

# Cherwell

Bryn Mollet reports on rent hikes on page 4:



Wadham College to increase main site rent by 29.3%

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## PROTESTS ESCALATE: RAD CAM ENCAMPMENT ESTABLISHED, GRADUATIONS DISRUPTED

Cherwell News reports.

The Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) movement has expanded and escalated since its first encampment was established on 6th May by the Pitt Rivers Museum. In the ensuing weeks, OA4P has established a second encampment on the Radcliffe Camera lawn, staged a 'die-in' during a graduation ceremony, and held numerous rallies with growing numbers of protesters.

On 19th May, a "Liberated Zone #2" of around ten tents sprang up in front of Oxford's iconic library after the organisation alleged that the University has not responded to its demands, delivered via email and on paper.

OA4P said in a statement: "We reaffirmed our commitment to begin negotiations, and once again, the University made no efforts to come to the table and meet with us. We are escalating accordingly. There can be no business as usual while enabling a genocide."

Over 500 people also flocked to Radcliffe Square after the establishment of the second encampment. A spokesperson for the encampment told Cherwell: "We are certain the admin do not want this level of action on the Rad Cam lawn and we insist they reply to our negotiations. As soon as they do, we will take this all down."

The second encampment only plans to stay until the University begins the negotiation process, while the first encampment plans to



stay until the University meets the protesters' seven demands, focused on disclosure and divestment of assets.

On 18th May, dozens of protesters staged a 'die-in' at a graduation ceremony. They lay on the ground, with red handprints on white shirts, and blocked all exits from Sheldonian Theatre, where the ceremony was taking place, forcing graduates to step over their bodies.

In a video published by OA4P, a worker who appears to be a

University library employee prodded a protester with his foot and tried to close a door on another protester's head. In a separate video, the cameraperson said "you just kicked a student" to which the same employee responded "yes, yes."

On this occasion, OA4P said in a statement: "There are no more Universities in Gaza, no more graduations, no more milestones. Higher education has been systematically destroyed in a campaign that has targeted every

aspect of Palestine life in Gaza."

The escalation follows the University's official statement which one activist described as "long and so incredibly empty" at a 16th May rally that drew over 600 people.

Vice Chancellor Irene Tracey's statement, released on 14th May, reiterated the University's commitment to freedom of speech and the right to peaceful protest.

Artwork by Joe Walford.

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## Crankstart tops UK aid, yet falls short of Ivy League

Emily Henson reports.

With endowments of over £1 billion, both Oxford and Cambridge stand out among peer British universities for their generous student support packages. Both universities have made vigorous attempts in recent years to subvert the idea that they are exclusively for those born into wealth. Schemes like Crankstart make Oxford one of the most affordable universities in the country.


Looking across the pond, however, the picture changes. Increasingly, students from top private schools are leaving Britain for the Ivy Leagues. Equally, with generous university support, it may be more realistic for middle-income British students to attend Harvard and Yale over the institution an hour away from home. In light of this, Cherwell investigated: how effective are Oxford's financial support schemes? And how do they compare to Oxford's international competitors?

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## NEWS SHORTS



### Oxford named UK's most walkable City

Preply's Most Walkable City Index names Oxford number one amongst the UK's top tourist destination cities. It found that all of the city's top five tourist attractions are within 1.1 mile of each other, making it a 2,310-step route for those wanting to visit the city's attractions on foot. Cambridge is ranked ninth and tourists have to walk 6.7 miles to visit its top five most popular attractions.

### Sean Bowden steps down as OUBC coach after 27 years

Sean Bowden is stepping down as the Chief Coach of the men's rowing team after 27 years.

Bowden won the Boat Race 13 times with Oxford, most recently in 2022. Coupled with his two wins as Head Coach of Cambridge University in 1993 and 1994, this makes Bowden the most successful coach in the Boat Race's history.

However, recent performances have been mixed, with Oxford winning just two of the last eight races.

### Oxford Africa Conference to take place end of May

This year's Oxford Africa Conference, will be held between the 24th and 25th May at Rhodes House. Some African leaders are expected to attend: Raila Odinga, former Kenya Prime Minister and Godwin Obaseki, a governor from Nigeria.

Prominent charity and business leaders such as Aïda Ndiaye, head of public policy at Meta, and Naana Otoo-Oyotey, Executive Director of Forward UK, a charity aimed at ending violence against women in Africa, are also expected.

Key topics of discussion will include economic development emphasising African entrepreneurship and climate change.

# Vigil for former Oxford student 'wrongfully held' in Iran for over two years

**Euan Elliott reports.**

A vigil will be held for Johan Floderus, former Oxford student, who has been detained in Iran's notorious Evin prison for over two years.

Floderus, a Swedish national, graduated from Harris Manchester College in 2014 with a philosophy, politics and economics degree, before working as a diplomat with the European Union's External Action Service.

In April 2022, the then 33-year-old was arrested at Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport. His arrest was made public more than a year later. Last December, Floderus appeared in an Iranian court, accused of "spreading corruption on earth" – prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

The vigil, aimed at "raising awareness of Johan's plight", will be held on Saturday 1st June. A silent march is to be held through central Oxford, concluding with a reception at Harris Manchester College. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who was detained by the Iranian government for six years, will speak, along with friends and family of Floderus.

Conditions in Evin prison, where Floderus is currently held, are notoriously poor. Hu-

man rights groups accuse prison guards of arbitrary beatings, humiliating detainees and failing to give injured prisoners access to medical care. Floderus is allowed one short conversation a month with his family. Cell lights are kept on 24 hours a day, and according to his family, Floderus is given neither sufficient food rations nor medical attention.

Floderus' detainment is seen as part of Iran's strategy of hostage diplomacy, whereby Western citizens are arbitrarily detained so that their freedom may be leveraged by Tehran for financial or

political gain. The European Union has stated that there are "absolutely no grounds for keeping Johan Floderus in detention."

Zaghari-Ratcliffe was allowed to leave the country in March 2022, the day after the British government settled an outstanding debt of £393.8 million, linked to the pre-revolutionary government's order of thousands of British tanks which never arrived. In September 2022, the US unfroze £4.8 billion of sanctioned Iranian funds in return for the release of five American prisoners.

In July 2022, Hamid Nouri, a

former Iranian prison official, was sentenced to life in prison by a Swedish court for crimes against humanity following his involvement in the 1988 mass executions of Iranian prisoners. Nassim Papayaianni, of Amnesty International, has stated that there are "very clear indications that the authorities are holding Floderus hostage to compel the Swedish authorities to swap him for the former Iranian official Hamid Nouri."

*Image Credit: Set in Stone Project / CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.*



## Oxford College JCRs pass motions in support of encampment

**Cherwell News reports.**

Several Oxford University junior common rooms (JCRs) have passed motions expressing solidarity with the recently established pro-Palestine encampment.

Hertford College JCR and St Anne's College JCR are some of the latest to release public statements in support of the pro-Palestine encampment, joining a string of college JCRs expressing solidarity with the protesters.

Within the past week, Balliol College, Corpus Christi College, Jesus College, St Hilda's College, Somerville College, University College and Wadham College (through their Student Union) have all passed JCR motions, frequently accompanied by a public statement, which show support for the encampment and reiterate Oxford Action for Palestine's (OA4P) six demands to their respective college.

The motion passed by St Anne's JCR expresses support for the encampment, calls for "an immediate and permanent ceasefire," condemns "the current genocide within Palestine being carried out by the Israeli government" and calls on both St Anne's College and the University to fulfill the six OA4P demands. OA4P has demanded that the

University disclose its assets, in order to divest funding into Israel and arms companies, as well as boycott all institutional connections with Israeli universities. It has also urged the University to cease its association with Barclays and publicly commit to supporting the rebuilding of the higher education sector in Gaza.

In a statement given to *Cherwell*, Alfie Davis, the third-year St Anne's College student who submitted the motion, emphasised the importance of showing student support for University divestment, especially given that the Principal of St Anne's, Helen King, is the only Head of House on the Finance Committee.

Davis said they were "proud we've collaborated with students across the college community to write both this statement and motion. (...) Colleges and college heads have a lot of power to make change within the University, and it's vital we keep in mind that colleges have significant investments of their own. This motion is a vital first step for the JCR to ensure St Anne's helps fulfil the six demands of the encampment."

Balliol College's JCR released a statement via Instagram, sharing the motion it passed on 12th May. The motion expresses

support for "the Liberated Zone in solidarity with Gaza" and states "hope that all of the demands set out by the encampment (...) are met by Oxford University as soon as possible." The statement encourages all other JCRs to "support the encampment and place pressure upon the University to act."

The JCRs at Corpus Christi College, Jesus College, Somerville College, University College and Wadham College have all passed similar motions, echoing OA4P's language and demands. Jesus College JCR also committed to issuing a public statement on social media.

Over 120 Lady Margaret Hall (LMH) students and alumni have signed an open letter, dated 11th May, expressing "firm support for those of the encampment outside the Pitt Rivers Museum" and an intention to "continue to push for the total divestment of UK educational institutions from organisations enabling genocide in Gaza".

In addition to the letter, LMH JCR passed a motion on the 12th May to form a subcommittee which will discuss student demands for the College and for the University. The LMH JCR Secretary, Emma Davies, told *Cherwell* that the sub-committee is intended to be "an open and

inclusive platform" for all JCR members and "a safe space to discuss issues regarding Palestine, decide what action to take, and do so with a unified stance."

The recent shows of support for the encampment follow previous efforts by many JCRs to donate money to charities operating within the conflict.

The JCRs of Pembroke College and St John's College, which haven't passed a motion in support of the encampment as of the 16th of May, have both sought alternative ways of addressing the humanitarian disaster in Gaza, highlighting the widespread concern of students regarding the ongoing conflict.

A spokesperson for Pembroke's JCR told *Cherwell* that the JCR "passed a motion back in Michaelmas calling for a bilateral ceasefire," and is now "looking into avenues for financial disclosure and divestment on a college level."

St John's College's JCR recently elected Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) as their main charity of the year, meaning their donation will go towards preserving "the health and dignity of Palestinians living under occupation and as refugees."

*For the latest updates on the encampment, go to [Cherwell.org](http://Cherwell.org).*

## Fans celebrate Oxford United promotion to Championship

**Tom Gardner reports.**

Thousands of supporters gathered on the High Street on Monday evening to celebrate Oxford United's promotion to the Championship, confirmed after their Saturday win against the Bolton Wanderers. An open-top bus parade, carrying the Oxford team and support staff, arrived at the Town Hall just before 7pm and was greeted by thousands of supporters blowing horns and waving flags in support of the team.

Supporters of all ages lined the high street from as early as 5.30pm, waving yellow and blue flags in support of the team. Excited fans let off several flares. Oxford City Council also flew the Oxford United flag over the Town Hall to celebrate the club's promotion.

The buses set off from the Plain at 5.55pm and were expected to arrive at the Town Hall at around 6.30pm but were slightly delayed. They were accompanied by support vehicles from Thames Valley police and officers from the County Council.

Attendees included the Lord

Mayor of Oxford, the leader of Oxford City Council and other invited guests and dignitaries. At the end of the parade, the players and club representatives were invited to attend a civic ceremony at the Town Hall.

There were no public speeches at the event but players engaged with the crowd, lifting the Trophy several times to great applause.

Councillor Susan Brown, leader of Oxford City Council, wrote on the Council website: "We're delighted to welcome Oxford United to the Town Hall to celebrate their promotion to the Championship. It's been 25 years since they last played in the second tier and there have been some very dark days along the way, which makes the victory all the sweeter."

The event follows Oxford United's 2-0 win over Bolton in the League One play-off final at Wembley to secure promotion into the Championship. During the parade, chants of: 'Come on you Yellows', 'We are going up, we are going up', and 'Bolton get battered everywhere they go' could be heard.

*Image Credit: Tom Gardner.*



## Oxford researchers test AI tool to treat depression

**Roy Shinar Cohen reports.**

A team of Oxford researchers are testing an Artificial Intelligence algorithm to help treat depression. The system, known as PETRUSHKA, aims to personalise antidepressant treatment for adults with major depressive disorder.

Data unique to patients, such as their age, gender, and symptoms, are collected. This information is then used to recommend specific drugs based on previous outcomes for similar patients and the preferred side effects.

According to the Oxford University Department of Psychiatry, the two most important factors of the trial are the side effects and perceived efficacy of any prescribed medication. The PETRUSHKA team believes the new system could help choose the right antidepressant for each patient and improve treatment adherence.

Professor Andrea Cipriani, Chief Investigator for PETRUSHKA, said: "We want to treat individuals, not averages. We want to be as precise as possible and identify the best treatment for each patient sooner based on what we know works for patients with similar characteristics."

The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Nyla Haque, the Trial Manager for PETRUSHKA, said: "The

study lasts 24 weeks in total but after eight weeks we will see how many participants are still taking the allocated treatment." Haque explains this measure will tell the PETRUSHKA team how acceptable and well tolerated a treatment is. Haque added: "We will also collect information from the participants about their mood, anxiety, quality of life and any side effects during the entire duration of the trial."

Nearly nine million people in the UK are prescribed antidepressants ever year but, according to the PETRUSHKA team, approximately four out of five of them stop treatment after several weeks.

According to NIHR, Professor Cipriani said that "In real world practice, antidepressants are usually prescribed based on the clinician's knowledge."

He added that of all the antidepressants available, "nine times out of ten, GPs prescribe one of just four antidepressants," meaning that "patients may not get the treatment that would be most effective or sustainable for them."

The researchers are now looking for 200 volunteers to join over 500 people who have been used to test PETRUSHKA's performance. People interested in joining the study must be between the ages of 18 and 74 and agree to try antidepressants. After signing up, they will go through a screening process and, if found to fit the program's requirements, could participate in-person or remotely.

## CROSS CAMPUS



### Columbia faculty host graduation for punished pro-Palestine students

Students at Columbia University who participated in on-campus pro-Palestine protests attended an alternative 'People's Graduation' hosted by Columbia faculty after the University cancelled the main graduation ceremony. The students, some of whom were suspended by the University for failing to leave the encampment, were praised at the event, with speakers including Palestinian Journalists. At the event, one of the organisers praised students for "their moral clarity".

### Cambridge college reject motion to reinstate mixed choir

The Governing body of St John's College, Cambridge have rejected a motion calling for the College to reconsider their decision to discontinue the mixed choir St John's Voices (SJV). In an email to "friends of SJV", the choir said they are "devastated by this news, and rather surprised [as] the college received some very generous donation offers which would have secured the future of the choir."

### Exeter University Conservative Association responds to alleged connections to dead deer

Exeter University reported that two freshers purchased a dead deer as venison from a game dealer and brought it onto campus. An anonymous source to *Exposé* claimed that the students had connections to EUCA. A spokesperson for the society underlined that the actions were not in connection to the Society or any of their events. The University of Exeter said that they have "investigated the incident and spoken with the students involved."

## Oxford history professor donates prize money to the Ukrainian Army

**Roy Shinar Cohen reports.**

Oxford history professor Timothy Garton Ash was recently awarded the prestigious Lionel Gelber Prize 2024 and donated his prize money to the Ukrainian army. His most recent book, *Homeland*, which was awarded the prize, "tells the story of Europe in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries."

Garton Ash, St Antony's Isaiah Berlin Professorial Fellow and Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, received approximately £29,000 in prize money. He has donated the full sum towards purchase of drones and night vision equipment for the Ukrainian army.

Garton Ash visited Kyiv and Lviv this week for the presentation of the Ukrainian version of his book. While in Kyiv, Garton Ash said: "I can think of no better use for a prize received for a book about recent European history than to donate it

towards equipping the Ukrainian Armed Forces for victory. Because nothing less than the future of Europe is at stake in this war."

According to Come Back Alive, a charity to which Garton Ash donated the prize money, the donation was used to buy four DJI Mavic 3T quadcopters, ten thermal imaging monoculars, ten night vision monoculars and mounts for PNB, as well as four Minox monoculars.

Garton Ash told *Cherwell* that he chose this equipment because it is what Come Back Alive, who are experts in aiding the Ukrainian armed forces, said they most needed. He added: "this war is different from all earlier wars because of the almost total visibility of the front line for both sides, given by such reconnaissance drones."

Regarding the decrease in focus the Ukraine War has recently received internationally and in Oxford, Garton Ash told *Cherwell*: "Our students are absolutely right to be deeply, deeply concerned about

what is happening in Gaza, but I would ask them not to forget about what is happening in the Ukraine."

He added that the Ukraine War's longevity and casualty levels in the hundreds of thousands make it one of the most significant wars in Europe since 1945. "I hope people will want to pay attention to it too," he said.

Aside from *Homeland*, Garton Ash has written ten books mostly about Europe and European history. Additionally, throughout his career

he has contributed to *The New York Review of Books*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, and *The Spectator*.

Garton Ash was also a columnist on foreign affairs in *The Independent* and the Foreign Editor of *The Spectator*. Before receiving the Lionel Gelber Prize, Garton Ash received, among others, the Somerset Maugham Award, the Prix Européen de l'Essai and the George Orwell Prize.

*Image Credit: 401st\_AFSB / CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.*



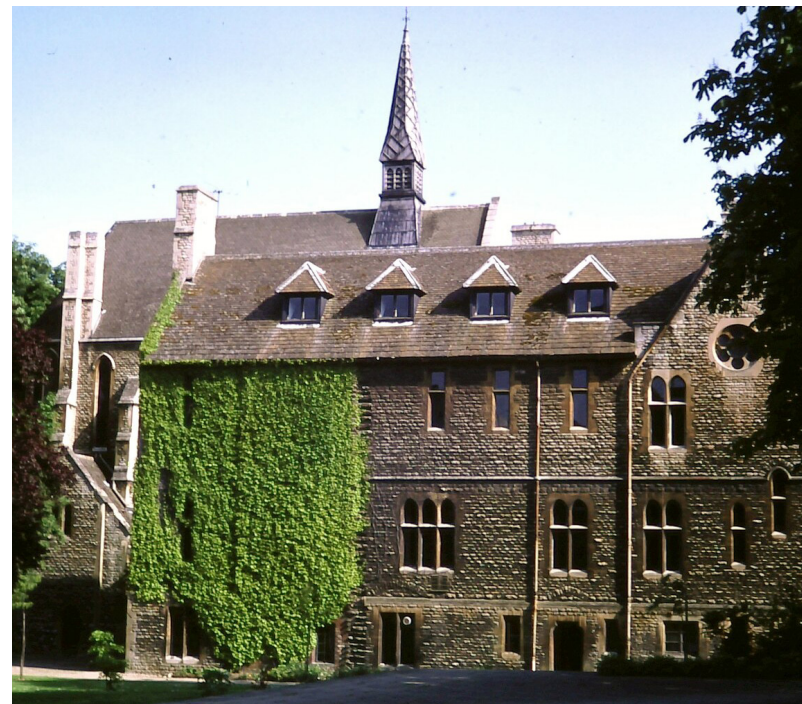
# St Antony's College signs deal with top Chinese university

## Cherwell News reports.

St Antony's College has signed a 5-year deal with Tsinghua University and received \$130,000 to take on two fellows from the University per year. Tsinghua is the top university in China where most leaders of the Chinese Communist Party

(CCP), including the president Xi Jinping, studied – they have been nicknamed the “Tsinghua clique”.

Some of the \$130,000 sum will be paid back to the fellows as a research allowance while the rest will go towards “a number of budget lines” including a management charge for administering the programme.



Tsinghua University does not pay the fellows directly but sends them the money through St Antony's College. As a result, Tsinghua fellows will be paid by Oxford University and will be employees of St Antony's College.

Tim Niblock, emeritus professor at the University of Exeter, told *The Times*: “it makes quite a lot of difference in the Chinese system whether they are simply being paid by Tsinghua to do research abroad, or whether they have some kind of a recognised status as part of another organisation. In short, the latter gives them much more kudos than the former.”

St Antony's, which is known for its international student body, told *Cherwell* that they have similar partnerships with other universities, some of which are funded by similar means.

Fellowships are either self-funded, funded by specific donations held as endowment funds, or as in this case funded by external institutions.

St Antony's said the agreement's benefit to the College is “largely academic. Our fellows and students, based at our various internationally-known area studies centres, have productive

interaction with researchers from IAS Tsinghua, who work on various parts of the Global South on topics of interest to our academic community.”

Asked about criticism they might receive, St Antony's told *Cherwell* that “some [express] reservations... because of objections to Chinese human rights and political issues such as the mistreatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang, the repression of political rights in Hong Kong, and threats against Taiwan, while others believe it is legitimate to engage with academics at leading universities as they are not involved in state policy-making on such issues.”

The announcement of the programme follows a MI5 warning to UK universities regarding national security risks associated with international partnerships. Specifically, of concern is sensitive research leaking to competitors in countries like China.

The Tory MP Iain Duncan Smith said about the agreement: “This decision is astonishing... How can Oxford care so little about the freedoms of people?”

*Image Credit: Kim Traynor / CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.*

## Protests escalate: Rad Cam encampment established, graduations disrupted

*continued from front page*

It also acknowledged that the protests have resulted in some members of the University and the public “feeling fearful or uncomfortable.”

The statement follows a 9th May meeting between UK university leaders, including Tracey, and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in 10 Downing Street where the leaders were advised to take further measures to tackle antisemitism on campus.

In response to the ongoing protests, Oxford Israel Society issued a statement on 8th May condemning OA4P's “failure” to mention Hamas' role in the war and called on the University to reject the protesters' demands.

Jewish Students for Justice (JSJ) also issued a statement in solidarity saying they “fully support the encampment's struggle” and “call for the University to accept their demands in full.”

Since early May, encampments have been set up at over a dozen of universities around the UK, including Cambridge, Manchester, Bristol and Newcastle.

*For the latest updates on the encampment, find the live feed on Cherwell.org.*

# Wadham College to increase main site rent by 23.9%

## Bryn Mollet reports.

Average rent in Wadham College will increase by nearly 10% by the next academic year, with rent on main site accommodation, which is for first and third years, increasing by up to 23.9%. Students will see a year's rent on term-long licences rise from £5,408.94 to £6,700. This comes as the College Disparities Report recently showed that Wadham College has the seventh highest accommodation costs.

Rent for second and fourth years will increase by 7.6% and 13.5% respectively for off-site accommodation, rising from £7,315.95 to £8,300 on

**“Average rent in Wadham will increase by nearly 10% by the next academic year.”**

a nine-month contract. Both accommodations come with ensuite rooms and kitchens and are located around a half-hour walk from Wadham College's main site.

This year Wadham College has changed its method of rent calculation. Previously, it was centred around the Retail Price Index (RPI) without regard

for cost of living and funding shortfalls. It is now based on the University of Oxford's own estimates of living costs, available to find on the University website.

