harrington, Anthea
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 Picture Editor: Joanna Kay
 Editorial Advisory Board:

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 Gillian Reynolds,
The Daily Telegraph
 Sally Shuttleworth,
Head of the Humanities Division
 Rachel O'Kane, *Wiley-Blackwell*

Editorial enquiries:
 Janet Avison
 Public Affairs Directorate
 Tel: 01865 280545
 Fax: 01865 270178
 oxford.today@admin.ox.ac.uk
 www.oxfordtoday.ox.ac.uk

Alumni enquiries, including
 change of address:
 Claire Larkin
 Alumni Office
 Tel: 01865 611610
 enquiries@alumni.ox.ac.uk
 www.alumni.ox.ac.uk

University of Oxford
 University Offices
 Wellington Square
 Oxford OX1 2JD

Advertising enquiries:
 Landmark Publishing Services
 7 Adam Street
 London WC2N 6AA
 Tel: 020 7520 9474
 Fax: 020 7520 9475
 landmark@lps.co.uk

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Oxford Today

THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



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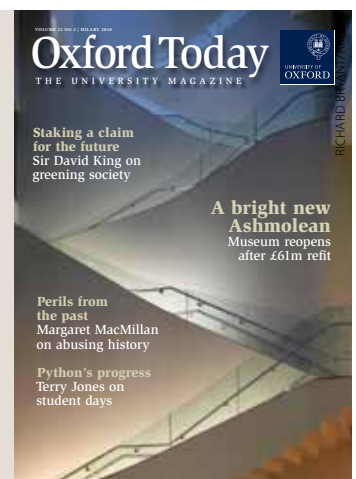
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COVER PICTURE

Brave new world: the cascading staircase at the Ashmolean Museum, one of Oxford's greatest treasures and visitor attractions, which has reopened its doors after a £61 million redevelopment. The revamp has created many fine new galleries and conservation facilities. For news and more pictures from the Ashmolean, see pages 8 and 34.



Undergraduate applications top 17,000 as state school bids surge

Oxford received more than 17,000 applications last year for around 3,000 undergraduate places in 2010, an increase of 12% over 2008. This included a 17% increase in applications from state-educated students, indicating that Oxford's efforts to widen access are bearing fruit.

There were 1,110 extra applications from state school students, 399 more from independent school students, and 299 additional applications from other, mainly international, students. Applications from state schools for entry in 2010 represent 64% of the UK total, compared to 60% for last year.

Mike Nicholson, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, said: 'This is great news. We have worked hard to ensure that all students with the potential to succeed at Oxford apply, regardless of their background.'

In the academic year 2008–9, the University spent a total of around £2.8 million on outreach activities, including targeted schools programmes, summer schools for promising students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and longer-term aspiration-raising initiatives such as the Oxford Young Ambassadors programme and Black Boys Can.

Oxford has also endeavoured to debunk myths about the University via initiatives such as podcasts about the admissions

process, an online video 'wall' featuring Oxford students from diverse backgrounds, and by publishing sample interview questions in order to demystify the interview process.

Eilidh Brown participated in an outreach programme, and is now studying law with German law at Brasenose. She said: 'I believed all the myths: that the students were all rich and all stuck-up. Each workshop, residential and meeting chipped away at this opinion until I realised that the only thing stopping me applying was my own belief that I wouldn't fit in.'

While progress has been made in widening access, challenges remain. In 2008–9, 55% of admitted students were educated in the state sector, compared to 60% of applicants. However, the University pointed out that the highest rate of conversion from applicants to actual students is for those from state grammar schools, with a 30.8% success rate. Applications from independent schools have a 29.4% success rate, while for state schools overall, the figure is 25.1%.

Despite the increase in demand, the number of places available at Oxford remains static, meaning that getting a place is becoming increasingly competitive. Nearly all the applicants are predicted three As at A level or the equivalent, and for picking

PA PHOTOCALL



out the best potential students among these, the selection process relies on a combination of aptitude tests, written work, interviews and references. Nicholson stressed that the University regularly reviews each step in the process to ensure that the best candidates are selected, regardless of background.

Data published by UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service), in early November, when applications to Oxford and Cambridge were complete, while applications

Universities must seek new revenue, minister says, amid warnings on cuts

British universities have been urged to find new sources of income – a course long taken by Oxford – amid concerns over the level of government support.

David Lammy, Minister for Higher Education, said in January that universities would have to find new sources of income for 'a good few years' before levels of public spending would rise again. His comment came after leaders of the Russell Group, which represents 20 leading universities, including Oxford, claimed universities face 'meltdown' as a result of funding cuts.

Professor Michael Arthur, chair of the Russell Group and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, and Dr Wendy Piatt, the group's director general, said that large cuts on university budgets would 'impact on the sustainability of our research and cannot fail to affect even the most outstanding universities'. Universities are facing government spending cuts of more than £900 million over the next three years.

In a response to the Russell Group statement, Lord Mandelson, whose

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is responsible for universities, insisted that cuts in spending did not reverse 'a decade of investment in excellence', but said that universities could not escape the squeeze on public finances.

Commenting on the Russell Group statement, a spokesperson for Oxford said: 'Oxford University already meets a shortfall in public funding of about £80 million in research and another £80 million in teaching. This shortfall is made up from other sources of income, which diverts funding away from some of the long-term investments we would like to make in infrastructure in order to maintain our position as among the world's best universities. Clearly, any further cuts in public funding are a matter of serious concern.'

The University's financial strategy in recent years has been to diversify income sources to reduce reliance on any single source – for example, by improving investment management, commercialising research, and through fundraising.

Novak Druce funds centre for research into professional service firms

Intellectual property law firm Novak Druce & Quigg LLP has donated £1.5 million to fund the Novak Druce Centre for Professional Service Firms at the Saïd Business School. The Centre will be led by Christopher McKenna, Reader in Business History and Strategy.

Greg Novak, the Managing Partner and CEO of Novak Druce, and an alumnus of the Saïd Business School's Executive MBA programme, said: 'Oxford's international outlook and entrepreneurial approach meant that it was the ideal partner for us and we are delighted to be developing our relationship by investing in academic research at the Business School.'

The Novak Druce Centre for Professional Service Firms conducts research into the internal and external dynamics of professional service firms, including the management of leading firms, the issues faced by people working within them, governance, leadership and innovation, and policy issues of concern to both clients and regulators.



ABOVE: Undergraduate applications to Oxford have increased by 12%

to other universities were ongoing, showed that university applications in the UK as a whole were greatly increased for entry in 2010. Almost 71,900 people had applied by mid October 2009, compared with 64,500 at the same time in 2008. The figures come as school leavers opt for further study rather than look for scarce jobs in the recession.

First scholarships for Indigenous Australians

The University hopes to welcome its first two Indigenous Australian students in Michaelmas 2010, supported by the Charlie Perkins Trust for Children and Students. The Charlie Perkins Scholarships cover travel, tuition and living expenses for graduate students over a three-year period and have been funded by the Australian government, the British government through the Chevening Programme, and the mining firm Rio Tinto.

Charlie Perkins was an Indigenous Australian football player who, as a young man, was spotted and offered a contract by the pioneering Manchester United manager, Sir Matt Busby. Following a game against the University of Oxford, Perkins decided to become a student instead, and in 1966 he became the first Indigenous Australian to graduate from university, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Sydney. He went on to become a leading advocate for Aboriginal equality, and received the Order of Australia in 1987.

The University is continuing to raise funds to ensure top-quality graduate students can enter Oxford. In particular, the Oxford Thinking Campaign is hoping to create a Graduate Fund, providing a flexible resource to ensure that the University can award the best graduate students with fully funded scholarships.

Changing times, unchanging values

'May you live in interesting times', runs the double-edged blessing. Oxford has had few periods in its history that have not been eventful, and the new decade promises - or threatens - to bring as many challenges as opportunities to the University. Certainly, Oxford is not immune to the economic difficulties that mark Britain in 2010, but as the figures for undergraduate applications that we report in this issue reveal, it retains its long-standing reputation and appeal for students and teachers alike.

Certainly, Oxford can draw strength in these times from the support of its international alumni community as well as its current body of staff and students, whose talents represent the University's wealth, as much as its inherited riches, whether in architecture, intellectual traditions or other endowments. For me, it was enjoyable as well as instructive, therefore, to meet many Oxonians at the Open Forum for alumni during last September's Alumni Weekend.

Part of the meeting was devoted to a series of presentations and discussions on how alumni can help the University through volunteer activities. There is undoubtedly a reservoir of enthusiasm for such activities: chairing an after-dinner discussion on politics and constitutional reform organised by West Kent OUS recently, I was again struck by the enthusiasm shown not just for the debate, but for news about intellectual life in Oxford.

To play a greater part as a volunteer for the University, alumni deserve as much information from and about Oxford as possible. At the Open Forum, the Chancellor, Lord Patten, in generously commending the progress of *Oxford Today*, drew appreciative laughter when he joked that 'the last thing we want is some sort of North Korea Times', and this issue, I hope, reflects a suitably heterodox approach.

Thus, for Hilary term we hear from Sir David King, Director of the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, how Oxford is bringing together academics, policy-makers and the private sector in search of sustainable development initiatives. Margaret MacMillan, Warden of St Antony's College, writes on the uses and abuses of history. We hear of research that may throw new light on the causes of multiple sclerosis. And we report on the achievements of Oxonians around the world.

In this issue, we are introducing some new design elements, aimed at making it easier for readers to navigate from section to section. We welcome your response. In our next issue, we hope to bring news of the next stage of this magazine's continuing development. Until then, we wish you enjoyable reading.

Greg Neale, Editor, *Oxford Today*

ROB JUDGES



Dame Vivien Duffield, who, through the Clore Duffield Foundation, has given £5.1 million to the Oxford Thinking Campaign

Oxford Thinking Campaign tops £776 million

The Oxford Thinking Campaign has topped £776 million, it was announced shortly before this issue of *Oxford Today* went to press. Recent donations include a sum of £5.1 million given by the Clore Duffield Foundation, to be divided between Lady Margaret Hall, graduate scholarships in the humanities, the Oxford Institute of Ageing, the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, and the Ashmolean Museum.

Oxford Thinking

The Campaign for the University of Oxford

Terry Jones, the writer, film director and former member of the Monty Python comedy team, who read English at St Edmund Hall (1961), has joined the Campaign as a patron.

My Oxford: page 48

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Hotel firm pledges \$1m for plant diversity research

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), the world's largest hotel company, has pledged up to \$1 million over five years to support University research into plant biodiversity. The money will go to support Oxford's efforts to pinpoint biodiversity 'hotspots' – areas of the planet that have the greatest concentration of rare and threatened plants – and to map these hotspots to detailed botanical data.

IHG is funding the donation by asking the 44 million members of its loyalty scheme to switch from paper to online statements. Switching to online statements will save up to \$400,000 every year, and the hotel group will donate half of the savings directly to the Department of Plant Sciences at the University.



STEPHEN HARRIS

A species of Paepalanthus, with a globe of flower heads

Professor Jane Langdale, Head of the Department of Plant Sciences, said that IHG's support would enable the department to better understand how biodiversity hotspots respond to climate change and human impact. 'Recognising and conserving plant biodiversity is crucial if we are to save fragile ecosystems and pave the way for sustainable economic development', she said.

Stony faces at the Bodleian

Nine new faces adorn the north-west side of the Bodleian Library as the result of a 'Design a Gargoyle' competition run by the University over the summer. The Library invited Oxfordshire schoolchildren to design a gargoyle with a connection to local history to replace a row of existing grotesques, which had been completely eroded. The winning ideas, which included, left, images of Thomas Bodley and the C S Lewis character Aslan the Lion, were transformed into gargoyles by stonemasons and now look out over Broad Street. The finished works were unveiled by Philip Pullman, author of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, in a special ceremony held in September. 'Oxford gargoyles have a long and proud tradition of rudeness, mischief and disobedience', he said.



PHIL SAYER

Breakthrough in IVF technology

A new technique for screening eggs and embryos may double the chances of IVF success.

The technique, developed by a team of scientists led by Dr Dagan Wells of the University of Oxford, combines two processes: whole genome amplification and comparative genomic hybridisation (CGH). It allows doctors to check chromosomes in the developing embryo, screening out those that are less likely to produce a healthy baby.

A clinical trial in the United States showed that each embryo transferred after screening had a 66% chance of forming a pregnancy, compared to only 28% for embryos that were not screened. The women involved in the trial were typically aged 39 and most had two failed IVF cycles behind them.

In the UK, where there are tight restrictions on the number of embryos that can be transferred to the womb – usually just one or two per cycle – the screening is predicted to have an even greater impact.

'We knew this procedure was likely to lead to improved pregnancy rates, but it has proven even more successful than we had predicted', said Dagan Wells, who is a Senior Fellow in Reproductive Genetics and a director of Reprogenetics UK.

The £2,000 test, which may also reduce the risk of miscarriage and Down's Syndrome, is currently available at only a handful of clinics in the UK, but more clinics are preparing to offer it. It will particularly benefit women undergoing IVF treatment who are 35 and older, whose embryos are more likely to carry genetic errors.

Work starts in Swindon

A groundbreaking ceremony in September marked the start of work on the Bodleian Library's £26 million book storage facility near South Marston on the outskirts of Swindon. University of Oxford figures including John Hood, then Vice-Chancellor, and Sarah Thomas, Bodley's Librarian, joined Rod Bluh, the leader of Swindon Borough Council, councillors and contractors for the ceremony. The decision to build the facility in Swindon followed Oxford City Council's rejection of plans to develop a site on Osney Mead.

Getting the chemistry right

Oxford's £49 million biochemistry building won a 2009 Royal Institute of British Architects award. The high-tech research building with its glass façades was designed by Hawkins/Brown to promote the exchange of ideas and to challenge public perceptions of the secretive nature of research, with labs visible to the outside world. The building was also shortlisted for a 2009 World Architecture Festival award in the 'learning' category, but lost out to the new Pearl Academy of Fashion building in the Indian city of Jaipur.



ROB JUDGES

Heart centre opens

Oxford's new £29 million Heart Centre was opened by Graeme Garden, the BBC radio personality, at the beginning of September. The new centre, based at the John Radcliffe Hospital, will facilitate groundbreaking research into inherited cardiovascular conditions, as well as state-of-the-art treatment for heart patients. The centre has been funded by the Department of Health with contributions from the University. Garden, who was a heart patient in the old unit, said that, despite the new hi-tech equipment, it was the staff who were important, describing them as 'cheerful, supportive, friendly and kind'.

Commemorating Darwin

Poppy Simonson, aged 15, from St Helen and St Katharine School in Abingdon, won a competition to decorate three sides of a new Charles Darwin plinth to stand outside the University Museum of Natural History. The one-metre-high plinth, and the plaque to be mounted on it, form part of the Darwin bicentenary celebrations, and commemorate the 'Great Debate' on evolution, which took place there in 1860. In addition to seeing her work carved in limestone, Simonson received a prize of £200.



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Blunden archive adds to Bodleian treasures

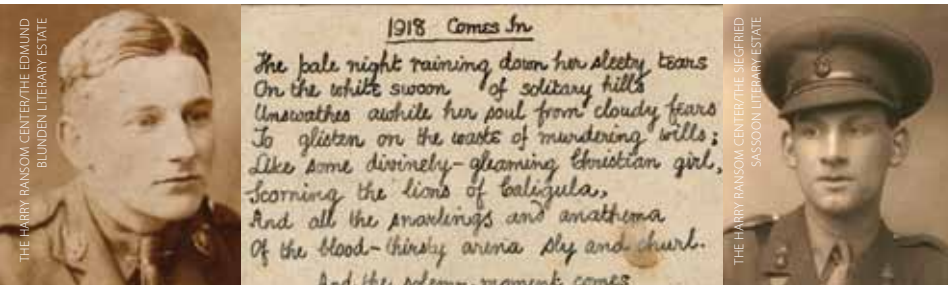
The Bodleian Library has recently been presented, through the Friends of the Bodleian, with an extensive archive of papers and books relating to the writer and scholar Edmund Blunden (1896–1974), widely regarded as among the finest recorders, in poetry and prose, of the First World War.

The collection, which will join other Blunden papers already held in the Library, is the gift of Mrs Clare Ross, the poet's oldest surviving daughter from his first marriage to Mary Daines. The collection contains several letters sent to Blunden by other notable literary figures, including Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves and Lady Ottoline Morrell. It also includes rare editions of the poet's earliest works, many of which bear extensive handwritten dedications and poems to members of his family.

Professor Richard McCabe, who recently succeeded Professor Jon

Stallworthy as Chairman of the Council of the Friends, welcomed the archive as a valuable addition, both to the Bodleian's holdings and to Oxford's new First World War Digital Archive (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/). The Friends would now seek to raise funds towards the cost of cataloguing and conserving the collection in order to make it accessible to future scholars, Professor McCabe said.

'The work of the Friends is particularly important at the present time, in view of the current strain on library funding, if the Bodleian is to continue to enrich its collections through purchase and donation. Over the coming year, the Friends will seek to widen their membership, foster closer links with their many branches abroad, and create further opportunities to meet, discuss, and appreciate the wealth of the Library's resources,' Professor McCabe added.



War poets: Edmund Blunden, left, the manuscript of his poem '1918 Comes In' and Siegfried Sassoon

War poets' works go online for Armistice Day

Rare manuscripts by the British war poets Edmund Blunden and Siegfried Sassoon were made available online for the first time in late 2009. The collections, gathered together from literary estates and libraries around the world, form part of the University of Oxford's First World War Poetry Digital Archive.

Blunden, who was posted to the Western Front in 1916, later became friends with both Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves, and in 1966 took over from Graves as Oxford professor of poetry. Among the items from his estate in the Archive are extracts from his private scrapbook, letters from the front, accounts of dreams about the war, sketches of the trenches, a previously unpublished story, and more than 15 previously unpublished poems.

The Siegfried Sassoon digital collection comprises materials from Oxford and Cambridge, as well as the New York Public Library and the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas. Manuscript variants demonstrate changes the poet made to his poems, including those in the anthologies

The Old Huntsman, *Counter-Attack* and *Picture Show*. Also included is his soldier's statement or 'declaration against the war', written while he was recovering from a bullet wound in England in 1917.

The Archive, originally launched for the 90th anniversary of Armistice Day in 2008, also contains manuscripts by Vera Brittain, Robert Graves, Ivor Gurney, Roland Leighton, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, David Thomas and Edward Thomas. The Blunden and Sassoon collections bring the number of items to over 7,000, including hundreds of photos from the Imperial War Museum, audio interviews with veterans and video clips of the Great War.

'It's very much literature in its historical context', said Stuart Lee, director of the project. 'You can branch out from the poetry into the historical material.'

The project was funded by the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and managed by Kate Lindsay of Oxford University Computing Services. The collections can be viewed online at www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/

Countdown to the trillionth tonne of carbon

A website launched by the University in October (<http://trillionthtonne.org>) tracks how fast we are approaching total global emissions of a trillion tonnes of carbon – a level which, if reached, may result in dangerous global warming in excess of 2°C. Hosted by the Oxford e-Research Centre, the site currently predicts that the trillionth tonne will be reached in 2045, but this date is advancing as man-made carbon emissions accelerate. 'The trillionth tonne symbolises the way carbon dioxide emissions accumulate in the atmosphere', said Dr Myles Allen of Oxford's Department of Physics, who proposed the idea based on a paper he and co-authors published in *Nature* earlier this year.

