

Which college has the most sex? How queer is Oxford? What's Oxford's favourite dating app? How often do Oxford students masturbate? What's Oxford's favourite dating app? How often do Oxford students masturbate? What's Oxford's favourite dating app? How often do Oxford students masturbate?

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Rowers discontent following severe river conditions

Selina Chen reports.

An offhand remark by a rower that “at this rate novices will still be eligible for next year’s novice regatta” was the inspiration for this investigation. Twelve term weeks into this academic year, unsafe river conditions have grounded rowers from the River Isis on 61% of days and the River Godstow on 85% of days, with novices especially impacted. Captains further expressed frustration over the unequal practice opportunities that favour colleges with external training facilities, a problem exacerbated by bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Because college boat clubs are under pressure to maintain their facade of strength and are concerned about speaking out against University-level governance, the majority of captains that spoke to *Cherwell* asked for anonymity. They will be referred to as captains of College A, College B, and College C.

Flag Colours

Rowers are allowed on water based on different conditions signalled through flag colours that are calculated based on how fast (and therefore how dangerous) the stream is on the respective stretch. A Green flag is ideal, while light and dark blue flags impose a detailed set of restrictions on where boats can spin, who can be on crew, and whether a bankrider must be present.

Amber flags mean that only senior crews can row provided they have a senior cox, of which there are very

few across the University, according to the College A captain. Red flags mean no crews are allowed on water. Black flags, which signals “do not expect to be rowing any time soon,” occurred for a dozen days toward the end of Christmas vacation when rivers around Oxford burst their banks amid severe storms.

Cherwell charted the flag colour of every day since the beginning of this school year as favourable – green, light blue, or dark blue – or unfavourable – amber, red, or black. Days that saw a change in flag colour are recorded based on morning conditions unless the change occurred before noon.

During term time, Isis was unfavourable on 61% of days while Godstow was unfavourable on 85% of days. According to their respective captains, College A novices have only been on water three to four times, College B novices five to six times at best, and College C novices between one to six times.

Training during vacation was also impacted. While the flag has not typically been used during vacation time, allowing the few rowers who stay in Oxford to make their own decisions, this year OURCs kept flags up during vacation for the first time, according to College B captain.

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Cambridge athletes punished following Michaelmas sports day swap at Balliol

Julia Amann reports.

Athletes from St John’s College, Cambridge were punished with over 130 hours of community service for their bad behaviour at a sports day swap at Balliol College last term. The behaviour involved verbal abuse, as well as urinating and spilling beer indoors.

The College Dean, Dr Nick Friedman, awarded the St John’s men’s football team and croquet team over 130 hours of community service, to complete jointly.

The students were recorded on Oxford’s CCTV causing destruction to the Balliol College Recreation Ground, off of Jowett Walk. They also reportedly left broken glass, mud, and urine in the changing rooms and trashed the College bar.

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Oxford’s Chancellor elections to be held online for the first time

Poppy Littler-Jennings reports.

Oxford’s Chancellor elections will be held online for the first time in the University’s history, following

Lord Patten’s announcement of his resignation.

After 21 years in the role, Patten has decided to resign, stating: “I think it is in my own interest and that of the University for me to step down [...]

giving the University the opportunity to plan a sensible succession which matches the demands of the 2020s.”

The position of Chancellor, as titular head of the University, comprises formal duties, such as chairing the

committee to elect the Vice-Chancellor, as well as advocacy, advisory, and fundraising work. Previous chancellors include Harold Macmillan, Oliver Cromwell, and Edward Wood, 1st Earl of Halifax.

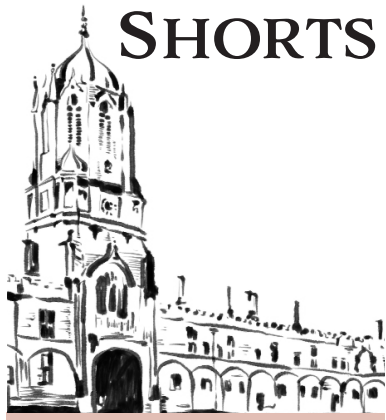
While the details of the elections are to be “announced in due course” by the University, many have already begun speculating about nominations.

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NEWS SHORTS



Oxford grads sell start-up for \$650 million

Three Oxford Economics and Management (E&M) graduates, Husayn Kassai, Eamon Jubbawy, and Ruhul Amin, created a facial recognition AI startup called “On-fido,” which has been used by companies like Revolut. Back in 2012, Oxford was their first investor with £12,000. They now stand to make more than 320 times that amount, having recently sold their firm for 650 million dollars to an American competitor.

Cat cafe opens in Cowley with no cats

Mac Kitten, a cat coffee shop on Cowley Road, opened last Friday without cats. The cafe said they cannot confirm the date of their cats’ arrival as they have not yet received their permit to house cats within the store. They assure customers that efforts are being made to arrange for them. A spokesperson for the cafe said: “For now, we are a normal cafe. We cannot estimate how long the procedures will take yet. Once the procedures are completed, we will bring the cats.”