There will also be more generous Accommodation Assistance Bursaries (AABs). With six brackets of household income, students will receive different levels of bursaries to help pay for their accommodation: the maximum of £1000, for the most expensive second year accommodation, will increase to £1600. This is one of the most generous and comprehensive AABs offered by Oxford colleges.

Student Finance England loans will increase by 2.5% next academic year, while the Office for National Statistics measures inflation at 3.8%. Oxford University also estimated accommodation costs will increase by 4.20% and 7.57% for ‘lower range’ and ‘upper range’ budgets respectively.

Wadham Student Union President, Oluwaseun Sowunmi, told *Cherwell*: “The next SU executive team will negotiate for lower future headline rent increases where possible, but hopefully the economic state of Britain could be better and our economic health indicators like inflation will be low and they won't have to.”

Sowunmi also explained that Wadham College acknowledges the financial difficulties students may face, and told *Cherwell* they will carry on promoting student welfare through reimbursement

schemes for taxis, prescriptions, menstrual and sexual health products, and cheap coffee and snacks.

According to the recently published College Disparities Report, wealthier colleges tend to charge lower rents, have smaller rent increases, and provide better help for students from lower income households. However,

though Wadham College has the fifteen highest endowment fund and seventeenth highest income from investment, it also has the seventh highest rent.

Meanwhile, Lady Margaret Hall (LMH) has the highest rent and the fifth lowest endowment fund, and second lowest investment income. St John's College has the cheapest accommodation,

the largest endowment and third highest investment income.

A second-year student from Wadham told *Cherwell*: “I think their rent prices in general are starting to go against all of their access initiatives...it defeats the object of being a college that claims to be all about access to education.”

## Increasingly unsustainable

### Laurence Cooke comments.

The Wadham rent hike seems to create a problem and then try to solve it. Raise rent and then underline the generosity of AABs. Yet even a bursary offering of over £1,000 will barely offset the increase in accommodation prices. And this level may not even be available for the ‘squeezed middle’ of Oxford Bursary recipients who do not also receive Crankstart funding.

Why not prioritise keeping rents low in the first place? Wadham SU should press for an explanation of why the college's “middle of the table” endowment translates into a rent position dangerously “near the relegation zone”.

It is ironic that the University's living costs estimates – intended to help prospective and current students by offering a budget

planning aid – have facilitated this change. Surely an RPI decrease of 0.6% from January to March 2024 would not have justified such a large rent hike. Colleges' rent increases should be predictable and, at the very least, all calculated by the same metrics.

**“Surely an RPI decrease of 0.6% from January to March 2024 would not have justified such a large rent hike.”**

Talk of kitchens within the accommodation serves as a reminder of the continued higher rate of inflation for groceries: at least 1% greater than the general inflation

rate. Off-site accommodation diminishes the likelihood that students can eat subsidised meals in hall.

This leaves them more vulnerable to high food – and potentially transport – costs. And this is all notwithstanding the fact that Oxford is an incredibly expensive city. I am always stunned when I return home from the vacation (no I don't live in London) and see that prices are subtly lower.

Sowunmi's comments about Britain's future economic health are hopeful. There is certainly a case for hope as inflation finally begins to fall. But expectations must be tempered by Labour's caution, the return of geopolitical headwinds, and, worst of all, vice-chancellors pushing for tuition fee increases.



## Crankstart tops UK aid, yet falls short of Ivy League

*continued from front page*

### Working and volunteering

As a stipulation for financial support, Crankstart Scholars are “encouraged to complete 25 hours of volunteering work” a year in order to give back either to Oxford or their home community. Oxford bans students from participating in paid work during term time – yet Crankstart Scholars are actively encouraged to participate in term time volunteering.

A meeting of JCR Access representatives found the volunteering “unfair” and one college Inreach Representative commented: “It makes low income students feel as though they need to do free labour in order to earn their place here. It’s quite demoralising for these students who then have 25 hours less than their peers to revise, write essays, do sports, etc.”

No clear support is provided for Crankstart students to complete their volunteering. When asked if they provide additional support related to volunteering, a spokesperson for Balliol College told *Cherwell*: “No – we understood it to be covered by the University.” Similarly, St Anne’s College stated that they had no specific general or financial support paths for scholars to aid with finding volunteering.

The introductory handbook states that Crankstart donors “are especially keen that [scholars] encourage school and college leavers to apply to university and promote the benefits of Higher Education.”

The message is reiterated on their website. Students of lower-income backgrounds are encouraged to participate in outreach for other lower-income background students, alongside their degrees. A first-year Crankstart Scholar told *Cherwell*: “It can feel a bit unfair when scholars have to feel as though they need to ‘earn’ the money they are provided, when realistically it is not their responsibility for their lack of privilege.”

While Oxford officially doesn’t allow students to work during the term, some colleges provide opportunities for students to work within college outreach, such as meeting prospective students or running social media pages. Finding work exclusively during the holidays can be difficult, especially when vacations are often described as “studying away from Oxford.”

### Comparison with other universities

Compared to British universities, competitive overseas institutions – especially those in the US – provide much higher levels of financial support to middle and lower income students. For instance, while a British student with a household income of £32,500 would, factoring in Crankstart, still need to pay £4,150 per year and would not be allowed to work during term, a British student with the same household income at Harvard’s would pay £2,750 per year,

and would be able to supplant the entirety of that cost through an on-campus job.

At other similarly-ranked US universities, like Yale, families earning up to £58,972 per year are expected to pay nothing toward tuition, room, or board, and all students are expected to graduate without loans. However, while these American universities provide scholarships and financial aid packages that cover the cost of tuition, room, and board, they lack an equivalent to the British “maintenance loan”, and students are therefore responsible for costs they incur outside food, tuition, and accommodation.

Other top UK universities like University College London and Warwick, give minimal extra funding. Warwick offers low-income students a bursary of up to £2000 a year, and both operate a hardship fund. Oxford and Cambridge have significantly higher endowments than other UK universities, compared to the US where the high levels of wealth are more common.

### Student loans

With maintenance loans, English students on Crankstart receive around £14,100 in funding a year, meeting the University estimated yearly living costs of between £12,000 and £17,000. Oxford students on Crankstart are unique in potentially not needing parental financial support with their studies.

The way student loans are provided is not an exact replica of a student’s financial position. Eligibility is decided by one household, ignoring separated parents who both financially contribute and including the income of step-parents or new partners, who may not be financially responsible for the student.

Some students also face parents refusing to contribute to their education. Student Finance England presumes a parental contribution, however there is no legal obligation for parents to support their children after the age of 18, placing some at a significant disadvantage for accessing higher education. In 2018, the University’s definition of estranged was criticised as narrow, leaving only a few eligible for additional support. Further, one current college survey shows that 15 out of 68 students do not receive family financial support.

Student loans differ between nations within the UK, and even more so internationally. Welsh students all get £12,150, with the amount being loaned or granted shifting based on income. Scottish students studying in Scotland pay no tuition, and all receive a minimum of £8,400. Both Welsh and Scottish students can use their maintenance loans in England.

International students, on the other hand, are often without access to any government financial support. The University “encourages students to explore options for sourcing funding in their home country”, however, these resources are often not available. This limits the diversity of international applicants, restricting Oxford to those who already come from financially able families, especially given that international fees are nearly triple those of home fees.



### Living costs

A strength of the scholarship is the control it enables scholars to have over their finances. There is no demand to spend the scholarship on University fees or accommodation costs. This is unlike the nearest equivalent at American institutions, where scholarships must be put toward the teaching fees. The money for Crankstart Scholars has no caveat as to how it should be spent.

A first year Crankstart Scholar told *Cherwell*: “I think Crankstart has been very beneficial in helping me be able to take part in social activities within Oxford. Though I’m grateful to have financial support, that mainly goes towards essential things (accommodation, bills, food

etc) and wouldn’t be able to cover all social aspects of my student life here at Oxford.”

Colleges also offer further support to students on Crankstart, and other bursaries. St Anne’s College told *Cherwell*: “In the recent past, the JCR have offered subsidised tickets to the College Ball for Crankstart and Oxford Bursaries recipients.”

Some colleges provide additional support on top of Crankstart. Lincoln College, who notably provide the most in bursaries, offer additional financial support to Crankstart Scholars.

However, for some colleges financial support outside of Crankstart is scarce. When asked about “support, financial or otherwise” that the college provides to students on Crankstart, a

spokesperson from Balliol College told *Cherwell* that there is a JCR grant students can apply for. They further said: “If an application for financial assistance is made we will pay careful consideration to low-income students... [and] make them aware of the financial support available...” but did not offer further detail.

When asked the same question, a spokesperson from St Anne’s College told *Cherwell* that there is “no specific financial [support].” They also noted that all students can apply for travel grants and hardship grants, which, according to an online report, is for students experiencing “unexpected financial hardship” they “could not have foreseen.”

*Artwork by Joe Walford.*

## Oxford academics sign letter supporting ‘race-realist’ Cambridge Fellow

**Nayana Juliette Syed reports.**

**F**our Oxford academics have signed an open letter criticising the investigations into Nathan Cofnas, a Cambridge Fellow who describes himself as a ‘race-realist’. The investigations concern a controversial blog post made by Cofnas in early February in which he likened race equality to “a thesis based on lies”.

Investigations into Cofnas were launched in early April by Cambridge University and the Leverhulme Trust – who provided Cofnas with his current research grant. This followed Emmanuel College notifying Cofnas that they were terminating their research affiliation with him.

The investigations came as a response to substantial protests from Cambridge students and staff. In February, the master of Emmanuel College, Doug Chalmers, said that the University retains its “commitment to freedom of thought and expression.” The support was reiterated by Cambridge’s Pro-Vice-Chancellor

for Education Professor Bhaskar Vira who stated that freedom of speech “sits at the heart of the University of Cambridge”. Following the University’s initial response a petition calling for the termination of Cofnas’s employment gained more than 1200 signatures.

An open letter, signed by fourteen academics and published May 2nd in *The Times*, expresses support for Cambridge’s initial response. The letter states that: “[m]embers of the college or university who disagree with Dr Cofnas’ views could issue statements repudiating those views and explaining why they believe them to be mistaken.”

Of the 14 academics, four are from Oxford: Professor Roger Crisp of St. Anne’s College; Marie Daouda, Stipendiary Lecturer at Oriel College; Professor Jeff McMahan from Corpus Christi College, and All Souls Fellow and Professor Amia Srinivasan.

Srinivasan has since expressed her discontent with some aspects of the letter in *The London Review of Books*. She said the letter “did

not contain a condemnation of Cofnas’s racism” and “did not draw a distinction between supporting Cofnas and objection to Cambridge’s investigation of him”. She also said the it did not emphasise “the possibility that students have a right not to be taught by someone who is on the record expressing the view that, if a student is Black, they are almost certainly less intelligent.”

Cofnas is himself an Oxford alumnus, having completed a DPhil in Philosophy at Balliol College in 2021. Since 2022, he has been employed at Cambridge’s Faculty of Philosophy, researching Philosophy of Biology and Ethics. According to his website, he maintains a particular interest in “scientific and ethical controversies connected with evolution-informed social science.”

This is not the first time Cofnas’ employment has sparked outrage. Following his appointment to Cambridge University in 2022, the student body called for his dismissal regarding a 2019 article arguing that racial and ethnic groups show genetic

## What's in a game? Wordle and NYT Games



Image credits: Adapted from Kurinurm / CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

## CHERWELL

Lara Foxon discusses the popularity of *The New York Times*' games in this week's editorial comment spotlight

My morning routine is pretty nailed down. As much as I'd like to say it's full of yoga, journaling, or basically anything that doesn't involve my phone, it's a lot more mundane. Coffee, then breakfast, get ready, and do the Wordle.

What could so easily have been a fad is something imbedded into my daily habits. Wordle has rode the wave of internet celebrity and came out, well, much the same. Despite being bought by *The New York Times* (NYT), all that's obviously dissimilar is the branded header. Otherwise, its mostly blank page only changes when tiles slowly blink from white to grey, from yellow to green. Substantially, it feels no different - although it now slots effortlessly into a portfolio of games. After Wordle comes Connections, after that the Mini Crossword (followed by Strands if you're feeling adventurous). Forget the 'Apple Ecosystem', NYT games are a much loved package deal.

Paean to its interface aside, what really keeps so many coming back? My friends and I share our 'results' pretty much day in, day out. The crossword now has a claim to being 'cool'. At the very least, it's got plenty of 20 year olds in its grip. But its popularity doesn't come from slotting into social media's nexus. This is the problem with so much of the advertising aimed at our generation, it tries to capture social media's 'clutch'. It tries to capitalise on 'trends', ironically making them into long worn out clichés in doing so.

Wordle's allure is its steady simplicity. Unembellished, it fulfils the 'social' aspect of social media without any of the noise. Sharing the results with friends and family is a habit, but it's also a daily touchstone with the simple message: I'm thinking of you, I hope you are me.

# Local elections: Britain's greatest fortune-tellers

Stan Smith

It's a rare moment when the papers in Britain agree with one another. Yet, following the May 2nd local elections, they all appeared to have the same message: the polls are correct in their prediction of electoral disaster for the Tories come the next general election.

The Conservatives undeniably took a thumping, losing 474 councillors, the Blackpool South constituency and a key mayoralty. But for many of our generation, whose formative political experiences were the shock victories of Trump and Brexit in 2016, there is a perhaps inbuilt scepticism of any media coverage that presents an election outcome as certain. Should we really take such prognoses at face value?

Certainly, local elections are much more complex than general elections. The beginning of May saw a mixture of council elections across England, as well as Police and Crime Commissioner contests in England and Wales, and 11 mayoral elections. This is far from a comprehensive national picture; we learn nothing about Scotland where Labour must make gains to form a majority. Nor are voters guaranteed to make the same decisions when it comes to choosing an MP. Voters are more willing to support smaller parties and independents at the local level, before returning to the major parties at a general election. The Conservatives, one might

think, might take some solace in the fact that the results later this year could be very different.

But the truth is that the Conservatives benefited from the key differences between local and general elections, rather than being hindered by them. Their few successes came where voters chose to think local, despite deep frustrations with the national party. Ben Houchen, the Conservative mayor for Tees Valley, won re-election by distancing himself from the national brand, running on his local impact, and dropping the Conservative logo from many of his pamphlets. His brag that voters liked him whilst disliking the Tories shows an understanding that, in contrast to Sunak's attempts to paint it as evidence of some remaining hope for the Conservatives, many who backed Houchen will be voting against his party later this year.

This is in part because you can't fully separate local and national issues. Whilst the May elections frequently featured 'hyper local' concerns such as potholes and road quality, such issues are directly connected to national problems, such as the decline in local council

funding under the Conservatives, which leaves local bodies unable to tackle voters' priorities. Voters cannot think local without being persistently reminded of Conservative failings.

This has been exacerbated by the ongoing death of local news. As more small papers close due to rising costs, our news feeds are dominated by stories on 'party-gate' and Liz Truss' disastrous premiership, rather than the actions of our local councillors. Consequently, such stories are at the front of our minds when we head to the polling booth. As a result, local votes tell us more about national perceptions of the major parties than the Conservatives might want to admit.

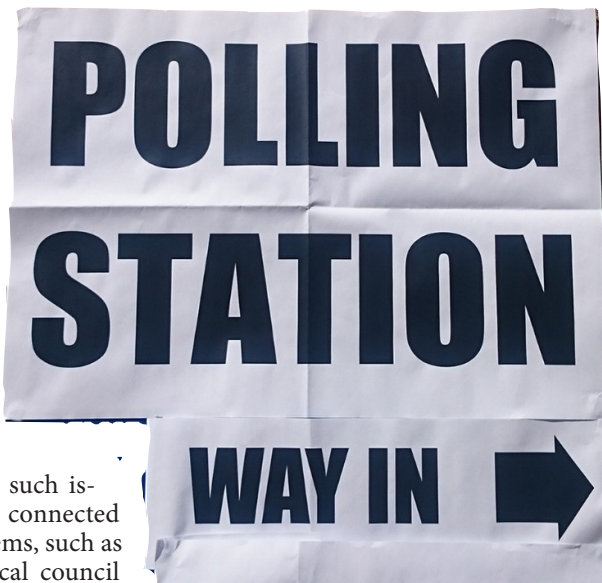
The loss of these councillors is not only significant as an indica-

tor of where national politics is heading. It may have a material impact on the outcome of the next election. Councillors make up the ground force of national parties, organising much of the local campaigning and door knocking which is crucial for getting MPs elected. With many Conservative councillors now out of a job, in their view, because of the actions of the those in Westminster, they will be much less keen to help their local candidate. This will make it harder for Tory hopefuls to connect with their local constituents, something they will need to do as few will be looking to run on the government's track record.

Don't get me wrong, a Labour landslide is far from guaranteed. Keir Starmer must take seriously the complaints over his stance on Gaza which lost Labour control of the Oldham Council. We are also yet to see whether the SNP can mount a comeback under Swinney or will continue to suffer from the same incumbency problem and perceptions of corruption as the Conservatives. But if the Tories perform better than expected at the general election, it will be because of events that occur between now and then, and not because the distortive nature of local elections. Every once in a while, it's okay to believe the media hype.

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

Image Credit: Descrier from London, UK/CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons



## Coco and Roy go head-to-head, debating whether the media's image of Oxford students is accurate

An overwhelming majority of Oxford students (if not all), it seems, are stuck in a self-actualizing bubble of notoriety. A concept which is, and continues to be, propagated by the great titans of University life: college pride, student politics, rowing, and the all important 'night out'. These individuals close themselves off from the outside world, from anything beyond the realms of extortionately priced balls, poorly prepared tutorial work, and Atik (though not for much longer). A definite norm for most people at this university.

It should be no surprise that this same, and albeit saddening, reality would be reflected in how we are perceived by the media and, by extension, the public.

Those behind the (admittedly intrusive) camera lens or at

the desk of a nation-wide tabloid, therefore, are merely upholding their journalistic commitment to truth. The images depicting, and headlines describing, our many alcohol-induced, kebab-eating Oxonian allies as they are must be understood as accurate. Whether be it on the steps of a Medieval college donning sparkly ball gowns covered in sick, or drunkenly lining up outside Najar's in one's puffer post crewdate: it is all the truth. The extent to which this truth is objectively bad is the more pressing matter.

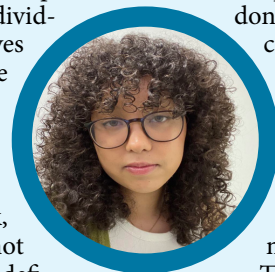
Thus, I pose to you, the reader, such questions accordingly. Are the activities participated in by such individuals deserving of public documentation? Should we cower away in fear from these accusations? Or should we change our behaviour to be more favourable to the public?

Oxford students are often portrayed as rich, private school-educated and suit-wearing in the media. For example, in an Independent article, Oxford students are described as spending their summer shooting at a family estate and writing in drawing rooms. I must say I would not be surprised to hear about students who do that, particularly those who frequent a certain debating society, but so far, I have not heard of them. What I do hear about is people from a broad range of backgrounds, fitting to the fact that there are nearly 27,000 Oxford students.

Approximately half of Oxford students are British, and the rest come from all around the world. Within the UK, London is the region that sends most students to Oxford (nearly a quarter), after which come the South East and then the South West. Among British students, 15.5% are from the

two most socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (ACORN categories 4 and 5) and 7.3% of British students were eligible for Free School Meals. Moreover, 68.1% of British Oxford students studied at State Schools. And, while among the UK population aged 19-25, the rate of people who are BME is 23.6%, among Oxford admitted students 27.8% declared themselves as BME.

Don't get me wrong, these statistics do not prove Oxford is a perfect place where everyone is equal. But it is also not a university where all students are upper-class, private-school-educated, white and from London. The reality is more complicated than the caricature that claims one "Oxford experience" has been constant since the British Empire was at its peak.



# How to fund a university

Laurence Cooke

If you're a humanities student, like me, then you'll probably be excited about the new Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities. A brand-new, interdisciplinary space in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter and a beautiful building to boot, it puts pride back into the humanities at Oxford. It's an expensive building too.

The issues surrounding college funding are all too painfully clear. Older colleges with large endowments and the wealthiest alumni can splurge on swanky new accommodation buildings, sports facilities, and study centres. But this article is about the faculties, institutes, and research groups that sit above the college level and belong to the University itself. In particular, it's about the people and organisations that seem so keen to invest in the UK's educational capital. And where better to start than with the man who gave this University its largest donation since the Renaissance?

Mr Schwarzman is a well-known philanthropist who has previously donated to the New York Public Library (now housed principally in the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building), MIT (the Schwarzman College of Computing), and a Chinese scholarship fund (the Schwarzman Scholars). See a pattern?

Schwarzman gives such large donations that his recipients are obliged to take his name – establishing an inextricable link between the man himself and his donees. This means that accepting Schwarzman's money amounts to a tacit endorsement (or at least a happy tolerance) of his personal history. This would probably be fine if Schwarzman was like Japanese

social educator and writer Eiji Uehiro who gave us the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics. It would probably be fine if he was like IT consultant James Martin who gave us the Martin School in the Social Sciences Division.

Unfortunately, the man behind Oxford's new humanities space is more controversial. He is the CEO and founder of private equity group Blackstone which was singled out by a UN Special Rapporteur as having created the global housing crisis. He described Obama's proposals to make hedge fund managers pay more taxes as 'like when Hitler invaded Poland'. A personal friend of Donald Trump, he put his financial might behind rabid right-wingers who went on to refuse to certify the 2020 Election results.

And all this is before we consider the ethics of whether anyone should be as rich as Schwarzman is. His 40 billion dollar net worth comes with a social, political, and (obviously) economic power that should really be the preserve of banks, charities, and government. Instead, he can wield such huge influence that the University of Oxford – whose previous plans for a humanities centre were a decade behind schedule – is left with little choice but to accept. The world's number one ranked university in thrall to one man.

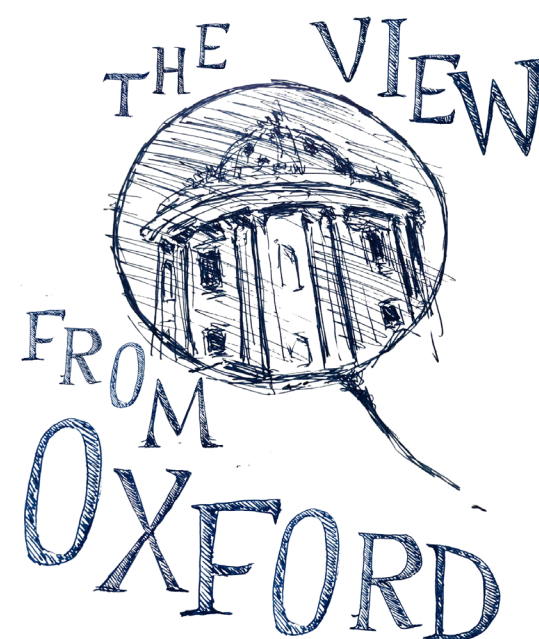
Schwarzman is not the only one. The Saïd Business School, Dickson Poon China Centre, Ertegun House – even the Ashmolean (Elias Ashmole) and the Radcliffe Camera (John Radcliffe) – all testify to the power of one individual. It could be argued that at least these donors are transparent. More opaque arrangements include the subtle hand of Elon Musk behind the now-defunct Future of Humanity Institute, that of Exxon Mobil in the

Nuffield Department, and mining group Rio Tinto's role in the Blavatnik Centre – yet another anonymous institute!