Spin-out secures £1m investment

Zyoxel, an Oxford spin-out company commercialising microbioreactor technology to improve drug discovery and stem cell culture, has secured a £1 million investment from Hong Kong multinational CN Innovations Holdings. The company also received a £100,000 investment from the Oxford University Challenge Seed Fund. The CN Innovations Holdings investment marks the first time a Chinese investor has provided funding for a new Oxford spin-out. Zhanfeng Cui, from Oxford's Institute of Biomedical Engineering, one of the founding inventors, was educated in China and is the first Chinese scholar to be appointed to a chair by the University.



Tim Hart, CEO of Zyoxel, with Professor Zhanfeng Cui

In a galaxy far, far away

The Hubble Space Telescope, with its newly installed Wide Field Camera 3, has enabled astronomers, among them a team led by Andrew Bunker of the University of Oxford, to locate the most distant galaxies yet. Early analysis of colours suggests that about 16 galaxies reside roughly 12.9 billion light years from Earth and another five or so are situated a record-breaking 13.1 billion light years away. Analyses of infrared images of these galaxies captured in late August and early September suggest there were fewer bright galaxies early in cosmic history and those galaxies formed stars at an unexpectedly low rate. Dr Bunker's team, which included Stephen Wilkins, a postdoctoral researcher at Oxford, was one of three teams to post analysis of the new data on 15 September.

Ashmolean reopens after £61m redevelopment, with 39 new galleries

The Ashmolean, Britain's oldest public museum, reopened in November following a £61 million redevelopment programme. Behind the restored Beaumont Street façade, a new annexe has been fused to the original neoclassical building. Designed by architect Rick Mather, it features 39 new galleries circling a six-storey Portland stone staircase, illuminated by natural light. At the top, visitors can relax in Oxford's first rooftop restaurant, The Ashmolean Dining Room.

The Ashmolean calls its new display strategy 'Crossing Cultures Crossing Time', based on the idea that the ancient civilisations that shaped our modern societies developed as part of an interrelated world culture, rather than in isolation. Treasures in the Museum's collection include: the Alfred Jewel, a teardrop-shaped jewel bearing the inscription 'Alfred caused me to be made'; the lantern that Guy Fawkes carried with him on the gunpowder plot; and Oliver Cromwell's death mask.

The revamp was funded by £15 million of Heritage Lottery Funding, as well as private donations, including £10 million from the Linbury Trust, one of the Sainsbury family charitable trusts. The Ashmolean will continue to raise funds towards the outstanding costs of £16 million. About 3,000 people visited the Museum within two hours of it reopening. Entry is still free.

Queen's Anniversary Prize for Oxford's museums, libraries and archives

The University's museums, libraries and archives have been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize in recognition of their quality and benefit to the public. The Prize, announced on 18 November at St James's Palace, London, recognises that Oxford's collections are an invaluable asset to the local community and to the nation, and that they safeguard items of national and international heritage.

The award is for seven University collections: the Ashmolean Museum, the Beazley Archive, the Bodleian Library, the Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum, the Museum of the History of Science, the Pitt Rivers Museum and the University Museum of Natural History. This is the seventh time in eight awarding rounds that Oxford has been successful, a record unsurpassed by any other university.

Professor Andrew Hamilton, the Vice-Chancellor, said: 'We are delighted with this national recognition of the value and quality of our collections', but added, 'While we celebrate this well-deserved success, we are also aware of worrying storm clouds on the horizon, concerning government funding for university museums and collections. We hope very much that the review currently taking place of university museum funding will come to the right conclusion – that this is a thoroughly good and beneficial investment and that cutting it would be entirely short-sighted and counter-productive.'

The University's museums, libraries and archives will be a feature of this year's Alumni Weekend – see www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk





At the reopened Ashmolean:

- 1 *The cascading staircase overlooking the atrium*
- 2 *Her Majesty The Queen with the Chairman of the Board of Visitors, Nicholas Barber, receiving a posy at the official opening of the Ashmolean in December*
- 3 *The Didcot Hoard AD 54–160, on loan from the British Museum*
- 4 *In the European Ceramics Gallery*
- 5 *The Temptation of Adam and Eve, mid 17th-century English embroidery*
- 6 *A silver Oxford crown minted for Charles I in 1644*
- 7 *A plaster bust of John Horne Tooke (1736–1812) by Sir Frances Chantrey, in the Human Image Gallery*
- 8 *In the Music and Tapestry Gallery*
- 9 *The Museum's main entrance*

All photos, save no. 5, by Rob Judges

Online vote planned for next Professor of Poetry

Oxford has adopted new procedures to elect a successor to Sir Christopher Ricks as the University's Professor of Poetry, including voting online. Under the new procedures, voting will take place online as well as by ballot box, over a number of days. The ballot will be open to all members of Oxford's Convocation, including graduates and staff. As *Oxford Today* went to press, it was expected that nominations would close on 5 May and voting take place between 21 May and 16 June.

Sir Christopher's five-year term ended last year. Last May, Ruth Padel was elected, after a ballot of about 500 people, but withdrew soon afterwards. She would have been the first woman to hold the post. Former Professors of Poetry include Matthew Arnold, W H Auden and Seamus Heaney. For details of the election, please see www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/gov/poetry.shtml or the *University Gazette*.

Ethics researcher pledges to give away £1m

Toby Ord, a practical ethics researcher from the University, attracted newspaper headlines last term when he pledged to give away an estimated £1 million over the course of his career. Dr Ord has launched a new organisation called Giving What We Can. Members will take a public pledge to donate at least 10% of their salary to whichever organisations they believe can most effectively use it to fight poverty in the developing world. Dr Ord led the way by promising that more than half his salary would go to development charities for the rest of his working life – amounting to more than £10,000 a year. Moral philosophers Peter Singer and Thomas Pogge have also signed up.

www.givingwhatwecan.org

Dr Ord will be speaking at this year's Alumni Weekend

Black History Month explores student past

Discussions, talks and a film screening were some of the events held throughout October to celebrate Black History Month at the University.

Events included a screening of the film *Sisters in Law*, winner of the Prix Art et Essai at the Cannes Film Festival; a Black History Month breakfast at the University Club; an interactive poetry workshop with Kuumba Nia Arts at the Oxford Playhouse; and 'Black Students: Past and Present', a panel discussion at New College.

Leyla Okhai, Equality Adviser for Race, Religion and Belief in the University's Equality and Diversity Unit, who organised the events, said: 'This year's events were organised alongside academics, alumni and local groups to recognise black history at the University. Black History Month is for everybody from all backgrounds to share in one exciting aspect of the UK's vibrant, diverse and evolving culture.'

If you would like to be involved next year, contact Leyla at race.equality@admin.ox.ac.uk or on 01865 289936.



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Appointments and awards



Professor Laura Marcus



Dr Sally Mapstone



Professor Sir Martin Taylor



Sir Jonathan Phillips



Dr Nick Brown

New Year Honours

Three academics were recognised in the New Year Honours.

Professor Valerie Beral, Professor of Epidemiology, Director of the Cancer Research UK Epidemiology Unit and Fellow of Green Templeton College, was made a DBE for services to science.

Professor Marcus du Sautoy, Charles Simonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science, Professor of Mathematics and Fellow of New College, was made an OBE for services to science.

Professor Bob Williams, Royal Society's Napier Research Professor Emeritus, Emeritus Fellow of Wadham College and Honorary Fellow of Merton College, was made an MBE for services to the community in North Oxford.

Chancellor's Court of Benefactors

During Michaelmas term, seven new members were admitted to the Court in recognition of their outstanding acts of generosity to the collegiate University. The benefactors admitted were: **Mr Graham Sharp**, founder of the Helsington Foundation; **Mr Martin Smith**, founder and partner of Oxford-based Beaumont Partners; **Dr Elise Becket Smith**, an arts administrator in the classical music world; **Dr Lawrence Tseu**, a highly respected Hawaii dentist; **Dr Catherine Wills**, Trustee of the Dulverton Trust, representing the Dulverton Trust; **Mr Christopher Lintott**, partner of Penningtons Solicitors LLP, representing the City Solicitors' Educational Trust; and **Mr Peter Mather**, Head of Country, UK and Vice President, Europe Region at BP, representing BP.

Eight members of the Court were honoured with the new Chancellor's Court of Benefactors Fellowship, for their exceptional support of the University. The new CCB Fellows are: **Dr James Martin**; **Mr Paul Ramsbottom**, representing the Wolfson Foundation; **Mr Wafic Rida Saïd** and **Mrs Rosemary Saïd**; **Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover** and **Lady Sainsbury**, representing the Linbury Trust; **Dame Stephanie Shirley**, representing the Shirley Foundation; and **Mr Guy Weston**, representing the Garfield Weston Foundation.

Queen's Birthday Honours

In the Michaelmas issue we listed the Queen's Birthday Honours. Unfortunately we omitted the following award:

Alan Milner, Emeritus Fellow of Trinity and a Member of the Faculty of Law, was awarded an OBE. He is a legal publisher and editor, and the award was for his contribution to 'good governance in Africa, the Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies'.

New appointments

English Literature

Laura Marcus, Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, took up the post of Goldsmiths' Professor of English Literature and became a Fellow of New College on 4 January.

Materials modelling

Nicola Marzari, Associate Professor of Computational Materials Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA, took up the post of Professor of Materials Modelling and became a Fellow of St Anne's College on 1 February.

Molecular and Population Genetics

Ian Tomlinson, Professor of Molecular and Population Genetics at Oxford, Honorary Consultant in Clinical Genetics, Oxford Regional Genetics Service and Visiting Professor in Cancer Genetics at Barts and the London Medical School, Queen Mary College, London, was appointed Professor of Molecular and Population Genetics in the Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine with effect from 1 October. Professor Tomlinson is a Fellow of The Queen's College.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Personnel and Equality

Sally Mapstone, Chair of the English Faculty Board and Reader in Older Scottish Literature at Oxford, was appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Personnel and Equality) with effect from 13 October. She remains a Fellow of St Hilda's College.

Merton College

Professor Sir Martin Taylor, FRS, has been elected Warden of Merton College with effect from 1 October 2010. Sir Martin is Physical Secretary and Vice-President of the Royal Society. He has been a Professor of Pure Mathematics at UMIST and, following its merger, at the University of Manchester, since he moved from Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1986. Sir Martin was awarded the London Mathematical Society's Whitehead Prize in 1982 and shared the Adams Prize in 1983. He was awarded a Royal Society Leverhulme Fellowship in 1992, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1996. He became President of the London Mathematical Society in 1998, and in the same year was given an EPSRC Senior Fellowship. In 2003 he received a Royal Society Wolfson Merit award.

Keble College

Sir Jonathan Phillips has been appointed Warden of Keble with effect from Michaelmas Term 2010. Sir Jonathan comes to Keble following a distinguished career in the civil service. After some 25 years working mainly in economic departments in Whitehall, he moved, in 2002, to the Northern Ireland Office as its political director. He has supported two prime ministers and four secretaries of state in the Northern Ireland political process and was appointed Permanent Secretary in 2005. By coincidence, his own earlier academic interests had a distinctly Irish flavour: in 1977 he completed a doctoral thesis on the campaign for government funding of Catholic higher education in Ireland in the late 19th century.

Linacre College

Dr Nick Brown, Lecturer in Plant Sciences and Fellow and Senior Tutor at Linacre College, has been elected as the next Principal of Linacre College. He will take office on 1 October 2010. Dr Brown's research interests range from the microscopic and local to international policy concerns. He is currently working with the Woodland Trust on a project to assess changes in woodland cover in the UK, and is also investigating the best methods for restoring ancient semi-natural woodland.

Sir David King

The head of one of Oxford's newest institutions argues for an interdisciplinary approach to global crisis. Interview: Greg Neale



Wanted: a 21st-century renaissance

PHIL SAYER

THIS is the single biggest challenge our civilisation has ever had to face.' As a scientist, academic and senior government adviser, Sir David King may have had moments in his career where he has had to use language diplomatically measured, but when he talks about the issue currently dominating his thoughts, he is directness personified.

Sir David, Director of Oxford's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, and a former chief scientist for the British government, is talking about climate change and the scale of the response that humanity must make to it if we are to negotiate the 21st century without economic and social catastrophe. 'It requires all major countries, all players, to act together', he observes.

In that sense, the Smith School, one of Oxford's newest centres of research – it opened its doors in October 2008 – is likely to prove a lesson in such cooperation and pooling of talent. Its offices may lurk behind a relatively anonymous façade in a building that overlooks the Gloucester Green bus station, but inside, a bright and airy atmosphere welcomes the visitor, as if challenging any traditionalist idea of academics working in cloistered solitude, untouched and untainted by the worlds of commerce or politics, let alone other academic disciplines.

The School was set up to focus on global environmental issues, and to bring together leading academics as well as figures from business, industry and government. A principal aim is to find ways of cutting fossil fuel use without impeding economic growth, and to foster sustainable living. The School brings together academics from around the world and from different disciplines and backgrounds, including various environmental sciences, law, economics

**'A catalyst for
innovative science
and progressive
decision-making'**

and international relations, as well as people from business and government backgrounds. Across the University, meanwhile, more than 60 academics from various departments have been appointed faculty associates of the School. 'We are genuinely multidisciplinary', Sir David says.

The speed with which the Smith School has established itself is also, one feels, a challenge to the more measured pace sometimes associated with a university established more than eight centuries ago. Certainly, Sir David gives the impression as he recalls the School's beginning, there is no time to be wasted.

'I started on 1 January 2008, and it was an initial hard slog for three to four months to establish a kernel of staff around me, and then it all started happening remarkably quickly', he says. 'By the time we opened the doors, we were about 30 people and are still growing. I think it's fair to say that we hit the ground running.'

His approach to recruitment also reflects a career spent bridging the worlds of academic research and industry. 'We were able to start with a good bunch of young research fellows, together with a remarkable bunch of more senior visiting fellows from abroad', he reflects. 'I think one of the cleverest things we did was to put an advertisement in *The Economist* for senior people – and so, at a relatively low cost to ourselves, we had some very brilliant people from around the world.'

The process has continued, and already the School can point to a roster of distinguished international scholars who have been visiting fellows. They include Professor Dan Bodansky, an international lawyer who advised former US President – and Rhodes Scholar – Bill Clinton on climate change issues. Professor Bodansky, who was a visiting fellow in the first half of last year, returns

to Oxford later this year. That White House connection was echoed last year when Al Gore, Bill Clinton's Vice-President, was a keynote speaker at the inaugural Smith School World Forum on Enterprise and the Environment, along with the presidents of the Maldives and Rwanda.

Less high profile, but with significant potential for policy development, are some of the School's research projects. 'We have established a very significant project on the

'By raising this in the public mind as the biggest challenge we are facing, I think that becomes something politicians have to do something about'

future of mobility, looking at mobility from the point of view of moving people and goods around villages, towns, countries, from country to country, and extrapolating forward to the next century and talking to all of the providers of mobility about how to adapt to a low-carbon economy', Sir David says. 'The key to what we are doing is working with the private sector, working with governments and working with academics to find solutions.'

After an academic career working at several universities – Imperial College, London and the University of East Anglia, as well as Cambridge, where he was Head of the Chemistry Department and Master of Downing College – Sir David became chief scientific adviser to the British government and Head of the Government Office for Science, and gained a grandstand view of how science and public policy could come together. Then came the job at Oxford. He has no doubt of the value to the Smith School of being where it is, rather than at

some of the other British universities in which he has worked.

'There is no question that the reason I came here, rather than any of those places, to establish this school, is precisely because of the convening power, the brand name of Oxford', he says. 'This isn't about finding solutions that are only relevant to Britain and British companies and the British government. We are a global operation, and the global recognition of Oxford is really what

we are building on. I don't think we could have pulled together such a marvellous group of people to the World Forum without that brand name – Oxford. However, the second factor is we have a level of in-depth expertise on environmental issues around the University. I think most of my new colleagues have been surprised to find just how much activity there is here. So I think that we can compete with anywhere in the world, given the strength we have.'

That multidisciplinary strength, he argues, also helps attract the interest and cooperation of business and industry, which must be part of the solution to environmental and sustainability issues.

'We are sitting at the nexus of the private sector, governments and academics, with the private sector being our major sector that we work with. We are working with them to discuss what the future is going to look like. So we are looking 30, 40, 50 years hence, and we are saying – because this issue of de-carbonising is going to be more and more

The Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment was founded by a benefaction from the Smith Family Educational Foundation, and has a home in George Street, close to the centre of Oxford. 'The School's aim is to find ways of cutting fossil fuel use worldwide without impeding any country's economic growth, and to foster sustainable living so that all of us enjoy health and lifestyle advances without doing any more damage to the planet', an

introductory mission statement on its website proclaims.

The School's activities are primarily based in a network of research centres:

The Centre for Climate and Development is promoting sustainable development in poorer countries; the **Centre for Low-Carbon Mobility** is improving transport for us and our goods; while the **Centre for Catastrophe Risk Management** deals with the risk and cost

of disasters. Planned developments include a centre for environmental economics, a centre facilitating the low-carbon switch for business and a centre for climate science and regulation.

For more information, contact:

Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment,
University of Oxford, Hayes House, 75 George Street,
Oxford OX1 2BQ
www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk

Sir David King

important – your company will either have to adapt to a low-carbon economy or create an opportunity out of the innovative processes that can lead us towards a low-carbon economy. If you get there first, you are going to knock your competitors out of the way. In other words, we are very keen to say, here is an opportunity for you in the private sector.’

He adds: ‘On the other hand – and I use the case of General Motors as my counter-example – if you are not fully aware of what governments will do, and the directions that everyone will move in, you might become a white elephant. General Motors, by focusing a significant investment into the development of Humvees for the private sector, was leading itself into becoming a stranded asset. So our discussions with the private sector are all about self-interest.’

Our initial conversation took place in the weeks before the Copenhagen summit on climate change. The summit opened in the wake of renewed arguments from some critics, who dispute that industrial and agricultural emissions of greenhouse gases are leading to global warming – an argument reflected recently in the letters pages of *Oxford Today*. Sir David is unequivocal.

‘The scientific consensus is absolutely clear and the information rolling in year after year simply underlines how sound the science is’, he insists. The potential consequences of climate change are the reason he describes it as civilisation’s biggest challenge, requiring a unified response.

‘If, for example, one major country were to say, “We’re not going along with this”, the manufacturing sector that depends on the smokestack industries, which depend on massive energy usage, could well simply migrate into that country, and we buy all those goods back, and the problem is not solved. So it requires an international agreement for joint action of a kind that we’ve only once achieved before, again on an environmental issue, where CFCs [chlorofluorocarbons, linked to the destruction of the ozone layer] were slowly phased out.

‘The second reason I think it is a challenge is not only because it requires joint action, but also because of the nature of the challenge in the face of a [world] population that will rise to nine billion by mid century. So if we’ve got population density increasing on our land mass, and if we’ve got rising sea levels and rising temperatures, with increasing desertification, it means that the usable land mass is diminishing as the population is increasing. So food production, fresh water availability – all of these challenges become much more severe as a result of climate change being added on top.’



ROB JUDGES

Sir David King

Born: South Africa, 12 August 1939

Educational career: University of Witwatersrand; Imperial College, London; University of East Anglia; University of Liverpool; University of Cambridge (Head of Chemistry Department, 1993–2000; Master of Downing College, 1995–2000).

UK government’s chief scientific adviser and Head of the Government Office for Science, October 2000–December 2007.

Director, Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, University of Oxford, since January 2008.

President of the British Science Association, 2008–9.

Officer of the Légion d’Honneur, October 2009.