All Souls won £300 pizza voucher for highest SU elections turnout

All Souls College and Corpus Christi College clashed over a £300 pizza prize promised by the Student Union to the college with the highest turnout in the recent elections. Hours before the voting deadline, six out of eight members of All Souls College had voted, a 75% turnout compared to the runner-up Corpus Christi’s 58.2%. A Corpus JCR member encouraged voting, writing “go and vote or eight sweaty nerds will steal all our pizza.” In the end, SU awarded pizza to both colleges.

VC urges alumni to donate to combat funding crisis

Poppy Littler-Jenning reports.

Oxford’s Vice-Chancellor, Irene Tracey, has encouraged graduates to “get behind our British universities” with donations.

In a recent interview with *The Telegraph*, she claimed that, with increased donations, universities would not have to rely on international fees, a “vulnerability in the system.” The VC emphasised how, historically, thanks to the generosity of Oxford’s alumni, the University’s leaders “have not, thankfully, been driven to a model where [they] are dependent financially on the international fee structure.”

This generosity of Oxford alumni has been substantial in recent years: In 2021/22, the University received over £249 million in donations, the second largest total received in a single year. Oxbridge accounts for almost half of all donations made to UK universities over the last decade.

The Chief Development Officer, Liesl Elder, declared that these philanthropic tendencies are “[...] testament to both the impact that Oxford is making in the world through the delivery of transformational teaching and research, and the generosity of our donors.”

Alumni donations have long been intertwined with Oxford’s

funding: from Dr John Radcliffe’s donation in 1714 that paved the way for the construction of the now-iconic Radcliffe Camera, to the £30 million that Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones KBE gifted to Worcester College just last year, which will fund a graduate accommodation building and a new library.

However, amid recent changes to student loans and difficulties with cost of living, some have raised questions about whether today’s graduates are prepared to “give back” to their alma maters after having already accrued an average of £45,000 of debt as a result of their education.

In 2023, the student loan debt in England surpassed £200 billion for the first time, likely amplifying any reluctance felt by graduates to donate to their universities. However, loan repayments also saw an increase, reaching over £4 billion in 2022-23 due partially to higher inflation, which may have positively affected borrower salaries.

Oxford’s own student population is characterised by a large proportion of international students. 46% of the student body are international students, coming from more than 160 different countries. This is nearly double the national average of 24% overseas students.

According to a study conduct-

ed by The Council for Advancement and Support of Education and More Partnership, annual donations to UK universities have doubled over the last decade. Recent years have also seen public funding for these institutions plummet, now reaching its lowest level since the 1990s: in 2020, 32% of universities reported an in-

year deficit compared to just 5% in 2016. Whilst donations to UK universities reached £1.5 billion in 2022, the Russell Group estimates that it lost an average of £2,500 for every home student last year, thus explaining this reliance on donations and steep international fees.

Image Credit: Tejvan Pettinger/CC BY 2.0 via Flickr



All Souls promotes diversity through open evenings

Grace Kyoko Wong reports.

All Souls College, Oxford University’s most selective graduate college, is holding two Examination Fellowship open evenings at the end of term targeting women and gender minorities, an annual initiative

since 2008, and ethnic minority students, introduced in 2019.

Students from these backgrounds remain underrepresented among candidates for All Souls’ highly competitive Examination Fellowships, which cover seven years of graduate tuition, research fees, and room and board for outstanding scholars in the humanities and social sciences.

Typically, two Fellows are elected each year from a pool of over 150 candidates.

Out of the 33 Examination Fellows elected since 2006, twelve (36%) are female; the percentage of female candidates has significantly increased over this time, from 25.9% in 2006 to 48% in 2023. While All Souls has not historically tracked the ethnicity of candidates, four (33%) of its

twelve current Fellows are from BAME backgrounds, and the proportion of BAME candidates exceeded 40% in 2023.

In recent years, All Souls has also taken steps to address its historical links to the Atlantic slave trade: Christopher Codrington, a former Fellow and a key benefactor of the College, was a prominent slaveholder in the Caribbean. The former Codrington Library, was renamed in 2020 to All Souls College Library, with contextual plaques and displays subsequently installed, including a digital projection of enslaved people’s names onto the statue of Codrington inside the building.

The College now funds three All Souls Hugh Springer Scholarships each year, which cover full tuition and living expenses for Black Caribbean graduate students studying at any Oxford college, and contributes to the University-wide Black Academic Futures Programme and the Caribbean Oxford Initiative, which support graduate students of Black or Black Caribbean heritage. Moreover, the College provides annual grants to Codrington College, an Anglican theological college in Barbados founded by a bequest in Codrington’s will.

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New pedestrian path to be built in University Parks

Elizabeth Waters reports.

A series of “near misses” between delivery vehicles and pedestrians at the South Parks Road entrance to University Parks has highlighted the importance of the recent proposal for a new pedestrian path alongside the park. The existing route is currently the only vehicle entrance to the park and a busy thoroughfare for joggers, families, dog walkers and other pedestrians, causing much concern over potential accidents. The use of headphones and mobile phones by walkers and runners has further complicated the situation at the busy entrance.

Aware that vehicles cannot be relocated, a plan has been submitted to Oxford City Council for a

new pedestrian path running between the parks and the University Science Area, offering a direct, landscaped route for residents to use safely instead of crossing the South Parks Road entrance, “mitigat[ing]” the risk of accidents in the area. The path’s construction would not include digging and would avoid disrupting nearby tree roots. University Parks Superintendent Dr Carolyn Jenkins has stressed that although risk cannot be eliminated and the South Park entrance will remain open to the public, this plan will greatly increase the safety of pedestrians by offering traffic an alternative route.