Some will argue that this criticism is highly impractical. After all, universities need funding, especially those like Oxford which belong to the global elite of institutions that do groundbreaking work every day. Nobody would begrudge Cancer Research UK helping fund new clinicians or even AstraZeneca in delivering the Covid-19 vaccine. Oxford cannot be picky with funding, the argument goes, in an age where government support waxes and wanes.

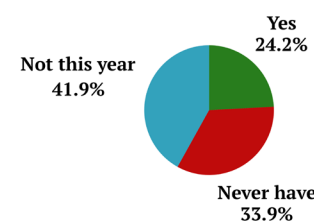
But surely we can do better. The University must be more than a collection of ever grander institutes massaging the egos of various (usually male) billionaires. The future of funding doesn't mean cutting all ties with rich philanthropists – that isn't possible. However, universities can at least be aware of the ethical and reputational risks they take when relying so obviously on individuals and their commercial ventures.

A better future would be one in which Oxford drew more astutely on the wealth its colleges have in reserve. One where innovation was promoted by paying tutors a decent wage rather than launching more architectural vanity projects. One where the University worked in smaller collaborations with charities, other universities, and groups of benefactors. One where an incoming Labour government sees the value of Oxbridge to the British economy and keeps funding flows stable. So of course I'm excited about the Schwarzman Centre – but there is undoubtedly a future where Oxford can hold its head much higher.

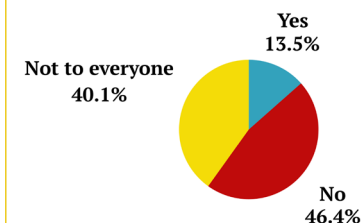


This week, we asked our Instagram followers...

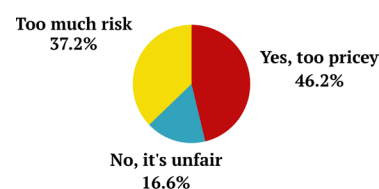
Did you watch Eurovision this year?



Is the media's image of Oxford accurate?



Would you sneak into a ball?



WANT TO GET INVOLVED AND VOTE ON FUTURE THE VIEW FROM OXFORD POLLS?

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# Has the term 'democracy' lost its meaning?

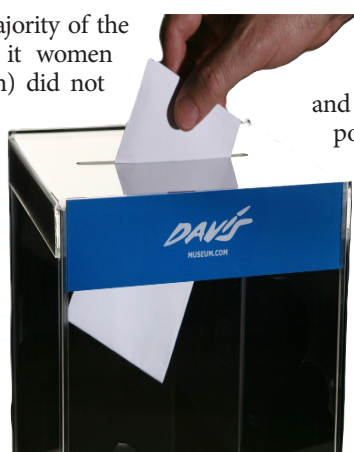
Roy Shinar Cohen

We are living through the biggest election year in history, an exercise in democracy which testifies to its victory as a political system. More than half of the world's population is expected to go to the polls at some point in 2024, but does that mean all these people live in democracies? Surely not. You may remember: during a fateful week in the middle of March, earlier this year, the Russian people went to the polls. Putin (shockingly) won, but that does not make Russia a democracy. So what does turn a country into a democracy?

When we talk about democracies, we actually talk about both an ideal and the form of government that strives to achieve that ideal. However, a quick historical recap reminds us how much the democratic ideal has changed. Centuries ago, colonialist countries relying on the exploitation of enslaved people, such as the United States, Great Britain, and France, were all considered ideal democracies. As recently as decades ago, countries

in which the majority of the population (be it women or working men) did not have the vote were still considered democratic. And even after the majority of adults obtained the right to vote, colonialism, segregation, and political persecution remained common. Surprise! These countries were also considered democratic. Looking back, we refer to them as democracies, but we would never consider these political systems democratic in the third decade of the twenty-first century.

This could indicate that we think of democracy as a relative term compared to other countries in the same historical context. The early United States was arguably the most democratic country in the world



at the time, even though it relied on a class of enslaved workers and only a tiny part of its population had the right to vote. Nowadays, we still rank democracies and discuss them relative to one another. Scandinavian countries are often looked up to because they are seen as most democratic. But how can we know that we will not look back at the Scandinavian countries as flawed democracies in fifty years' time? What's striking about this is that, as we have seen, democracy is an ideal and a set of institutions. So why should we consider it relatively – should countries not be either a democracy or not?

Indexes tell us in 2023 there are over 70 democracies around the world. However, in many cases of these 70 democracies, both public opinion and political theory pose substantial challenges to the categorisation as a democracy. These cases include

Hungary, Singapore, Israel and the United States, states which you may consider democratic to different extents, if at all.

Let's examine the case of the United States. Since its independence in 1776, the United States has claimed it is a democracy. This claim is based on its constitution ("We the People, of the United States..."), declaration of independence ("We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...") and its institutions (separation of power, elections, etc). But would you consider a country where only some men have the right to vote, where people of a certain race are enslaved, and where indigenous people are killed and their communities destroyed systematically a democracy? Would you consider a country with a segregation regime that separates people according to their race in all areas of life a democracy? Would you consider a country that goes to war and kills indiscriminately (lying to its people about it, of course) a democracy? I would be surprised if you did. All of these policies go

straightforwardly against democratic ideals as we understand them today and have understood them for a long time.

If this is not enough, we can look at the United States in recent years. In January 2021, the then President, Donald Trump, incited an insurrection in the Capitol leading to a mob of hundreds raiding the building and threatening representatives. The reason: preventing the democratic transfer of power. Accordingly, polling from the end of 2021 reveals that the majority of people in 16 Western and American-allied countries, as well as the American people, think the United States is no longer or has never been a democratic model.

It appears to me that the word democracy has lost its meaning. How can it describe so many different regimes in the past and present, and how could all of them fall under the same category? "Democracy" covers all that is deemed good, so any regime that wants to increase its legitimacy will bend logical definitions to prove itself. Even in the year that supposedly proves democracy's victory, it is not at all clear what and who democracies are.

Image credits: Isabella.Zanella / CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

# ‘Act normal, that’s crazy enough’: In conversation with Rutger Bregman, author of *Humankind*

Ananya Parakh and Rutger Bregman discuss community, balancing utopian dreams with realism, and whether money really can buy happiness.

Why have humans survived as the ones to travel to Mars, create artificial intelligence and make use of the world’s resources unlike any other species? Dutch historian and author, Rutger Bregman, author of the pop history book *Humankind*, might have the answers. Through scientific arguments supporting the inherent kindness of Homo Sapiens, Bregman argues that “most people, deep down, are pretty decent.”

Brian Hare’s theory of a shift in perspective from “survival of the fittest” to “survival of the friendliest” is one supported by Bregman: “I recently became a father. My daughter is two and a half years old right now. I love her very dearly, but it’s quite clear to me that she is very stupid. Toddlers are not all that impressive compared to, say, pigs or chimpanzees of a similar age. There is one thing which they really excel at, which psychologists call social learning. They’re really good at imitating us. The way my daughter talks is sometimes quite funny and disturbing, because sometimes she sounds like a little history professor.

“Our ability to learn from one another is our secret superpower. Loneliness is comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.” On the other hand, humans are also capable of committing terrible atrocities and waging wars that a “penguin could never dream of”. And this is why it took more than a couple, but about 400 pages, to explain *Humankind*.

Growing up in the Netherlands, Bregman has experienced the social norms that have led it to rank as one of the happiest countries in the world: “In *Humankind*, I talk about how nomadic hunter gatherers live their lives. There’s one very striking aspect that they have a reverse hierarchy where the group controls the leaders. It’s very dangerous to be a narcissist in a nomadic hunter gatherer society, because quickly the group will crack down on you. And that often reminds me of the Netherlands actually. So in the Netherlands we call it ‘hayfield culture’. As soon as you think you’re more important than others, people start dunking on you in a pretty massive way. So, it’s sometimes a bit difficult to be ambitious. There’s a famous Dutch saying, ‘Act normal, that’s crazy enough.’”

Bregman’s experience at university led him down an unconventional path to finding what is truly cool: “I was initially a very lazy student in the Netherlands. We have a grading system that goes from 1, which is the worst you can get, to 10, which

is a perfect score, and for me 5.5 was the best possible grade to get because that was just enough to get a pass. So, for me the most important thing in my first year was drinking enough beer and wasting enough time.

“But then what happened is that I became a member of a small student society in Utrecht, another city in the Netherlands. One of my friends, who was a member, brought me along and I fell completely in love with that student society. I guess it was the way people related to each other. There was such an honest and natural curiosity that most of the members had. It was also the kind of conversations that were much more interesting than what I was used to. So it turns out that curiosity and ambition are not just things that you can be born with but are also highly contagious. My definition of cool really changed during that period.”

How many people grow up

**“Your teens and your twenties are absolutely essential because this is the period in which you’re writing the constitution of your own life.”**

dreaming of money? A house made of money and not cheese, or a money-themed birthday party instead of princesses? As foundational as it is, how much money do we really need to chase to be happy? “There’s a famous Daniel Kahneman study and his number was \$75,000 a year, and after that there are huge diminishing returns to getting wealthier. I don’t pity those people to be honest. The world is lying at your feet basically. And you’ve got only one life. You’ve got only one career.

“A career on average lasts 80,000 hours. That’s 10,000 working days. That’s 2000 work weeks, and then you retire and then you die. So time is the most precious thing you have on Earth. Your teens and your twenties are absolutely essential because this is the period in which you’re writing the constitution of your own life. Usually, past the age of 30, people get stuck. So make your twenties really count. Don’t be a sheep. Don’t be a zombie. Don’t follow all those silly people to what my friend (and Oxford University student) Simon van Teutem calls ‘the Bermuda tri-

angle of talent’: banking, corporate law, consultancy. Being really successful is not about buying that big house or owning a boat. Being really successful is helping as many people as possible. That’s what it should be about.”

A few ideas that Bregman advocates for in his book *Utopia for Realists* are a universal basic income, open borders, and a 15-hour work week. Vigilant of being called naive, Bregman has sprinkled the definition of realism with hope. While believing that there is much to learn from Machiavelli to get things done, he holds faith in a world growing into a utopian reality: “A couple of decades from now, three-quarters of all countries are going to have a declining birth rate. We have also seen that the birth rate has plummeted and is plummeting in many rich and middle income countries. And in the end, the most precious capital that countries have are its people, right? And there’s already the global war for talent going on. I think that the countries that will be the most prosperous in the next couple of decades will also be the most tolerant countries. And that is why places like Oxford University can be so inspiring, because of its diversity.”

If you’re struggling to see the benefits of Brexit, Bregman seems to have an optimistic view on it: “Britain has also delivered a service for the rest of Europe, because they have shown us that getting out of the EU is such a bad idea that we don’t have to try it for ourselves in the Netherlands. Even Geert Wilders, the right wing populist, the most racist, xenophobic politician in the Netherlands is also against Brexit. And we really have to thank Britain for that. So thank you for your service, Great Britain. Thank you for proving to the rest of the EU that getting out of the EU is one of the most stupid ideas you can ever come up with.”

Sorry if that opener was misleading. “We live in a world of global apartheid, where the country in which you are born already determines 60% of your income.” Bregman says. “I think it would make a lot of sense to abolish all borders. I mean, that’s the utopian end goal. Now, obviously there’s a lot of intermediate steps, but we’ve got a lot of empirical economic research and most of it shows that immigration is both good for immigrants, obviously, they get a massive gain in wages, but it’s also good for receiving countries. Immigrants are less likely to commit crimes and they pay quite a bit in taxes, they contribute much more than they take. That’s just what the evidence shows us, but people find it very hard to follow the evidence when it comes to this and that is one of the dark sides of human nature.”

Bregman’s upcoming book, *Utopia for Realists*, is about the waste of talent, and here’s what he has to say about the role of Oxford’s talent pool: “So many smart people who go to the best universities get stuck in jobs that don’t add much value to the world. Lots of young physics students, for example, when they’re young, dream about going to Mars or finding a cure for cancer.” And you might not like this if you’re considering selling-out: “But then they turn 25 and there’s some hedge fund in London that gets them a shitload of money, and then they’re lost. There was this quote that went viral 15 years ago from someone that

**“Don’t go for the big corporates. We owe it to the world.”**

worked at Facebook, “The greatest minds of my generation think about how to make people click on ads.”

And that is so sad, right?” His message: “Don’t go for the big corporates. We owe it to the world.”



## OXFORD SPOTLIGHT

Olivia Polito Pons takes a look behind the effortlessly cool DJ collective, *Martian Moves*.



If you’re at all in tune with Oxford’s nightlife scene, I’m sure you’ve heard of “intergalactic boogie service” *Martian Moves* – but who are they, and what are they here to do? I spoke with three out of the four-man group of St Peter’s and LMH undergrads (*Michael Donlon, Louis Bryan, Will Vanhinsbergh and Luca Burgess*) to find out more as they approach their one year anniversary.

**How did you get started as a group?**

As I ask this question, Louis arrives to the call with a massively swollen eye from a bug bite he’d got at a rave the night before, much to the others’ amusement.

**Michael:** “In Hilary of our first year we [he and Louis] went to the open music night that the OU Electronic Music Society runs with open decks for people who want to go and play some tunes and learn to DJ. And that’s when we met Luca, who was also really passionate and interested in music. We all went to *Glamorous* after that – we were just talking about it all night. Eventually we were like: ‘we should just all do it together!’ and went back to Louis’ room to brainstorm what we want to do and what to call it – which was more difficult than you’d think.”

**How would you describe your brand image and what you’re trying to do as MM?**

**Will:** “Definitely fun and silly are the two main words – like not taking electronic music too seriously. So it’s accessible for people who aren’t really into it and there are good tunes – but also so people who are interested in electronic music can get behind it as well.”

**Louis:** “Dance floor-focused – not necessarily standing on a big stage, but being part of the crowd. The focus has been on the dancing and people having a good time. We had our first few events in the *Bully* front room which worked because it’s quite an intimate space.”

**Michael:** “And all those events have been free which is a big thing for us – even though we now do ticketed events, we still try and do the free ones to try and get people down on a weekday and have a boogie.”



# J. Smith-Cameron on Broadway, besties and Brian Cox

**Thomas Cowan** speaks with J. Smith-Cameron, star of stage and screen, on the making of award-winning show *Succession* and her plans for the future.



**How does it work as a business model?**

**Michael:** “We’ve always gone into it going ‘this isn’t something we’re going to make loads of money from’ especially in Oxford – if you do something like this in Leeds or Bristol, there’s definitely scope to make quite a bit of money off student life. But for us, as long as we’re not losing money, we don’t really mind. You kind of have to have faith in people turning up basically - especially in the current club climate, people don’t want to buy tickets before the night, they just want to buy on the door.”

**What impact do you think you’ve made on Oxford night-life?**

**Michael:** “We’re definitely walking in the footsteps of a lot of really good nights that have come before us. *Spice Lounge* was a massive influence and a massive help to us – they really took us under their wing when we got to uni. And there’s also *Goodness* which came from Oxford a while ago now. So we’re trying to keep that legacy. I don’t think people currently in our year realise how good Oxford can be – there’s some really good electronic music here. Between COVID and the people who did it [*Spice Lounge* and *Goodness*] graduating, it’s kind of died off. So hopefully people come to our nights and realise you can do it – especially first years like ‘oh I’m gonna go do this with like a group of my mates’. Student-led nights are important, and hopefully more people will want to take part and end up really interested.”

**What’s coming up this term?**

**Will:** “Our one-year party is on 6th June – it’s not been officially released yet but we’ve put a lot of work into it. We’ve tried to book some really cool DJs, so it should be really good. It will be our first time in the *Bully* back room – we’re going back to the club where we first started, but on a bigger scale.”

**Louis:** “Look out for some stickers around Oxford with a phone number. If you ring that phone number, it will tell you in an alien voice about the night.”

Image Credits: Coco Cottam, Faye Song.

J. Smith-Cameron would like you to know that she is not *Succession*’s Gerri Kellman. She gently corrects me when I slip up by describing her performance as the Roy family’s legal counsel and cut-throat consigliere as her ‘biggest’ role, and she is right to do so. The Broadway mainstay turned *Succession* scene stealer has had a fascinating career on both stage and screen, but recently she has been making time for one particular city that has become close to her heart: Oxford.

Having first set foot in OX1 on a daytrip when filming the first season of *Succession*, Smith-Cameron was back in town for a talk at the Oxford Union to follow up on her headline appearance at Brasenose Arts Week last May. Her husband, Academy Award winning director and screenwriter Kenneth Lonergan “just loves it here. This is his idea of having a great time.”

The two of them make up a certified showbiz power-couple, and have collaborated on screen multiple times, most notably in the 2011 epic movie *Margaret*, in which Smith-Cameron plays Joan, a veteran off-Broadway actress. Smith-Cameron chuckles as she admits that “there’s a lot of similarities between the Joan character and me”. She maintains that Lonergan, or just ‘Kenny’ to her, “tends to cast a lot of the same actors, but he doesn’t really write the parts for them.” She tells me that working with her spouse has its unique challenges: “he kind of took me for granted, but in a good way, you know?” The familiarity between the husband and wife duo meant that once the part was written, Lonergan put full trust in Smith-Cameron to take control of and develop the character, resulting in an incredible and highly acclaimed performance.

J. Smith-Cameron’s ability to own her roles and flesh them out was pivotal to crafting Gerri Kellman into a fan-favourite character. “I don’t feel like I’m anything like [Gerri], but I did kind of make her up.” It’s impossible to think of Gerri without her iconically sharp

glasses or the even sharper shoulder-pads of her power suits, both elements that Smith-Cameron personally brought to the role. Gerri’s no-nonsense personality was inspired by “two friends, both mothers of kids that went to school with my daughter, both in finance. They just have this very sarcastic and also very steely demeanour, and I just thought it was refreshing to see middle-aged women brooking no-one ever.”

In real life, Smith-Cameron is far from the stone-cold killer she portrays on screen, but she has thought out the psyche of Gerri Kellman to the tiniest nuance. “There’s a quality that Gerri has that any confidence man has. I have to do two pitches: be saying one thing and rapidly thinking two steps ahead the whole time, and also trying to do that with a veneer of harmlessness.” When I

**“You kind of have to keep starting over. [...] You have to keep going out and hunting for food: that’s perseverance.”**

ask her about Gerri’s role as godmother to Shiv Roy, Smith-Cameron replies that she “always found that as an interesting little aside, that [Gerri] is sort of actually part of the Roy family. It’s a family drama.” Reflecting on the series as a whole though, she reminds me that this fact “was sort of in the very first season and then forgotten, but that seems suitable, because it was as if none of those kids would care who the godparents were, or really even knew. I had sort of created that backstory that linked it all together.”

However, Smith-Cameron was not the sole arbiter of what Gerri could and would do. When asked about her initial thoughts on the ill-fated love affair with Roman Roy, the actress told showrunner

Jesse Armstrong that she believed that Gerri would “run a hundred miles an hour in the other direction”. Few viewers can forget Gerri calling the sleaziest Roy sibling a “slime puppy”, and Smith-Cameron offers me another damning assessment by saying that she “just can’t imagine anyone with [Gerri’s] gravitas being so swept off her feet by the likes of Roman Roy. He’s such a flibbertigibbet.” Fortunately for fans, she chose to put her trust in the writers who had proven their ability to create grippingly toxic and psychosexual dynamics by enshrining TomGreg in the halls of Western canon. Smith-Cameron’s aversion to the idea was further reduced by the palpable on-screen chemistry she shared with co-star Kieran Culkin. She is almost indistinguishable from any other *Succession* fan, as she gleefully picks apart their relationship: “I don’t think she thinks of him as a sexual creature at all. But as time passed, I felt that Roman kind of got under her skin a little bit in spite of everything.”

It comes as no surprise, then, that Smith-Cameron’s favourite scene to shoot was the last big interaction between her and Culkin’s characters. Roman’s attempted firing of Gerri finally allowed Smith-Cameron to let loose from Gerri’s typically reserved and measured temperament: “the thing I remember was being very dangerous and very very angry.” In one take, she even threw a bottle at Culkin, a creative liberty only afforded by the yearslong rapport she had built with the actor, having first met him on the set of her husband’s 2003 play *This is Our Youth*.

Over the course of filming four award-winning seasons, Smith-Cameron tells me the whole cast and crew became “very attached to each other”. She describes Sarah Snook’s recent one-woman West End debut in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as “dazzling, a real tour de force”, and tells me that she also has plans to see Jeremy Strong’s Tony-nominated performance in *An Enemy of the People*, but only after she catches Brian Cox in a *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*. Aside from the original cast, Smith-Cameron has grown particularly close to Zoe Winters, who plays Kerry in the final two seasons of the show, describing Winters as her “*Succession* bestie”.

Beyond her fellow actors, Smith-Cameron has heaps of praise for the showrunners. She agrees that the writing of *Succession* landed somewhere between stage and screen, with “language [that] was so heightened in scenes with real back and forth, whereas oftentimes in film and TV, you just have these little snippets, or sometimes there’s no words at all. People really had scenes and debates and they really used words, which is kind of

refreshing.” Given the challenging task of mastering such fast-paced, quick-witted dialogue, Smith-Cameron notes that “it’s not by accident that a lot of the cast, really all the cast, had their roots in theatre.”

Her favourite line in the show? The effortlessly chilling “but it doesn’t serve my interests” she delivers in the season three finale as she crushes the Roy siblings’ plans. Credit for that piece of dialogue goes, of course, to Jesse Armstrong, but the show’s creator isn’t entirely in Smith-Cameron’s good books: “that son of a bitch is never going to write a sequel to *Succession*.”

With my personal dreams of a Gerri-centred spin-off left in tatters, the question remains just what is next for J. Smith-Cameron. The answer is that she has no time for resting on her laurels, preferring to move on to the next project, as is the way of her industry. “You kind of have to keep starting over, you don’t get a job and stay there for years and decades. You have to keep going out and hunting for food: that’s perseverance.”