He concludes: ‘I think we need a 21st-century renaissance – and by that I mean a transformation at least equivalent to the Renaissance or the Reformation or the Industrial Revolution – if we are going to manage this in a way that doesn’t lead to massive breakdown of our global economies.’

That, Sir David believes, means not only international cooperation between nations, but also individuals acting in small ways that bring about change.

‘An obvious thing to say is that it’s individuals who make up the population, the nine billion who will inhabit the planet by the middle of the century’, he argues. So the multiplier is enormous, and if we all change our behaviour, then the problem is solved.

He smiles at a memory: ‘I think I may have made myself a little unpopular with the car manufacturers, when at the end of a lecture to a group of students in London, I was asked by a young woman in the audience, “What should I be doing?” and I said, “You should stop admiring young men in Ferraris!” I didn’t realise that there were representatives of the media in the audience, and you can imagine the headlines in the papers the next day. But the point I was trying to

make was a very serious one: that we all need to rethink what our status symbols are. We have through the centuries come to admire people who are big energy consumers, and give them a lot of status. We need to invert that. Every one of us contributes to this culture of wastage, and without much effort, we can turn that around.’

Perhaps it is because of this belief that collective effort can still help avert disastrous climate change that Sir David was not as dismayed as many by the outcome of the Copenhagen summit in December. Many observers had hoped that the summit would agree stronger international measures on greenhouse gas emissions, but even before the gathering, Sir David was taking a more cautious view.

‘Because President Obama is hostage to his own senate on global climate change policy, Copenhagen did just about all we could have expected’, he says. ‘Every country is now engaged in tackling climate change, developing nations found their voice and showed their muscle, and the US is now involved positively if not leading the way.’

‘The conference was not the place to achieve a new deal. Much is now needed if a new protocol is to be agreed in Mexico at the end of this year, which meets the needs of the world.’

If business and industry could be persuaded to adopt sustainable solutions for reasons of economic interest, what, I wondered, did Sir David, with his experience of government, think would persuade politicians who work under the pressure of regular elections and are often accused of short-termism?

‘I think you are asking me, right at the end, the most interesting question’, he responds. ‘Short-termism always tends to win out. However, if we come back to individuals and what they can do: if you have a society that recognises the challenges to our grandchildren, we can think that far ahead and it becomes a major issue. And so by raising this in the public mind as the biggest challenge we are facing, I think that becomes something politicians have to do something about.’

That, I suggested, was moving beyond a scientific or purely economic approach to environmental issues, and raising other questions – of values and a different attitude to what constitutes a good life.

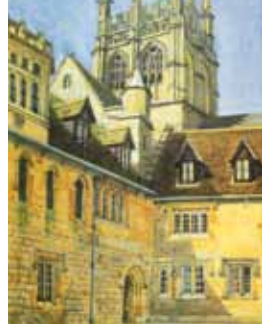
‘We’ve lost sight of that’, Sir David replies. ‘Well-being rather than consumerism. And when I talk about a 21st-century renaissance, that’s exactly what I mean. Hoping that we can focus on that, our well-being; what makes us satisfied human beings.’



r) Brasenose – Radcliffe Square



e) Lincoln – Turl Street



d) Merton – Mob Quad



r) Pembroke – Hall & Chapel



d) St. John's – Garden Quad



f) Christ Church – Tom Tower



b) Sheldonian – Degree Ceremony



b) Corpus Christi – Fellows Building

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c) St. Catherine's – College Front



[c] Univ – Fellows Garden



h) Jesus – Front Quad



d) Queen's – College Front



c) St. Hilda's – Milham Ford



f) Wadham – Front Quad



f) Magdalen – View from High



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History can help us understand the forces that have shaped the modern world. But it can also be distorted and manipulated. In an essay taken from her recent book, *The Uses and Abuses of History*, **Margaret MacMillan**, Warden of St Antony's College, argues for the importance of her discipline, and against its misuse

History

HANDLE WITH CARE

DAVID KING COLLECTION, LONDON



ON the evening of 11 September 2001, the American writer Susan Jacoby overheard two men talking in a New York bar. 'This is just like Pearl Harbor', one said. 'What is Pearl Harbor?' the other asked. 'That was when the Vietnamese dropped bombs in a harbour, and it started the Vietnam War', the first man replied.

Does it matter that they got it so wrong? I would argue that it does, that a citizenry that has so little knowledge of the past cannot begin to put the present into context, can too easily be fed stories by those who claim to speak with the knowledge of history and its lessons. History is called in, as we have seen, to strengthen group solidarity, often at the expense of the individual, to justify treating others badly, and to bolster arguments for particular policies and courses of action. Knowledge of the past helps us to challenge dogmatic statements and sweeping generalisations. It helps us all think more clearly.

If those two bewildered men in the bar had known about Pearl Harbor, they would have understood that the attack on the World Trade Center was not the same as Japan attacking the United States in 1941. That was a war between two states; this was an attack of terrorism. That in turn

suggested that the tactics and strategy would have to be different from before. Although many, including the administration of President George W Bush, talked about a war on terror, the analogy was misleading. Wars are made on enemies, not on ideas; wars have defined goals – usually forcing the enemy to capitulate – but a war on terror has no clearly defined end. Nor was the attack on the World Trade Center anything like Vietnam. There the United States was carrying the war to the enemy's country, and, again, it had a solid enemy in North Vietnam and its southern allies.

In the aftermath of 11 September, when Americans were shocked, angry and frightened, it was crucial that they and their leaders be able to think clearly. Who, to begin with, was the enemy? Here history was helpful because it cast light not only on al-Qaeda and its goals but also on the reasons for its anger at the West. History was also there to remind Americans of how their country tended to behave in the world and in the face of threats. Those reminders were largely ignored by the US administration as it prepared for war on first Afghanistan and then Iraq.

A year after the attack on the World Trade Center, Paul Schroeder, one of the most thoughtful of the United States' histo-

rians of foreign affairs, wrote an article, 'What Has Happened Since 9/11? Not Much, and Not for the Better', in which he urged Americans to put what had happened in a larger historical and global context. Yes, he said, the attack had been frightful, but it had not done long-term damage to the United States. True, the terrorist threat remained a serious one, but it was not as great as those suffered by other states in the present and in the past. Yet the Bush administration was using 11 September to claim the right for the United States to decide whom to attack when it pleased without consulting its allies or world bodies such as the United Nations.

'It is hard to grasp and impossible to exaggerate', Schroeder wrote, 'how novel, sweeping, dangerous, and subversive of world order and peace this new doctrine is. It violates the two foundation stones of the international system developed over the last five centuries: the principle of the independence, juridical equality, and coordinate status of its component units (now almost entirely states), and its equally vital counter principle, the need and requirement for such independent units to form and join associations for common purposes and to follow recognised norms and practices, especially in seeking peace and security.' The United States, moreover, was abandoning its



own history of working with others to uphold a world order and, in its invasion and occupation of Iraq, its long history of opposition to imperialism. Worse, as Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo would show, it was going to undermine and compromise its own deep respect for the law.

History, by giving context and examples, helps when it comes to thinking about the present world. It aids in formulating questions, and without good questions, it is difficult to begin to think in a coherent way at all. Knowledge of history suggests what sort of information might be needed to

answer those questions. Experience teaches how to assess that information.

As they look at the past, historians learn to behave rather like the examining magistrate in the French judicial system. What happened and why? the historian asks. History demands that we treat evidence seriously, especially when that evidence contradicts assumptions we have already made. Are the witnesses telling the truth? How do we weigh one version against another? Have we been asking the right or the only questions? Historians go further and ask what a particular event, thought or attitude from the past signi-

fies. How important is it? The answers in part will depend on what we in the present ask and what we think is important. History does not produce definitive answers for all time. It is a process.

History can help us make sense of a complicated world, but it also warns of the dangers of assuming that there is only one possible way of looking at things or only one course of action. We must always be prepared to consider alternatives and to raise objections. We should not be impressed when our leaders say firmly, 'History teaches us', or 'History will show that we are right'.

DAVID KING COLLECTION, LONDON



Nine minus five equals fake history

In Stalin's Soviet Union, politically sensitive photographs were frequently physically altered – often to remove figures who had been purged in the 1920s or 1930s. The main picture, above, was taken in April 1925. Fourteen years later, a new official version, left, was published, showing only four of the original nine figures – Frunze, Voroshilov, Stalin and Ordjonikidze – removing the others from official historical memory.

History – handle with care

They can oversimplify and force inexact comparisons just as much as any of us can. Even the very clever and the powerful (and the two are not necessarily the same) go confidently off down the wrong paths. It is useful, too, to be reminded, as a citizen, that those in positions of authority do not always know better.

Because history relies on a sceptical frame of mind, whether towards evidence or comprehensive explanations, it can also inculcate a healthy propensity to question our leaders. They are not always right, indeed often the opposite. In 1893, the British naval commander in the Mediterranean, Vice-Admiral George Tryon, decided to take personal command of the summer naval manoeuvres. When he ordered an about-face of two parallel rows of battleships, his officers tried to point out that there would be a collision. A relatively simple calculation demonstrated that the combined turning circles of the ships were greater than the distance between them. While his officers watched in dismay, his flagship, *Victoria*, was rammed by the *Camperdown*. Tryon refused to believe that the damage was serious and ordered the nearby vessels not to send their lifeboats. The *Victoria* sank, taking him and 357 sailors with her.

The Charge of the Light Brigade, when the flower of the British cavalry rode straight into the mouths of the Russian guns, is an equal reminder of human folly, not just of Lord Cardigan, who led the charge, but of the system that allowed him to be in command. As David Halberstam, the American journalist, said in

the last piece he ever wrote: 'It is a story from the past we read again and again, that the most dangerous time for any nation may be that moment in its history when things are going unusually well, because its leaders become carried away with hubris and a sense of entitlement cloaked as rectitude.'

Humility is one of the most useful lessons the past can provide the present. As John Carey [Emeritus Meriton Professor of English Literature at Oxford] puts it: 'One of history's most useful tasks is to bring home to us how keenly, honestly and painfully, past generations pursued aims that now seem to us wrong or disgraceful.' Slavery once had its defenders. Think of the arguments over the position of the earth and the sun, of the conviction, apparently supported by science, that so many Victorians had that there were superior and inferior races, or the calm assumptions even a few decades ago that women or blacks could not make good engineers or doctors.

History also encourages people in the present to reflect on themselves. 'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there', the novelist L P Hartley wrote. Know-

ing that classical Chinese civilisation valued scholars above soldiers or that the Roman family was very different from the nuclear one of the modern West suggests other values and other ways of organising society.

That is not to say that all values are relative; rather, we should be prepared to examine our own and not merely take them for granted as somehow being the best. Professor John Arnold, of Birkbeck College, University of London, put it elegantly in his book *History: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP): 'Visiting the past is something like visiting a foreign country: they do some things the same and some things differently, but above all else they make us more aware of what we call "home".'

If the study of history does nothing more than teach us humility, scepticism and awareness of ourselves, then it has done something useful. We must continue to examine our own assumptions and those of others and

ask, where's the evidence? Or, is there another explanation? We should be wary of grand claims in history's name or those to have uncovered the truth once and for all. In the end, my only advice is use it, enjoy it, but always handle history with care.



PHIL SAWER

Margaret MacMillan is Warden of St Antony's College, and the author of several histories, including *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War*, for which she won the Samuel Johnson Prize, and *Seize the Hour: When Nixon Met Mao*. This article is an extract from her latest book, *The Uses and Abuses of History*, published in Britain by Profile Books.

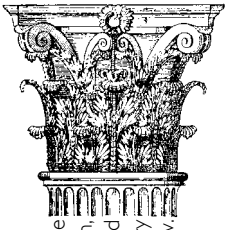


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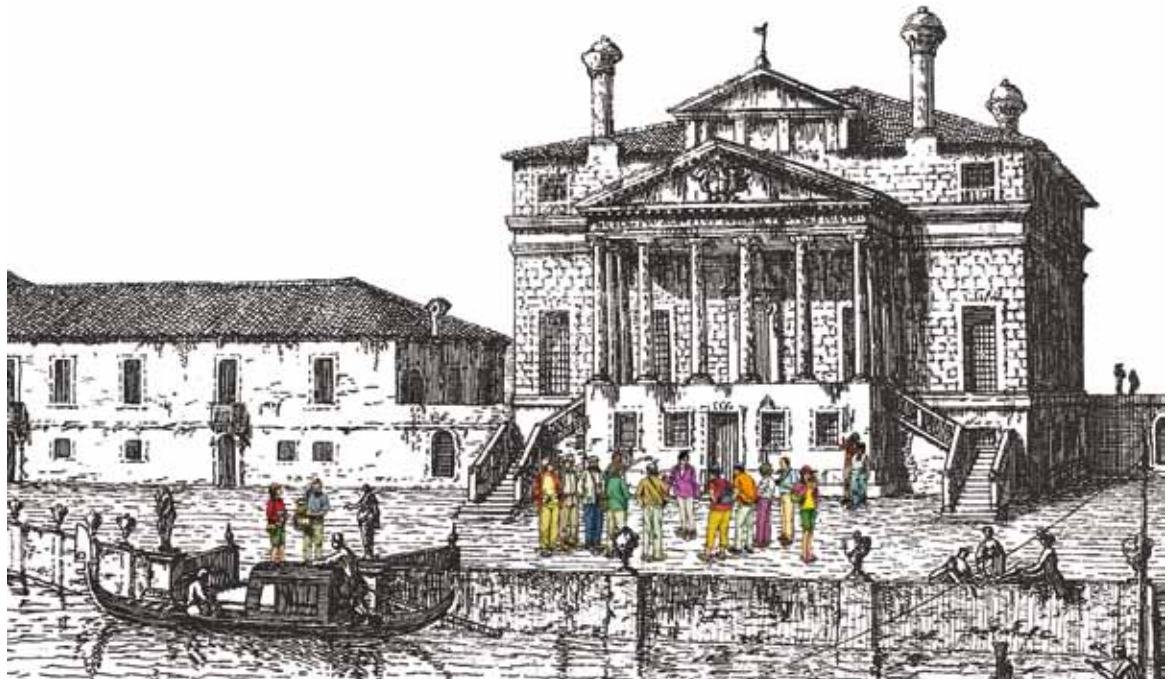
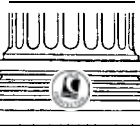
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The attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 prompted some to draw historical comparisons with that on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941



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Palladio's Villa Malcontenta, from an 18th-cent. etching.

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Piecing together the causes of lives torn apart

Genetic and environmental influences leading to multiple sclerosis have confused scientists for decades. Now an Oxford researcher believes the key may be found on the DNA signposting, known as epigenetic markers. **Michael Gross** reports

MULTIPLE sclerosis is a devastating disease in which the patient's own immune system attacks the insulating material of the nerve cells, the myelin sheath, leading to progressive loss of function in the nervous system. In the UK, which is among the worst-affected countries, it affects around 1 in 700 people at some stage in their lives, with the first symptoms most commonly appearing in the patient's mid 20s. In Oxford, the Jacqueline du Pré Music Building at St Hilda's College is a memorial to the outstanding cellist whose career was tragically cut short by the disease.

The question of just what causes this disease in a person who may have lived a normal healthy life for three decades or more has long mystified scientists, but Professor George Ebers of the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics, based on the Old Road Campus near the Churchill Hospital, is now confident that the international research collaboration that he leads is about to crack the mystery.

During his time as a professor at the University of Western Ontario, Ebers co-founded the Canadian Collaborative Project on the Genetic Susceptibility to Multiple Sclerosis (CCPGSMS), which involved neurologists from 19 different MS clinics across the country. Since being appointed Action Research Professor of Clinical Neurology at the Radcliffe Infirmary in the early 1990s, he has continued to investigate the vast Canadian datasets he

helped to build up as part of an international collaboration.

The study has identified more than 30,000 MS patients, and DNA has been collected from over 3,000 families with at least two family members with MS. The study group has also collected a large database of clinical, epidemiological and environmental data, which has become an invaluable research tool, enabling some novel approaches to unpicking the complex interactions at the heart of disease susceptibility.

Back in 1986, Ebers and others involved in the Canadian study could demonstrate that there is a genetic component to the disease. However, it explains only part of the risk, as even a monozygotic twin of an MS sufferer will have a 35% risk of being affected as well, and the association becomes weaker for normal siblings, half-siblings and more distant relatives. Even more confusingly, the genetic trait mysteriously disappears after two or three generations.

A study of a population of half-sibling pairs who both have MS – made possible by the rising divorce rate – has been crucially important. These pairs share only one parent, and Ebers' group could show that the mother was much more likely to be the common parent. Known as a parent-of-origin effect, this was confirmed in affected aunt-niece pairs, where the unaffected connecting parent was more likely to be the mother than the father. Finally, half-siblings split conveniently into half that are raised together and half that are raised apart. Their risks were the same, which redirected



Piecing together the causes of lives torn apart

Genetic variants that may turn the body against itself

Most of the heritable risk for contracting multiple sclerosis is linked to group of genetic variants (technically known as a haplotype), itself found in a group of genes known as the Major Histocompatibility Complex, or MHC. The MHC is a feature shared by all vertebrates, but its size may vary. In humans, it spans 3.6 million letters of our genome sequence, containing 140 genes, all related to the immune system.

The MHC plays a crucial role in enabling the immune system to distinguish self from non-self, i.e. body cells from intruding pathogens. An unwanted side effect of its role is that transplanted organs are usually rejected by the immune system of the recipient, which is why transplant patients have to take immunosuppressive drugs. Peter Donnelly, current director of the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics, has famously suggested that the conspicuous genetic variety in the MHC region can be communicated via our sense of smell and contributes to our partner choice.

One of the variants found in the MHC region and linked to an increased risk of MS is a version of the DRB1 gene known as DRB1*1501. Carriers of this variant also have a genetic switch that operates in response to vitamin D, so the lack of vitamin D during pregnancy may stop the gene from being switched on at a crucial time in the development of the immune system. Just how this leads to the immune system's attack on the nervous system later in life, and how it relates to the epigenetic markers that account for the unusual inheritance patterns, remains to be explored.

LEFT: The cellist Jacqueline du Pré had her career cut short by multiple sclerosis

thinking about the environment – away from viruses and towards climatological factors.

'There is a clear month of birth effect', says Ebers. 'The risk is highest for those born in April or May, and lowest for November.' However, in contrast to what some press reports suggested when this was discovered, these differences are not related to the zodiac. How can scientists exclude the astrological interpretation? With a very straightforward control: they looked at statistics in the southern hemisphere and found them reversed.

So the month of birth effect implicates pregnancy timing as an environmental factor, says Ebers: 'A plausible interpretation is that a pregnancy in summer gives the baby a better protection from MS in later life, while one in winter increases risk via a factor for which winter pregnancies are deficient.' Add to this the general geographic trend (higher probability of MS in higher latitudes) and its notable exceptions (fewer cases in Norway, where people like their fish oil), and one gets increasing indications that the environmental factor will turn out to be vitamin D, which we can synthesise with the help of sunlight, but can obtain from very few foods, notably oily fish.

However, the lack of sunlight and vitamin D during pregnancy doesn't automatically cause MS. It's not an easy cause-effect link, as in other vitamin deficiencies (for example, a lack of vitamin C producing scurvy). Somehow, the environment interacts with the genetic susceptibility, which in itself doesn't yield a straightforward explanation either. It's not the environment, and it's not the genes, Ebers suggests. Instead, it's what the environment does to the genes.

This idea fits in with a very modern concern of human genetics, namely the study of epigenetic markers, i.e. molecular labels attached to the DNA that can occur in response to environmental influences. In the decade since the first draft version of the full human genome was sequenced, geneticists have come to realise that the string of letters as such doesn't answer the most relevant medical questions (apart from those rare diseases resulting from single mutations, which were known long before the genome).