University Parks Management told *Cherwell*: “The new pedestrian path will be created in summer 2024 to offer an alternative to the current shared vehicle and

pedestrian route from the South Lodge entrance. It allows pedestrians to walk behind the mixed border instead of on the roadway. This should improve their experience of walking through the Parks, providing a more direct, vehicle-free route from South Parks Road heading north before joining Thorn Walk again at the junction with South Walk.”

Commenting on the “tricky corner,” City Councillor Anna Railton expressed her support of any proposal which “reduces conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.” The recent “near misses” have further drawn at-

tention to the necessity of action.

In response to the new pedestrian path some residents have returned to the popular request for dropping the bike ban within the parks. However, the University has made clear their “firm” stance that in order to ensure the parks are “a peaceful space for everyone to enjoy” cycling will not be allowed, even after the temporary lift of the ban in 2023. Instead, they hope this new path, where dogs off-lead, children, and joggers can move about freely with peace of mind, will increase the overall safety of the area.

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Oxford’s next Chancellor elections to be held online for the first time

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Rumoured candidates include Rory Stewart, former Prime Minister Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, and principal of St Hugh’s College Lady Angiolini KC. Both Lady Angiolini and May would be making history as the University’s first female chancellor if elected.

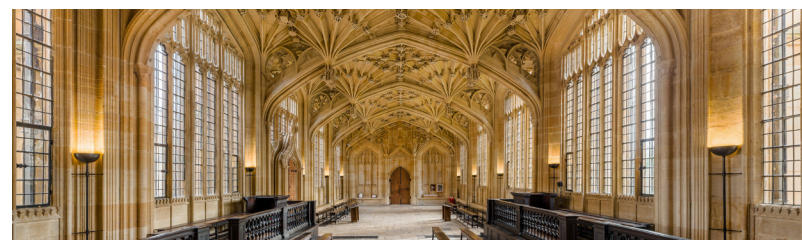
A serving don has commented that candidates “[...] need to have the stature to do the job as well as people skills.” The formal requirements for the selection process involve a nomination by fifty members of the University’s Convocation, which is made up of former students who hold an Oxford degree and existing or former congregation members. Despite common misconceptions, provided that these 50 nominations have been obtained, anyone, regardless of nationality and alma mater, can, in theory, be elected as Chan-

cellor. However, the role has typically been held by former Oxonian politicians.

The previous election in 2003 was held, as tradition stipulates, in the Sheldonian, and required full academic dress. Over 8,000 of Oxford’s graduates participated, a turnout which is now expected to be exceeded with the removal of in-person voting. The 2003 ballot offered voters a choice between Lord Bingham of Cornhill, Lord Neil of Bladen, Chris Patten, and Sandi Toksvig, the latter of whom pledged to eliminate student fees, and was the first female candidate for this position. Patten was consistently regarded as the most likely candidate in the run-up to the election, William Hill having offered odds of 7/4.

This year, Lee Phelps of William Hill said that Rory Stewart “[...] tops the early betting at 5/6” and faces his “main rival” in Theresa May at 7/4. Behind them are Sir Tony Blair and Boris Johnson, who “can be backed at 4/1 and 13/2, respectively”. Khan was placed at 10/1.

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History, philosophy, and theology most popular Oxford degrees

Mahima Nayak reports.

New data from the UCAS 2023 undergraduate application cycle show that Oxford degrees classified as historical, philosophical, and religious studies were the most popular for undergraduate study.

Degrees in this grouping received 3,480 applications, out of a total 24,230 applications made to the University – just over 2,000 more than the number to Cambridge.

Other highly popular subjects include physical sciences (2,610 applications), social sciences (2,575 applications), and law (2,465 applications). By contrast, the least popular were subjects involving medi-

The data, which go back to 2019, also show trends in the popularity of different subject areas. Law has seen the most growth in applications, with 580 more this year than in 2019. In contrast, the subject with the biggest drop is languages, with 275 fewer applications.

The full list of applications to Oxford is as follows:

1. Historical, philosophical, and religious studies (3,480 applications)
2. Physical sciences (2,610 applications)
3. Social sciences (2,575 applications)
4. Law (2,465 applications)
5. Mathematical sciences (2,330 applications)
6. Medicine and dentistry (1,950 applications)



cine, with just 295 applications, and art/design, with 360 applications.

There were certain subjects where Oxford attracted more applications than Cambridge and vice versa. Oxford outnumbered Cambridge in applications significantly for maths, physical sciences, history, philosophy, and religious studies.

Conversely, subjects that were more popular at Cambridge were primarily science focused. Engineering received over double the number of applications at Cambridge compared to Oxford, with computing, geography, and psychology also all receiving more applicants.

7. Language and area studies (1,915 applications)
8. Biological and sports sciences (1,780 applications)
9. Engineering and technology (1,400 applications)
10. Computing (1,230 applications)
11. Business and management (770 applications)
12. Psychology (570 applications)
13. Geography, earth, and environmental studies (500 applications)
14. Design, and creative and performing arts (360 applications)
15. Subjects allied to medicine (295 applications)

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CROSS CAMPUS



Imperial to stop accepting fossil fuel funding for research

Imperial College London announced on Thursday 8 February that it will no longer accept funding for research that supports the fossil fuel extraction business. The University has established an Imperial Zero Index working together with student representatives. This framework helps them to evaluate and determine their engagement with different companies based on factors such as commitment to net zero, reduction targets, and reporting emissions.