Up next on the agenda is to complete her conquest of the stage on both sides of the Atlantic, as she makes her West End debut as the eponymous Juno in *Juno and the Paycock* opposite Mark Rylance this coming October. Smith-Cameron’s excitement to take on the role is palpable, and the broad press coverage that her casting has received is testament to how much her profile has grown in recent years. Looking at a longer-term picture, Smith-Cameron tells me that she and her “*Succession* bestie”, Zoe Winters, are looking at getting behind the camera by writing their own project together. Smith-Cameron is tight-lipped when probed for any further detail. “I don’t think I should reveal,” she demurs, with the enigmatic rationale that “if we talk about it too much it evaporates.”

Evaporating screenplays aside, you immediately get an impression of total normalcy when talking to J. Smith-Cameron. She name drops Matthew Broderick and Mark Ruffalo in such a way that it makes it feel as if you too could be their friend. She is not one to lavish in her celebrity status; she comes across simply as someone who loves their craft, and does it exceptionally well. The ice-cold coyness of Gerri Kellman is a million miles away from Smith-Cameron’s natural affability, but the actress’ understanding of the character is down to a precise science. She can clearly be counted as one of Gerri’s biggest fans: she tells me that one of the friends who inspired the character is currently looking for a job. Her advice? “Oh, just tell them that the person who played Gerri based the character on you.”

Image Credit: Roger Askew via the Oxford Union.



# CHERBADLY

## BREAKING: BNOC list goes missing hours before release

Third week saw the release of the hotly anticipated *Cherwell* BNOC list, which, as the name suggests, features an agglomeration of Oxford's most famous characters, or BNOCs (Big Names On Campus) for short. Of late, the list has gained quite the cult-like following, as various Union hacks, Tiktokers and people who wear red puffers vie for the glory of joining the pantheon of greats who have risen to widespread renown in the UK's fourteenth least social university. The list has a long and rich history: in one early manuscript now found in the Bodleian, Thomas Becket was listed in fifth spot, ironically losing out to his four future killers.

This year's edition has, unsurprisingly, been the source of much controversy. Excluding the fact that both 'cheditors' put themselves on the list AGAIN, Emma Watson shockingly found herself in 13th spot on the list too.

Given both its importance and prestige, it is unsurprising that the secrets of the list are kept hidden away from prying eyes. Much like the recipes to Coca Cola, KFC and Keble Lasagne (although I doubt

anybody actually wants the latter), the list remains in a locked vault in the Choffice (it's up the stairs and to the right just behind the sofa).

However, in the early hours of the Friday of third week, *Cherwell* staff were horrified to find that the list had been stolen. Immediately, alarm bells were sounded, security footage was checked and oxfesses were written demanding that the thief unmask themselves, and most importantly give the list back. Many names were thrown around about who the thief could be, but at last the culprit was disclosed. A man notorious for his Happy Birthday messages, DJ sets and even just his alliterative name, Daniel Dipper accidentally revealed himself as the BNOC list thief after the document fell out of his bag during a gig in a bar next to Atik. Having left the University last year, Mr. Dipper (or DJ Dipps for short) was ineligible to feature on this year's edition and thus unable to take top spot for a third year running. When asked to comment, Mr. Dipper told *Cherwell* "If I can't be on it, nobody else can" and claimed "I would have gotten away with it, if not for that meddling Kiss".

# John Evelyn

22nd May 2024

Welcome back to The Villa, the only place where the hotties are literally bringing the house down. Our roof creaks and heaves, fuelling the Deep Slate's ambitions to wipe out some hacks when it finally comes tumbling down. But this is far from the biggest problem troubling the library. A panoply of secret ballots, redacted letters, and remnants of the Third Reich have burst into view to defend the interests of the dead and buried white men that adorn our bookshelves. The Other Villa fought a desperate fight to ensure that no matter what book he picks up in the library, he loves it so much he can leave the pages stuck together when he's finished.

Monday's episode was replete with cameos and throwbacks, with some old contestants returning to Stand and deliver. As predicted, the Turnip has indeed found himself in ROcky territory. Big Mac was determined to trash the Union's electoral procedures to protect his man on the inside, and only some last-minute dodgy dealing was enough to save the turnip from being

cooked. Lying to the president, the house and the staff is apparently not enough to undermine our confidence in him, proving that the Omnislate is indeed alive and well. From banning presidential candidates to dictating what motions come to the house, there is nothing they can't do - maybe this is why Banana Republic was so keen to stop the turnip being swallowed up. Next episode, they'll be teaming up to eliminate the Panda from the villa and install BR as our next appointed president. Stay tuned to see if the corporate crusaders can mount a successful complaint and protect our democratic values.

The season finale is drawing near, and electoral tensions are ratcheting up. Leon Boy's disciple is gunning for victory, leaving Barbie's Sequel forlorn. At least the Oucaholic is still on board to sustain the girl-power of the slate: as the staunchest promoter of women's rights in the Union, the Oucaholic cares deeply about their personal and

political lives, especially when they can be used for electoral gain. We've also been closely watching sport this week. Some of us are winning pentathlon; others are watching cricket. In reality, we should be learning from the best: Oxford United spent the afternoon hacking on High Street and attracted more fans than either slate ever could. Forget modern pentathlon, cricket, and democracy. All we need to

remain relevant is a football match between slates to pick the winner. It would go more viral than Pelosi.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention Zelensky's triumph of a ball, and the fun we had donning our finest Suits for the speakers. To everyone who's been paying attention to the press: we'll keep sending our agents to spy on you, so you'd all better watch out! In the meantime, John Evelyn will be making the most of the Villa for the rest of this week, and hopes you won't vote him off.



PR

JOURNALISM

# TRASH TALK:

*a panel on careers in media and communications*

*Mansfield College*

*7pm, Tuesday 28th May*

FASHION

s | s

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### Cherbably

Billy Backhouse

### John Evelyn

John Evelyn



**Adam Saxon**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

Oli and often bemoan the workload of being Editors-in-Chief. While we massively enjoy the role, it comes with its challenges. Don't get me wrong – there are perks: we enjoy supreme creative influence over the paper and have been able to leave our mark on key areas, including the social media and a number of the sections, as well as being able to oversee and help a wonderful team of up-and-coming student journalists. That's without mentioning the events we've been invited to on behalf of the paper (I'm making the most of the free drinks).

However, it always feels as though there's more that could be done. Balancing editorship alongside full time studies is a chore, and if one wants to add a social life into the mix then there's no choice but to sacrifice a reasonable portion of their 8 hours of (beauty) sleep each night. This can be frustrating, because Oli and I



**Raghav Chari**  
*Deputy Editor-in-Chief*

When I bought a new phone recently, I was left somewhat miffed that they didn't send a British charger with it. It's a constant reminder that I'm an international student when my chargers don't fit the sockets here. I've been managing the last two years with an array of adaptors and extenders. Buying a British™ phone with a British™ charger would solve a whole host of problems. But now I was left at square one, connecting my British phone to my Indian charger. These are the real Third World Problems, I'm sure.

But I don't think my desire to have a British charger is just convenience. It's another symbolic step in what has become a steady

process of assimilation. In my two short years here I've slowly picked up the habits of a true Brexit geezer. I've picked up the accent and dialect, and now I call them Hoovers instead of vacuum cleaners, bikes rather than cycles, and glorious past instead of British Raj. I've begun watching football. I think 16 degrees is positively balmy weather. I'm hooked on game shows like QI. When the cricket T20 World Cup comes around in June, I'll be supporting England (only for my pookie bear Jos Buttler).

The one thing I haven't been able to hack yet is beans on toast. There's very little about the flavour or texture that I find appealing. I reckon it's one of those things that you won't appreciate unless you grew up here, but beans on toast has never used any of the many chances I've given it. I suppose I've given it so many chances because I want to be part of this new culture. There's quite a lot that I like about this new place, and I've made something homely out of it. I have friends, interests, and comfort here. I don't feel like I'm leaving any Indian-ness behind; like my charger, it complements the British parts. I do want to stay here. But if there comes a day when I'm asked to eat beans on toast for my citizenship test, then I'm fucked.

always feel as though we have more to give, and while we're really happy with the improvements we've made to the paper, we both hold ourselves to incredibly high standards and recognise there are areas where it could be developed further. We joke that being *Cherwell* Editor ought to be more like being Union President: socially acceptable to rusticate for a year to do the job. Indeed, in years gone by the revolving door between the two roles was significantly more common – take Michael Crick, who held both roles in the 80s (and went on to be a household name journalist for the BBC and Channel 4). I stress that the rustication idea is a joke – though regular criticism of the quality of student journalism in Oxford does make it more tempting.

As Oli noted in his editorial in our last edition, everyone who works for us is a volunteer, and everyone is learning. Student journalism is a vital training ground for the future of the field – something which is arguably more vital than ever. We get things wrong sometimes, but trust me, having written the archives column this term and looked back at over 100 years of *Cherwell*, we've been getting things wrong since our conception.

So, this week five, as the blues set in, be kind to the student journalists in your lives, and maybe (just maybe) they'll keep your name out of the papers.



**Oliver Sandall**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

A recent *Cherwell* survey (a show of hands at our biweekly lay-in) showed that more than half of the Senior Editorial Team (SET) speaks German. This unique skill-set proved vital after last week's social, when, outside the renowned Bavarian cuisine-sporting McDonalds, we bumped into a group of inebriated men from Munich, working for BMW.

After a number of poor attempts to lure us into Pläsh (German for Plush), we moved on.

Yet, it is surprising how many of our Deputy Editors-in-Chief – and, of course, myself – speak German. We're also losing a number of our amazing SET to a certain plague which afflicts many third-year humanities students: the year abroad. Five members of our current SET will be heading to Europe over the next few months. I hope some of them will continue to write for *Cherwell* during the absence from Oxford.

Indeed, the dynamic of our SET

is quite interesting, with the girls outnumbering the boys 6–2 (excluding me and Adam). Another interesting statistic is that there are only three people in the entire SET that don't speak German or don't study law. What a banging stat that is. *Cherwell* truly brings the best people together.

In any case, I think it is interesting to see the type of people drawn towards student journalism. Unsurprisingly, humanities students outnumber STEM students in the *Cherwell* editorial team. Yet, we are largely representative of the student body. We have staff from almost 30 colleges. We somehow manage to publish dozens of articles a week, hundreds of articles every term. Print editions are much less about trying to find articles than it is deciding which articles ought to be printed – and thereby remembered forever in the archives.

A big shoutout to everyone on the *Cherwell* team. My final editorial is likely to be quite self-centred, or at least focus on my role. But this one goes out to the diverse, cool, and hard-working *Cherwell* team. You can find a picture of the majority of the SET in the bottom right of this page on our aforementioned college bar crawl. To any section editors reading this, please apply to become a part of this wonderful team. It is not only great experience, but also an opportunity to make some great mates. Applications are normally in 7th or 8th week – keep your eyes peeled on the staff group chat.



*Cherwell Senior Editorial Team TT24. From left to right: Oliver Sandall, Éilis Mathur, Raghav Chari, Julia Amann, Rufus Hall, Gracie Allen, Adam Saxon, Alicia Martínez Patiño, Amelia Dovell, Eden Kilgour [Not pictured].*



# Breaking down the value of a university education

**Matthew Oulton** explains why we should stay committed to our study.

**W**e have all had this experience: you have a deadline coming towards you like a Japanese high speed freight train. Glancing at the clock, then at your open word document, then back at the clock. The cocktail of stress and apathy that leads you to a simple question - why am I even doing this?

Then you think of the fees you are paying: how expensive that stress in fact is. It can feel like we are at an elaborate fine dining restaurant where they ask the customers to do the dishes. To make matters worse, leaving university is rarely a smooth process. The straightforward 'milk-round' experience that earlier generations might have experienced, where graduate employers competed for graduates, seems to have passed like an overburdened bus.

So, would we have been better off saving our money and forgoing the entire experience?

Whether university is 'worth it' is a surprisingly hard question to answer. You can't just look at whether graduates earn more than everyone else, after all, since students are not a random sample of the population. Graduates do earn more than non-graduates, but university students aren't a random subsample of

the population. University selects both for academic capability as well as higher social status. Hence, taking university out of the equation, there is hardly a level professional playing field between would-be uni students and the people who do not attend. Maybe we would all be just as well off if we stuck it out and went straight into the world of work.

In favour of education, the first and classic response is to affirm that economic output aside, we can view a university level education as a consumption good, valuable at the point of practice. Granted, when you have a deadline looming or an imminent exam, it might not feel like study is all sunshine and roses. But surely some of the value of studying is that it gives us the time, space, and social environment to enjoy things that are harder to come by in working life: the capacity to flex our mental muscles and relishing the wonders of Nietzsche, string theory, Biblical hermeneutics or a Thursday night bridge with the promise of a Friday spent in quiet recuperation. The refrain learning for learning's sake comes to mind, after the age-old Humboldtian model of education.

This line of thought has an emotive pull, especially for those of us for whom the possibility of a lack of education and imposed ignorance

because of economic or class-based barriers is a fundamental reality or, for the more privileged among us, is at least within familial memory. But the independent value of the free thought and the expansion of the mind through knowledge acquisition is notoriously difficult to justify - especially given the difficulty of disassociating the independent at-

**“If education is going to be an economic good, it will be a credence good, whose utility, whose value is extremely hard to ascertain”**

traction of education from its status as a signifier of social class and how it is perceived as a tool for ascending social and material hierarchies.

To what extent, then, are these perceptions correct? It seems ob-

vious to say that studying is an investment. We study in the hope of improving our future labour market outcomes and time spent in education is, we tell ourselves, a way of increasing our lifetime human capital, and ensuring that we can be more productive in later life. For many, that will mean acquiring skills or qualifications that enable us to enter high power professions, many of which have a minimum graduate entry level or are requiring of particular university-level skills, and ultimately, if cynically, earn more throughout our lives. Another consideration might be that studying gives us increased time to ponder a career-choice before we commit to it. Instead of making hasty decisions, we are able to take time to develop, get a taste for what we like and make a more informed choice about our career preferences. And surely: if you enjoy your job, you are more likely to succeed in it.

Much of this is speculative, however. Increasingly, apprenticeships offer alternative, cheaper pathways into high value professions such as law, engineering and finance for those who are unconvinced that four years of doddering aimlessly around student bars and lecture halls is a valuable use of time. And even for those of us, who have made

the choice to invest in an education, the doubt often lingers that education's promises will be fulfilled. Economists sometimes talk about 'credence goods' - products whose value is not possible to determine at the moment of consumption, but only over a long time. These goods require that the consumer 'believes in them' for a while, before they have any chance of being effective. You cannot expect to feel the benefits of going to the gym after a single session. The connection that you make between tricep extensions and massive gains is perceptually a very loose one, based on the wise words of fitness influencers and gym operating companies. You have to crush those snagging doubts that the influencers are wrong when you do not immediately see results, in order to eventually see results.

If education is going to be an economic good, it will be a credence good. And one of the difficulties of credence goods is that their utility, their value is extremely hard to ascertain. Over a long period of time, there are so many variables that enter into the equation regarding the effects of a credence good, that those effects are potentially obscured from view. To make matters worse, it is likely that how education is consumed really matters for how

economically effective it will turn out to be. For it to work, you have to commit to it, and trust not only that the overall experience will be worthwhile, but, much like those final, cumbersome tricep extension reps, that the marginal effort of handing in any given piece of work or doing an extra hour's exam preparation will somehow translate into future benefit.

Thinking of education as a credence good, it is no longer obvious what value it drives. Fortunately, the data still speaks in its favour. A

## “Economists generally think of university level education as benefitting graduates in two distinct ways – signalling and human capital”

life-cycle earnings model estimated by the Institute for Fiscal Studies a few years ago found that almost all graduates increase their earnings through their education. Around 80%, meanwhile, increase their earnings enough that they are better off even considering the tuition fee repayments they have made.

Those who do not make a net profit on their degree are generally clustered in a small number of very low return degree subjects and are also disproportionately at less selective universities. Interestingly, the category of subjects for which people are least likely to make a positive return through their lifetime is the creative arts. No doubt many graduates in the creative arts will know they could have earned substantially more if they had trained as a plumber or a bricklayer, rather than having gone to university. For students of these subjects, one suspects that there is no long term expectation of profitability: it is the enjoyment of creative expression, or consumption value, that counts.

So, on average, your degree probably is worth it. Like a

long-acting medicine or steady exercise regime, it may not feel like it day-to-day, but the hours you're spending pouring over another history essay is strongly associated with better social outcomes later in life. Interestingly, higher degree performance is also associated with higher lifetime earnings. So, when that pony undergraduate who is too busy writing poetry to do her essays claims that 'it doesn't matter how well I do', you can tell her how utterly misinformed she truly is.

What are the methods and processes by which a university level education confers (in most cases) economic value? For some degrees, of course, this is obvious. A medical student, for example, can trace a clear causal arrow between their degree and their subsequent job as a junior doctor. For others, there is no direct channel for the conference of economic benefit - especially when graduates enter into professions where they compete with ambitious and capable non-graduates.

Economists generally think of university level education as benefitting graduates via two distinct channels - signalling and human capital. The signalling channel, which is perhaps the most depressing of the two, is the less intuitive. It proposes that graduates earn more than non-graduates because de-

grees are really hard. They test students on attributes employers care about - willingness to work hard, personal organisation, as well as the student's skills at writing or solving problems - and can thus be used as a 'signal' of worker quality. This channel, of course, suggests that even if all you have to talk about as a result of your study are the reasons for the collapse of the Umayyad empire, your potential employer is not put off. This channel, whilst no less important for us as students, suggests that education is all just a 'costly signal' that we use to attract an employer, like an elaborate plumage on a male peacock as it struts around in the hope of finding a mate.

Secondly, education may well improve our skills. In the case of vocational degrees, perhaps, this is very obvious. A computer science or mathematics graduate might get a job coding probability in a company trading options. But even if you are employed outside of an industry with a clear link to your subject, you will probably use abilities you honed during your degree. As a graduate in Philosophy once told me, "every time I have to write something in a hurry, I feel those hundreds of hours of Philosophy essays come in handy."

There are also 'meta-skills', which are important too. Skills which help in acquiring new skills. You have, doubtless, learnt to learn

during your studies. You have probably learnt to manage deadlines. Even the most jaded graduate can surely accept that they are quicker at reading complicated material than they were prior to their studies. When you need to develop and learn in the future, these things will come in handy both for future employers, and to you as a worker, even where your intricate knowledge of British and Irish history in the years 1900-1921 may not. Many important skills of learning are not even domain-specific. If you spend years mastering fine art or music, the odds are that patience, the ability to exert undisturbed patience, and discipline were required and trained. Even if you don't become an artist, those skills will not be wasted.

So does your degree prepare you for a job? Almost certainly. What job? Now, that is a harder question to answer.

It is difficult for two reasons. Firstly, as already discussed, most degrees do not point towards a clear vocation. Indeed, even the skills portfolio you acquire in studying is not always that indicative about what sort of job you should do.

But it is a mistake to view education as simply an entry point to a career. The idea that you only benefit from what you have learnt in your first job is nonsense. In many ways, it is least helpful when you're applying for your first job, because employers are overwhelmed by the

volume of job applications and use coarse filtering tools, like psychometric or situational judgement tests, for which your actual skills and education are virtually useless. It is in the years after you start working that your ability to progress and find new jobs will depend increasingly on your demonstrated aptitude.

Secondly, it's hard to know what career paths will even look like in ten, twenty, or thirty years time. New industries and jobs will doubtless spring up, and even in the ones that exist the type of work will change. Who could have guessed that basic computing skills would

come to be required in every job when our grandparents were starting their careers? What matters in the long-term is your ability to adapt and learn new things, and general education is a tool for preparing ourselves for that. The need for specific expertise and knowledge will always change over time, but education in a broad sense is unlikely to ever set you back.

So, resist the nihilistic urge to condemn education as nothing but a waste of time. It is a transformative opportunity; one that will benefit all of us throughout our lives. The opening up of university to more people in the UK is a huge change - for generations it was the preserve of the wealthy and the elite. It is a privilege that so many of us are now able to benefit from it.

Resist further the urge to downplay education as nothing more than a signal. Firstly, signals are good. They help to smooth the matching process between employer and employee and help guide us to jobs we are more likely to succeed in. Furthermore, better that we have education as an imperfect signal than even more primitive signals like parentage or postcode. Secondly, whilst it is a signal, for sure, it also provides the first step in building the tools to deal with an uncertain and changing world. Just as once reading and writing were seen as luxury

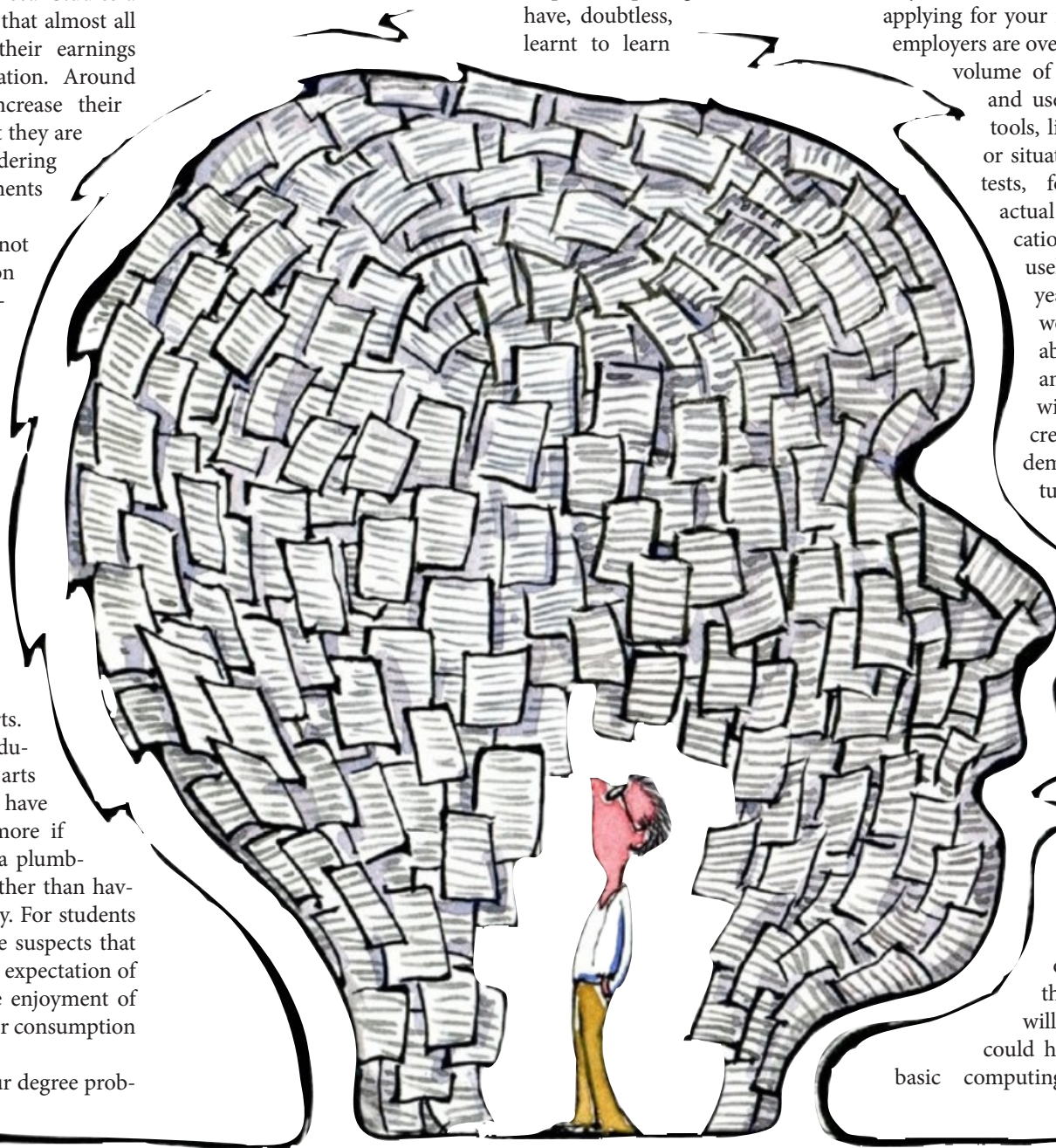
## “Resist the nihilistic urge to downplay education as nothing but a waste of time”

skills that could be monopolised by a privileged few, advanced training is an increasingly vital requirement for working in a modern economy. Even where there is no obvious vocational outlet, study is important.