What is much more important is the next level of complexity, i.e. the signalling and instructions specifying which genes are to be activated and which are to be silenced. In part, this happens through other molecules (protein factors, small RNAs) that can temporarily bind to their genetic target. But an important part is also found directly on the DNA, in the form of so-called epigenetic markers. The most common type of these markers is simply a methyl group (CH₃)

attached to cytosine, the letter 'C' of the genetic code. In October 2009, researchers in California presented the first overview of such markers in two types of human cell.

These epigenetic markers can remain on a gene long enough to be passed on to the next generation or two, but they don't last for ever. Studying large families in North America descended from one European and one Native American parent – which is of particular interest, as the MS susceptibility trait is virtually unheard of among Native Americans – Ebers' group found that the disease hit two generations with the predicted pattern, but then disappeared in the third.

Ebers says his group has now shown three ways in which the environment interacts with the genes to influence MS risk. 'Firstly, gene expression in the main genetic

These findings confirm that the 'genetic cause' really reflects an epigenetic pattern that is passed on for one or two generations but then tends to disappear

region for MS risk is regulated by vitamin D. Secondly, the month of birth effect maps to the same genetic region, and finally we have shown that epigenetic modifications determining MS risk take place in this same region.'

These findings, says Ebers, confirm that the 'genetic cause' that scientists were hunting for so long, really reflects environment-gene interaction, an epigenetic pattern that is passed on for one or two generations but then tends to disappear. 'Multiple sclerosis is the first common disorder with an important epigenetic mechanism', Ebers concludes, and this, along with gene-gene interactions, accounts for the 'missing genetics' in MS recently highlighted by the scientific journal *Nature*.

Ironically, his findings, published in the widely celebrated Darwin bicentennial year, may also help to rehabilitate a pioneering thinker long ridiculed but whom Darwin perceptively admired: the French scientist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829). 'If I may paraphrase Lamarck', Ebers says, 'he said that if Nature could think of a way in which environmental experience could be passed on to benefit the next generation, she would use it.' Ebers, almost whispering his conclusion, which directly contradicts what is taught in every genetics course for beginners, admits: 'It turns out that Lamarck was right, at least conceptually.'

Michael Gross is a science writer based in Oxford

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A healthy diet is a crucial part of pregnancy for every woman and it can help to prevent birth defects. Make sure you eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid every day for a month before conception and throughout early pregnancy. Folic acid has been shown to reduce the risk of neural tube defects of the brain and spinal cord (such as spina bifida) in unborn children by between 50 and 70% when taken before conception and during the first trimester, and it could also help to reduce the risk of cleft lip and palate. It is also important to stop smoking when you are pregnant and to avoid foods such as raw or smoked seafood, raw shellfish and eggs, soft cheese, unpasteurized milk, and pâté. Speak to your GP for further advice about having a healthy pregnancy, and if you would like any more information about why clefts occur, how clefts can be repaired with surgery, or about caring for a child born with a cleft, please visit www.smiletrain.org.uk today.



Computers learn medical jargon

A new computer language, OWL 2, will enable computers to exchange semantically complex information such as medical terminology using the World Wide Web. Professor Ian Horrocks of Oxford's Computing Laboratory chairs the working party that has developed OWL 2, which received final endorsement from the World Wide Web Consortium on 27 October 2009.

Slothful virus evolution

The two-toed sloth has traces of viral DNA in its genome that suggest that viruses similar to HIV have been evolving for as long as mammals. Dr Aris Kazourakis from Zoology and his colleagues were surprised to find remnants of foamy viruses in the genetically isolated sloth genome. 'Ancestors of complex retroviruses, such as HIV, may have been with us from the very beginnings of mammal evolution', he said (*Science*, 18 September 2009).

Transparent aluminium

Oxford physicists focusing a very brief pulse from the immensely powerful FLASH laser in Hamburg onto a tiny spot of aluminium foil have made the metal almost transparent to UV light. 'It's the sort of matter that you would get at the centre of a giant planet', said Professor Justin Wark. 'It's almost as surprising as finding that you can turn lead into gold with light!' (*Nature Physics*, 26 July 2009)

JOPHIL/ISTOCKPHOTO



Juggling on the brain

People who learned to juggle over a period of six weeks had clear changes in the 'white matter' of their brains, compared with others who did not learn a new skill. 'We've shown that it's possible for the [adult] brain to condition its own wiring system to operate more efficiently', said Dr Heidi Johansen-Berg of the Centre for Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the Brain (*Nature Neuroscience*, 11 October 2009).

Muscular dystrophy drug shows promise in mice

Mice genetically engineered to develop a severe form of muscular dystrophy recovered almost normal mobility after receiving a new drug that targets the genetic material itself. 'These findings, should they be replicated in human patients, suggest great potential for the treatment of Duchenne muscular dystrophy', said Professor Dame Kay Davies, Head of the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics, who led the study, in collaboration with colleagues in Oxford, Australia and the US.

Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) is a genetic condition that affects mostly boys, resulting from mutations in the gene on the X chromosome that makes a muscle protein called dystrophin. Boys with DMD gradually lose the use of their muscles, because the mutations they carry interrupt the genetic sequence and make it unreadable.

The new drug, which has been developed by the American company AVI Biopharma, takes advantage of the fact that the dystrophin gene is very large, and can make a shorter protein that works reasonably well, even if the protein-manufacturing machinery 'skips' part of the sequence. The drug binds to a transcript of the gene in the mutated region, so that the cell can simply bypass the scrambled sequence.

As the team reported in the journal *Molecular Therapy* (20 October 2009), after a six-week course of treatment, the mutant mice recovered near-normal levels of dystrophin, and videos show them exploring their enclosures actively instead of sitting almost immobile. Trials of a human version of the drug have already begun in boys with DMD.

www.dpag.ox.ac.uk/research/genomics/kay_davies/

Reverse engineering the flight of the locust

The old chestnut about bumblebees defying the laws of aerodynamics has been finally buried, by a study that reveals, for the first time, the engineering design features that make insect flight so efficient.

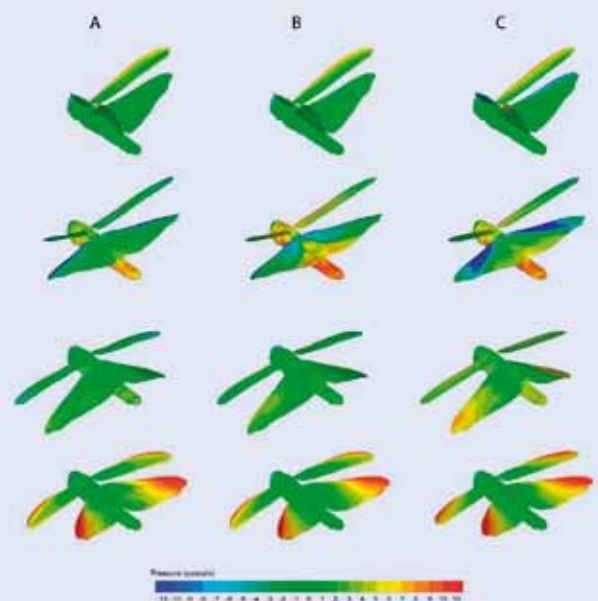
Professor Adrian Thomas and his colleagues in the Department of Zoology and the University of New South Wales in Australia used high-speed video cameras to capture the 3-D shape of a locust's wings in flight, and computers to recreate the way the shape changes during each wing beat. They then simulated modifications to the wings, to see how they affected performance.

The colleagues reported in the journal *Science* (18 September 2009) that the insect's flexible wings ensured that at every phase of the wing beat, the air flowed smoothly over the surface, never becoming detached, which it does with a flat-plate wing. Compared with creatures with rigid wings, the insects were able to generate 50% more lift for the same amount of power, giving them the efficiency they need to migrate huge distances.

'We always thought that insects, with their complicated wing structures full of twists, curves and ridges, must know something about aerodynamics that engineers don't', said Thomas. 'Now we know what that is.'

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~zool0261/>

RIGHT: Changing colours indicate changing pressures on locust wing surfaces in this computational model



The Broad view

A winter wonder

Heavy snowfalls and low temperatures marked one of the harshest prolonged cold spells seen in Britain for several decades in late December and early January. But on a day when the sun shone, it gave photographer Rob Judges the opportunity to explore the central area of the University as it took on a traditional winter appearance, as in this view of the rooftops of Radcliffe Square taken from the gardens of Exeter College.



It's an Oxford sporting institution with an illustrious history, but this student club is moving into 21st-century society against the strongest of tides. Members are proposed and elected – or blackballed – for their 'qualities physical, social and intellectual', as they have been since 1863. There's no application process, no stall at Freshers' Fair. No mobile phones are allowed in its High Street premises, where the great (now Sir) Roger Bannister lived during his year as president. The dress code – jacket and tie – is strictly enforced in the evening. And yes, you've guessed it: 30 years after the vast majority of colleges went coeducational, Vincent's Club is for men only.

Vincent's is often referred to as the Blues' social club, but half of Oxford's Blues don't even meet the first criterion for membership. The issue has clearly exercised this year's president, Hugh McCormick. 'I'm a DPhil political philosopher, and my subject is equality', he grimaces. 'It's been tricky to reconcile my philosophical views with Vincent's constitution. But the socialising is an extension of our interactions in training and in the field, and I think we'll have male and female teams in sport for the foreseeable future. The atmosphere in men's team sport is very red-blooded, and I'm not sure that's what the women want, having coached the University women's rugby last year.'

A cynical outsider might observe that Vincent's has an extremely strong alumni network – all members are elected for life – and surmise that McCormick has to justify traditional segregation for their sake. The cynic might then be startled to find that there is a 16-year-old 'sister organisation' for women Blues, called Atalanta's, whose president Alice Gardner agrees with McCormick. 'We're both social clubs, but women need different things. For us it's as much a support network as anything: a place where we can moan about how hard the training is, or how hard it is to keep up with academic work, or to achieve the required weight restriction.'

At heart, Atalanta's is about promoting sportswomen – to themselves and to others – as sportswomen, rather than women who play sport. ('Sportswoman' is still not a comfortable identity in British culture.) Any woman who has played a Varsity Match can join the club. This term, Atalanta's runs a careers event, where high-flying alumni describe how their sporting background has proved valuable in the workplace. Vincent's, on the other hand, is about promoting sportsmen as men, as McCormick explains. 'Atalanta's is inclusive, we're exclusive – for a



GRAHAM TOPPING

In an era of sexual equality, Oxford sportsmen and women still have some social differences. **Steven Casey** reports

Blues brothers and sisters go clubbing apart

reason. You come up to Oxford from a place where you were best at maths and/or sport, and suddenly you're awash in a sea of talent. It can make you very unsure of yourself. Election by your peers tells you "we think you're a good guy" and gives you the confidence to go and hone your talents. Our goal is to foster a sense of belonging.' Not to mention prestige, bolstered by a membership that includes Imran Khan, Matthew Pinsent and recent Australian rugby stars Anton Oliver and Joe Roff.

Perhaps McCormick's conscience has been eased by the club's decision to give Atalanta's women evening access from Michaelmas 2009 – without membership – to the club's well-sited eyrie above Shepherd and Woodward's tailor's shop. Previously, they would have had to be signed in as a member's guest. Vincent's has a newly refurbished bar with very competitive prices, and a full-time steward. Atalanta's has no premises of

its own, and has only just secured a regular meeting place, a cocktail bar on Blue Boar Street that gives them a discount on Mondays. But when I suggest that, surely, a merger is inevitable, Gardner is very firm. 'We need our independence', she says. 'We would just be swallowed up by Vincent's ethos, which is "a band of brothers". Besides, I respect the history and prestige of Vincent's as a men's club.' The two clubs are not in conflict, she stresses, even if some Vincent's members voted against Atalanta's access.

McCormick has a vision for the near future. He wants to renew the lease on Vincent's premises, which expires in 2013, as does that of the language school next door. 'I think it would be perfect to have the two clubs side-by-side, with connecting doors', he says. It sounds like the perfect laboratory for a serious research study into gender roles, 21st-century style.

News in brief

Student scene news is edited by Elen Griffiths, Jesus College

New student leader's green pledge

David Barclay, 21, a third-year student reading history at Worcester College, has been elected President of the Oxford University Student Union. He gained 1,712 votes, beating his competitor Jake Leeper by 579 votes. His manifesto included pledges to set up a housing fair and a student discount card. He also promised to lobby the University to adopt green measures and provide a new, central headquarters for OUSU. He will take up office at the end of Trinity 2010.

First female Afghan Master's student

Shaharзад Akbar has become the first female Afghan student to study for a Master's at the University. Shaharзад, 21, is doing a Master's in Development Studies, having studied philosophy at Kabul University and anthropology at Smith College, Massachusetts, in the US. Shaharзад said: 'I remember reading about Oxford University when I was a child ... but I never thought I would end up here. It is truly a dream come true.' She is one of 29 students to have been awarded a Weidenfeld scholarship. The scholarships support around 25 international students each year by covering their University tuition fees and living costs. Weidenfeld scholars often come from Eastern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Asia, but this is the first time that a female student from Afghanistan has been accepted.

St Edmund Hall, acting up

St Edmund Hall has come out on top in Drama Cuppers this year, with its production of *Hansel and Gretel*. Teddy Hall won best overall production, narrowly defeating Oriol, as both colleges picked up awards in three different categories. Ollo Clark, pictured below, centre, with Alice Pearse (Gretel), left, and Nik Higgins (Hansel), picked up awards in three separate categories. Oriol College, which entered two plays, came a close second. Its production of *The Lover* won best experimental show and best director, while its adaptation of *Julius and Cleopatra* was awarded best design. Drama Cuppers is organised and judged by the Oxford University Dramatic Society (OUDS) and reserved for first-year drama.



GENEVIÈVE WASTIE

Hertford student is next Union President

A student from Hertford College has been elected President of the Oxford Union. Laura Winwood, who is 22 and reading archaeology and anthropology, was previously the Union's librarian. She defeated the treasurer Lou Stoppard in the election by 121 votes. She gained a total of 656 votes and will be taking up office in Trinity 2010.

Teddy bear protest at Queen's

Queen's College JCR has elected a teddy bear as its next president in response to a decision by the college to ask the former president, Nathan Roberts, to stand down. Roberts, a second-year studying PPE, was elected as JCR President in Trinity term 2009, but was asked to step down by the college authorities after achieving a 2:2 in his preliminary examinations.

They're just wild about Harry

Inspired by J K Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels, Magdalen College JCR has voted to rename itself Gryffindor, after the boy magician's house at Hogwarts. The motion was proposed by third-year student Zoe Tyndall, who suggested that Magdalen College 'embodies the values of courage, daring, nerve and chivalry ... the characteristics of the Gryffindor house in *Harry Potter* novels'.

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Running great artistic institutions calls for a range of skills. **Alicia Clegg** asks Sandy Nairne and Tony Hall how Oxford helped set them on their respective courses, to the National Portrait Gallery and the Royal Opera House

Managing the arts of change

ROB JUDGES



CAREERS intrigue me. How does a champion of avant-garde art become director of the National Portrait Gallery? How, for that matter, does a BBC News chief come to be running Britain's national ballet and opera house? The only way to find out is to ask them ...

My first stop is the National Portrait Gallery. At 2.30 pm sharp, Sandy Nairne (University College 1971) strides into the reception area. As we walk towards his office, he stops to exchange a few words with a member of his team. I pause to wonder at his jutting shoulders.

We start talking about Oxford and the origin of the muscular shoulders reveals itself. Nairne was a member of the Oxford rowing squad, but although he rowed in the University's reserve crew, Isis, as a freshman, he resisted the temptation to try again for the first boat. 'I knew that I had a lot of different things that I was interested in. Rowing was a part of that and a powerful part. But it wasn't going to be my whole life.'

One of those other interests was art. Nairne's father, Sir Patrick Nairne, a retired civil servant and former Master of St Catherine's College, is a gifted watercolourist who encouraged his children to make space in their lives for art. 'There's a line of art that runs through my family. Even though my father spent all his time organising things and making things better, he brought us up with the idea that art had a very strong place.'

If rowing was Nairne's first consuming passion, experimental art was its successor. With friends he developed the Oxford Students' Arts Council, which ran a gallery and theatre workshop in Worcester Place. While revising for finals in modern history and economics, he helped out, as a volunteer, at the Oxford Museum of Modern Art (Modern Art Oxford). There, he met the Museum's recently arrived director. 'It was very clear to me that this young Nicholas Serota was incredibly bright and talented.' Serota must have thought that Nairne was talented, too, as he offered him a job as his deputy. Twenty years later, they revived their partnership when Nairne became Serota's number two at the Tate.

When I arrive at Covent Garden to interview Tony Hall (Keble 1970), chief executive of the ROH and former head of BBC News, his secretary warns me his diary is a nightmare. Since the summer, on top of ROH business, he has been chairing the Cultural Olympiad board for the government. What did Oxford mean for him? Hall shakes off the distracted air of a man whose diary has indigestion, and becomes animated. He hails from Birkenhead and was the first from his family to go to university. 'Oxford, for me, was a time of experiment, when you could try out so many things that you thought you might be good at and see whether they were really things that you wanted to spend your life doing.'

Among the myriad activities that he tried out – acting, directing, writing reviews and fighting his corner in student politics – he discovered he was good at journalism. When the student paper *Isis*, which he edited, ran out of cash, he mounted a rescue. 'We got some stories published [in national newspapers]. A couple of days later, a telegram arrived, saying, '£1,000 on its way to you. Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor.' It was his first taste of fundraising.

His first job at the BBC, after he graduated in PPE, took him to Belfast. The next opened a new chapter in his cultural education. In the BBC newsroom, he met 'a glorious man', who was passionate about opera. 'Each week he would say, go and try this, and go and try that. I would nip off to the record shop and come back with a huge mass of LPs to listen to over the weekend.'

The midlife career hop was unscripted. As head of BBC News, he applied for the post of director general, but lost to Greg Dyke. When the ROH job came up, he decided to try something different. For a BBC lifer, it was quite a gamble. 'The press wrote that I was mad to go and it [the Opera House] was mad to have me.'

A career setback also had a hand in Nairne's metamorphosis from champion of modern art to standard-bearer for the nation's history. In 2000, he narrowly missed becoming the founding director of Tate Modern. 'It was quite a crunchy



moment. I had no expectation that I would necessarily get the post. But, even so, it gave me quite a jolt.'

I ask both men what they set out to do. Nairne's priorities were to end the National Portrait Gallery's reputation as 'London's best-kept secret' and to shift its focus from improving facilities, which was the big push of the 1990s, to 'acquiring better things'. One of his proudest achievements is establishing a portrait fund, which has helped the Gallery to make major acquisitions. Prize additions range from an important portrait of the poet John Donne to the sculptor Marc Quinn's controversial bust of his head, *Self*, which he cast from his own blood. 'I wanted the Gallery, on the one hand, to reach out to many more people and, on the other, to think more about how the collection could be extended.'

Hall's challenge was to restore the ROH's 'legitimacy'. In 2001, the Opera House was reeling from a dizzying succession of short-lived chief executives and a decade of public relations disasters. Its media image was as the place where rich people enjoyed themselves at poor people's expense. 'People were saying, "Why should

this place have that big grant?" or "Why did it get that Lottery money?"' If I've done anything at all, I hope, it's to have got the debate away from that and onto what really matters, which is the art forms.'