Stanford enforces “no camping” policies at pro-Palestine sit-in

On Monday 12 February, Stanford University demanded a cease to an overnight sit-in organised by Sit-In to Stop Genocide. They threatened protestors with legal or disciplinary action. During protests over the last few weeks, the University has attempted to appease protestors with offers to meet with University presidents and a statement to not employ legal or disciplinary action. However, the University is now reporting students who disobey this mandate, and the sit-in continues.

Halfway Hall at Trinity College, Cambridge cancelled due to safety concerns

Cambridge University’s Trinity College has had to shut down its dining hall due to health and safety concerns. Two hours before Halfway Hall, second-year undergraduates were told the event would not take place. The poor condition of the ceiling plaster, which requires at least one month of repairs, means all formal halls will be postponed until the end of Easter Term.

Tesla to set up first permanent base in Oxfordshire at Bicester technology park

Álvaro de Frías reports.

Tesla is opening its first site in Oxfordshire in a technology park located south of Bicester. Albion Land's Catalyst Park in Bicester is designed for advanced manufacturing sectors and technology, and will house Tesla's newest outlet. With 40 stores in the UK, the Tesla store closest to Oxford up until now was in Reading.

Tesla has already been leasing the 24,000 sq ft location, alongside a unit that will be handed over to an unnamed design and manufacturing company. The new occupants will join Evolito, an aerospace company, and Yasa, a manufacturer of electric motors owned by Mercedes Benz, at the site. There is one more building currently available and an additional two under construction, comprising a further 110,000 sq ft that will be ready to let in summer 2024.

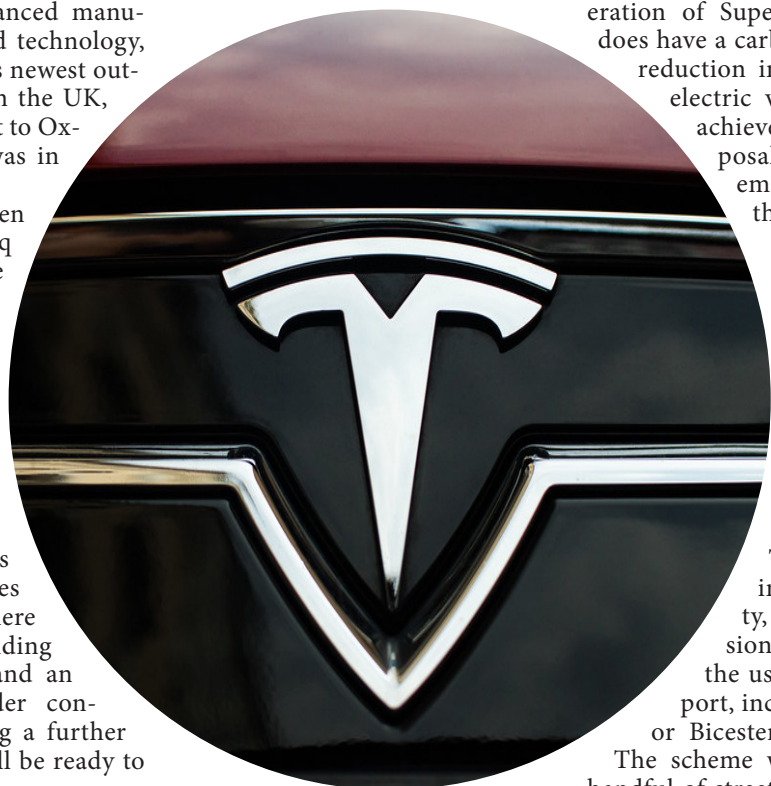
The business complex aims to help reduce commuting out of Bicester due to its proximity to housing, transport links and infrastructure. This would support Bicester's population growth plans, with

10,000 new homes planned within 12 years and an increase in population from 32,000 to 50,000+ by 2031. Future planned infrastructure works are already in place to ensure the transport network will keep pace with this

hub in 2022, which was claimed to be the 'most powerful' in Europe. It remains one of the few supercharger stations in Oxfordshire, with 12 Tesla chargers at 250kW restricted to Tesla owners. Although the manufacture and operation of Supercharger stations does have a carbon footprint, the reduction in emissions from electric vehicles will help achieve Oxford's proposals to move to zero emission travel in the city.

Oxford is set to become the first UK city to introduce a zero-emission zone, an area in which only zero emission vehicles can be used without incurring a charge. The objective is to improve air quality, cut carbon emissions, and encourage the use of public transport, including Redbridge or Bicester Park and Ride. The scheme will only cover a handful of streets in the city centre, but the Oxfordshire County Council and City Council hope to grow the zone over the coming years.

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growth.

Tesla had previously been expanding in Oxford, with its superchargers contributing to the opening of the Redbridge Park and Ride electric vehicle charging

Cambridge athletes punished following Michaelmas sports day swap at Balliol

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Friedman was told that St John's students had been asked to pick up rubbish left on the pitches but failed to do so.