And finally, do not forget that part of the point of studying is to enjoy yourself. It is, in part, a consumption good. Do not believe older people when they say that university is the best time in your life - indeed your early twenties are often found to be a particularly stressful and difficult time of people's lives. But full time study is an experience unlikely to be repeated, with many positive components. It is a generational privilege of ours to be so well educated. We might as well take advantage of it, as there aren't very many others.

Image Credit (page 12): Txllxt TxllxT / CC BY-SA 4.0 DEED via Wikimedia Commons

Image Credit (Left): Hiking Artist CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons



# Things can only get... worse? Why 2024 is no 1997 for Labour

Adam Saxon sheds light on the shortcomings of a tempting political parallel.



One of the characteristic features of the 1997 Labour Party general election campaign was their use of D:Ream's song 'Things Can Only Get Better' in their campaign video. This song was selected to conjure optimism following what many saw as eighteen years of Conservative failure which had left the country at an all-time low. Labour had been far ahead in the polls since as far back as 1992, following the failures of 'Black Wednesday', when the Tories shed their reputation as reliable managers of the economy. Unemployment, despite being lower than certain peaks under Thatcher, had also spiked at 10.7%, since the previous general election in 1992. All of this while a civil war over the European Union rendered the Conservative party divided.

Sound familiar?

Over the last few months, there has been growing speculation about the similarities between the general election of 1997 and the one to be held later this year. Ostensibly, such comparisons appear warranted: we, too, have a floundering conservative government whose long stretch in power has left them without ideas. They have had to deal with crisis after crisis, are nearing the end of their term, and are marred with a mounting number of accusations of corruption and mismanagement that have led to economic despair, not least the paragon of economic incompetence that was Liz Truss' mini budget. Ever since that disaster struck, the Conservatives have been unable to make up a vast gap in the polls with a Labour party who claim to offer 'change' in an attempt to give hope to a country that appears to be pinballing between crises with little sense of a long-term plan.

However, the pundits are wrong to project the results of the 1997 election onto this year's contest. It will be of little surprise that the tempting comparison is overly sim-

plistic, and leaves a number of fundamental differences in the politics of today compared with that of 27 years ago unaddressed.

The first glaring difference concerns the ideologies of the two major parties. A lot has been made in recent times of the seeming dearth of ideas among politicians, with particular focus on voters not really knowing what Labour's platform will be going into the general election. While they have been vehemently opposed to almost everything the current government does, there seems to have been little in the way of a clear plan as to what they would do differently to solve the numerous crises running riot through the country. Indeed, during Hilary, the Oxford Union held a debate in which members voted at a ratio of almost 3:1 in favour of the motion: "This house does not know what Labour stands for".

Those who back Labour's va-

**“Major pledges for constitutional reform have also fallen victim to U-turns...”**

cant policy platform highlight that when Starmer has introduced potential flagship policies, they have been vulnerable to theft by the Conservatives, who then make sly U-turns. Take, for example, Labour's long-standing aim to abolish non-dom tax status, a move which it was recently announced that the Conservatives were also exploring despite having previously strongly opposed it.

Again, however, this example demonstrates precisely one of the reasons why 1997 is so different from 2024. The fact that the policy platforms of the two parties are similar enough for the Conserva-

tives to poach the ideas of Labour says a lot about the dearth of ideas in British politics. In 1996, New Labour published *New Labour, New Life for Britain*, which set out, in detail, the party's centrist vision for the future of the country. Included in the 'pre-manifesto' were promises to cut infant class sizes to 30, reduce backlogs in the NHS and the justice system, and get more young people into work.

They were able to own these policies because they knew their justifications would be ideologically distinct enough from anything the Conservatives would be able to support. Indeed, when *New Labour, New Life for Britain* was released, it was met with horror by the Conservatives, who responded with their own tagline: "New Labour, New Danger". Contrastingly, both parties being unwilling or unable to make any significant promises this close to an election because they fear their opposition appropriating them indicates a severe lack of integrity and ideology in politics. This bodes badly: "more of the same" will not be enough to get the UK out of its current slump.

Of course, from Labour's point of view, it might be argued that this fear of 'policy theft' does not represent a lack of ideas in their own party, but purely from their opposite numbers in the Conservative party. After all, being the party in government, the Conservatives have the means to 'steal policies' by enacting them through parliament, while Labour, currently, do not.

However, even where Labour have made promises they have been forced into several u-turns. For example, when Keir Starmer ran for leadership of his party, he promised renationalisation of major public services such as mail, energy, and water, promises he has since largely abandoned. Even where they have not fully cast aside core pledges, a number of promises have been heavily watered down, including in pledged green investment, which

was reduced from £28 billion a year to just £4.7 billion a year.

Major pledges for constitutional reform have also fallen victim to U-turns. In 1997, when coming to power, the Labour Party promised and delivered major constitutional reform through its devolution settlements for Scotland and Wales. Under Starmer, the reform 'promised' by Labour was the abolition and replacement of the House of Lords. Once again, however, this pledge has been shelved, under the argument that constitutional reform is a drain on both time and energy for governments.

Another potential reason for Labour's weakness on these core promises is the UK's current bleak economic forecast. Growth in the UK has essentially flatlined, the national debt is at 98% of GDP, and the tax burden has hit record post-war highs. The economic dire straits the country faces hint at another crucial difference between the incoming Labour government and that of 1997: spending. Indeed, any incoming government will be very limited in how it can increase spending. As of now, the only way to do so would be to either raise

**“Britain's economic problems could not be a further cry from the optimism of youth captured during the Blair campaign.”**

taxes – which is politically unpopular – or to borrow more – which has longer-term negative implications. By contrast, despite the chaos of conservative rule, when the Labour party came to power in 1997 economic growth was strong and unemployment and inflation were both falling, which gave a much stronger fiscal base for the incoming government. This outlook allowed the New Labour government to increase public spending by 4.4% per year between 1997-2010, which was largely directed towards the NHS, education, and transport.

Regarding election campaigns, it is crucial to note that the UK is today a very different cultural landscape from where it was in 1997. New Labour's use of 'get better' to reinforce their image as the 'cool party' capitalised on a trend that swept the country in the latter half of the 90s. "Cool Britannia", typified by developments like Britpop, Euro 96, and a new wave of British cinema, represented a revival of national pride following two decades

of division. "Get Better" succeeded in typifying this pride, capturing a popular and persistent desire to feel, as Blair often said, like Britain was a 'young country' again. Set against John Major's sleepy vision of Britain as the eternal land of "warm beer, green suburbs" and "old maids bicycling to holy communion through the morning mist," Blair did a fine job of claiming this newfound British "coolness" for the Labour party's own core values. He morphed Labour into the 'hip' party which embraced a modern Britain which had become significantly more diverse in the preceding twenty years. Through this leadership, he also won the support of major, traditionally Conservative newspapers like *The Sun*, which allowed the party more room to announce policy without the threat of significant criticism.

By contrast, the Labour party under Starmer appears significantly less dynamic, weighed down by a deflated national spirit. Not for want of trying, that is: Starmer has also attempted to bring to the fore ideas of British identity and its place on the world stage, vying relentlessly to reignite a sense of national pride. However crass his adoption of British national symbols might seem, Starmer's incessant plastering of the Union Jack all over his campaign videos and speech platforms doubtless speaks to a real desire to claim for Labour a patriotism which consists in serving the interests and welfare of British citizens, rather than in anachronisms about our 'glorious' past. However, the Labour party cannot alone drive a wider cultural revival: today, Britain's structural economic woes, its lingering divisions over the political taboo of Brexit and its crumbling public services could not be a further cry from the rose-tinted optimism of youth captured during the Blair campaign.

It is obviously hard to predict exactly what the result of this year's general election will be. Given recent local election results, the Conservative party appears on the brink of electoral oblivion. Nonetheless, six months is a long time in politics and anything could happen. However, what we can guarantee is that the outlook for whoever ends the year in charge will be significantly bleaker than it looked in 1997. Rachel Reeves recently said that Labour won't be able to "turn things around straight away" – possibly a slightly less optimistic catchline than 'Get Better'. Whatever happens, what the people of the United Kingdom need is hope, and it is in politicians' hands to provide it for them.

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

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## Fashion

## The Oxford Fashion Gala: A stellar display of talent

Connie Hilton and Aniya Boranbay

The evening of Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May brought a show that transcended the limitations of space and time in a beautiful portrayal of Oxford University's talent. The Fashion Gala returned in a whirlwind of incredible designs, modelled by Oxford's finest. We truly ascended in the lunar eclipse theme, which brought a shower of metallic, shimmering looks from the guests. This high fashion dress code was only elevated by the stunning setting of the Randolph Hotel, and we were taken on a voyage of the university's creativity.

The night began with a nuanced runway adorning the gala's sponsor, *Tom's Trunks*. The crossover between the casual beach look and the science fiction style makeup created an eclectic mix that set the bar high for the rest of the evening. The ability to secure such a brand for sponsorship speaks volumes about the scale of this event.

Following this runway, the guests enjoyed an exhilarating perfor-

mance from *Little Clarendon*, with jazzy covers of the classics that got the audience ready for the incredible designs to come. After the swanky musical intermission, the ballroom was abuzz with excitement for the second runway. As everyone crowded around the runway, it became apparent that this was going to be the highlight of the night. As the first song began to play, the entire room collectively tensed as eager eyes searched for the first model to come out on the runway.

The first model emerged in an all-white ensemble. The top was sheer white, complete with subtle ruching. The bottoms continued the theme, the fabric carefully gathered to create a plethora of folds cascading down.

As more models had their turn on the runway, there were several themes and pieces that spanned

across several designs. Head and face coverings were heavily featured. The majority of the time, these accessories made the overall designs more interesting and elevated them to suit a high fashion runway. Another prominent overall theme was the use of sheer fabrics. Several designers played with these fabrics to create dresses and tops, creating an ethereal and whimsical

display. With the theme being 'A voyage into ascent', it was interesting seeing the different designer's interpretations of the themes. The theme was incorporated into even the makeup, with hues of blue and shimmer being heavily incorporated.

David Akanji, the talented president of the gala, was able to talk to us about his expectations for the night. Chuckling, he said that he had kept them very low to avoid disappointment, but breathed a sigh of relief that the gala ran so smoothly.

When asked about the root of his interest in fashion, he talked about his final fashion piece at UAL, which sparked his desire to get involved in the fashion community at Oxford. By the time the call for committee positions was released for this year's gala, he knew president



would be the perfect role to get into! David's modesty and joy throughout the show was inspiring to watch, and he did an excellent job as president.

One big aspect of the gala's success was the audience. With silver sparkles and dark colours prominently featured in everyone's outfits, the celestial theme was executed to perfection. Guests spoke ecstatically of the gala and its designers, speaking of their highlights of the night. Some people who attended the event were finalists, and they did not regret taking time out of their busy schedules to be present at the gala. The vibrant display of creativity was great to witness according to onlookers. Some audience members also commented on their favourite designers. Designer Ocho's designs were commonly praised for their distinctive silhouette and design.

All in all, the Oxford Fashion Gala was a major success from start to finish. It was a true testament to the creative talent that the university has to offer. While Oxford students are often praised for their intellect, it is clear that there is so much more to the community than academia. The gala was a beautiful display of the artistic scene that shines at Oxford.

Image Credit: Olivia Cho.

## Music

## Drake vs Kendrick: A saga

Nina Naidu

Since the rise of hip-hop in the 1990s, diss tracks (short for disrespect or disparage) have been a staple of the genre. These tracks aim to tarnish a person's reputation through the art of "spitting bars", escalating conflict between individuals. It's often a game of verbal ping pong, where releasing one diss track prompts a response which in turn prompts another response, intensifying the rivalry. I've even witnessed amateur rap battles on primary school playgrounds with kids hurling insults about each other's mums. While somewhat entertaining (especially when both parties commit to the diss), the stakes are never as high as in the most infamous track feud: Drake versus Kendrick Lamar.

Many are surprised to know that the Kendrick-Drake feud actually dates back to the early 2010s, despite its recent resurgence. Initially, the two artists began on favourable terms with their first collaboration in 2011 on Drake's album *Take Care*. They continued to collaborate together over the next few years. However, in 2013, Lamar stirred the pot by claiming that he would "murder" Drake amongst other rappers in Big Sean's song 'Control'. This

led to a response from Drake in the album *Nothing Was The Same*, referencing Lamar's 'Control' verse. Drake, however, denied dissing Lamar, claiming that he wasn't at all threatened by Lamar's verse.

Between 2015 and 2022, their diss tracks evolved into 'sneak disses': subtle jabs without directly mentioning names. This feud reached a peak in a famous 2016 interview with Barack Obama, who, when asked whether Lamar or Drake would win in a rap battle, appraised Lamar's album *To Pimp A Butterfly* as the best album of 2015. Drake responded unfavourably to Obama's endorsement of Lamar, taking a shot at the former president with the line "tell Obama that my verses are just like the whips that he in / they bulletproof" in his song 'Summer Sixteen'.

Fast forward to 2023, when fellow rapper J. Cole suggested that he, Lamar, and Drake formed the "Big Three" greatest rappers of modern hip-hop on Drake's song 'First Person Shooter'. Lamar, rejecting this idea, responded with a diss track as-

serting that he was only "big me" rather than part of the aforementioned trio...

In March 2024, Lamar released 'Like That', stirring controversy with disses aimed both at J. Cole and Drake. Referencing many of Drake's previous albums and songs ('fuck sneak dissin', 'first-person shooter' and 'certified paedophiles', for example), this marked a departure from years of subliminal disses. Accusing Drake of issues with alcoholism, gambling, inappropriate behaviour with minors, and being a neglectful father, Lamar made it undeniably clear that their beef was far from over, and he was determined to win. As of May 2024, 17 total diss tracks have been involved in their feud.

While diss tracks have always fuelled drama in the hip-hop scene, their reputation has been somewhat diluted by the sheer

volume produced by YouTubers and social media influencers. A notable example is the feud between Jake Paul and RiceGum, two YouTubers popular in the mid-2010s. When Jake Paul

## Cherwell Introduces... Tongue

Joseph Lomax



Joining me this week are Oxford student rock band Tongue. They told me all about their debut album, and love of dyson airblades.

**What is your favourite song to perform as a band?**

Doudou: Say it on three?

James: Yep, ok let's do it on three....

Tilly: No wait, I'm between two and I wanna say the same as you guys.... ok ready.

All together: One, two, three... Dyson Airblade.

**I have to ask: What was it about this hand-dryer that was so special for the band?**

James: It's just the best type of drier. You know you're going to have dry hands, the physical intensity of it is just incomparable. I have a belief about hand dryers, you've got to put one hand on top of the other slide them in and out alternately, it should be

systematic! And that's what a Dyson Airblade is...

systematic! What on earth is better than an instructional hand dryer? You've got clear communication.

Tilly: I like the Dyson V version; you know the ones with the handles that jut out (like the one's at Society café? I ask) I don't know about the society café toilet, but all I can say is there's something very powerful about the stance of that Dyson.

**What exactly did you mean when you said that you embody: 'The typical machismo of post-funk jazz fusion'?**

James: Just a little joke about jazz-fusion - not to get sincere, but local music is an old-boys club. Our Spotify is 59% male listeners, an all-time low for us. It's a joke about how machismo the industry is.

Read the full article at [cherwell.org](http://cherwell.org)  
Image Credit: Kiaya Phillips.

Follow Tongue!

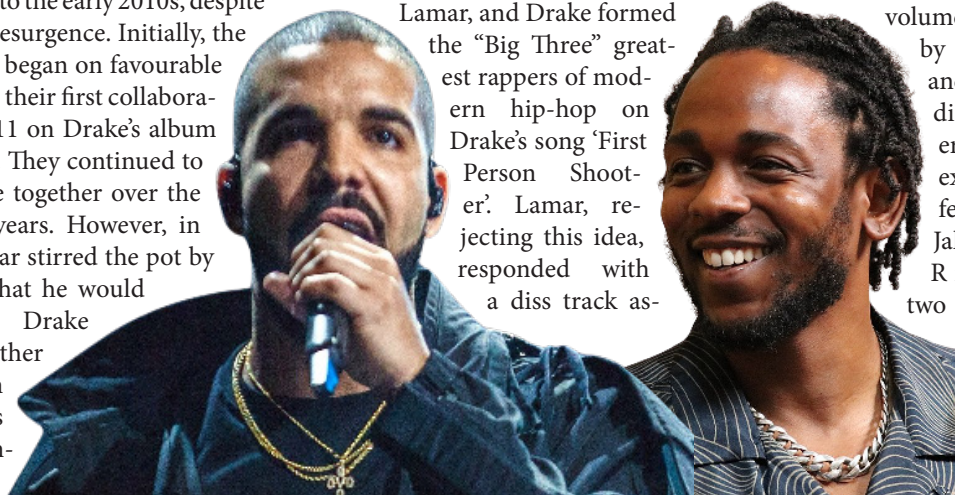
Instagram: @tongueband

re-leased his infamous song 'It's Everyday Bro' in 2017, it was widely mocked for its poor quality. The song dissed Paul's ex-girlfriend, Alissa Violet, prompting her to release a response track, 'It's Every Night Sis' with RiceGum. Their feud, which also involved Paul's brother Logan, caused quite a stir on YouTube, with many criticising their bars as inauthentic and ghost-written. Today, when people mention "diss track", it's difficult not to think of these two influencers trading juvenile insults.

Despite this, the enduring feud between Drake and Kendrick Lamar remains both entertaining and impressive. While the content of their diss tracks may be contentious, the prolific output of music is a testament to their dedication and talent and casual listeners and fans alike remain eager to hear the next revealing instalment.

Drake Image Credit: FMSky / CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

Kendrick Image Credit: Fuzheado / CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.



## Books

## RIP Dante, you would have loved fanfiction

Liz Lane

When a trailer for the adaptation of Robinne Lee's 2017 novel *The Idea of You* came out last month, it set the internet ablaze. Within a month, it became the most-watched trailer ever for an original streaming movie. As word of the film spread online, one question abounded. 'Is this film based on Harry Styles fanfiction?'

The film follows 40-year-old gallery owner Solène Marchand (played by Anne Hathaway) and her love affair with 24-year-old boyband superstar Hayes Campbell (Nicholas Galitzine). They meet when Solène, a single mother, escorts her daughter to Coachella and unwittingly finds herself in the trailer of the heartthrob Hayes Campbell. She does not recognise him, but he takes a shine to her and an immediate connection is formed. Hayes then pursues Solène, they fall in love and try to navigate the media storm that follows their relationship.

As soon as Lee's book was published, it was connected with One Direction's Harry Styles. Lee, who once admitted that Styles acted as something of a muse, has now expressed regret over the statement. 'It's unfortunate because it's being used as click-bait,' she told *Entertainment Weekly*, "and when I'm writing for Hayes, I'm

not picturing Harry Styles." A debate about the degree to which *The Idea of You* can be considered fanfiction has since emerged. But Lee's desire to distance herself from the genre says more about the derision that surrounds the label 'fanfiction'.

Some people have traced fanfiction back to *Star Trek* zines created in the 1960s but its history dates back much further. If 'fanfiction' can be defined as 'stories written about TV, film, or book characters by their fans', Virgil, Jean Rhys and John Milton can be considered some of its best writers. *Paradise Lost*, Milton's epic 1667 poem about Adam and Eve in Eden? Bible fanfiction. *Inferno*, Dante's poem detailing his own journey through hell? Self-insert fanfiction. Tom Stoppard's modern classic *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*? Hamlet fanfiction at its finest. Authors tend to shy away from the term 'fanfiction' because it is so frequently used in a derogatory manner but on a very basic level, the concept has always existed in literature.

Robinne Lee's rejection of the label 'fanfiction' may stem from a fear that her work and its themes would not be taken seriously if it is labelled as such. Talking to *Vogue*, Lee explained, "This was never supposed to be a book about Harry Styles . . . It was supposed to be a story about a woman approaching 40 and reclaiming her sexuality and rediscovering herself, just at the point that society

traditionally writes women off as desirable and viable and whole.' *The Idea of You* is, in many ways, a book about the ways in which ideas and people can be shamed by society. Solène, Lee's protagonist is quickly labelled a "cougar" by the press when her relationship with Hayes goes public. The media is incredulous, appalled by the idea that a middle-aged woman could be an object of attraction to a younger and highly desirable man. Part of the book's purpose is to prove that it is possible to rise above ideas unfairly ridiculed by society. Why can't fanfiction, surely the most ridiculed subgenre of them all, do the same?

In recent years, work that originally started out as fanfiction has produced some of the biggest hits in the publishing industry. Most famous, of course, was E. L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey*, which started out as fanfiction based on Stephanie Meyers' *Twilight*. Since then, Ali Hazelwood's TikTok sensation *The Love Hypothesis*, which started out as Star Wars fanfiction about Rey and Kylo Ren, has taken the industry by storm. In the same year, Neil Gaiman defended the legitimacy of fanfiction online: 'I won the 2004 Hugo Award for Best Short Story for an H. P. Lovecraft/Arthur Conan Doyle mashup fiction,' he wrote, 'so fanfiction had better be legitimate, because I'm not giving the Hugo back.' S. E. Hinton, the author of *The Outsiders*,

who has written fanfiction based on her own novel, similarly praised the genre, arguing that 'two of the best stories I've ever read in my life, published or not, were fanfiction.'