Some of Hall's innovations have ruffled feathers. Under his watch, the ROH has established itself on the social networks Facebook and YouTube, made an opera on Twitter and run offers in the *Sun* newspaper, enabling readers to attend heavily subsidised first-night opera performances. Beaming opera, for free, onto big outdoor

screens and, commercially, into cinemas, has opened new fronts. 'For the first time, we can reach people across the world with the things that we do. It's a challenge, but what an opportunity.'

Is there a suggestion that the ROH has embraced gimmickry in its drive for new audiences? As someone who discovered opera and ballet through a series of lucky chances, Hall believes 'viscerally' that great art is for everyone, not just for those in the know. If social networks can help get that message across, Hall is all for it. 'We have to be out there, where people can come across us.'

I ask what effect the recession has had. The National Portrait Gallery has had a record year, both for visits to the collection, which are free, and to ticketed exhibitions. 'It's not quite that people are saying we're stopping shopping and going to museums,' Nairne says, 'but there is a sense that, in rather difficult times, the realm of ideas and images matters more to people.'

Hall says the Opera House's audiences 'have held up well', but unfamiliar pieces have been harder to sell, as audiences have sought the certainty of what they know they enjoy. To encourage the public to experiment, Hall has halved ticket prices on lesser-known operas. 'One of the ways that I learned [about opera] was to keep on going to things that I'd never seen before. I want people to carry on doing that.'

Corporate retrenchment and the squeeze on public finances make the annual challenge of balancing the books at the National Portrait Gallery and Royal Opera House tougher than ever. The Gallery received £7.7 million from the public purse last year; the Opera House £26.3 million. Both directors are passionately opposed to funding cuts. Salami-slicing the arts, they argue, impoverishes the nation's cultural life – without contributing materially to the recovery of its finances. 'We have to convince people that museums and galleries are not just great public services, but also part of the cultural scene that brings people to Britain,' says Nairne.

As my interview with Hall is about to end, I slip in one last question: what advice would he offer to people who face the disappointment of not getting a job that they want badly? 'I think that people get onto tram-lines', Hall says thoughtfully. 'There are so many wonderful opportunities that I have been lucky enough to have in the past nine years – which I simply wouldn't have had within the BBC. The thing I would tell myself, or other people, would be to go out and to try to do some other things.'

ABOVE: *Arts and the men* – Sandy Nairne and Tony Hall argue a point at the Royal Opera House

RIGHT: *The National Portrait Gallery*, where Sandy Nairne has overseen a series of major acquisitions



Oxonians at large is edited by Alicia Clegg

Tending the roots of career change

If it's possible to have a recession-proof product, the National Gardens Scheme (NGS) found one last year. 'Despite the weather not having been great, income from visits to our gardens is up by 7%', says NGS chief executive Julia Grant (St Hilda's 1979). 'For £10, two people can look round a lovely garden, have a cup of tea and a piece of cake and still have change for the plant stall.'

Grant spent the first half of her career as a management consultant, which culminated in six frenetic years in Hong Kong. When she and her husband returned to Britain, now with three children in tow, she took a career break and consulted, as a volunteer, for a charity. The experience proved so satisfying she decided to make her career in the charity sector.

As NGS chief executive, Grant presides over a skeleton staff of eight, a 3,500-strong army of private householders, who throw open their gardens to the public, and 350 local volunteers who help make it all happen. Last year, the NGS garden openings raised £3 million. The scheme began life in 1927, before the birth of the National Health Service, to fund the provision of district nurses. Today, its beneficiaries are such charities as Macmillan Cancer Support and Crossroads Care, which supports carers.

When the NGS began, most of its gardens were attached to picturesque rectories and manor houses. The modern mix is more vibrant. 'We've got barge-gardens in the middle of London and roof gardens', says Grant. 'One of the attractions is the element of surprise.'

www.ngs.org.uk



Gardens of delight: Julia Grant

Following in Henry's footsteps

Writing a crib for the visitor interpretation team at Hampton Court Palace started research curator Suzannah Lipscomb (Lincoln 1998) on a psychological exploration of Henry VIII's metamorphosis from Renaissance prince to obese, murderous tyrant.

The result was her first book: *1536: The Year that Changed Henry VIII*. Published last year, to coincide with the 500th anniversary of his accession, the book advances the idea that the avalanche of disasters that befell Henry in 1536 – rebellions, a debilitating jousting accident, the loss of his illegitimate son and Anne Boleyn's beheading – aggravated flaws that were latent in his personality and soured the character of his rule.

Academic historians generally study subjects thematically. Preparing history for 'public consumption' gave Lipscomb a hunch that the key to fathoming Henry lay in his reign's chronological unfolding. 'It made me think what the human effect must have been of all those events that came clustered together.'

Lipscomb has been working at Hampton Court on a three-year knowledge transfer partnership between Kingston University and Historic Royal Palaces, part-funded by the Arts and



OXFORD MAIL

Suzannah Lipscomb: absorbing history

Humanities Research Council. The year 2009 was as good for her as 1536 was bad for Henry. As well as her book, she completed her Oxford DPhil, organised talks featuring historians and novelists such as Hilary Mantel and Philippa Gregory, and worked with film-makers to bring court politics to life for Palace visitors.

When her contract ends this year, she plans to return to academia. For now, she is absorbing all the history that she can from the ancient stones that surround her. 'My office is under Henry VIII's council chamber. To be here and to walk in these spaces, in Henry VIII's footsteps, is a great privilege.'

www.suzannahlipscomb.com

Strategic thinking for the unsung army

Could the cultivation of empathy save future generations from the consequences of climate change? Roman Krznaric (Pembroke 1989) believes it could – in the same way that abolitionists awoke the world's conscience to the human suffering caused by slavery.

Krznaric defines empathy as 'the imaginative act of stepping into the shoes of another person.' He became fascinated by its radical potential while working as a human rights monitor in Guatemala. Later, as a 'personal experiment', he took a job as an assistant gardener at LMH. His aim was to discover what life is like behind the domestic divide for the 'unsung' army of porters, gardeners and cleaners who keep colleges running.

Today, Krznaric teaches the art of living at The School of Life, in London, which he helped to set up. He has recently completed a book, entitled *Empathy*. As a first step, he calls for a reform of



higher education. Before they specialise, students need to develop the 'wide-ranging intelligence' of the 'educated generalist', he argues. Other ideas include hosting 'mass conversation meals' between young and old and the setting up of 'climate futures museums', which would illustrate the consequences of global warming for

generations to come.

Can imaginative experiments produce a revolution in how people treat each other? Krznaric rebuts any suggestion that he is utopian. Throughout the ages, he says, people have changed reality by imagining themselves as the enemy they fight or the underclass they oppress – from 18th-century abolitionists to bereaved families, today, in Israel and Palestine, who unite for peace. 'Historically, there have been amazing moments of social change when empathy has flowered.'

<http://outrospection.org>



A lonely journey into the record books

'How ironic is this?' thought Sarah Outen (St Hugh's 2004). 'Having made it all the way across the Indian Ocean, I'm about to die at the very end.'

Fortunately, she didn't. By some fluke, or powered by sheer desperation, she righted her boat, *Serendipity*, from three capsizings and was swept by a massive wave, to land, right way up, on the coral reef.

Outen set out from Australia on 1 April last year and arrived in Mauritius 124 days older and two stone lighter. Only three solo rowers – all men – had made the 3,100-mile crossing before. On good days, she rowed for 16 hours and spotted albatrosses and whales. On 'rubbish' days, she hunkered down in her cabin and plundered her emergency store of chocolate. 'When you're being bashed

by waves from either side, sleeping can be quite difficult.'

Outen got into rowing at Oxford, captaining the St Hugh's 1st VIII to 'blades' in Torpids and Eights. 'At times it was a bit ambiguous as to whether my degree was in biology or rowing.' During her second year, Outen's father, who had rheumatoid arthritis, died unexpectedly. She undertook the challenge in his memory and to raise money for the charity Arthritis Care.

Back on land, she is writing a book about her adventure and adjusting, a little painfully, to life in the 21st century. 'Sea life is a simple life', she says. 'Time ends up having no meaning and days become just a figure of speech.'

<http://sarahouten.co.uk>

Triumphant, Sarah Outen, who made the 3,100-mile journey in 124 days

Green cuisine proves couple's recipe for business success

A chance conversation led David Silverglide (Saïd Business School 2004) and his future wife Leslie Swallow (St Hilda's 2003) to start Mixt Greens, a fast-service retailer that aspires to be both gourmet and environmentally friendly.

Silverglide and Swallow (pictured, right), came to Oxford from the US. She studied biodiversity, conservation and management. He did an MBA. After graduating, they moved back to San Francisco, with plans to start a business that would tap his commercial skills and her environmental zeal. When they talked to Swallow's brother, a professional fine-dining chef, they came up with the idea of offering San Franciscan lunchers a way to enjoy gourmet-style sandwiches and salads, without damaging the planet. 'We realised that if the three of

us combined, we could have a successful business that used each of our expertises', says Silverglide.

Mixt Greens grounds its eco-credentials in a raft of policies that Leslie Swallow has worked out to minimise the environmental toll of catering. Most of its food is organic, locally sourced and seasonal. Takeaways come in compostable containers. Restaurant customers eat their meals on table-tops made from recycled plastics.

With three units up and running, the business is poised for expansion. Last September, the partners accepted an offer from an investment fund of a large global company, which means they now have the cash to take Mixt Greens into other US cities. 'Selling your business is always a difficult thing,' says Silverglide. 'But the



chance to turn a business that you have worked hard to create into a national brand is an incredible opportunity.'

www.mixtgreens.com



Contact the Alumni Office: If you have any questions about the information included on this page, or would like to find out more about the alumni relations programme at Oxford, please contact us at: enquiries@alumni.ox.ac.uk; +44 (0) 1865 611610. Alumni Office, University of Oxford, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD, UK.

Benefits for alumni, from alumni

The Alumni Office has introduced a category within the Alumni Card Scheme for 'Alumni-run businesses'. Alumni are encouraged to offer a discount or other benefit to fellow alumni, and in return, receive publicity for their business. We have been delighted with the response to this category, and have received applications from a wide range of businesses, including:

Truffle Tree

Truffle Tree offers food lovers the opportunity to have their own truffle-producing oak tree in a French truffle plantation. The adopter makes an initial payment, reflecting a share of the cost of establishing the *truffière*, planting the tree and care for the first year. In subsequent years, there is a 'care and maintenance' charge to cover such costs as irrigation, weed control, harrowing, pruning and ultimately harvesting. Adopters can elect to have truffles mailed to them, or they can be sold on their behalf.

Alumni Card-holders are entitled to a special price of £119 to adopt a tree.

The Alumni Office is now the proud owner of a Downy Oak truffle tree, which was donated

by the Truffle Tree company. All proceeds will go towards the work of the Alumni Office for the benefit of the alumni community. (**Dick Pyle**, *New College 1962*)

Oxford Panoramas

Seth Lazar, a postdoctoral Fellow at Oxford's Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict, has been photographing Oxford's spires for years. He has staked out South Park countless times, capturing the spires in every possible aspect: covered in snow; suffused with a

golden sunset; and amid vibrant autumn leaves, among many others. He has recently made his work available as archival-quality panoramic art prints from his website. Alumni Card-holders are entitled to a 10% discount on all products purchased via the website. (**Seth Lazar**, *Wadham 2002*, *St Peter's, Nuffield*)

Professional services

A range of professional services is also offered to alumni at a discounted rate, including: Brilliance Coaching (Michelle Cheng, Pembroke 1995); Silver Lining Coaching (Dr Sunny Kotecha, St Anne's 1999); Avanté Media Ltd (George Dearsley, Oriel 1968).

For a full listing of our alumni-run businesses and to find out how to offer a discount, please visit www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/alumni_card_businesses/

Alumni Marketplace

Over the next year, we are hoping to add an 'Alumni Marketplace' function to our website, which will give alumni the chance to exchange services, and will offer alumni-run businesses unique access to special discounts. Businesses within the Marketplace will be categorised to enable easy searching. We are currently looking for your ideas and feedback in order to realise this idea – please get in touch at alumniocard@alumni.ox.ac.uk.



SETH LAZAR

'Oxford Snow' a panoramic view of the city by Seth Lazar

Pigeonholes

Your new Oxford Alumni Card

The Oxford Alumni Card has been updated and improved. You will find your new, plastic card attached to the address sheet in this issue of *Oxford Today*

– please do not throw it away! Your Alumni Card entitles you to a wide range of benefits and discounts, and identifies you to those on college premises as having a connection with the University. www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/alumni_card/



House of Lords summer reception

On Thursday 22 July you are invited to join other Oxford alumni and friends at our exclusive summer drinks reception at the House of Lords. Hosted by Baroness Gillian Shephard, alumni and their guests can enjoy an insight into the workings of the House. Taking place in a room inside the House of Lords, with a terrace overlooking the Thames, this is a night not to be missed. www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/events/

Boat Race 2010

The 156th Oxford vs Cambridge Boat Race will take place on Saturday 3 April (not 4 April, as printed in Michaelmas 2009), and the Alumni Office is providing a unique opportunity to watch the race from private riverside rooms. Alumni from around the world join us on this day for fine cuisine and a chance to hear from a special guest speaker about their experiences of the Race. See you at the river! www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/varsity/

Travel Programme newsletter

The second issue of the Oxford Alumni Travel Programme newsletter is now available. It features details of the 2010 travel photography competition and plenty more to inspire keen photographers, along with news and updates about the Travel Programme, interviews with trip scholars, book reviews and articles. If you have not yet decided where to go for your next holiday, browse through our newsletter for inspiration. Oxonians have been enjoying tours with the Travel Programme for many years, and all tours combine interesting destinations, intellectual stimulation and relaxation.

To view the newsletter online, please visit www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/travel/

Alumni aid for student projects

A number of our regional alumni groups in the UK and overseas make awards to Oxford students from their area, offering support for projects and travel undertaken during their vacation. More information can be found on the website about the valuable schemes run by East Kent, Dorset, Hertfordshire and West Sussex.

The Dorset branch award was established by chance in 2007, when two enterprising undergraduates asked for financial help with their summer project at a Kenyan school and were rewarded with £100 each.

The branch now has a formal application process, and the award is offered to any non-finalist undergraduate who comes from, or attended school in, Dorset. The branch looks for a project's personal development value and at how it may enrich the applicant's student life to



JOSHUA HARVEY

Joshua Harvey, an Oxford student from East Kent, received an award from his regional alumni group, which helped him to work with a new children's charity in Thailand

the benefit of his or her college. Recent awards have also been given to fund travel to Harvard to take part in a brain degeneration project, and to a south-west Ugandan hospital.

In 2010, the bursary has risen to £250, simply by offering branch

members the opportunity to donate to the scheme when booking for events. The idea that their events can be of incidental benefit to current students has been well received and is evidently increasing interest in branch activity.

www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/regional_networks_awards/



Meeting Minds – Shared Treasures

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
ALUMNI WEEKEND

24–26 September 2010

www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk

PUT THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY
OR SIGN-UP ONLINE TO
RECEIVE REGULAR UPDATES

Museums and galleries

Ashmolean Museum

Crossing Cultures Crossing Time

The newly refurbished Museum's collections of art and archaeology are presented over five new floors, spanning cultures from east to west, and charting the aspirations and creativity of humankind up to the present day. It tells the story of each object on display by tracing the journey of ideas and influences through time and across continents.

Bodleian Library

UNTIL 3 MAY

Crossing Borders: Hebrew Manuscripts as a Meeting-place of Cultures

The Library's winter exhibition tells the story of how, together, Jews, Christians and Muslims have contributed to the development of the book. It illustrates the cultural exchange, the social interaction and the religious toleration between Jews and non-Jews in the Muslim and the Christian worlds during the late Middle Ages. The exhibition draws on the Bodleian's Hebrew holdings, one of the world's largest and most important collections of Hebrew manuscripts.

28 MAY–31 OCT 2010

Summer Exhibition

'My wit was always working': John Aubrey and the Development of Experimental Science.

Christ Church Picture Gallery

16 FEBRUARY–16 MAY

After Michelangelo

Michelangelo Buonarroti's fresco of the Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican is the most replicated of all works of art. This exhibition brings together 33 drawings from the Christ Church collection of Old Masters to trace and understand Michelangelo's genius through his followers, imitators and admirers.

Museum of the History of Science

UNTIL 1 APRIL

Steampunk: the next generation

An exhibition of Steampunk devices made by secondary school students for the Great Steampunk Art and Design Competition, inspired by the Museum's recent exhibition of Steampunk art.

Modern Art Oxford

17 APRIL–6 JUNE

3: 3 artists / 3 spaces / 3 years: Johanna Billing 'I'm Lost Without Your Rhythm'

Johanna Billing's videos reflect on routine, rehearsal and ritual with an emphasis on the fragility of individual performance and the power of collective experience. In this, the second of a series of three new commissions, Billing makes a film based on the recording

of a live performance of dance 'learned' or performed by Romanian amateur dancers in Iasi, during a week-long festival held there in 2007.

17 APRIL–6 JUNE 2010

Maria Pask: Déjà vu

A newly commissioned film by Amsterdam-based Maria Pask, inspired by a local newsletter, 'The Roundabout', which was produced in the 1950s–60s on one of Oxford's housing estates.

Pitt Rivers Museum

FROM 1 MAY

Reopening of the Upper Gallery

A key feature in the reopened gallery will be an extensive new firearms display. This wide-ranging display will chart the development of firearms from 15th-century hand-cannons to modern automatic assault rifles, exploring their use in battle, law-enforcement and self-defence, as well as for hunting and sport, and highlighting their diversification around the world.

4 JUNE–5 JUNE 2011

Wilfred Thesiger in Africa: A Centenary Exhibition

'I am certain', wrote the British traveller and writer Sir Wilfred Thesiger about his formative years in Ethiopia, 'that the first nine years of my life have influenced everything that followed.' Marking the centenary of Thesiger's birth, this major exhibition will show a wide selection of his photographs – many for the first time – relating to his life and travels in Africa. The exhibition will be accompanied by a major new publication by the Pitt Rivers Museum and HarperCollins, *Wilfred Thesiger in Africa*.

The University Museum of Natural History

EARLY MAY UNTIL DECEMBER 2010

Wonderland of Natural History 1860–2010

The 150th-anniversary exhibition will present a series of more than 100 images from the early days of the museum, including contemporary photographs.

PITT RIVERS MUSEUM



Literary

20–28 MARCH

Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival

Christ Church

Highlights include the launches of Philip Pullman's adult book *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, and of Joanne Harris's latest novel *The Blue-Eyed Boy*, as well as an event about the history of the Royal Society, involving Richard Dawkins and Georgina Ferry, former editor of *Oxford Today*; another will feature Anthony Beevor's new book: *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy*. The children's programme will include appearances by Anthony Horowitz, Meg Rosoff, Mal Peet, Geraldine McCaughrean and Philip Reeve.