One Oxford student said: "College sports swaps aren't about the sport as much as socialising at the other place," emphasising that students often sign up to play sports they don't have experience in just to participate in the trip.

Friedman emailed the captains of the men's football and croquet captains to request that they "attend an urgent meeting with the Dean" in January and told them that he had received a list of allegations made by Balliol including the above.

The email further stated that "The

security staff reported [St John's] students drinking beer through funnels, and then sliding on beer spilt to the floor."

After the community service was awarded, the Balliol master said the following: "The Balliol/St John's Sports Day is [an] annual event which all the students involved enjoy. We are grateful to St John's for resolving an issue from a recent event and relationships with St John's, our sister College in Cambridge, remain cordial."

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

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

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Indian artefact repatriation recommended by the Ashmolean

Samuel Williams and Daniel Thomas report.

The governing board of the Ashmolean Museum, the Board of Visitors, has now formally recommended to the Oxford University Council that a 16th-century Indian statue be returned to its original temple. The Board of Visitors of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History has also recommended the repatriation of a human cranium to the Hopi Tribe of Arizona.

These decisions come at a time when repatriation of artefacts and human remains has become increasingly common, especially from Oxford museums, caused in part by student-led conversations about the relationship between the University and imperialist legacies.

The repatriation process for the Indian bronze was initiated in 2019 by the museum itself, thanks to a tip from an independent scholar. The scholar was researching the photo archives of the IFP-EFEO (Institut Français de Pondichéry and École Française d'Extrême-Orient) and discovered a photo of the statue still in its original temple location, dated 1957. The scholar

notified the museum which led the museum to contact the Indian High Commission.

On 3 March 2020, the Indian High Commission then made a formal claim of repatriation. The process of repatriation was slowed by the pandemic, but in July 2022 it resumed, culminating in the present recommendation of the Board of Visitors. The bronze statue, a 16th-century depiction of Saint Tirumankai Alvar, was acquired in 1967 by the Ashmolean at an auction held by Sotheby's of Indian and Southeast Asian art. Sotheby's claims that the statue comes from the collection of Dr J R Belmont, a major collector of Indian artefacts.

At the same time that this request for repatriation was granted, a parallel claim by the Indian High Commission for another statue, an 11th century bronze of Shiva with his attendants, was denied by the Board. The Board justified its decision by stating that "there is no evidence to support the work's previous ownership or its possible theft."

In 2022 Oxford and Cambridge University agreed to repatriate more than 200 of the famed Benin Bronzes to Nigeria, while two years earlier the Pitt Rivers Museum removed its "Treatment of Dead Enemies" exhibit

from public display. But the national discussion is far from resolved – in November of last year, Rishi Sunak reignited the argument surrounding the Elgin Marbles by cancelling a meeting with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis intended to discuss the matter.

During a recent talk at Magdalen College, the Victoria & Albert Museum's director, Tristram Hunt, suggested that the statutory obligations of some nationally owned museums may prove an obstacle to restitution efforts. The British Museum Act of 1963 and

National Heritage Act of 1983 restrict museums from returning objects outside of a narrow range of conditions, such as items which turn out to be forged or duplicated.

The V&A itself worked on the long-term repatriation of gold regalia looted from Ghana, also in 2022.

Analysis: Ashmolean offers counterweight to nationalist rhetoric

Morien Robertson comments.

The proactive steps taken by the Ashmolean and University of Oxford in looking at the repatriation of a 16th Century bronze statue demonstrate that constructive dialogues are possible. After being tipped off by an independent scholar, the museum contacted the Indian High Commission, expressing openness to the idea of repatriation. This willingness to engage with colonialism and the provenance of their collections contrasts sharply with Rishi Sunak's handling of the Elgin Marbles dispute, in which he was accused of 'losing his marbles' after abruptly cancelling a meeting with the Greek PM. The British Museum Act (1963) has

been used by museum trustees and politicians alike as an excuse for not repatriating, yet simple amendments to the Act would allow for specific objects to be returned. Fears about objects being returned at random are completely unfounded, as demonstrated by the Ashmolean's denial of another repatriation request due to a lack of evidence. Unlike Germany, which returned 21 Benin bronzes to Nigeria in 2022, and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the British Museum has not engaged with discussions on repatriation of its Benin bronzes, which were looted by British colonists in 1897.

Using the Act to obviate discussion on the topic of repatriation is unhelpful, making the UK govern-

ment appear stubborn and conceited during a time in which much of the West is coming to terms with its colonial legacy. And with a broader public shift towards supporting decolonisation, Sunak's decision may further isolate him. In contrast, the approach of the Ashmolean illustrates that dialogue and reconciliation is the way forward. Of course, Oxford still has much further to go in unpacking its colonial heritage and dealing with institutional biases, but the steps taken by its museums offer a refreshing alternative to the inflammatory and regressive nationalist rhetoric of the government.



Rowers discontent following severe river conditions

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When term and vacation days are combined, Isis was unfavourable 72% of the time and Godstow was unfavourable 90% of the time.

Waning engagement

Notably, the majority of favourable flags took place in the first few weeks of Michaelmas, after which colleges without private external facilities were forced to seek alternatives such as a tank at Iffley, Tideway in London, or Dorney Lake, which is owned by Eton College.