The key word here is Gaimain's: 'legitimate.' Though fanfiction is undeniably a popular form, and one that can easily be found in the canon, it is still not taken seriously by the media at large. This, perhaps, is where Anne Hathaway comes in. Anne Hathaway is a multi-award-winning A-list actor, not only does she have a proven track record as a film star but she's also enjoying what has gleefully been dubbed as a 'Hathaisance' in the media. Praised on social media for her iconic performances and 'unproblematic' ce-

lebrity persona, Hathaway may well be at the peak of her powers. Her decision to star in *The Idea of You* gives the film and book a kind of legitimacy: a premium label that can only be found in the brand of Anne Hathaway.

So, will this turn the dial in turns of how we start to view fanfiction? The film, though not universally praised, has not been derided in the way that it might have been five years ago. It has been lauded as an enjoyable piece of escapism and was even described as 'deceptively courageous' by *Empire*. Love or loathe it, *The Idea of You* is a mainstream rom-com about an older woman finding love. Fanfiction, as we know, has always been an object of derision but when it starts to dictate the conversation as much as it has done recently, perhaps it's time we stop dismissing it and start paying attention to all the bi-



## WHAT'S ON?

Stage: *Equus*

@Pilch Studio

28th May - 1st June

Dr. Martin Dysart, a psychiatrist, is confronted with Alan Strang, a boy who has blinded six horses in a violent fit of passion.

Music: Simple Oxford

@Tap Social Room

26th May

Join Simple Oxford as they turn 25 over the bank holiday weekend, celebrating with an outdoor party featuring DJs from 12-12!

Film: *La Chimera*

@Phoenix Picturehouse

*La Chimera* is a brilliant comedy-drama set in 1980s Tuscany, following an Englishman in search of something he can't quite grasp.

## The Orwell Tour by Oliver Lewis review: 'A first-rate travelogue'

Hassan Akram

Within the last year there have been countless new books on George Orwell, but Oliver Lewis's *The Orwell Tour*, just released in paperback, is the most accessible and enjoyable of all of them. Lewis writes in a crisp and evocative style (I can still see in my mind's eye the Martian dust of Marrakech and the architecture and landscape of Huesca); and he has Orwell's own gift for fresh similes (on a bus "it was as if the passengers were coins in a tin can being rattled"; in Burma he finds "a crumbling church tower, as if copied and pasted from Surrey"). The result is a book which, even without the Orwell element, would remain a first-rate piece of travel writing.

Orwell had an extremely productive life in which, aside from writing enough novels and essays and letters to fill twenty thick volumes, he travelled very widely. He was born in India, educated at Eton, lived among miners in Wigan and beggars in London and Paris, served as a policeman in Burma and a soldier in Spain. Lewis handles every location with expertise. He is not just a travel writer, but a novelist, a humourist, and a historian.

Like Evelyn Waugh, a contemporary of Orwell's and a former contributor to *Cherwell* who wrote a number of amusing travelogues,

Lewis makes his travels more fun to read about by recording a number of humorous interactions with locals. There is an incident that stands out involving an octogenarian monk in Burma. Lewis approaches him and asks for a photograph. "He replied: 'Mannay?' I answered that I had paid my entrance fee, but he snapped back: 'No mannay? Get out!'" At another point, Lewis meets a woman who complains to him that, on ships, dogs are always taken down first: "They're treating them like animals. It's disgusting."

Lewis manages seamlessly to blend anecdotes and local colour with history and biography. In the chapter on Burma, he gives an overview of the country's history since Orwell's days, and this historical coverage flows perfectly with all else around it, where in less competent hands it would have come through as a tacked-on digression. Some of the accounts of local folklore are also very good, like the legend of Jack of Southwold.

There is some literary criticism here, too, but it never overbears and is always interesting. Lewis belongs to that school of Orwell scholars which seeks to rescue his dullest novel, *A Clergyman's Daughter*, from what E.P. Thompson called the condescension of posterity; an intriguing parallel is drawn between that novel and *The Power and the Glory* by Graham Greene (yet another *Cherwell* alumnus - we're on a roll this week). If anything, these snippets of literary criticism are too brief, although those who want more such can always console themselves with a copy of *Orwell: The New Life* or the latest issue of *George Orwell Studies*. Lewis does his best with the less interesting sites of Orwell's life, and the quality of writing and research never falters. Orwell had lived for some time in some quite full places, like Hayes, of which he gave a laser-accurate description as "one of the most godforsaken places I have ever struck". Lewis, like Orwell, is a bibliophile, and he has



an extraordinary eye for bookshops in all the places he has visited. "It is hard to resist visiting any bookshop in the vicinity of somewhere with Orwellian credentials." It is interesting to read a description of a tucked-away library in India where books in English have gone utterly unborrowed since the 1950s, remaining as a sort of shelved tomb for the British Raj. Some of Lewis's observations defy categorisation but remain amusing and thought-provoking: in Marrakech he reflects that former French colonies have better hotel breakfasts than former British ones.

If at times Lewis tries too hard to be accessible (i.e. explaining about how public schools are not really public), that is compensated for by the fact that everyone can read this book. Lewis succeeds admirably in everything that he aims to do, and his infectious enthusiasm for his subject shines through every line. Whether you are interested in travel or literature or history or biography, this is definitely a book to read - as, I am sure, will be his upcoming book on travels through the life and work of John Steinbeck.

The *Orwell Tour* is now available in paperback from Blackwell's, Waterstones, and Gulp Fiction.

For Hassan's interview with Oliver Lewis, go to [cherwell.org](http://cherwell.org).

Image Credits: Cassowary Colorizations / CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.



## Stage

## The Two Gentlemen of Verona review: 'A hilarious modern take'

Adam Saxon

Arriving at a packed-out Playhouse to see Shakespeare's rarely performed *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* I had high expectations. The production marks director Sir Gregory Doran's completion of all 36 plays in Shakespeare's *First Folio*, and with a man as experienced as the former artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in charge, it was understandable that I was expecting big things.

In a speech to the Playhouse's circle bar before the show, Doran spoke of the honour of working with students over the last academic year to put the production together. He praised their commitment, adding that five finalists working on the play had multiple exams in the week of the performances.

It was, then, a testament to this commitment that the performance was as good as it was. The production was a hilarious modern take on

Shakespeare's comedy, with several scenes updated, modified, or introduced entirely for this play. We had a drag scene, the use of Hinge (yes, the dating app), and a Formula One-themed scene to name but a few of the excellent modernisations made for this production.

One of the stars of the show, undoubtedly, was its Duke of Milan, Jake Robertson. From his introduction in the raucous drag scene which fooled the entire audience (genuinely the highlight of the entire play), to his masterfully witty confrontation with Valentine, he had the audience in stitches throughout.

Jo Rich, playing Launce, also captured the comedy perfectly. Every scene he was part of felt like the address of a madman to his imaginary (or real) audience, and this brought his character a suitable level of chaos which matched the absurdity of the play as a whole. He also had brilliant chemistry with the live dog, Rocky, who, despite spending much of his

time more interested in whatever was going on offstage, captured the hearts of the audience from his first appearance. The audible 'awww' when he came on for the first time was well deserved.

However, to single out individuals does not do justice to many of the cast members in this production. There are many strong performances: Lilia Kanu (Julia)'s portrayal of the heartbreak of Proteus's betrayal, Rob Wolfreys (Proteus) in his capturing of the character as a dual figure, at times the funniest character in a scene, while at others delivering gut-wrenching soliloquies about his internal turmoil to name but a few. Also deserving praise are the servants played by Leah Aspden (Lucetta) and Jelani Munroe (Speed) whose chemistry with the lead actors was excellent.

One of the most surprising aspects of the play was the set design. Upon entry, I was underwhelmed, being greeted by nothing more than four ugly pillars of scaffolding. However, the adaptability of this set proved vital, with the production benefiting from a wide range of props which brought the set to life, while the scaffolding moved as needed to signify different settings. There was also support from a live band, which only added to the brilliance of the musical scenes.

Admittedly, on a couple of occasions, the play went too far in its unseriousness. A couple of the modifications fell slightly flat in their attempts to be funny, but these were rare and still merited a handful of laughs from the audience. All in all, the play was riotously funny, and that, in large part, is a testament to the delivery of the



## Art

## The artist and the photographer: An analysis of Francis Goodman's film negatives

Taya Neilson

The walls of the National Portrait Gallery in London are dotted with an eclectic mix of paintings and photographs. There is no hierarchy based on which the art is displayed, but rather visitors are hit by a wave of portraits as soon as they enter a room in the gallery. The visitor is met by a room of unfamiliar faces and throughout their journey they become increasingly curious about the stories of the individuals who now adorn the gallery walls. One such individual is the artist Lucian Freud, who's rather unconventional charisma was captured by the photographer Francis Goodman in 1945.

Goodman was invited to take photographs at Freud's flat, 2 Maresfield Gardens, following their initial, and rather spontaneous, interaction at the Coffee An' in Soho, London. Freud, a young artist who had recently graduated from Goldsmiths' College, likely perceived such an interaction with a professional photographer as a sign that his art career had just begun.

Goodman's photographs, after the Second World War, which featured regularly in the British magazine *The Tatler And Bystander*, focused on covering high society, lifestyle, and politics. Yet, Freud's portrait was not nearly as organised or calculated: the photographs were taken outside during winter, where the reflection of the cold winter snow on young Freud's complexion acted as a natural form of studio lighting.

An unusual dynamic is consequently captured between the photographer and artist in the photograph of Lucian Freud. Rather than Goodman directing the sitting, it appears that Freud cultivated his own image as an artist through the medium of Goodman's photography. As such, rather than the final photograph reflecting primarily on Goodman's perceptions and insights as a photographer, the hardship experienced by Freud as a Jewish artist in post-war London is revealed. This is especially depicted by the piercing, though distant, gaze of Freud and his folded arms, attempting to protect his body from the cold winter. Freud emigrated to Eng-

land in the 1930s, aged ten, alongside his family to escape Nazism. Whilst Freud was granted British Citizenship, the photograph illustrates the realities of migration as Freud appears unsettled by the harsh conditions of the outside from which the photograph was taken. Nevertheless, whilst a sense of starkness and coldness is portrayed through the slightly blurred surrounding landscape, this is in contrast to the extremely clear and determined glare of Freud himself. The photograph, therefore, was important to Freud to act as a reminder of the origins of his life as an artist and his ability to navigate the alienating environment of urban London.

The photograph not only depicts Freud as an artist, but one of his own paintings is also visible in the background. Goodman and Freud cleverly synthesise the mediums of paint and photography. The portrait depicts an old, slightly deformed man, who's glance mirrors the direction of the artist himself. The man in the portrait and the artist are therefore connected, perhaps through similar shared experiences of isolation and hardship.

Freud is sitting and his lower position on the ground means that the portrait is depicted above the artist. It is almost as if Freud was now directed by the art he created and the photograph reveals how interrelated his emotions or personality were to his artistic process.

Goodman's other film negatives also reflect the unconventional beginnings of Freud as an artist. For example, one photograph depicts Freud with dishevelled hair placing the spout of a watering can into his ear. Again, he looks away from the camera and appears to be contemplating what he was discovering. Whether the watering can symbolises an old ear trumpet of the nineteenth century, or whether it was supposed to symbolise Freud as a plant being watered and nurtured, mirroring his growth as an artist, is unclear. Yet, what is apparent is that Freud was highly creative in his expressions as an artist, where he chose unconventional objects or settings to symbolise his rather unconventional journey as a painter.

Located on the second floor of the National Portrait Gallery, the photo-



graph of Lucian Freud no longer depicts an unfamiliar face. The square film negatives considerably capture Freud's life as an artist torn between an isolated past and his new outlooks for the future. The photographs, therefore, symbolise the beginnings of his careers, which was possible even if his experiences following the rise of Nazism and his migration to London were equally as difficult to interpret or comprehend than his interaction with a watering can.

Lucian Freud by Francis Goodman Image Credit: Taya Neilson.

## EDITORS' PICKS...



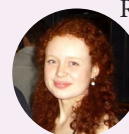
**Book of the week:** *Caledonian Road* by Andrew O'Hagan

"Dickensian" is a much abused word, but I cannot think of a better one for this 600-page novel with a sprawling London setting that brims with burlesque characters like the celebrity author of *Why Men Weep in Cars*, and the self-obsessed Oxonian son of a Russian oligarch. With memorable characters, a whizz-fast plot and a holistic grasp of post-Brexit Britain, this is one of the year's best novels.



**Film of the week:** *Monster*

Hirokazu Kore-eda's most recent film is a tender exploration of the relationship between two young boys and the adult figures in their lives. But everything is more complicated than it seems. Kore-eda masterfully plays with perspective, layering the film so that each time the story is told from another character's eyes, the audience gains another piece of information. The film is a must-watch for fans of the great Ryuichi Sakamoto, who gave his final score to this movie.



**Music of the week:** *Driving to Hawaii* by Summer Salt

No song could be more perfect for a June fast approaching. Everything Summer Salt releases is immediately transportative, breezy and blissful, filled full of summertime nostalgia and longing. It's impossible not to smile while listening to 'Driving to Hawaii', and you will soon (if you're anything like me) have your heart set on a trip to the island state.

play by its cast.

The play also handles a difficult scene towards the end of the play well, in which Proteus attempts to force himself upon Silvia. As it ought to be, the scene is difficult to watch, and the actors did well to capture that. Will Shackleton (Valentine) and Wolfreys shine in the part in which Valentine confronts Proteus, and for such a humorous play, it excelled in its ability to switch to serious matters in an instant.

The ending of the production also had an important commentary on the play. Julia and Silvia are left on stage as the lights fade, which I took as a comment on the play's willingness to forget

the crimes of Proteus at the expense of the female characters. It was a moving signifier of their lack of opportunity to choose their paths for themselves.

All in all, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* matched and furthered the expectations I held before the show. The influence of Doran was clear, but there were also aspects of the performance that were clearly student-led. This made it all the more impressive, and I hope there are more opportunities for the artistic talents of the University to work with big names and people of Doran's level of experience in the future.

Image Credit: Geraint Lewis.

## Film

Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*

Arav Bhattacharya

Warning: contains spoilers

In 1984, shortly after the epic finale of the original Star Wars trilogy was in theatres, David Lynch's *Dune* treated audiences to, in the words of one critic, "one of the most confusing screenplays of all time." In contrast, Denis Villeneuve's adaptation of the same series of novels has received high praise from fans and critics alike. So how did Villeneuve pull this off?

The challenge of directing a successful *Dune* movie starts with the density of the source material. In the original novel, with a reading length of over 12 hours, Frank Herbert builds an intricate world around the conflict on the planet Arrakis, where a cadre of factions fight for their own goals with varying levels of moral ambiguity.

The complexity of the relationships between factions in *Dune* is

what makes it so difficult to condense into a movie. Two to three hours is just not enough time to familiarise the audience with everything in the novel at a comfortable pace. Hence, the director has to decide what bits of the source material to cut out in order to capture the audience's imagination.

This is the first place where Villeneuve shines: while Lynch tries his best to fit a majority of the novel into his film, Villeneuve purposefully omits some of the details of the book in order to underscore those he does show. For example, the Canadian filmmaker omits a lengthy dinner hosted by the Atrides, freeing up the screen time for him to flesh out Lady Jessica's character.

Additionally, David Lynch's film relies on voiceover narration to impart key information, and while these can be informative, they are also disruptive to pacing. On the other hand, Villeneuve's films convey informa-

tion to the viewer through a more 'show, don't tell' approach. Villeneuve also aligns his films with one of Frank Herbert's main messages in the original *Dune* series, namely that "the mystery of life isn't a problem to solve, but a reality to experience." Audiences still have to pay attention to fully understand what is happening in the new *Dune* films, but thanks to the reframing of the events portrayed, piecing together the subtleties of what the films convey is now much more satisfying.

One scene where Villeneuve's approach is especially effective is when Paul rides Shai-Hulud. This climactic scene, after which Paul is fully accepted by the Fremen, is almost entirely dialogue-free. On top of that, our view of Paul trying to mount the beast of a sandworm is often obscured by sand. Despite not relying on dialogue, this scene makes Paul's growth apparent to the viewer: he has become a confident desert warrior.

The new *Dune* films also look better. Not only is there superior CGI technology, but Villeneuve experiments with a range of techniques to make the film look as convincing as possible. To emphasise the barrenness of the Harkonnen homeworld of Giedi Prime, he shot the scene on that planet using an infrared camera. In conjunction with the decrease in dialogue, this new look more effectively presents



the colossal scale of the planets in the movie. Hence it is not only the changes in pacing and tone that make these movies more immersive, but the greater care that was put into their visuals.

On the whole, the new *Dune* films are an example of a 'less is more' approach gone right. By focusing on making a more cohesive whole, rather than fitting in every detail from the source material, Denis Villeneuve has treated moviegoers to one of the best sci-fi experiences of the 21st century.

*Dune* Image credit: Astronimati / CC BY 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

Villeneuve Image Credit: Gage Skidmore / CC BY-SA 2.0 via Flickr.

## Language Loss

This week, **Fay Lorien** discusses discovering her ancestral culture



Growing up, my mother spoke to me in Russian in an effort to raise me bilingual. I have fragmented memories of being able to think in the language. But somewhere along the way, when I started attending school most of what I'd learned disappeared, replaced by German and English (and five years of French classes that I didn't retain). At some point, I refused to speak Russian with my mother and she (according to her own words) gave up.

Language loss, in an environment where the language is only spoken at home is a common occurrence. I've found that one thing I often have in common with other second generation immigrants is an insecurity when it comes to that second language. However, this seems to occur less if the family is particularly close knit. Preserving culture and language seems to be a conscious effort for a lot of families.

'I was in this odd competition with my brother. I was never good at it and he'd speak in nearly perfect Cantonese with our grandmother. Every time she praised him, he would turn and smirk at me. It used to drive me crazy,' my friend Philip says. 'I have tried and given up learning Cantonese so often I stopped keeping track.'

My best guess is that I lost interest in Russian because none of my friends spoke it. It wasn't a necessity.

Whenever I try to recall it now, the frustration that the language made more sense to me at age 6 compared to now, often keeps me from dedicating time to re-familiarise myself. Technically I am halfway there, as fragmented knowledge and recognition still remain. I find learning (or in this case re-learning) a language as an adult intimidating.

My roommate Marlise is now doing exactly that. She is in the process of learning Swahili.

'On one hand, it is my language because I was born in Tanzania and my parents speak it. On the other hand, I feel like it is foreign. Some of the words are vaguely familiar but there's still so much to learn.'

For many immigrants, language means connection to family and culture. I sometimes wonder if it would be different if I'd been closer to my family.

My grandmother and I developed this pattern of her speaking in Russian and me usually answering in German whenever I couldn't think of the right words. But nothing beats her proud smile whenever I manage to speak an entire sentence (at least somewhat) confidently.

## The Source

## We Walk Along

Josephine Thornton

We walk along by the river, my hand in his, our arms of different lengths and his palms much bigger than mine. The sun is hot but not too hot; we feel its glow on our shoulders as we walk towards the bridge. Along the bank there are poppies, hundreds of them, interspersed between the long grass. Their tissue paper petals are translucent in the sun. We walk and say very little, but sometimes his fingers gently brush against the back of my hand.

The path winds upwards and opens onto a bridge, a great metal monstrosity that hangs above the wide stretch of dancing waters below, but from up here there is little sense of that. You stand by the railings and look down at the glittering blue, the sun rippling in a blinding continual flutter, and you close your eyes and feel the breeze in your hair. You forget for a moment that your heart is heavy, and those words you have been trying not to say evaporate on your tongue.

We stand there for several minutes, passed by occasional cyclists in bright lycra and walkers, some in jeans and t-shirts that catch on the breeze, others dressed in tight leggings and wielding walking sticks. A few greet us, some smile in our direction. I imagine how we look from the outside, young and intertwined. The present does not capture what might be coming next, and so they keep walking or pedalling, these passers-by, and we become extras in their stories, frozen in our moment of bliss.

The sun is taken in by a cloud and it is a reminder that the afternoon will not last forever. I look up into his face – I am always looking up – and see into his familiar eyes. There has often been a melancholy tinge to that blue, and now that it is the end of May I finally understand why. Those eyes have known all along that they will watch as I walk away. He smiles, the sweetness of his face clarified by his sorrow.

I trace his chin with my finger. Without the need for any words, in the language that will always unite those of a similar soul, I tell him that I would not change a single one of these perfect moments that have led us towards our imperfect end.

## Loaded Words

Glenn Armstrong

Where now those sentences, those syllables,  
Loaded like cannon balls on the field of Austerlitz?

Full of the weight and confidence  
And destructive power of centuries  
Of thought, they were.

If thrown, in seconds they would  
Rip through that sheath of wary silence  
And the meeting of unsure eyes  
Across the battlefield. Much depends  
On the ground, the air and the preparedness,

The steadfastness of those opposite,  
But also on the surety of the gunman.  
Primed himself, by himself, now

Confronted with the chance  
To batter down those built illusions  
Of peace, the weight of those cannon ball syllables  
Returns. The prospect of their release  
Had lightened their load on the journey,  
But merciless gravity held them now  
In the barrel of his throat.

Their choking weight would leave for a moment only,  
Returning inevitably with a thudding and crushing  
Upon impact. They could not be delivered.

The ground was wrong, the air too quiet.  
Peace would rain down weightless,  
As those cannon ball syllables retreat  
And tear out craters in his heart.

## Cherwell's checklist

*Our editors list the types you're guaranteed to see in the library this term...*

**1** *The early bird.* The early bird arrives at 8:30 am, twitching and chirping in anticipation as they desperately evade eye contact with their rivals. While Oxford is still in slumber, this keen bean has secured their favourite desk on the Taylorian balcony and managed to fit in a morning run in the process. Chances are they'll go for a break at 10 am, only to return post-nap – to collect their laptop.

**2** *The doom scroller.* After ten minutes of reading, the doom scroller has a quick check of their notifications, only to be sucked into the Instagram vortex for at least half an hour. They may spend five hours at the library, but they won't tick a single item off their reading list. Never fear, this influencer-in-the-making took some aesthetic photos of the ceiling – no one can say it wasn't a productive afternoon.

**3** *The drunkard.* Although they partied hard the night before, the drunkard epitomises work-life balance by honouring a promised study date the next (same?) day. The walk to the library is bleary-eyed but bearable, but it's now thirty minutes in and the Law Library's strobe lighting has begun to pulse.

**4** *The gossip bags.* Often seen (or, rather, heard) in the college library, the gossip bags missed the memo that libraries were for silent study. Though they'll start off with a whisper, before long their cackle will funnel through the bookshelves. Irritated finalists will post complaints on the JCR Facebook page, but we all know they'd rather learn about the freshers' love triangle than contractual remedies.