27 MARCH

St Hilda's College Media Network

A day of events consisting entirely of St Hilda's alumni and associates. The programme includes the historian Bettany Hughes, *Sunday Times* magazine editor Sarah Baxter, novelists Victoria Hislop, Adele Geras, Anita Mason and Gaynor Arnold, as well as honorary Fellow P D James talking about alumna Barbara Pym. For further details:

www.sundaytimes-oxfordliteraryfestival.co.uk

JOHANNA BILLING/COURTESY HOLLYBUSH GARDENS, LONDON



An image from Johanna Billing's film, *I'm Lost Without Your Rhythm*, at Modern Art Oxford



Oxford Alumni Card holders can obtain 10% discounts at the Ashmolean, Bodleian and Museum of Natural History shops,



A Konso grave in Ethiopia, marked by carved wooden effigies – one of the photographs from the exhibition Wilfred Thesiger in Africa, at the Pitt Rivers Museum

Opening times/contacts

For Easter opening times contact individual museums

Ashmolean Museum

Beaumont Street
Tel: 01865 278000
www.ashmolean.org
Tues to Sun 10.00–18.00

The Bate Collection of Musical Instruments

Faculty of Music
St Aldate's
Tel: 01865 276139
www.bate.ox.ac.uk
Mon to Fri 14.00–17.00
Sat 10.00–12.00 (full term only)

Bodleian Library

Broad Street
Tel: 01865 277213/277216
www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about/exhibitions/
Mon to Fri 9.00–17.00
Sat 9.00–16.30
Sun 11.00–17.00

Botanic Garden

Rose Lane
Tel: 01865 286690
www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk
Daily 9.00–17.00

Harcourt Arboretum

Mon to Fri 10.00–17.00
(May to Oct, daily 10.00–16.30)

Christ Church Picture Gallery

Christ Church
Tel: 01865 276172
www.chch.ox.ac.uk/gallery/
Mon to Sat 10.30–13.00, 14.00–16.30
Sun 14.00–16.30

Museum of the History of Science

Broad Street
Tel: 01865 277280
www.mhs.ox.ac.uk
Tues to Fri 12.00–17.00, Sat 10.00–17.00
Sun 14.00–17.00

Modern Art Oxford

Pembroke Street
Tel: 01865 722733
www.modernartoxford.org.uk
Tues to Sat 10.00–17.00, Sun 12.00–17.00

Museum of Oxford

Town Hall, St Aldate's
Tel: 01865 252761
www.museumoxford.org.uk
Tues to Fri 10.00–17.00
Sat & Sun 12.00–17.00

Oxford Bach Choir

www.oxfordbachchoir.org
Tel: 01865 305305
www.ticketsoxford.com

Oxford Philomusica

www.oxfordphil.com
Tel: 020 84501060
www.ticketsoxford.com

Oxford University Orchestra

www.ouo.org.uk
Tel: 01865 305305
www.ticketsoxford.com

Oxford University Philharmonia

www.ouphil.oums.org
email: ouphil@oums.org

Pitt Rivers Museum

Parks Road
Tel: 01865 270927
www.prm.ox.ac.uk
Monday 12.00–16.30, Tues–Sun 10.00–16.30

The University Museum of Natural History

Parks Road
Tel: 01865 272950
www.oum.ox.ac.uk
Daily 10.00–17.00

Music

Daniel Barenboim and the Berliner Philharmoniker

1 MAY
Sheldonian Theatre, 10.00
Wagner Overture: *Die Meistersinger*
Elgar: *Cello Concerto in E minor*
Brahms: *Symphony No. 1 in C minor*
Conductor: Daniel Barenboim
Cello: Alisa Weilerstein
Tickets: 01865 244806
www.musicatoxford.com

Each year the Berliner Philharmoniker selects a venue of cultural importance in a different European city for a televised performance to mark its founding in 1882. This year, Music at Oxford is hosting this special event. The Brahms symphonies, with their rich sonorities and characterful solos, are central to the orchestra's history and style. Elgar's concerto is a newer introduction, but for Daniel Barenboim it is a work with a strong personal resonance, a work with which he and his late wife, Jacqueline du Pré, were closely associated. Young soloist Alisa Weilerstein is hailed, like du Pré, as a natural, impassioned virtuoso.

Schola Cantorum of Oxford

1 MAY
Sheldonian Theatre, 20.00
50th-anniversary reunion concert
Schola Cantorum will be joined by former members, including the soloist Emma Kirkby, for its 50th-anniversary reunion concert. There is space for a few extra singers: for information contact **Josie Carpenter: 2010@schola-cantorum.net**

Handel: *The King shall rejoice*
Handel: *Dixit Dominus*
James MacMillan: *Bring us O Lord God* (premiere of a new commission to mark the occasion)
Bach: *Magnificat*
Bach: *Singet dem Herrn* (from cantata 190)

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
Conductor: James Burton
Tickets: 01865 305305
www.ticketsoxford.com

Oxford Bach Choir

19 JUNE
Sheldonian Theatre, 19.30
Handel: *Dixit Dominus*
Conductor: Timothy Byram-Wigfield
Charivari Agréable

Oxford Philomusica

31 MARCH
Sheldonian Theatre, 19.30
Easter Concert
Handel: *Messiah*
Soprano: Mhairi Lawson; mezzo soprano: Anne Marie Gibbons; tenor: Richard Edgar Wilson; bass: David Stout
Conductor: Marios Papadopoulos
Oxford Philomusica Orchestra and Chorus

29 APRIL
Sheldonian Theatre, 20.00
La Belle France
Ravel: *Le tombeau de Couperin*
John Rutter: *Harp Concerto*
Debussy: *Danse Sacrée et Danse Profane*
Bizet: *Symphony in C*
Conductor: John Rutter
Harp: Catrin Finch

15 MAY
Sheldonian Theatre, 20.00
The Eight Seasons
Vivaldi: *Four Seasons*
Piazzolla: *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*
Director/Violin: Tamás András

17 JUNE
Sheldonian Theatre, 20.00
Verdi: *Messa da Requiem*
London Symphony Chorus
Conductor: Marios Papadopoulos

Distractions

Crossword Editor: **Mark Thakkar** (*Balliol 1999*)

Beyond Compare

The clues are of five equinumerous types:

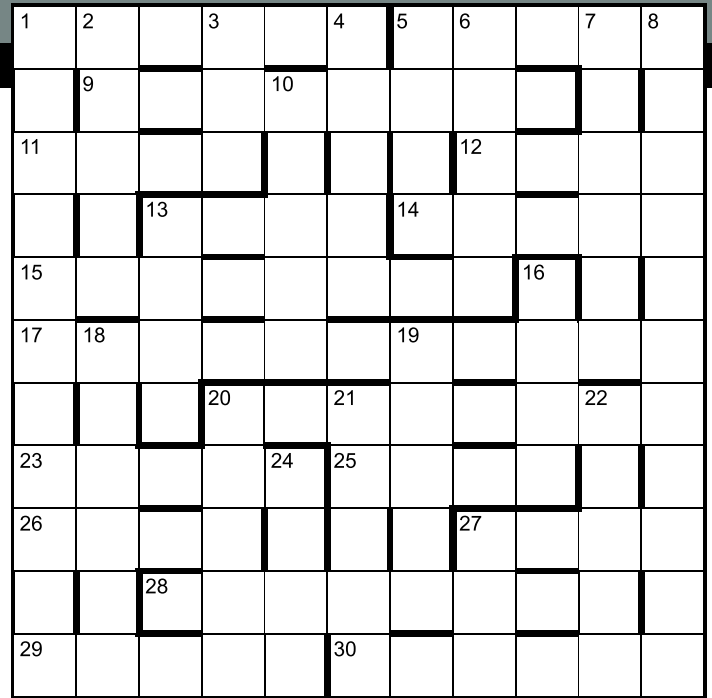
- a) the definition contains a one-letter misprint;
- b) the wordplay leads to the grid entry plus an extra letter;
- c) the clue leads to an anagram of the four-letter grid entry;
- d) the clue contains a superfluous word;
- e) the clue is normal.

In clue order, the correct letters/extra letters/last letters of clue/first letters of superfluous word/first letters of clue spell out a quotation whose author must be highlighted in the grid.

Wil Ransome (*Oriel 1964*)

Please send your solution by 19 April 2010 to Distractions, c/o Janet Avison, Public Affairs Directorate, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD. The sender of the first correct solution to be drawn from the red knitted hat will be sent a copy of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (seventh edition), published by Oxford University Press.

FOR THE SOLUTION TO THE MICHAELMAS PUZZLE, SEE PAGE 43.



ACROSS

- 1 A wealthier family on the radio (6)
- 5 Formal changing of parts in reverse (3-2)
- 9 In outlying parts of the East, strange liqueur (8)
- 11 King's regular appearances in Memphis in headdress (4)
- 12 Exhibited topless – hacked into? (4)
- 13 In the middle of tree, one's found wax (4)
- 14 Fidgety kid with middle name not initially admitted (5)
- 15 English try to become involved in wine and 'practise beforehand' (8)
- 17 Pilot angry, rejecting award (6,5)
- 20 20dn shot with heartless irony, becoming uncommon cross (8)
- 23 Shy type near foyer (5)

- 25 Tree trunk's opening sacrificing height for breadth (4)
- 26 Comfort reflected in apartment complex, ultimately (4)
- 27 Cats' burial-place, briefly meeting point (4)
- 28 Garden centre diversified with new hybrid, initially (8)
- 29 What, princess seen with money lender? (5)
- 30 Straight away – in fact I'm following (6)

- 6 Some get weeds sowing stuff here (5)
- 7 Going 'sure' is somehow irritating (6)
- 8 Neatly arranged with mess precluded at the outset – that's one way to organize an office (5,6)
- 10 Stiff neck resulting from special cold flannel? (5)
- 13 Photograph showing unusual play of colours (4)
- 16 At one time held by Preston centre-half (4)
- 18 Cadence originally found in *Secularum Amen* at intervals (6)
- 19 Old centre with no time to resettle aged woman (5)
- 20 Sharp cornets having variable bass on purpose (1-4)
- 21 Short advertisement with head of superstar makes Vogue (5)
- 22 Banish revolting Asian fruit (5)
- 24 Mountain vision limited, however intense at first (4)
- 27 Mean to change old Greek money (3)

DOWN

- 1 Mass sprinkler, simple, with gular arrangement (11)
- 2 As I remarked, not noted for shaking rear (5)
- 3 Poet's sash, originally held in esteem (3)
- 4 Even when reversed, it's still direct (5)
- 5 International exam (4)

Bridge Barry Rigal (*Queen's 1976*)

Peter Czerniewski (Jesus 1967) died as the English Seniors won their first ever World Title last October. He was to have been part of the team, until ill health forced him to withdraw. Here is Peter at work.

Five no-trumps offered a choice of slams. Peter elected to play the 4-3 heart fit, sure that dummy was going to have a singleton diamond, and right he was. But how would you play the heart slam on a top diamond lead?

Peter found the best line when he won the diamond ace and immediately ran the club nine, playing low from dummy when West covered with the ten.

He won the spade return in hand, ruffed a diamond, cashed the two top hearts in dummy, then came to hand with the club queen and drew the rest of the trumps, pitching dummy's small spades. Now dummy was high. Although there are alternative winning approaches, Peter's line succeeded against anything but a foul break in clubs.

DEALER SOUTH

- ♠ A 7 5 2
 - ♥ Q J 5
 - ♦ 5
 - ♣ A K 6 4 2
-
- ♠ J 9 6 4
 - ♥ 10 9 7 3
 - ♦ Q J 4
 - ♣ 10 8
-
- ♠ K 8 3
 - ♣ A K 6 2
 - ♦ A 9 8 3
 - ♣ Q 9

E/W/VUL.

- ♠ Q 10
- ♥ 8 4
- ♦ K 10 7 6 2
- ♣ J 7 5 3

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♣	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

Chess Jonathan Levitt (*Magdalen 1982*)



How did Peter Wells (Jesus College 1984 and White to play) defeat A Kharlov in this position taken from Dresden 2007? It appears in Richard Palliser's (Worcester 2001) *The Complete Chess Workout* (Everyman Chess, 2007). Solution below.

1 Ng5! fxg5 2. Qxg5+ Kf7 3. Bg4 Qh6 (No better is 3...h6 4.Qf4+ or 3...Qg2 4.Bh5+ 4.Bh5+ and White wins the queen.)



Books and CDs reviewed in *Oxford Today* all have an Oxford connection: their subject-matter is the University or city, and/or the author is a current or former student or academic. We welcome suggestions from authors and publishers. Please send brief details to the Editor, at oxford.today@admin.ox.ac.uk. We cannot mention every book or CD, and choose those likely to be of general interest, rather than specialised academic texts.

Years that shook the world

Mary Dejevsky on two major new histories of communism

The Rise and Fall of Communism

Archie Brown

Bodley Head

9780224078795, £35

The Red Flag: Communism and the Making of the Modern World

David Priestland

Allen Lane

9780713994810, £35

If only, I thought, when halfway through Archie Brown's magisterial 600-page history of communism, this volume had been around when I was an undergraduate, or even a research student. But, of course, it could not have been. In the 1970s, communism might not have been at its zenith, but the precipitate fall it was to suffer in the late 1980s seemed utterly inconceivable. The repressive regimes of eastern and central Europe, not to speak of the Soviet Union itself, seemed thoroughly entrenched and set to endure.

Here is a book that could only have been written with the benefit of hindsight. But Oxford Emeritus Professor of Politics Archie Brown brings much, much more than hindsight to this history. He brings insight, judgement and a lifetime of studying communism and observing at first hand how it really worked. In so doing, he renders obsolete many of the set texts and commentaries once regarded as indispensable.

This is a comprehensive, and confident, account of an idealistic thought system turned pernicious that has now – almost – had its day. Brown has no illusions about the suffering communist power inflicted on individuals and whole countries. But he is careful to distinguish between communists as idealists and communists in power, who in time became an establishment, with everything that entails. This is a crucial distinction, and one too rarely made.

Brown writes with clarity and pace, without a syllable of political science jargon,

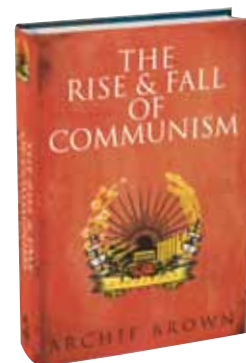
and his wide-ranging content is admirably well organised. The final chapters recounting the rapid end of one European communist regime after another are almost as enthralling to read as the events themselves were to watch 20 years ago. But he does not stop there. He asks, and answers as well as anyone has, the questions that beg to be posed: why did communism last so long, and – conversely – why did it end where and when it did?

David Priestland's *The Red Flag* is another brick of a book, but a very different creature. The perspective is longer, more philosophical and consciously intellectual. Rooted as much in the realm of ideas as experience, it nevertheless comes across as more of an assemblage of narratives, drawn together by historical and cultural comparisons, than the comprehensive history Brown has produced.

The Red Flag has flashes of originality, and Priestland, a University lecturer in modern history, challenges the reader to trace, with him, the way ideas connect and evolve. Despite much undoubted virtuosity, though, there is more of the 'what' than there is of the 'how' and 'why' that make Archie Brown's *The Rise and Fall of Communism* the standard for future historians to match.

Mary Dejevsky (LMH 1970) was *The Times*

correspondent in Moscow through the collapse of communism and continues to watch Russian politics from her position as chief editorial writer at *The Independent*

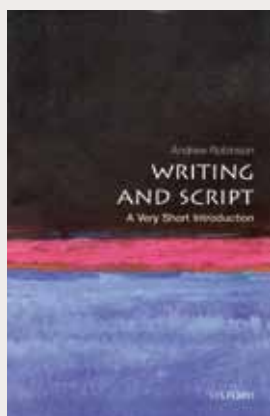


Writing is an essential aspect of modern civilisation – without it, we would have no letters, books, newspapers, emails or text messages, let alone the sundry signs that inform, entertain or infuriate us in the street, at stations and airports, or from instruction manuals to cereal packets. In *Writing and Script* (OUP, 9780199567782, £7.99), one of the latest additions to OUP's Very Short Introductions series, Andrew Robinson traces the progress of writing, from prehistoric 'proto-writing' on clay tokens dating from 8000 BC to the impact of electronic media on how we communicate, with a contemporary cartoonist reducing Shakespeare's lines to '2b or not 2b ... tht is th?'. Some early writing – Ancient Egyptian

hieroglyphic inscriptions or the Linear A and B scripts of Minoan culture, for example – have long engaged scholars, millennia after they were in daily use. Others, like this example (above) of the Rongorongo script from Easter Island, dating from the late 18th to the mid 19th century, remain mysterious.

The Very Short Introductions series – small paperbacks offering modern scholarship in a pocket-sized volume – now encompasses more than 200 titles; other recent issues include works on *The Norman Conquest* and *Deserts*. In the 15 years since the series was launched, more than 3.5 million Very Short Introductions have been sold.

Greg Neale



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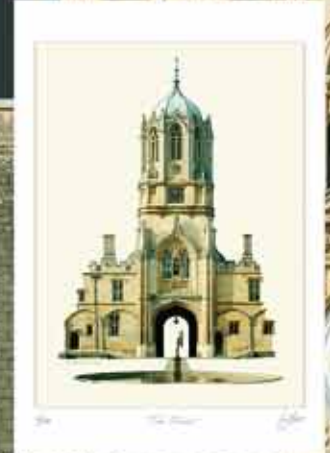
Harris Manchester View from Mansfield Road



Hertford The Old Buildings Quad



New College The Garden Quad



Christ Church Tom Tower



Magdalen The New Building



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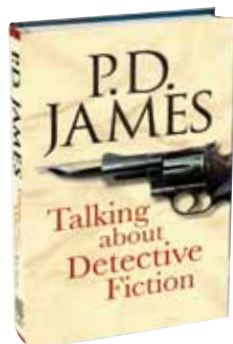
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Talking about Detective Fiction

P D James

Bodleian Library

9781851243099, £12.99

Murder, they wrote

Susie Cogan enjoys a practitioner's perspective on a popular genre of fiction

P D James has been staging murders for half a century, and with 19 detective novels under her belt is well qualified to conduct this intriguing exploration of the short but sensational history of detective fiction. From the creation of the original gentleman sleuth Sherlock Holmes, through the golden age of crime writing between the wars, to the modern trend towards realism, James examines the extraordinary appeal of the murder mystery and the great fictional detectives, and offers an interesting insight into her own influences and working methods.

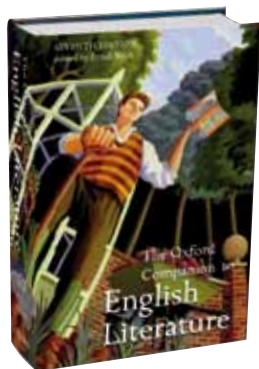
Detective fiction has not always been regarded as the most distinguished of literary styles; as a murkier, sensational offshoot of the novel, its potential contribution to moral decay was initially a cause for concern. Even today, with so many outstanding contributions to the detective canon over the years raising the genre to an art form, reading murder mysteries is still widely thought of as light entertainment – as of course it is – a categorisation that, however, James argues is far from incompatible with sophisticated culture.

Commentators have expressed amusement that bloody murder should so occupy the imaginations of the middle classes as to provide a seemingly limitless market for lurid descriptions of violence and mayhem.

Yet detective fiction is often a vehicle for remarkable characterisation and insightful social commentary. As in all literary genres, merit is often about subversion, and this is a central point in the book's discussion of the development of detective fiction: a feature of the greatest mystery writers of every era has been their readiness to step outside the confines of convention.

This is a lively look at the history of a much-loved form of escapism, but is also as comprehensive and businesslike as one would expect from the orderly minded P D James. One of the challenging aspects of her widely acclaimed work is that her novels are often more literary than light-hearted; their social settings uncompromisingly bleak. It is a pleasure, therefore, to see a more playful side to the author's character come to the fore alongside her sharp intelligence and accomplished style, in an enjoyable and illuminating exploration of a remarkable literary tradition. It is satisfying also that the profits from a book that makes a good case for identifying detective fiction with serious literature should be going to one of serious literature's most important causes, the Bodleian Library.