College B captain told *Cherwell* that the tank is “very old” and in a “miserable state” with “screws falling apart.” It is undergoing

“Enthusiasm for land training is understandably limited when the novices have barely been on the water to know what they are training for!”

repair but has not yet been fixed. Tideway is “not cheap to get and arguably more dangerous than the red-flag Isis” and Dorney is “expensive and a headache to organise.”

Rowers turned to ergometers (ergs), conditioning, and group runs; College C also organised ice hockey and swimming sessions together. However despite their best efforts, the clubs have found it difficult to maintain

experience down to novices in the years to come.”

College C captain said the conditions have impacted motivation for both novices and seniors as “water time is much more fun.” The captain also said it has been harder to set crews as they haven’t been able to observe people’s performance on boats.

College B captain said: “a lot of clubs almost got destroyed after Covid due to a big gap in new recruits; this will have a similar impact into the future for sure.”

Bureaucratic inefficiencies

Traditionally, Isis flag colours have been set based on the number of weir gates – sliding discs used to control water level. As the river rises, more weir gates are opened to release water, and so indicate river flow rate.

During the early January flooding, however, debris of a boat got stuck in Iffley Weir. The obstruction blocks water from flowing, allowing Isis to calm down enough that it was safe to row, according to College B captain. However, the piece of boat also prevented the weir gate from closing, so the gate-based calculations yielded a red flag.

As a result, College B missed out on six days of rowing. The captain said that while this sounds “silly to complain about,” when one accounts for the scant few days College B was able to row, this missed opportunity for “about 25% of [College B]’s rowing days,” therefore making a big difference.

Instead of anchoring the flag colour to the number of open weir gates, captains have advocated for measuring flow rate by calculating lock differentials – essentially the difference between the height of water at the top of the river and at the bottom, indicative of flow rate.

A project by two previous OURCs Captain of Coxes, Jameson Lee and Joe Hitchen, implements this by calculating the differentials and their corresponding flag colours. Their daily calculations

more cautious [as of 28 January] in lowering the flag than his predecessor. While safety is a priority, this obviously frustrates clubs like our own who pay significant sums for racking.”

A notice from OURCs in Michaelmas concurs that “the new team there is not yet familiar with all the peculiarities of the [river] stretch.”

A spokesperson from St Edward’s School told *Cherwell*: “St Edward’s School takes the safety of rowers and coaches on the Godstow stretch extremely seriously. All flag decisions are taken by highly qualified personnel based on updates about river conditions from the Environment Agency alongside all available data about river flow and level.”

Slow to change

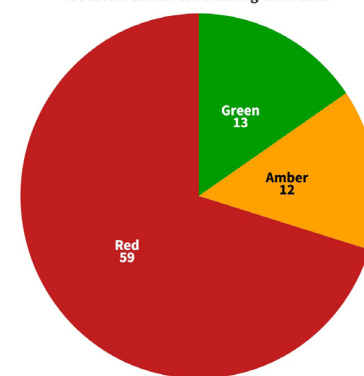
Any change to the flag system requires multiple levels of authority to sign off. The first level, student-run OURCs, has been efficient and responsive according to two captains.

“Any change to the flag system requires multiple levels of authority to sign off.”

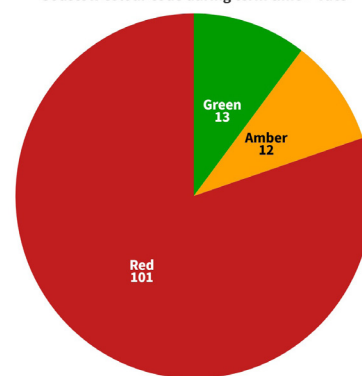
The College C captain told *Cherwell*: “I have it on very good authority that most of the plans ‘politely suggested’ by captains on social media [to OURCs] have already been in the works, and just can’t be made public for a range of safety and privacy reasons.”

When Iffley Weir was blocked by debris, OURCs announced on its mailing list that “it has been agreed with the University authorities that the flag can be set using a combination of several types of objective data and with the confirmation of the [OURCs] Senior Member. This temporary method takes a lot more time to confirm than the usual lock-checking and needs confirmation of data and decisions via multiple conversations which can’t always happen instantly.”

Godstow colour code during term time



Godstow colour code during term time + vacs



College C captain said that Oxford’s Sports Safety Officer “took a fair bit longer” and “hold ups usually come from connecting with University bodies.” The approval was given several weeks after the initial debris blockage, which includes the time it took for the Environment Agency to remove the boat.

College B captain believes that the University exhibits “massive risk aversion” but this caution should only pertain to racing, not training. The captain further notes that while Isis saw a change in system after the debris incident, Godstow initially did not.

According to OURCs Captain’s Meeting minutes early this term, “The OURCs committee and a number of Senior Umpires are gathering data on alternative systems for setting the [Godstow] flag. Any new system will require the approval of the relevant authorities and a body of data, covering a range of river conditions, [and] will be vital to demonstrating that the new system is safe. No changes are therefore expected this term, and possibly longer, though all involved hope a solution can be found as soon as possible.”