**5** *The Oxlover.* The Oxlover goes to the library for one purpose and one purpose only: to be noticed. Each time they make eye contact with someone in their vicinity, they daydream about a decades-long romantic future, only 100 words into their essay. A painstakingly composed Oxlove will go unanswered and their library crush will soon be forgotten.

**6** *The history student.* Trudging into the Rad Cam at 2:30 pm, the history student begrudgingly circles the upper floor, already resigned to their fate. The *Cherwell* April Fools hit a little too close to home; we all know this person's birthday wish was historian-only library hours. It's not long before they'll be forced to stand in the centre of the dome to let out a scream of pure rage – maybe the noise will free up a desk.

## Greeting the imposter

**Ted Holbrook** navigates the ups and downs of his Oxford degree.

**I**s an Oxford degree truly worth the stress? What really should be worn for a lounge suit dress code? (spoiler alert, reader: I still do not know). Whether it manifests in academic or non-academic form, imposter syndrome has been, and always will be a notable facet of my Oxford experience. Despite being told (albeit, in a well-intentioned way) by one of my tutors that I shouldn't be feeling imposter syndrome at this point in my degree, it hasn't been something that I can escape.

I am a proudly state-comprehensively educated, first-generation student, and whilst some may jokingly claim my degree consists of purely colouring-in, that does not mean I've never felt out of my depth in a tutorial setting. I distinctly recall the feeling of not understanding any of the words one of my humbly intelligent peers used in one of my first tutorials. After working myself to the ground to understand the topic beforehand, I was so incredibly fearful about admitting I had no clue what was being discussed, and instead left after the hour was up without making a significant contribution. Swiftly following this, I arranged a video call with the only person able to reassure my tiny brain about why the hell

I was offered a place here (thanks Mum). Whilst I had expected the chats about privilege and family background, as a relatively self-assured person in my academic work, this meeting with the Imposter really threw me; I had no idea how to deal with him.

Speaking to my (eternally wise) mum made me realise that working with rather than against these fears is the way to go from meeting the Imposter, to greeting and welcoming his presence into your everyday life. When you interviewed at Oxford, someone saw your potential and will have gone some way to back your

**“...find ways to recognise and celebrate your successes, your efforts, and your journey to get to where you are now.”**

corner in admissions discussions. You were chosen as someone with the potential to succeed in this environment; it would be a shame

to prove them wrong.

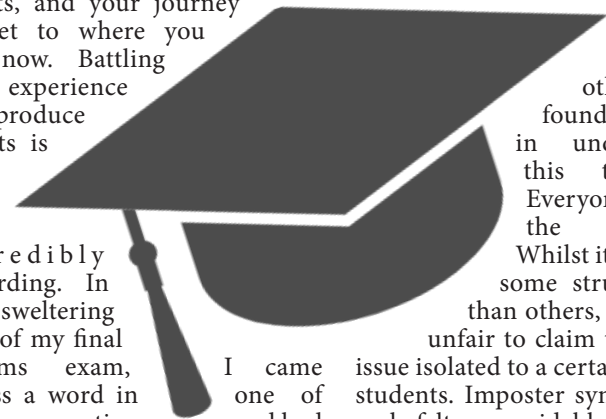
Whilst you will never escape the Imposter, it is, in my view, important to find ways to recognise and celebrate your successes, your efforts, and your journey to get to where you are now. Battling the experience to produce results is

**i**ncredibly rewarding. In the sweltering heat of my final Prelims exam, I came across a word in one of the essay questions and had absolutely no idea what it meant. Instead of forcing myself to answer a different question, I used this doubt productively, providing my own (questionable) definition for the term and structuring my essay around it. Whilst it was by no means the highest mark I have received in an essay, a meeting with the Imposter in this split second could have forced me to abandon all knowledge I had and lowered my mark significantly; instead, I embraced the feelings of doubt, finding ways to adapt to the encounter amongst the stress. In this moment, I accepted my failures, let go of my hopes

of writing a perfect response and cultivated something that was the best I could do in the circumstances.

Leaving the exam, I was reassured by the fact that others had found difficulty in understanding this term too. Everyone meets the Imposter. Whilst it is true that some struggle more than others, it would be unfair to claim that it is an issue isolated to a certain subset of students. Imposter syndrome is a real, felt, unavoidable reality for everyone. I am, however, highly aware that this account of the issue is personal to me and I wish to note that reader, I still often meet the Imposter in a non-academic context; it is a continuous, dynamic process of learning, with no one-fits-all method to solving these dilemmas.

Nevertheless, I hope that one day you can greet, rather than meet your Imposter, whoever he/she/they may be in your many future encounters. And when you do meet again, take time to stop, breath, notice, reassess and respond to whatever they throw your way.



## Dear Cherwell, I've touched too much grass!

**D**ear Auntie, I spend more time frolicking in the sun than I do at my desk. Should I lock myself inside?



**D**ear sun-bathing student, Ah! That age old Trinity Term crisis! A year of missed lectures, unfinished coursework, and looming exams coincides with the best mediocre weather England can provide. Your essays may be slipping, but at least you're skipping through Port Meadow – or undertaking a leisurely stroll at least. Life is better with a little sunshine. Don't feel guilty about soaking up that Vit D, you deserve it! (At least I always tell myself I do.) Find yourself traipsing along the riverbanks in the evening? And while I may use the same logic at the start of every week, promising myself I'll commit myself to the library, I'm just not ready for that relationship; besides, the on-and-off situation we have going on

now suits me just fine.

Trinity is about embracing the possibility of happiness (hard for Oxford students, I know). Make up for the previous terms of desperation and despair, and accept that studying isn't the only thing that makes the world go around. Take a break. For freshers, it's the culmination of a year of new friendships, new places, and whole new feelings. Oh, to experience Oxford for the first time in the summer – what I would give to relive that! I wouldn't say it's like your first kiss. No, I wouldn't like that – teathy. Take a bite out of that summer apple. Finalists, enjoy what you can! You're here for a good time, not a long one. 15 minutes leant against the Bod Wall can't hurt.

There are 24 hours in a day. And it's BST, baby: long evenings of daylight and cool early mornings of delicious sunshine. Maybe you are frolicking in Christ Church meadows for more hours than you find yourself working, but maybe you're still working the hours you should be. Don't let yourself feel guilty sim-

ply because you're living a balanced lifestyle. It's like a balanced diet. Port Meadow is just one of your five a day! The others being Uni Parks, ChCh Meadows, South Parks, and Hilda's lawns (a must-visit this season). Although I draw the line at studying in these environs. Why ruin it? Perhaps sprawled on the grass with a notebook and copy of Shakespeare's sonnets is just about functional for an English student, but for degrees less easily romanticised... stay indoors. You'll be back out there before you know it. And who doesn't love a good incentive?

You also have a long summer ahead of you. While an Oxford summer may be at times glorious, don't let a mediocre 16 degrees and partly sunny forecast ruin your so-far-untainted academic track record (let's indulge you for a second). You've got 16 weeks of a tutorial-free holiday, assuming you're not one of those internship nerds. (Surely you can't be. Those LinkedIn-chasing thrill-seekers have too much discipline to entertain an afternoon picnic in Port

Meadow. And well, let's be honest, that just couldn't be you. You're reading this after all.)

But lock yourself inside? Well... if that's what it takes. You can't keep writing emails to your tutor feigning difficulty while they catch you sunning yourself on college lawns. For one friend, the only time I know she's working is when I go visit her only to find the door is locked. She's not at a lecture. She's panic-writing an essay and the sound of quiet sobbing can be heard from within. While Trinity is there to be enjoyed, don't let academic review force you to be shackled to a desk in the lower Glink. You want to enjoy another summer right? So maybe preempt it. Go to the Glink. Windowless. Soulless. Cut off from the rest of the world. Just how I like it! Buried beneath the crushing mass of the Bodleian library, you can finally tackle those essays undisturbed. The summer delights that Oxford offers are still there, waiting for you.

**Got a problem? Need some advice?**

Email [lifestylecherwell@gmail.com](mailto:lifestylecherwell@gmail.com) or message one of our editors!

# Why don't we go clubbing any more?

**Kiera Hybel**

It's a Wednesday evening and I'm curled on a JCR sofa with my friends, peppermint tea in hand. Whereas once we would have been throwing back shots, we now relegate ourselves to onlookers, marvelling at the freshers who career around the room, "Park End" bouncing from their lips.

You may already have crafted an image of my anti-social and, dare I say, boring friend group, but I implore you not to be so quick in your stereotyping (herbal teas are for everyone, ok?). As we sit on this sofa, esteemed elders that we are, I don't feel boring. I don't feel that I'm missing out.

But why is this? What about the sweaty caverns of Plush or the narrow corridors of Bridge has made me so immune to the allure of a club night? Perhaps it's the notoriously bad nightlife in Oxford – 'this is no Manchester, no Newcastle', my northern friends decry. Although this is evidently true, I instinctively know that it isn't the answer I'm seeking. A hardened Cowley veteran, my infrequent club nights this year have been at O2, Bully and Glamorous. Of these clubs, it's the half-empty basement bar, Glamorous, in which I've made the best memories, dancing to Wham's 'Last Christmas' as my friends count down to my birthday. Given that Glam can hardly be deserving of the label 'club', I know that it's

not more tightly packed rooms and louder DnB that I desire.

At the heart of this debate is a stark generational shift. It's not that we don't want to go clubbing in Oxford, it's that we don't want to go clubbing at all.

In February of this year, Rekom (the owner of clubs including Atik and Pryzm) went into administration. As readers will by now be aware, Atik Oxford is closing

in June, a headline of such importance that it could only be topped by the northern lights and a geomagnetic storm last seen in 2003.

Atik's closure is not testament to Oxford's questionable nightlife. Rekom

had already shut the doors to 17 of its venues; the fate of Atik Oxford rested on discussions with the club's landlord, rather than financial dire straits. Nevertheless, while Atik and Park End (Street) may not have been compatible after all, Rekom's troubles are an indication that my lack of enthusiasm for clubbing is not unique.

Gen Zers just aren't clubbers – and there are stats to back this up. The NHS revealed in 2021 that 38% of 16-to-24-year-olds in England either don't drink or haven't drunk in the last 12 months. A survey by Keep Hush in 2022 found that only 25% of Gen Z would ever consider a night out. It's my suspicion that these slightly outdated figures have only been exacerbated in the past few years.

Rekom put forward that its financial difficulty was due to the fact that one in three young Brits are socialising less. It's a plausible argument given the aftermath of a global pandemic, a steady increase in spiking, and an ever-present cost of living crisis.

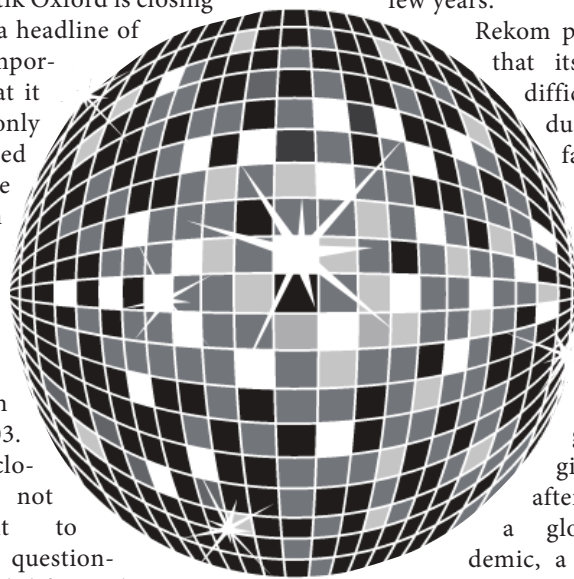
Even in a city as small as Oxford, it's impossible to go on a night out without feeling the sweaty hand of a stranger snatching at your waist or droplets of beer-breath settling on the back of your neck. A friend's single vodka coke at a recent event cost her £16, much to our incredulity. But despite all of this, I don't

think Rekom's conclusion captures the full picture.

I contend that we're not socialising less, but instead socialising differently. It has become all too easy to label our generation as TikTok-obsessed internet addicts, but, in my opinion, it's actually social media which is inspiring us to be more creative with how we spend our time. Town and Gown was all the rage this year, but this is only representative of a wider running craze sweeping social media by storm. From a quick scroll on Instagram, I'm led to believe that students have left nightclubs and joined running clubs.

But that's not all. Be it crocheting, group reading, baking, swimming, travelling, picnicking, listening to live music, or painting candles and pottery, you bet my social media has suggested it to me. We've been told by TikTok (or, for the more refined among us, Reels) to romanticise our lives. We're certainly not living as the 'main character' when shoved up against the wall of a club.

Last weekend, I went to visit my sister at her uni. Very spontaneously, we hopped on an evening train to a tiny seaside town and made our way to the seafront. It was when I resurfaced after having plunged into spearmint-fresh waters that the only other person on the beach, backlit by a soft pink sunset, said "aren't you glad we didn't go clubbing?"



## Soul stew: a reflection on Milton's Comus

**Georgia Short** analyses Milton through the lens of disordered eating...

Content warning: disordered eating.

COMUS

*Why should you be so cruel to yourself,*

*And to those dainty limbs, which nature lent*

*For gentle usage and soft delicacy?*

*But you invert the covenants of her trust,*

*And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,*

*With that which you received on other terms;*

*Scorning the unexempt condition*

*By which all mortal frailty must subsist, –*

*Refreshment after toil, ease after pain, –*

*That have been tired all day without repast,*

*And timely rest have wanted.*

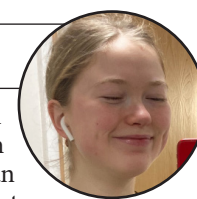
(Comus, 679-689)

The words 'dainty' and 'delicacy' are more than a little unfortunate here, but considering how immaculately Comus hits the nail on the head in every other respect, I'm prepared to forgive him. Evidently

so was Milton, who lets the sorcerer escape at the end, magic wand intact, while the Lady's idiot brothers and remarkably negligent Attendant Spirit blunder around the stage failing to free her. Not that you really want them to, as by this point her priggishness has become truly oppressive. Perhaps I'm biased: the catty accusation of 'false traitor!' and self-satisfied ramblings about 'spare temperance' encapsulate the response of my sixteen-year-old self

to being asked to have two slices of toast for breakfast.

But yes: he gets it. The stunning disavowal from the logic of being alive. The willful – in both senses – repudiation of bodily need; the scorn, indeed, the profound shame, of needing. The transactional nature of survival, the 'unexempt condition', only really comes into focus when you stop keeping up your end of the deal, and nature gets fed up and asks for her stuff back.



I am an English student and an indeterminate anorexic. The existence of this passage thrills me. I was aware, previously, of a sort of eating disorder presence within the literary canon – Charlotte Brontë and Lord Byron are probably the foremost examples – but striking upon something so subtle, so piercing, and so apparently devoid of context actually made me reel a little bit.

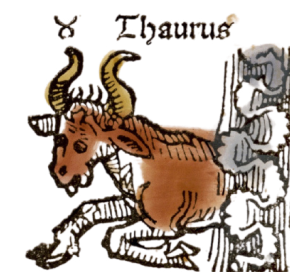
Thrilled and reeling: both pretty neutral, overall. To my mind, that's how it should be. Clearly I don't think eating disorder representation is a bad thing (not four columns in) but I do think that eating disorders are bad for art. Or maybe sad for art. They're just a dead end, creatively: to get it, you have to be mentally ill.

So, you can apply an eating disorder reading to Comus. As to why you'd want to, though, I'm not sure. Frankly, I don't think it needs it.

Image credit: Wellcome Collection / CC-BY-4.0 via Look and Learn



Sleep is important, but don't let people sleep ON you or your talent. Rock on you legend.



It's the beginning of your season. Go berserk, queen.



Do not let pesky exams darken your doorstep. Rusticate and hit repeat.



If you are thinking of the hack lifestyle: stop it. Do some self-reflection.



You are not a lizard. Stop basking in the sun for once and get yourself in a library.



They agree. Make of that what you will.

♎ Libra



Be toxic, be mean, be a menace.

♏ Scorpius

Life is tough, but you are tougher.  
Rawr.

♐ Sagittarius

Slay. That is all we have for you  
(and all you need).

♑ Capricornus

Peer closely at what and who is  
around you. You might discover  
something new...

♒ Aquarius



It will pass.

♓ Pisces

No one really cares about your new  
morning routine. They are simply  
too polite. Take the hint.

# Your insight into interrrailing this summer

## Bryn Mollet

If you are wanting to travel the continent this summer to soak up some sun, party into the early morning, convince yourself your three-day travel romance is the love of your life – and obviously appreciate the rich culture and history – interrrailing sounds like it may be for you.

ABBA might have been right when they said 'it's a rich man's world' but that doesn't mean you can't fulfil your European ambitions this summer. There are so many ways that you can cut down the little (or big) costs that add up all too quickly. It is easy to lose track of money between the Aperol spritz, sunbathing, national parks, and late night döners, but hopefully these tips will help ease your mind and help you make the most of your interrrailing experience.

### Plan with your pass

The best way to interrrail is with an Interrail Pass, a train travel pass that is great value for money – although you may still need to pay for seat reservations!

There are different types of Interrail Passes on offer. The main price difference is between passes that offer unlimited travel days over a certain time period and ones that only allow a certain amount. If you already have a route with a certain number of stops in mind, you can save by opting for a pass with a set amount of travel days that matches your plan. Even if you have more travel days planned than a set-day pass might permit, it can work out cheaper buying the extra tickets not through the pass, than buying a more expensive pass. Purchasing the set amount of travel days doesn't tie you to any set dates either, so you will still have plenty of flexibility.

### Inter...bussing

Trains in Europe are marvellous, and the UK could definitely learn a lesson or a hundred about how to properly run a rail service. That being said, for shorter distances, getting buses can sometimes be half the price and reach places that trains don't. They can also come in handy if seat reservations are sold out and you don't fancy sitting on the floor, being judged by all the Germans who of course did remember (a uniquely humbling experience).

### Night trains

As well as being a pretty cool experience in themselves, night trains are a brilliant way to save on a night of accommodation. If you are short on time, night trains can help you get from place to place and save time for exploring in the day. Food is extortionate (and notoriously bad) on board so remember to bring your own.

### Location, location, location

A big variable on your expenditure is where you decide to travel. Outside of Western Europe, everything tends

to be a lot cheaper and arguably more interesting. Rural areas are much cheaper than cities, and can offer a rather different experience, great for nature lovers and hikers.

When staying in cities, accommodation outside the centre is typically less expensive, even when you factor in the cost of necessary public transport. Electric scooters are more popular in Europe than in Oxford and are often the cheapest mode of transport around.

### Accommodation: the bigger the better?

Accommodation is likely to be the biggest cost on any interrrailing trip, but there are a few ways to save. For the best prices, check Hostelworld, Booking.com, and the hostels' own website, as prices can vary a lot. It is advisable to book accommodation as far in advance as your flexibility allows.

Going for bigger dormitories can also save you money. They really aren't as bad as they sound and if you are travelling in a group, you will know most of the people there anyway. It is also where you'll most likely meet future travel companions.

If you are in a group, booking an Airbnb can be cheaper than hostels and in better locations. From

personal experience  
I can warn

hostage by an angry Croatian man until you pay up the difference.

Looking for accommodation with kitchen access is also a great way to channel your inner Gino D'Acampo and save on having to eat out every night. Although be warned, whilst most are well-kept, some hostel kitchens can be worse than even the messiest university accommodation!

### Money, money, money

Having the right card when you travel is important and avoids frustrating conversion rates and fees. Monzo, Revolut, and Starling Bank charge no foreign transaction fees and use the Mastercard exchange rate. Starling Bank offers unlimited fee-free ATM withdrawals – the other two only permit £200 a month. They all have very accessible apps that make budgeting and transferring money to friends easier, ensuring you always get paid back for dinner.

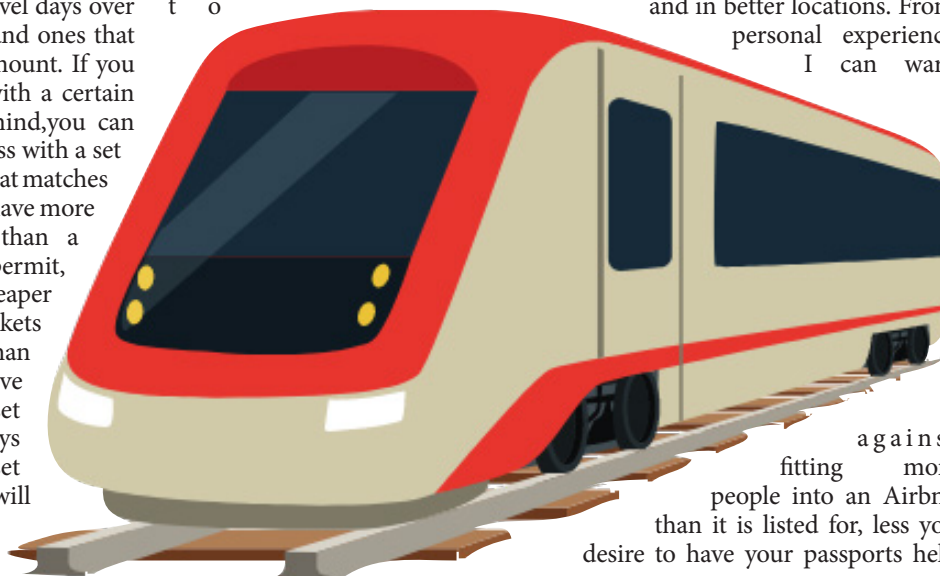
Most places take cards but there are some places where only cash will be accepted, especially at local markets and clubs, and lots of places in Berlin – you won't be able to survive there without it!

### Travel wash

Laundrettes are expensive; bringing travel wash allows you to frequently wash your clothes (usually in a sink) without having to splash out. This also allows you to pack lighter, which can reduce the temptation to spend money to avoid long walks with your bags and makes for a comfier trip in general.

### Bring a padlock

Hostels will have lockers in the room but no padlock, so to avoid leaving your now lovely clean clothes vulnerable to the prying hands of the less virtuous interrrailer, it is definitely advisable to bring your own.



against  
fitting more  
people into an Airbnb  
than it is listed for, less you  
desire to have your passports held

## Cherpser 1

Cherwell sent two lucky readers on a blind date. Find out how it went – from both perspectives...

My date seemed nice and brought me flowers, making a good first impression. We met at a pub for drinks, chatting with each other and mingling with other patrons. The highlight was definitely drink number three – conversation always seems to peak at that point. Unfortunately, I choked on my drink multiple times, a

recurring theme for me on dates. (If any medics have advice, I'd love to hear it – perhaps it's nature's way of keeping me from being flawlessly attractive.) By the end of the date, he still seemed nice, so my initial impressions were sustained. While a second date isn't likely, I think we're on 'saying hi at Tesco' terms. Overall, the date was sociable, relaxed, and full of good vibes.