Susie Cogan (New College 1997) is Company Secretary of *Daily Information* (Oxford) and a freelance writer



The Oxford Companion to English Literature (seventh edition)

Edited by Dinah Birch

Oxford University Press

9780192806871, £35

The changing shape of English literary studies

Pamela Clemit welcomes an updated edition of a classic reference work

The Oxford Companion to English Literature, the earliest of the Oxford Companions, was first published in 1932 and has been periodically updated. It is both an authoritative and readable work of reference, and an index of the changing shape of English literary studies. In the days before Wikipedia, it was the first port of call for students, scholars, journalists and anyone wishing to mug up before attending a literary cocktail party. How well does this new edition, revised by a team of scholars under the expert guidance of Dinah Birch, meet the evolving needs of 21st-century readers?

The volume, at 1,164 pages, aims at comprehensiveness. It begins with four introductory essays by leading scholars championing areas of particular interest: 'Literary Culture and the Novel in the New Millennium' (Hermione Lee), 'Cultures of Reading' (Kelvin Everest), 'Black British Literature' (Bénédicte Ledent) and 'Children's Literature' (Michael Rosen). It ends with a helpful chronology placing principal literary works in their historical and cultural contexts. In between, it adds over 1,000 new alphabetical entries to Margaret Drabble's superb sixth edition. Most of these additions provide enhanced coverage of areas that have come to academic prominence over the last two decades, such as world literature, life-writing in all its forms, science fiction, travel writing and children's literature. Bolder

innovations include entries on writers with newly established reputations, whose works are yet to withstand the test of time. Other entries on traditional subjects have been revised 'to reflect recent developments in literary research'.

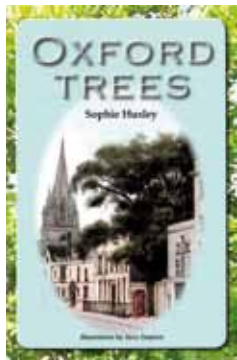
Entries are concise, informative and accessible. Items with the prefix 'New', for example, include 'New Historicism' (a trend 'that emphasised the historical nature of literary texts and ... the "textual" nature of history'), 'New Journalism' (a mode 'which incorporates first-person narration, gives prominence to the reporter, and uses other novelistic strategies') and 'New Negro' ('phrase in use from c.1895 onwards to describe the changing situation of African Americans, especially as re-examined by themselves'), as well as revised entries on *New Grub Street* (a novel by George Gissing) and 'New Woman fiction'. While there is a welcome extension in coverage of literary movements and terms, many plot summaries – one of the most useful features of previous editions – have been cut or condensed. Even so, this book provides an invaluable starting point for some, and, for others, a comprehensive resource. It deserves a place on every reader's bookshelf.

Pamela Clemit (Mansfield 1979) is Professor of English Studies at Durham University. Her edition of the *Letters of William Godwin* will be published by Oxford University Press

Book briefings

Book reviews are edited by **Jenny Lunnon**

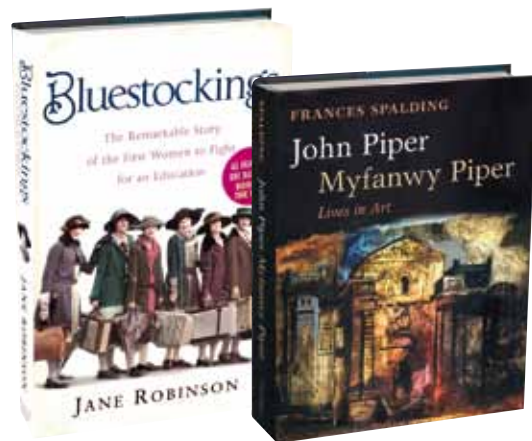
Of all Oxford's beautiful trees, which do you remember best? The flaming tunnel of copper beeches that frames Addison's Walk at Magdalen or the wind-sculpted stand of Scots pines in the University Parks? Perhaps the avenue of slender silver birches beside the river in the Botanic Garden or the ancient and ungainly Pococke plane at Christ Church, reputedly the inspiration for Lewis Carroll's Jabberwock? In *Oxford Trees* (Huxley Scientific Press, 9780952267119, £3.95), Sophie Huxley, author of *The Oxford Science*



Walk, celebrates Oxford's arboreal legacy through another walking tour. It takes in the Princeton elms at Worcester, the cork oak at St John's, and many other rare and interesting trees in the streets and college gardens. She includes 'the memories of former great trees'

such as the magnificent Wadham beech, which sadly succumbed to honey fungus.

The ancient chestnut in Lamb and Flag Passage puts in an appearance in Dorothy L Sayers' *Gaudy Night*. Sayers was a brilliant and eccentric scholarship student at Somerville between 1912 and 1915, and her story is one of many recounted by Jane Robinson (Somerville 1978) in *Bluestockings: The Remarkable Story of the First Women to Fight for an Education* (Penguin Viking, 978067091684, £20). Despite achieving first-class honours, Sayers could not graduate until 1920, when Oxford finally agreed to award degrees to women. Of Britain's universities, only Cambridge took longer – until 1948 – to do so. Robinson reminds readers how vicious the opposition to women's aspirations sometimes was: in a Cambridge riot of 1897, an effigy of a bluestocking on a bicycle was ripped to pieces and thrust through the railings of Newnham, which had locked its gates against the firework-throwing mob. She interviewed or corresponded with 120 former 'bluestockings', and their testimonies, complementing excerpts



from contemporary letters and diaries, vividly illustrate what university life was like for these brave and determined women.

Many found their lives utterly transformed by the experience of higher education; in Robinson's words: 'University turned villagers into citizens of the world, passivity into proactivity, and predictable little girls into strong, surprising women.' For

Poetry

Oxford Poetry is edited by **Peter Dale**

John Weston read Greats at Worcester College (1958), where he is an Honorary Fellow. He joined the Foreign Office in 1962, and was knighted in 1991. Since retiring in 1998 as UK Ambassador to the United Nations in New York, he has been active in business and the voluntary sector. He began writing poetry in 2002. His first collection, *Chasing the Hoopoe*, was published by Peterloo in 2005. 'In the Palm House' commemorates the 250th anniversary of Kew Gardens. He is working on a second collection, to be published by Shoestring Press.

Stephen Wilson qualified as a doctor in 1968 and obtained a doctorate in creative writing 40 years later. He joined the Faculty of Clinical Medicine in 1975 and became a member of Merton College. He was formerly Consultant Psychotherapist at the Warneford Hospital, and Honorary Senior Clinical Lecturer in the Department of Psychiatry, University of Oxford. The poem that follows is taken from his first book of verse, *Fluttering Hands* (2008), and is reprinted by permission of the publisher, Greenwich Exchange.



VALERIE SIEYES

John Weston In the Palm House

Beached spaceship under morning dew,
a crepitation in the warm, damp air.
Return ticket to another planet.

A quarter-millennium in touch with Kew,
they are trying to signal – Look up, tune in,
these benign sentinels – for upon it

may hang survival. A fishtail palm
is poised to eject straight through the roof;
the bark code reads – Few years, no re-count.

Confabulation in green. Frond language:
raffia to rattan, henna to mahogany,
babassu to neem. Somehow you can't

escape the feeling they are filling time
we should not let slip. The starfruit whispers
that peepul has given up on Buddha.

Corkscrew climb to the skywalk. On the bridge,
a final supplication of leaves (umbrella,
shuttlecock). From here, I begin to perceive better

nature's life-span, the whole launch and heave
of growing things. Their lift-off, uplift.



KATE WILSON

Stephen Wilson Flightpath

A465, Heads of the Valleys Road

Despite the talent for miniaturisation –
a tiny handlebar moustache bristling with sonar,
and notwithstanding the art of hanging upside down,
bivouacked in its own wings for long periods,
on the roofs of caves, attics and boiler rooms,
to say nothing of the Lesser Horseshoe's

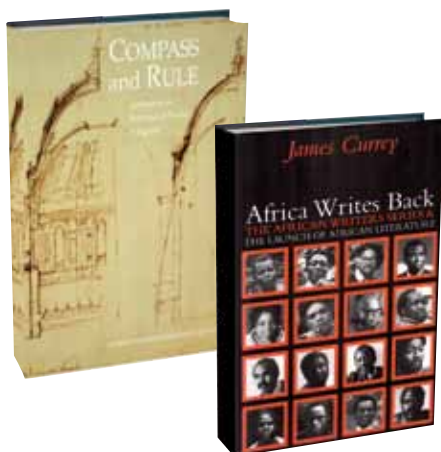
envious ability to zoom low at night,
homing in on gnats and crane flies;

its single-minded trajectory,
elsewhere a virtue, is fatal

when it comes to crossing roads.
Blind to human traffic, its failed parachute

just keeps dropping to the lowest linear feature.
Who'd ever heard of bats needing bridges,

suspended high over the carriageway like safety nets
in a flying circus, or some theatre of the absurd?



Myfanwy Evans, who came up to St Hugh's in 1930, Oxford provided not only an academic education but a creative one. She seized the opportunity to attend classical concerts and exhibitions of contemporary art organised by the Oxford Arts Club. Later she would go on to forge her own artistic career, editing the art magazine *Axis* and writing the libretti for three Benjamin Britten operas, including

The Turn of the Screw. She also welcomed many other creative people into the home near Henley-on-Thames that she shared with her husband, the multi-talented artist John Piper. The inspiring story of their intertwined lives is told by Frances Spalding in *John Piper, Myfanwy Piper: Lives in Art* (OUP, 9780199567614, £25).

Those who missed the exhibition at the Museum of the History of Science last year can enjoy its companion publication of the same name, *Compass and Rule: Architecture as Mathematical Practice in England 1500–1750* (Yale University Press, 9780300150933, £30) by Worcester Senior Research Fellow Anthony Gerbino and Stephen Johnston, Assistant Keeper at the Museum. Looking at the development of architecture as a profession, and at the role of geometry and other aspects of mathematics in this, the authors focus particularly on the work of Sir Christopher Wren. They explain how Wren overcame the formidable technical challenges involved in building the Sheldonian Theatre, inventing a new

type of roof truss that would cover an unprecedented span, carry the painted ceiling below, and even be strong enough to support the University printing presses in the attic!

In *Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series and The Launch of African Literature* (James Currey, 9781847015020, £19.99), James Currey (Wadham 1955) looks back at a pioneering publishing venture, Heinemann's African Writers Series. Founded in 1962, it went on to publish books by nearly all Africa's most eminent authors, among them Chinua Achebe, Sembene Ousmane and Bessie Head, and to distribute their work throughout the continent and worldwide. Currey was in charge of the Series between 1967 and 1984, so is well placed to describe the personalities and politics involved. He has recently given his complete collection of first editions of the African Writers Series to Rhodes House Library, where it will be a valuable resource for students of African literature in English and translation.



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Sir Terence English

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Solution to Michaelmas 2009 crossword 'Exercise'

Exercises are compositions submitted for music degrees. On the SEVENTH OF JULY SEVENTEEN NINETY ONE, Joseph Haydn led a performance at the SHELDONIAN THEATRE of his Symphony no. 92 in G, and at Encaenia the following day he received an honorary DMus. This symphony subsequently became known as the 'Oxford'. Haydn's other symphonies include the five unclued entries: MILITARY, SURPRISE, FAREWELL, MIRACLE and LONDON.

1	M	Y	T	H	C	M	I	L	I	T	A	R	Y	
2	I	A	S	U	R	P	R	I	S	E	D	N	A	
3	R	U	D	E	O	F	I	L	M	G	O	E	R	
4	A	P	I	E	C	E	S	T	S	H	P	A	R	
5	C	O	A	C	H	R	A	S	P	O	T	T	O	
6	L	N	N	H	E	A	D	M	A	N	S	E	W	
7	E	N	A	C	T	L	Y	I	G	E	A	R	S	
8	L	I	T	T	R	E	S	T	D	A	Y	X	V	E
9	O	C	H	E	D	I	A	L	N	A	I	A	D	
10	N	A	E	G	N	H	E	I	D	O	L	A		
11	D	E	M	A	N	D	E	D	S	E	M	I	T	
12	O	A	E	F	A	R	E	W	E	L	L	U	E	
13	N	O	S	T	R	I	L	S	S	L	A	M	S	

John Higgs *Queen's 1979*

Mark Baker wins *The Geek Atlas: 128 Places Where Science and Technology Come Alive (O'Reilly, £22.99)*.

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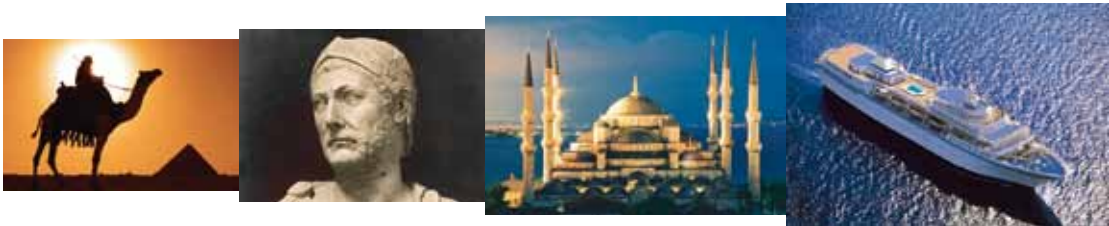
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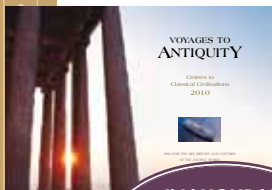
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Leszek Kołakowski

Dr Leszek Kołakowski, FBA, the Polish-born philosopher, political scientist and historian who was a Senior Research Fellow (and later an honorary Fellow) of All Souls College, 1970–1995, died on 17 July 2009, aged 81. In earlier life a keen Marxist, he turned into a strong and influential revisionist. He had become Professor of Modern Philosophy at Warsaw, but his criticism of his communist former colleagues eventually led to his exile from Poland in 1968. Kołakowski remained influential in the revival of Polish intellectual life. He was a very productive writer in his

native Polish, but his Oxford years were notable for his three-volume *Main Currents of Marxism* (OUP 1978), a masterly historical and analytical study of the ideology, which proved very influential in the development of Polish democracy. Many further writings in several languages and on a broad range of subjects – ethics, metaphysics and religion – followed. After the collapse of the Communist regime in Poland, he was much celebrated there, though throughout his busy retirement he chose to remain firmly based in Oxford.

Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones

Professor Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones, FBA, Regius Professor of Greek from 1960 until his retirement in 1989, died on 3 October 2009, aged 87. He came up to Christ Church from Westminster School, with its strong classical tradition, but his undergraduate career was interrupted during the Second World War. For active service he learnt Japanese and was engaged in Intelligence work in India and Burma. He returned to Oxford to take high honours in Greats, then became Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, and in 1954 returned to Oxford as a Fellow of Corpus. In 1960 he was appointed Regius Professor of Greek (and Student of Christ Church), holding the chair – in succession to E R Dodds – for 29 years. He received a knighthood on his retirement.

A lecturer of rare animation, and with firm opinions, his was an energising presence. His early publications included an edition of Menander's *Dyskolos* (1960) and a flood of articles and reviews, not only on classical texts but also on the history of classical scholarship. He wrote on Greek religion in *The Justice of Zeus* (1971), and there were further editions and translations, including the now standard text of Sophocles (with N G Wilson, 1980).

David Hawkes

David Hawkes, Professor of Chinese from 1959 to 1971, and from 1973 to 1984 a Senior Research Fellow of All Souls, died on 31 July 2009. He was 86. His principal achievement was the translation of the 18th-century Chinese novel *The Story of the Stone*, and he is regarded as the greatest translator from Chinese of his time. His version of the early anthology of shamanistic poetry, *The Songs of the South*, also enjoys a very high reputation.

A wartime Mods undergraduate at Christ Church, he transferred from Classics to Japanese to teach wartime code-breakers, and then resumed his academic career by reading Chinese. From 1948 to 1951 he lived in Beijing, noting the old city and studying with revered

scholars. There he came under the influence of the literary critic William Empson. On his return to England, to doctoral work on *The Songs*, he became also a close friend of the translator Arthur Waley. After a decade or more in the Oxford chair, he decided to retire early to devote himself to his translation work. His election to the All Souls fellowship enabled him to bring the three volumes of the English text of *The Stone* to publication (and much acclaim) in 1973–80.

Kenneth Garlick

Dr Kenneth Garlick, who has died at the age of 92, was Keeper of Western Art at the Ashmolean Museum from 1968 to 1984. He was also a Fellow of Balliol, his undergraduate college. He saw war service in the RAF, later studied at the Courtauld Institute in London, and took a PhD at Birmingham University.

An expert on Sir Thomas Lawrence, he compiled the major catalogue of his works (1964), with a larger study of his portraits following in 1989. He also edited (with the late Angus Macintyre) several volumes of the diary of the English artist Joseph Farington, a major source for the period he knew so well.

Humphrey Case

Humphrey Case, Assistant Keeper and then (in 1973) Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum (Department of Antiquities), 1949 to 1982, died on 13 June 2009, aged 91. He joined the museum staff after studying at Cambridge and completing wartime service in the army. He then took a diploma in archaeology at London University, taught by V Gordon Childe, who set him on his career in prehistoric archaeology. In Oxford, he combined museum duties with regional fieldwork, and published the results of many mainly Neolithic excavations, including some in Ireland and France. He was prominent in establishing the Oxford Archaeological Unit, and his publications include the co-authorship of a substantial volume on *Settlement Patterns in the Oxford Region* (1982).

Ian Skipper

The entrepreneur and philanthropist Ian Skipper, a Domus Fellow and considerable benefactor of St Cross College, where his benefactions provided a new south wing and a conference room, died on 20 July 2009, aged 75. Backed by a fortune based on the retail motor trade, he sought out cultural good causes in need of assistance. Among them was the establishment in York of the much-visited Jorvik Viking Centre, based on recent archaeological excavations. Its success led to ventures such as *The Oxford Story*, in Broad Street. Whatever the misgivings it aroused in academic circles, the attraction was undeniably prominent on the Oxford scene, and led to his association with St Cross.

G A Cohen

Professor Jerry Cohen, FBA, who held the Chichele Chair of Social and Political Theory and was a Fellow of All Souls College from 1985 to 2008, died on 5 August 2009. He was 68. Educated in Montreal (where his parents were communist rag-trade workers), he attended McGill University and arrived at Oxford in 1961 to study for a BPhil at New College. Working under Gilbert Ryle and Isaiah Berlin, he sought to apply the analytical techniques of Oxford philosophy to Marxist theory. The result was *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (1978), published while he was lecturing at University College, London. He returned to Oxford as Chichele professor in 1985, and during his long tenure of the chair sought to link political theory with contemporary moral philosophy.

His teaching and writing were infused with a ready wit, great skill as a mimic (in three or more languages), and an underlying seriousness that was never solemn. For example, his 1995 Gifford lectures at Edinburgh were published as *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?* Ultimately he would describe himself as an ex-Marxist. His last book, *Why Not Socialism?*, was nearing publication at the time of his sudden death.



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Access all areas?

It is hardly surprising that at David Grove's pre-war grammar school (Letters, *OT* 22.1) 'the vast majority were middle class', simply because his schooldays pre-dated the 1944 Education Act, which Mr Grove describes as 'divisive'. Before the Second World War, there were fees to be paid at most grammar schools. At just the right time for plebs like me, it was the 1944 Act which based entry to such schools on academic ability rather than parents' ability to pay. My father (an electrician on Birkenhead docks) and mother (a 'dinner lady'), both lifelong Labour voters, were delighted that the entry criterion was now – as they saw it – fair, being intellectual instead of financial. They were excited that I was given opportunities which they had never enjoyed, and 'selection' was not yet a dirty word in education circles.