College C captain acknowledged the importance of caution: “It’s really tough as safety must remain a priority, and it can seem nonsensical in extraordinary times like this where the river is nominally safe and yet the flag remains high. However, it is my belief that these systems should remain in place as for the most part they work well, and to change them would be to jeopardise safety in future instances.”

OURCs, the Sports Safety Officer, and the Head of Sport

and Physical Activity did not respond to requests for comment.

Disparity in opportunities

While Isis and Godstow flew unfavourable flags, not all colleges were grounded: six clubs have access to external training facilities. 18 colleges (including College A) row on Isis and eight colleges (including College B and C) row on Godstow, while

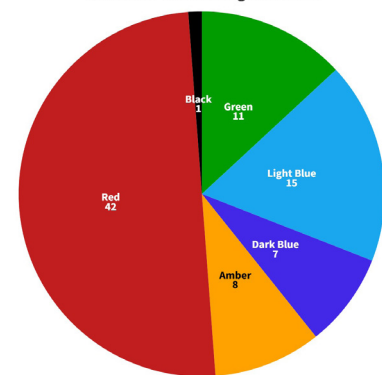
“These systems should remain in place as for the most part they work well, and to change them would be to jeopardise safety in future instances.”

Christ Church, Balliol, Magdalen, Queen’s, and St Edmund Hall can row at private facilities including at Sandford, Wallingford, and Abingdon. College Captain B said Wolfson and University College have been able to arrange travelling to Dorney Lake approximately every weekend since Michaelmas.

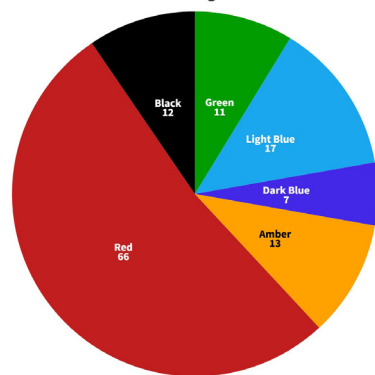
College B captain told *Cherwell*: “From a competitive standpoint this will massively tear the field in half between [colleges] that have the funds and the size to go train elsewhere quite regularly versus those that [train externally] as a one-off thing.”

Image credit: Pointillist via Wikimedia Commons

ISIS colour code during term time



ISIS colour code during term time + vacs



engagement.

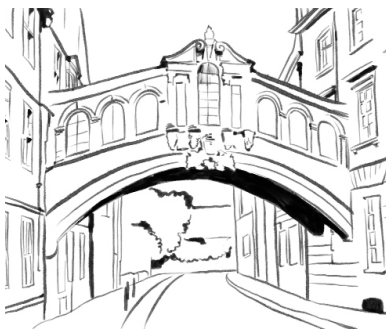
College A captain said: “Enthusiasm for land training is understandably limited when the novices have barely been on the water to know what they are training for! For a sport where a lot of the teaching comes from the years above, there is also a danger that the novice year group may not be able to propagate that

and projections can be found at <https://flags.jamesonlee.com/isis>.

On the Godstow, the flag was traditionally set by a St Edward’s School Boat Club employee based on long-time experience, which has worked well. Recently a new employee took over, and College C captain said that he “lacks the experience to set this more confidently, and thus was far



Thoughts: Election of the Chancellor



Will we care about it in a year?

Alfie Roberts

Before this news, I had not heard of the Chancellor or what he even did. After reading a bit on what the job entails it appears to be more symbolic than anything else. Therefore, the results of the next election probably are not as important as they might feel during the interim when the post changes hands for the first time in twenty-one years. However, who is chosen next will come to represent, at least in part, the direction of the university for potentially the next two decades and more.

Symbols can't hide what's within

Alicia Martínez Patiño

Names have certainly been dropped – Boris Johnson, Imran Khan or Rory Stewart are just some examples of potential candidates. Without a particularly saintly bunch in the first place, the result becomes even more irrelevant. Even ignoring the candidates themselves, the University cannot redeem its failures simply by appointing a new figurehead. For better or for worse, a chancellor has always been merely symbolic. Change will not be made by choosing a shiny new face, whatever its ideology.

Soft power does matter

Morien Robertson

Since Lord Patten announced his resignation there's been a flurry of speculation in the media about potential candidates to succeed, with names as outlandish as Imran Khan and Boris Johnson having been mentioned. This just goes to show the significance of the role: as the flagship figure of the university, the role is useful for upholding Oxford's global status, and of course we've got to have someone cooler than Cambridge's Lord Sainsbury (which shouldn't be hard).

Celebrity, rhetoric, and the Oxford Union

Sebastian Hall

I would be surprised if Dominic Cummings was the star appearance from the Oxford Union you were expecting this term. Because, from where I'm standing, it felt like the announcement of his visit came as an unhappy revelation for many of us. The fact that a man whose only real 'achievement' – Brexit (a tough sell) – was overshadowed by a mid-lockdown trip to Durham and a poor dress sense is the Union's USP for people who shelled out to join it, is majorly disappointing. Yet such an invitation is not in isolation. Rather, it is indicative of a larger trend in society, in which the boundaries between politicians or celebrities and controversialists have been blurred.