## Cherpser 2

I had a positive first impression of my date; she was very friendly, although I felt a bit guilty for being slightly late since she must've been waiting outside for a while. We met at Chequers, where we had a few drinks while I tried to keep an eye on the Arsenal vs Chelsea match. The highlight of the evening was taking a fun Voi ride to her college.

My initial positive impression was sustained as we got on increasingly well after a few drinks. Although I had a great time and the date was cozy, romantic, and exciting, I don't want to commit to anything at the moment, so there isn't a second date on the cards. Overall, a cosy, romantic, exciting date with a genuinely lovely girl.

### Looking for love?

Email [lifestylecherwell@gmail.com](mailto:lifestylecherwell@gmail.com) or message one of our editors!

# An ode to the spring onion

Jay Austin

CW: discussion of eating disorders.

I really do add spring onions to everything, you know. They go with my eggs, on my toast, in my tuna and on top of my bolognese. They're the base of pretty much every pasta recipe I make and I've put them in more than a few soups. Every day, I move one step closer to mixing scallion juice into my brownies. After that, who knows. Sorbet, perhaps?

A spring onion slots beautifully into any recipe. It's got the distinctiveness of chilli or ginger, but it's cooler and brighter: the perfect way to liven up a basic meal, or add another layer of complexity to something more flavourful. I always keep a bunch or two on hand; they're practically a necessity for me.

Predictably, of course, I wasn't always so liberal with my spring onion usage. Up until about five years ago, I'd barely heard of the things, let alone tasted them. For essentially all of my life, I've suffered from what people around me at the time called picky eating and now, with hindsight, can fairly confidently be identified as some sort of eating disorder. My preference for basic foods and my tendency to skip meals was

only exacerbated by becoming responsible for cooking for myself. During the first COVID-19 lockdown, I essentially alternated between two meals - eggs on toast and tuna pasta. If I didn't have the ingredients for either, I usually didn't eat anything.

Things started to change when, standing smack dab in the middle of the Tesco Extra aisle, I had an epiphany: I missed eating vegetables. Alright, it probably wasn't that dramatic. I don't even remember why I chose spring onions specifically. But for whatever reason, I came home that day with a bunch of them in my bag. I chopped them up, sprinkled them over my eggs, and that's when the love affair started. They crept into everything I cooked, meal by meal.

It didn't end there. Eggs on toast (with spring onion) started to bore me, so I bought an avocado on a whim one day, who'd have guessed - it turned out I quite liked avocado. Plain noodles (with spring onion) weren't cutting it any more, so I went chilli flakes and soy sauce and other basic ingredients I'd always been too scared to try. My spring onions were my safety net. I knew I liked them, and I knew the sharpness of them could sideline any flavours I ended up not liking. What I

found, however, was that I did like all of these new ingredients. I enjoyed the taste of the avocado and the textural contrast it added, too. I struggled a little with the heat of the chilli at first but soon enough I was adding it to tomato soup, using its aftertaste to extend the flavour.

My new fervour for cooking only grew. Now that the floodgates had opened, I was looking for ways to make everything I ate more interesting. I learnt the five flavour types, and now I always keep lemon juice on hand for a splash of acid -- honey, too, for a sweet undertone. Bored of tinned soup, I made my own; it really does taste so much better. Then, of course, I had to bake some bread to go with it. "You know what goes well with tomato soup? Cheese," said everyone on the internet, and I'd never liked most cheeses, but I sucked it up, bought the mildest I could find, and sprinkled spring onion all over it. And I enjoyed it! I stopped skipping lunches, because I learnt to love making them. They were a part of my day I actually looked forward to. Finding new ways to combine flavour and texture is something I absolutely live for. Going out to eat has become a lot easier, too; I no longer end up holding back tears in a restaurant because there's nothing on the menu



I can bear the thought of.

I'm not going to call myself a 'good cook'. My shopping basket gets a little more varied every week, but there's still whole categories of ingredients I haven't tried. There's ingredients I'll probably never be able to bring myself to try - blue cheese, for one (although I always said I couldn't stand the idea of smoked salmon, and you'll never guess what's sitting in my fridge right now). I regularly burn toast and split sauces. But I still feel a little burst of pride whenever I remember my flatmate saying "oh, wow, you can actually cook!" when he saw me roasting a courgette, because the me five years ago would never have even thought of doing that, let alone adding paprika to the soup it went into.

The soup didn't actually taste much like courgette, for the record. I put too much spring onion in, and it overwhelmed everything else. I'm not complaining, though - you can never have too much spring onion in your life.

# Balancing Act

George Exley brings you another lesson in healthy eating...



The end of spring draws near and we

now begin looking towards the glorious unpredictability that is British summertime. Bouts of sunshine and rain over the last weeks have helped delicate salad crops and soft fruits to ripen, which will soon be arriving on our supermarket shelves. Eating seasonally is not just beneficial for reducing air miles and supporting local farmers; it also improves the quality and longevity of the produce. Often, fewer pesticides and preservatives are required, as out-of-season produce can take days or even weeks to reach our shelves.

Farmland accounts for around 74% of Oxfordshire, of which 56% is cereals and 30% is dedicated to livestock, notably Oxford Down sheep. We are fortunate to have excellent local greengrocers and butchers who take advantage of this, including the wonderful Bonners Greengrocers and David John Butchers situated in the Covered Market. These establishments are far and away the best places to find the pick of the week, which their friendly staff will happily point out to anyone interested.

Of course, on student budgets and timetables it is often both cheaper and more convenient to get all your shopping in one place at your supermarket of choice. Fortunately, prices tend to fall as respective products come into season which is beneficial to your budget. Unfortunately, due to the smaller size of most Oxford supermarkets, some of the best seasonal items might never appear on the shelves, so it is worth looking around to see what's available. Presently, field rhubarb is in full harvest and coming to the end of its season, with spring cabbage and salad crops such as lettuce, radishes and spinach all continuing on into June and July. British strawberries will also begin to emerge moving into June, giving plenty of time for you to enjoy them with lashings of cream before Wimbledon begins on 1st July. Using goods that are local and seasonal can inspire your cooking; committing yourself to certain ingredients can provide a base around which to build your weekly menu. Being informed around the impact of your diet, as well as how it can benefit local producers, is an equally important topic as the nutrition you gain from it.



# World Cocktail Day at the Ashmolean

Cherwell News reviews.

As news editors, when we received an invite to the Ashmolean Museum's celebration of World Cocktail Day - 13th May, for those who didn't celebrate - we jumped at the opportunity to take a break from running between protests and sending off comment requests. Instead of attending our usual 4pm tutorials, we found ourselves at the

**"It's royalty income from products like cocktails that allows the Ashmolean to keep entry to its world-class galleries free."**

Ashmolean's rooftop bar, where we were served a range of Ashmolean-inspired cocktails.

We arrived at the event and were greeted by a table decorated with flowers and charcuterie boards. Other members of the press, Ashmolean staff, and representatives of Gibson's Organic Liqueurs and Oxford Artisan Distillery joined us as we discovered new cocktail recipes and learnt more about the Ashmolean Museum.

We spoke with a member of the Ashmolean's brand licensing team, whose workdays are dedicated to ensuring that the museum's 'brand identity' is aligned with their wider narrative. Her creative domain includes art print tees developed with Topman, but extends to creative details with an ecopaint brand developing paint colours inspired by the Ashmolean's collections. The newly painted rooftop restaurant features 'Enamel Blue', for example, lifted from accents on delicate pins and brooches in the enamel jewellery collection, and 'Breaking Wave', a colour from the details of waves depicted in their Japanese woodblock prints.

As part of these efforts, the museum recently launched a partnership collaboration with Gibson's Organic Liqueurs, whose owner, Miles Gibson, attended this event. Gibson's farm, based outside Burford in Oxfordshire, grows all of the fruit and flowers used in Gibson liqueurs - a feature of the company that is, according to Gibson, "unlike almost every other liqueur producer in the country."

We tried the Ashmolean Crab Apple Organic Liqueur, developed by Gibson, first straight-up and then in a crab apple martini. The liqueur is composed almost entirely of crab apples and sugar. The alcoholic base, a gluten-free organic grain spirit, was hardly detectable and allowed the pure bitter apple flavour to dominate the drink. Star anise - subtly sweet and tinged with



licorice - added a needed edge. The liqueur bottle is enamelled with Still Life of Apple Blossom, a relic from the Dutch Golden Age, painted in the 1680s by John Verelst. The painting, we are told, was Verelst's only one not to include a vase - a nod to the organic wildness of the crab apple used in Gibson's liqueur.

We also tasted the Oxford Artisan Distillery's Ashmolean Dry Gin, the bottle of which featured 'Spray of Morning Glory', by Takeuchi Seiho, part of the museum's Eastern Art collection. The blue and green flowers depicted in the print are a nod to the orris and exotic kaffir lime leaves, two of 17 botanicals that together created the final full, juniper-led taste. It was a flavourful base for a summery G&T, which we received garnished with a slice of

jara lemon and a sprig of lavender.

If the Monday afternoon invite-only rooftop gin tasting didn't quite align with the museum's stated goal of making their collections "more accessible... and relevant to people's lives", then at least the event was such a delight that no one attending seemed to mind. The atmosphere was light, the drinks were both tasty and brand-aligned, and, as the organisers reminded us, it's royalty income generated from products like cocktails that allows the Ashmolean to keep entry to its world-class galleries free.

In addition to free entry for all, the Ashmolean provides Oxford students and alumni with free entry to paid exhibitions and a 10% discount on all museum merchandise.

Image Credit: Ashmolean Museum.

# The 2025 grid: F1's biggest shake-up yet?

Zoe Williams

With over half of the seats still left unclaimed, the 2025 Formula 1 season is looking like it could provide one of the biggest grid shakeups yet. There are potentially new rookies on the scene, drivers who have already lost their current seats, and one or two who unfortunately still haven't found their feet. So without further ado, I present to you my 2025 grid predictions, albeit sprinkled with some wishful thinking (because a girl can dream...!)

## Red Bull

1. Max Verstappen
2. Daniel Ricciardo – I know what



you're thinking... But Ricciardo has showed signs of improvement in the past couple of races, and it is undeniable that he would respect team orders regarding a prioritisation of Verstappen. He also has plenty of experience under his belt and has worked closely with the team in the past. However, if I were to give Ricciardo the Red Bull seat, I would likely attach a performance-based quota to the deal stating that should he underperform in the early parts of the 2025 season he will be swapped with one of the two RB drivers (most likely Tsunoda, who has been on top form this season, but potentially lacks the experience to go straight up).

## Mercedes

1. George Russell

2. Carlos Sainz – Sainz has already been offered an Audi deal but is holding out in hopes of a Red Bull or Mercedes offer. He has been impressive in the Ferrari so far this season, so he is likely to have caught the attention of Toto Wolff. Other options for Mercedes include F2 protégé Kimi Antonelli, however rookies are expensive as they are more likely to cause damage and so Wolff might opt for a more experienced driver in Sainz.

## Aston Martin

1. Fernando Alonso
2. Lance Stroll – While Stroll isn't officially confirmed for 2025, he has a rolling contract with the team and is pretty much guaranteed his seat for as long as Lawrence Stroll remains in charge.

## Williams

1. Alex Albon
2. Kimi Antonelli – Antonelli's performance in F2 has been promising, and he is a favourite to gain a seat in 2025. He is currently part of Mercedes' feeder programme; however he is likely to start off in Williams first (much like George Russell). In addition, Williams have put in requests to the FIA for Antonelli to drive in a couple of FP1 sessions, thus

increasing the likelihood of him signing a contract with them.

## Alpine

1. Pierre Gasly – Alpine have struggled with driver dynamics over the past couple of years and are therefore unlikely to keep both of their French drivers. However, Gasly has frequently performed better than Ocon and is generally considered to be more popular with fans meaning that he is more likely to hold on to his seat.

2. Valtteri Bottas – Bottas is openly talking to other teams, suggesting that he is looking to leave the Sauber team. He is a strong racer and given he has already been linked to Alpine there is a good chance he could be racing for them in 2025.

## RB

1. Yuki Tsunoda – Tsunoda has been particularly impressive so far this season, regularly scoring points and placing in the top 10. He definitely deserves to keep his seat in RB and could potentially drive for Red Bull as well depending on if Horner elects for experience or boldness.

2. Liam Lawson – On Lawson's F1 debut in 2023 he outperformed all Red Bull and RB drivers, proving

he is absolutely worthy of a seat on the grid. Whilst there is a possibility for Horner to take Lawson straight to Red Bull, as previously discussed, rookies can be expensive and I would argue that Lawson would need to prove himself on a larger scale before he could be promoted above both Ricciardo and Tsunoda.

## Haas

1. Ollie Bearman – Bearman's debut for Ferrari earlier this year was incredibly impressive, and certainly marked him as one to watch in the coming years. Haas is generally considered to be an unofficial feeder team for Ferrari and so he is likely to be offered a seat here for his rookie season, with the potential for driving for Ferrari in the coming years.

2. Sergio Perez – Perez has proved time and time again that he is an experienced, reliable driver. However, his current pace is not matching that of Verstappen and so he will likely lose his seat at Red Bull. Nonetheless he is a strong talent which will undoubtedly be snapped up by the likes of Haas.

*Read the full article, which analyses the full grid, at [Cherwell.org](https://cherwell.org)  
Image Credit: Rubin16/CC BY-SA 4.0 DEED via Wikimedia Commons.*

# Thanks for everything, Jimmy

Raghav Chari

It's been an announcement so long in the offing that when it finally does come, it catches everyone by surprise. James Anderson, in a statement released last Saturday, announced that he will be retiring from international cricket after England's first Test of the summer at Lord's, against West Indies. He will play his last match a stone's throw away from his 42nd birthday, calling curtains on a marathon 188-Test, 700-wicket career.

Words are insufficient to describe the magnitude of Anderson's achievement. He began his Test career at Lord's (the very same ground he will end it at) in May 2003. I wasn't even born when Anderson sent down his first ball for England, and I'd reckon most of you weren't either. Neither was Shoab Bashir, who played alongside Anderson in the most recent Test at Dharamsala on England's tour of India. How often can your career be so long-lived that it pre-dates a teammate's lifetime? How can you keep going for so long, especially as a fast bowler?

I feel few qualms in pronouncing him England's greatest post-war player. Nasser Hussain, the man that gave Anderson his debut Test cap all those 21 years ago, called him 'by far England's greatest ever bowler', speaking to Sky Sports. Praises flow in from Australia and India and all over the world where

he has tormented batsmen for a generation. To see him step down now is to watch a living legend of the game walk off into the sunset.

The secret to his greatness is his longevity and constant drive to get better. From 2003 to 2014, he took 340 Test wickets at an average just above 30. Had he retired

**"The years could pass, and the world could turn upside down, but come the English summer Jimmy would be there... Now it is at an end."**

then, at the age of 32 (a very normal age for a fast bowler to retire), few praises would have sung of his greatness. But Anderson did not retire. He kept bowling, and kept getting better. From 2014 till 2022, he has taken 360 wickets at 22.66 runs per wicket. These are statistics almost identical to Allan Donald's entire career, or Oxford's very own Imran Khan. And to do that at an age generally considered well past the peak of a fast bowler's career speaks to the wealth of experience, quality, and determination that Anderson possesses.

We have been waiting so long for him to retire that our expectations bent back on themselves. The years could pass, and the world could turn upside down, but come the English summer, Jimmy would be there. Defying all our predictions, defying all common sense, he'd be out there with the bright red cherry in his hand. Steaming in with that ever-fluid action of his, getting the ball to swing out just the right amount, watching the ball nick off to first slip. It's what he's always done, and we thought he would do it until the end of time.

Now it is at an end. No matter how he goes, I just plead for us to treat it with equanimity. It had to end at some point, in some way; now that it has, all that remains for us is to applaud what is a fine career. 700 Test wickets place Anderson as the record wicket-taker among fast bowlers, and nearly a hundred clear of second place in Stuart Broad. He is third among all bowlers, just eight wickets behind Shane Warne. His 188 Tests are the second-most ever played, behind Sachin Tendulkar's 200. This is not even recalling that he is still England's all-time wicket taker in ODIs.

So, I say, for all of us: thanks, Jimmy. Thanks for all the Test wins, and thanks for being there through all the losses. Thanks for the wickets you've taken, and for the memories you've made. Thanks for everything.

# Eights Week order

This week, we present the starting order for Summer Eights. The first three divisions for both the men's and women's races are shown.

## Men's Division I

1. Oriel
2. Christ Church
3. Keble
4. Wolfson
5. Pembroke
6. Balliol
7. St Edmund Hall
8. Magdalen
9. University
10. Wadham
11. Lady Margaret Hall
12. St Catherine's

## Women's Division I

1. Christ Church
2. St Edmund Hall
3. University
4. Oriel
5. Wadham
6. Pembroke
7. Wolfson
8. Keble
9. Magdalen
10. Jesus
11. Balliol
12. St Anne's

## Men's Division II

1. Jesus
2. New
3. Hertford
4. Trinity
5. Lincoln
6. Merton
7. Queen's
8. St Hugh's
9. Exeter
10. Oriel II
11. Worcester
12. Brasenose

## Women's Division II

1. St John's
2. New
3. Green Templeton
4. Hertford
5. Lincoln
6. Trinity
7. St Catherine's
8. Exeter
9. Linacre
10. Mansfield
11. Lady Margaret Hall
12. Somerville

## Men's Division III

1. St John's
2. Mansfield
3. St Peter's
4. Christ Church II
5. Pembroke II
6. Corpus Christi
7. Linacre
8. Green Templeton
9. Somerville
10. University II
11. New II
12. Keble II

## Women's Division III

1. St Peter's
2. Brasenose
3. Wolfson II
4. Merton
5. Corpus Christi
6. Worcester
7. Queen's
8. St Hugh's
9. St Antony's
10. Christ Church II
11. University II
12. St Hilda's

Brought to you from the **Cherwell** archives by Adam Saxon

Summer Eights is upon us! By the time this print edition comes out, days of bumps will have taken place, but in anticipation, this week I bring you some of *Cherwell's* Summer Eights coverage from over the years.

The coverage here stretches as far back as 1959 – “*Eights Improved*” – and it is characteristic of Oxford traditions that the format of the races and the general terminology doesn’t seem to have changed much since. Given that, according to Wikipedia, Summer Eights of some kind has been going on since 1815, the tradition outdates *Cherwell's* 104 years of quality journalism, but one would doubt, given the nature of Oxford, that the tradition looks so different to how it did even when it started.

A number of colleges feature heavily in the coverage through the years. Oriel are particularly dominant in the men’s races, hav-

ing won six times in the 2010s, and 35 times in total. The women’s races were established in 1976, and Somerville are the most decorated with eight victories.

My favourite part of the *Cherwell* coverage across the years is the diagrams showing the week’s bumps. The complex diagrams are a little tough to follow but provide a great visual outline of the week’s developments. In fact, I like them so much that I’ve asked Raghav, our Deputy Editor for sport this

term, to revive the graphic – keep an eye out for week 7 print!

Rowing is not a sport I know much about, but I think we can all get behind the idea of a day down at the boathouses, drinking Pimm’s and enjoying soaking up some sun (fingers crossed). Regardless of who comes out on top, the Saturday will be a great day out for those who love rowing and those who just want a day in the sun alike.

**Week 3 Cryptic Crossword answers:**

**Across:**

- 1) Paint the town red 9) Jazz band
- 10) Epoch 11) Frolic 12) Wonkier
- 14) Medieval 18) Oars 20) Jowl
- 21) Thickset 25) Colours
- 29) Remark 30) Squib
- 31) Rebuttal 32) Once in a blue moon

**Down:**

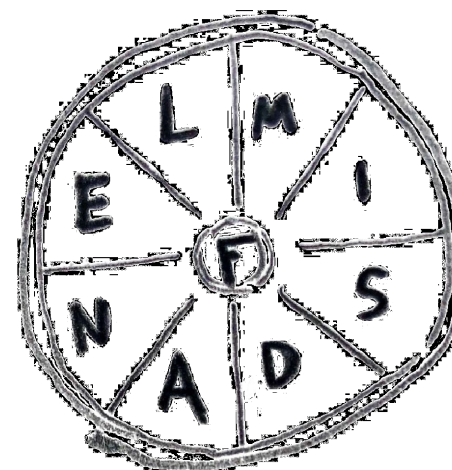
- 2) Anagram 3) Nuzzled
- 4) Tranche 5) Endow 6) Ocean
- 7) Naomi 8) Exhorts 13) Kiosk
- 15) Ego 16) Igloo 17) Ash
- 19) Rue 20) Jackson 22) Caribou
- 23) Symptom 24) Tornado
- 26) Louse 27) Urban 28) Scrub

**American Crossword by Julian Xiao**

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10
11					12					
13				14						
15								16		
		17					18			
19	20					21				
22					23					
24				25				26	27	
28			29							
30								31		
32								33		

- ACROSS**
- 1. Magic charm
  - 5. Something you can hold for years
  - 11. Give an ass-beating
  - 12. Celebratory cry
  - 13. Alias
  - 15. What you can call in a crisis
  - 16. Hair-raising stuff
  - 17. Effect of a minor car crash
  - 18. Final check?
  - 19. Public disturbance
  - 21. Doctrine
  - 22. Sunk \_\_\_\_
  - 23. Country south of Libya
  - 24. President on the penny, for short
  - 25. Disney protagonist who is Chinese in the original story
  - 28. Phrase used for emphasis, or something you could say to your tutor after submitting an essay
  - 30. Felt sorry for
  - 31. Typical fairy tale villain
  - 32. Nuts
  - 33. Gush out
- DOWN**
- 1. Air kiss sound
  - 2. Quaint way to say “very”
  - 3. Comeuppance
  - 4. Swanky
  - 5. City where the treaty ending the War of 1812 was signed
  - 6. Insolent
  - 7. Vase
  - 8. Simple way to attach a file
  - 9. Reproductive cell
  - 10. Shoelace hole
  - 14. Go for the gold?
  - 18. Open fields
  - 19. Fish alternative that goes with chips
  - 20. Kurt \_\_\_\_, lead singer of Nirvana

**Wordwheel by Nathaniel Read**



Find as many words as you can. There are two words that use all the letters. One of them is Oxford-related.

- Good: 18
- Very good: 27
- Excellent: 34
- Outstanding: 45+

**Suguru by Miranda Devine**

	4						
				2			
				4			1

- 21. Unfreeze
- 23. Glasgow’s river
- 25. Prayer ender
- 26. Doing nothing
- 27. Explicit warning
- 29. Korean carmaker