It was in teaching that the advantage of putting bright pupils together was really brought home to me. For many years, as head of department, I tried to be egalitarian, rationing the most promising A-level students around the three or four 'sets' in the belief that they would help to set the standards. Then came a year in which the subject options were arranged in a way which obliged us to have most of the potential high-flyers in one set – a kind of enforced selection. The result was remarkable, and they were a joy to teach – though in fact relatively little 'teaching' was required, as they argued fiercely with each other in a way which really sharpened their wits. I realised that this kind of sparring was far better for their development than scattering them across the sets, where they became bored by the lack of challenge. I do not believe other sets suffered, as more pupils had the courage to contribute when they did not feel overawed by someone more articulate.

Peter Hopkins

Exeter 1956

David Grove (Letters, *OT* 22.1) has fallen into the common error of believing that post-war legislation imposed a tripartite system of secondary education. Rather, the 1944 Education Act required local education authorities (LEAs) to secure the provision of (not necessarily wholly to provide) sufficient schools for their area to suit the ages, abilities and aptitudes of pupils. The so-called tripartite

system was commended by a committee chaired by Sir Cyril Norwood, an ex-public school headmaster, in a report published in 1943. The Ministry of Education encouraged LEAs to adopt it, but it was not mandatory.

K P Poole

Merton 1948

Admission to university should be by an application form which does not name the applicant's school, and questions which would identify it should be off-limits at interview. And of course questions about the applicant's parents' educational and occupational backgrounds should be dropped. No prejudice of any sort, no social engineering; admission on merit, no problem!

Andrew Turek

Hertford 1974

John Heywood (Letters, *OT* 22.1) asks, 'Who knows what talent was written off ...'

by the 11+ examination for grammar schools. I failed both 11+ and 13+ examinations and followed my father into shipyards, pits, trade unions, night classes and weekend schools. After 15 years I won scholarships

to Ruskin and Magdalen College – graduating aged 34.

Arguably, I had a broader, more profound grounding for PPE studies in the industrial north-east of England than any grammar school could have provided. With a degree and diploma I combined academic and organisational abilities in adult education, community, health and staff development and research and writing in these areas.

Talent written off is retrievable within systematic structures. Over the last 10 years, adult education, innovative access to HE and Open College Networks have been weakened financially. This has favoured government's 'skills agenda' and 'informal learning', and has directly disadvantaged those written off at school, limiting their opportunities to regain a stolen education and wider opportunities for their children.

We should enable more parents to retrieve lost opportunities by expanding adult education and adult access to HE – a concern of both secondary and tertiary sector education – supporting local communities and parents, and enhancing the social mix and experiential depth of university learning.

David Browning

Magdalen 1971

Hot air?

You report in your latest issue (News, *OT* 22.1) yet another conference in which the prevailing nostrum is repeated: that irreversible CO₂-induced warming will become critical unless enormous resources are devoted to deflecting such an outcome.

However, I would have expected an Oxford conference to at least provide space for a plausible alternative. Not that global warming is not taking place, but that whatever we do, such warming is irreversible. The Milankovitch Cycles demonstrate that warm and ice ages alternate over very long periods – hundreds of thousands of years probably – as caused by inconsistencies in the earth's orbit, solar exposure, etc. There is great concern about the shrinking ice caps. But their mere presence surely shows we are not wholly out of the last ice age. It is not so long since deep penetration below the Arctic revealed traces of primeval forest. In more recent, Roman, times North Africa was the 'breadbasket of the Empire'. The province of Asia – modern Anatolia – was fought over by retiring consuls.

Surely the issue on which we should be focusing our resources is how we are going to live with warming and dealing with its massive consequences for our way of life, not futilely trying to reverse the irreversible.

Ian Wylie

Corpus Christi 1958

In arguing for human-induced climate change (*OT* 22.1), Professor Peter Read says, 'The only ... prerequisite is an open mind.' Yet it is abundantly clear that Peter Read has already made up his mind that human activity is changing the climate, despite the number of scientists who cast doubt on his certainty.

For example, there is the belief of climate physicist Mojib Latif and others that we are heading for global cooling, not global warming, or the evidence that Antarctic ice is increasing, not diminishing.

As a graduate of a university that taught me to question every assertion (however forcibly it is put), I retain the right to remain sceptical about global warming and climate change.

Tony Augarde

St Peter's 1957

Bowra's boys

Anthony Kenny ('Reviews', *OT* 21.3) thanks God that the Oxford of Maurice Bowra's time 'has vanished forever'. The remark speaks volumes about what is wrong with politically correct Oxford today.

R D Dunn

Merton 1968



Woe, Superman?

The 'practical ethics' debate on human enhancement and especially life-extension to 200 or 500 years (OT 22.1) is neither practical nor ethical, for both the suggestions and the objections are put forward in a social and environmental vacuum. In the social context, longevity enhancement will inevitably benefit rich people and countries first, thus promoting or exacerbating yet another source of inequality (and its concomitant unhappiness) in a world which is desperately inequitable already. In the environmental context, the world is currently having trouble feeding 7 billion people who expect to live to a mere 70 or so. What will 10 billion 500-year-olds eat throughout their lengthy lives? Each other? And a quick chorus from Tithonus and The Struldbrugs will remind us that eternal life does not necessarily imply eternal youth. So, far more practically than speculative biotechnology, why don't we just send off some geographers to seek the Fountain of Youth?

Douglas Porteous
Jesus 1962

I was fascinated by the article on human enhancement, 'Woe, Superman?' (OT 22.1), but horrified at one prospect it opened up – that of a significant increase in lifespan.

FLATLINER



With the global population already forecast to peak at some 9 billion by 2050, a 20% increase in average lifespan would add an extra 1.8 billion souls to an already grotesquely overpopulated world. The problems this brings – pressure on resources, especially land and water, and the risk to the infinitely precious and irreplaceable other species with which we are privileged to share the planet – are very well documented; not to mention the enhanced risks of conflict which increased pressures on space and resources would bring. Further population growth caused by our own intervention would thus be potentially cataclysmic.

It occurred to me, though, that many of the techniques which might prolong lifespan might beneficially be applied to enhancing the quality of life in its terminal years. While maintaining its existing span, I am sure most people would be eager to avoid the many

years of dependence and debility faced today by many, if not most. And applying research in such a direction would help overcome many of the ethical dilemmas as well.

David Bell
Christ Church 1979

My uneasiness concerning many of the possibilities presented in this article ('Woe, Superman?' OT 22.1) can be expressed rather succinctly in two quotations. The first is the comment of Mephistopheles in the *Prolog im Himmel* from Goethe's *Faust*:

*His life would be a little better
Hadst Thou not given him the glow
of heavenly light;
He calls it 'Reason' and only uses it
To make himself more bestial than any beast.*

The second is the well-known verse from Swinburne's *Garden of Proserpine*:

*From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.*

Evan Appelman
Visiting Senior Fellow, Jesus 1983–4

Oxford at war

I went up to Hertford College in the summer of 1944, only late in the war. However, I must add these comments as a tailpiece to Chris Sladen's detailed account of Oxford during the War.

John Lehmann, the editor of *Penguin New Writing*, compared beleaguered Britain with Athens in the Peloponnesian War, giving of its artistic best under siege. In my time Oxford students founded a number of remarkable magazines which today are valuable collectors' items. The literary magazine *Mandrake*, for instance, founded and edited by Arthur Boyars (who would later lend his name to the publisher Marion Boyars, who pre-selected and published five Nobel laureates); Denis Frankel's *Arabesque*, devoted to dance and ballet; or *Counterpoint*, my own publishing venture, which published unknowns who would become famous, like Lucian Freud, Lawrence Durrell, Mervyn Peake, David Sylvester, or Peter Vansittart, as well as some 'native' Oxford wartime residents like Dylan Thomas or Paul Nash.

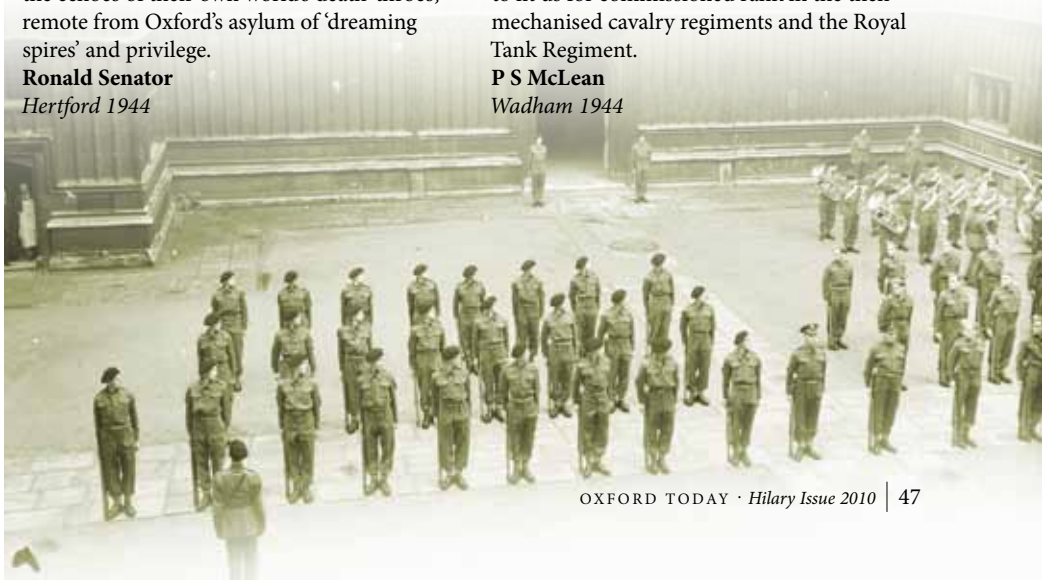
Second, both the University itself and the City of Oxford were enriched beyond measure by the influx of refugees from the European mainland. Sir William Beveridge, then Master of University College (who interviewed me for my scholarship), was not

only the author of the epoch-making report which would usher in the Welfare State which we cherish, but also as early as 1933, soon after the Nazi rise to power and their dismissal of Jewish and non-Nazi professors from German universities, he had created the Academic Assistance Council (AAC). The council had helped over 2,500 refugees by the end of the War, of whom 16 would win Nobel prizes. My own teacher of composition, Egon Wellesz at Lincoln College, had been a pupil of Arnold Schoenberg, his most promising disciple in the words of Nadia Boulanger. These refugees also brought to Oxford something beyond their learning and talents: the echoes of their own world's death-throes, remote from Oxford's asylum of 'dreaming spires' and privilege.

Ronald Senator
Hertford 1944

I think those pictured in black berets in Chris Sladen's article, 'When war came again' (OT 22.1) were part of a Royal Armoured Corps short course. These six-month courses were provided at many universities for entrants to the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force who were regarded as 'officer material'. Only Oxford had a course for the armoured corps. Those selected spent half their time on basic instruction with the Officer Training Corps and half on academic tuition. It remains a mystery to those of us who attended this course why the War Office considered that obligatory study of the history of science would help to fit us for commissioned rank in the then mechanised cavalry regiments and the Royal Tank Regiment.

P S McLean
Wadham 1944





ST EDMUND HALL

A Python's progress

The actor, writer and director – and a new Patron of the Oxford Thinking campaign – recalls student life

Why did you apply to Oxford?

Originally I wanted to go to Cambridge because I thought they were more up to date in modern poetry, which I was interested in. The other universities I'd applied to turned me down because of my bad A-level results – I'd screwed up my English exam. So I went for an interview in Cambridge, at Gonville and Caius College, did the entrance exam, and they offered me a place on their reserve list.

Then I did the exam and interview for Oxford. I remember going to the loo in Teddy Hall. They were outside toilets, like those at my primary school, and I thought: I just know I'm going to come here! They offered me a place, and I accepted it. Then, a week later, Gonville and Caius confirmed a place there. I was terribly excited, but my school – the Royal Grammar School, Guildford – was very firm, and said, no, you've accepted a place at Oxford.

What were your first impressions?

When I first went to Teddy Hall, I did think it didn't seem to be a proper college – in fact it had only recently been granted full college status [in 1957]. You just had the front quad, and then you had the Besse Block, basically rooms above the shops in the High Street. You ate in the old Hall, and it needed three sittings to get everyone in.

They gave me a room in the front quad: it was really just a converted passageway – into the Bursar's office, I think – with a glass partition on one side. Years later, when I went back to see it, it had been turned into a lavatory!

What sort of a student were you?

Very keen, but hopeless at languages – we had to do Anglo-Saxon and Latin, so I think Bruce Mitchell, one of my college tutors, thought I wasn't working. I got a 2:1. Away from college, I remember J R R Tolkien giving a lecture on *Beowulf* in the Examination Schools. The room was packed. He started off reading with great animation, and then he stopped, pulled out his handkerchief, and – amid a great laugh – put his false teeth in!

Who were your contemporaries?

Notably, Michael Rudman, who became a director with the National Theatre, and David Aukin. They helped revive the John Oldham Society, the college drama group, and between them gave me my start. We did Chekhov's *A Month in the Country* and spent two terms rehearsing. We used to stay up a week after term, then go back to Oxford a week or two before the start of the next term, so it was like going to drama school.

It sounds a very full life ...

Never a dull moment. I was doing a lot of acting, working on *Isis* – I was designing it in my second year – and I played rugby as well.

How did your acting progress?

In my second year, the Oxford Review that was going to the Edinburgh Festival was directed by Ian Davison. Doug Fisher was in it, and Robin Grove-White and Paul McDowell. I'd done a small part in a review called *Loitering with Intent*, and I was

designing posters as well. Suddenly I got a call from Ian, asking me if I'd be in the review. Paul McDowell used to sing with a group, The Temperance Seven; they'd just had a hit, and he was going on tour with them. So it was thanks to Paul that I got into showbiz.

That review was called **** and I've still got a programme, which I designed. I see we were all looking very moody – and that Miles Kington [Trinity] was playing the double bass.

Afterwards, we took **** to the Phoenix Theatre in London. When I came back for my last year at Oxford, having been on the West End stage, suddenly I was in demand. I'd met Michael Palin [Brasenose, and later a Monty Python member] before that, but in the third year we did the review *Hang Down Your Head and Die*.

You've written on medieval history. Did that have Oxford origins?

It started there. I wrote a paper on Chaucer's Knight for Del Kolve, an American medievalist who took me for a couple of terms. Much later, while we were doing the *Monty Python* TV shows, I'd be moonlighting at the British Museum; research for what later became a book.

What did Oxford do for you?

I made friends who have remained with me all my life. But it was also such a privilege to live amongst beautiful buildings, and have three years where you could explore things. I don't know whether it's the same now, whether everyone is so focused on a career, and desperate to pass exams, but I was able to explore acting and performing and journalism and design, and by the end of those years I knew what I wanted to do: to write and act.

Why do you think Oxford is important?

I think its diversity is very important. I think Oxford and Cambridge are precious institutions that we need to keep hold of, to keep going.



TOPHAM/PA

Interview: **Greg Neale**

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Dr George C McGavin, TV Natural History presenter

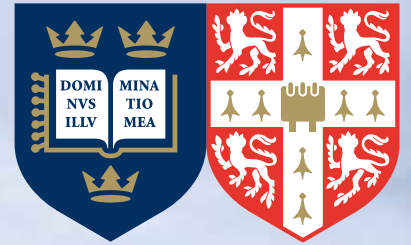
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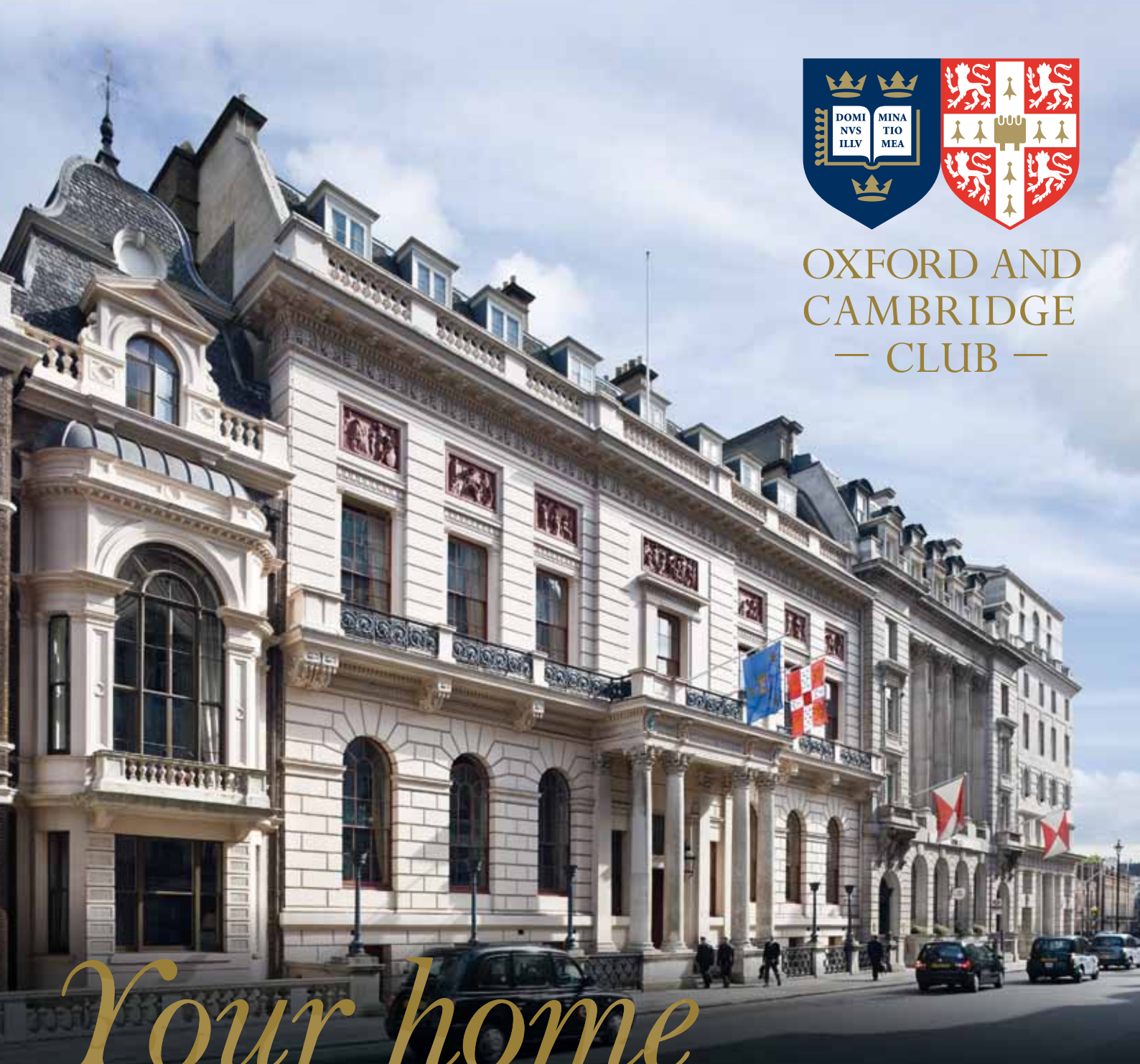
Senior Development Officer
University Museums & Collections
Email: amy.sewell@devoff.ox.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 278287

Shona Nicholson,

Head of Annual Fund and Legacies
University of Oxford Development Office
Email: legacies@devoff.ox.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 611522



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