Ideally, being a celebrity should be a status conferred on someone by society in recognition of their achievements as a role model. In reality, it is not the moral credentials of an individual that get them plaudits in real life and likes on social media – it is the attention they can attract. Given the Union's fame and notoriety amongst many students, it's unsurprising that they should seek out such figures. Yet it points to a worrying trend that continues to be intensified in modern society, where through the combination of rhetoric and the internet, and rhetoric on the internet, people are increasingly exposed to speech which puts sensation over substance. Politics is more and more often dominated by politicians whose controversial opinions obscure any claim to substance or rigour and it is to

society's detriment that those voices drown out those of caution and moderation.

While it seems that modern culture is dominated by those who speak too much, we mustn't forget the true power of speech, politically or otherwise. For the torchbearers of the Renaissance, oratory was central to the promotion of virtue within the state, which was the most worthy and noble end of political engagement. The vision of humanists such as Thomas More was that the power of speech was to promote a universal code of values, which were applicable in any circumstance. In modern politics, speech increasingly no longer

“In our age, a celebrity can beat a career politician at their own game.”

stands to promote a common morality, but rather as the cornerstone of extreme partisanship. In our age, a celebrity can beat a career politician at their own game. Trump's 2016 victory was not the first time a celebrity president was elected, but with mass-media conspiracy theorising instead of Reagan's folksy charm, it certainly felt different.

The dangerous effects of political articulation are not new: Hitler would not have been nearly as effective without his propagandist-in-chief, Joseph Goebbels. And Shakespeare similarly emphasises the power of speech to cause mutiny in his Roman tragedy Corio-

lanus. Yet in the modern age, there is a critical new dimension that dangerously intensifies that power: the internet and social media. And how could they not? When outrage is the most valuable currency on X (Twitter), it is not the learned, moderate politician who gets coverage, but the demagogue and the rabble-rouser. This idea that 'he who speaks loudest wins' is key to understanding the difficulty in achieving a bipartisan border deal in the United States. For, if there were a lasting solution on the Mexican border, that would be one less polemical issue for Republican lawmakers to raise hell over in the House and Senate.

It seems a sad indictment that sensational, polemical speakers are in higher demand than more subdued and moderate voices. But in truth, the Union should not be condemned too harshly for following that trend. It hardly needs mentioning that highly divisive figures such as Ben Shapiro and Katie Hopkins will attract attention, from both followers and haters, whose ability to draw crowds only benefits the Union, and gives it a tangible (if shallow) sense of relevance. The invitation of Dominic Cummings feels particularly relevant. Not only has he achieved notoriety for his Barnard Caste jaunt, but it was also he who famously created the Brexit slogan 'Take Back Control' in 2016.

From a linguistic perspective, this is genius marketing. But it's not as if political slogans are anything new. We only have to look to the pleasantly innocuous "I like Ike" from Eisenhower's 1952 campaign to realise their timelessness. Yet in con-

junction with the relentless Facebook Leave campaign in the lead-up to the referendum, it symbolised a new era in which the internet has given greater influence to, more often than not, partisan political positions. An era in which false claims (including those propagated by the 'Yes' campaign) disseminated much faster than claims seeking moderation and balance. An era in which

“sensational, polemical speakers are in higher demand than more subdued and moderate voices”

the 'keyboard-warrior' could have as much impact as the career-politician talking at a rally.

Ultimately it means that overwhelmingly in both politics and the 'culture war', people can gain mass attention simply by stating something controversial. And, unfortunately, this phenomenon gives rise to non-serious and jokey (though not very funny) politicians and public figures. But I suppose at a point in history of decreasing attention spans and increasing polarisation, this shouldn't be surprising. The Union's position in Oxford as a place for discussion is positive for students, but this must be reconciled with a new kind of speaker – far from the classical or Renaissance ideal – for whom there's no such thing as bad publicity.

The Debate Chamber

Alfie and Raghav go head to head, debating whether Oxford is a good place to find love

Going to university contains some of the most formative years of our lives. The prospect of finding new friends, fresh experiences and facing new challenges can be daunting. That's why I think so many people find 'love' at university – they seek to find a partner which they can navigate this new world with.

Oxford, in particular, could also be seen as a classically intimidating university experience but cranking it up to the extreme. The tutorials, the deadlines, the subfusc; these are all distinctly Oxford pressures that make the overwhelming experience of university all the more heightened. Within this world, there is even more reason for people



to find partners; someone that shares in this experience with us, someone that helps us through the gruelling 8 weeks.

Oxford also offers quite the venue for romance. Its charming, ancient pubs provide a sufficient venue for any date. Its cobbled streets and abundant parks (and meadows) provide the space for enchanting evening strolls in Trinity.

The only fear about dating in Oxford is bumping into someone you don't really want to see, which is almost inevitable in the centre of town. In some ways, though, alerting others to the success of your own romance will only compel Oxford's innately competitive students to find also their 'one true love'.

So, Oxford is a great place to find love as the pressures it applies and the spaces it presents to a budding young couple, provides ample opportunity for love and ardour.

They say that at university, we can only have two out of the following: a good social life, good academics, and good sleep. No one, of course, mentions finding love. The problem with Oxford is that we're all too preoccupied with our worries and responsibilities to find the time to find love. It's not unusual for us to feel like we're falling behind from Week 1. Where are we meant to find the time? We can't fill our social lives just with opportunities to meet new people; we like to spend time with our friends, or playing a sport, or running societies we've been part of for a while. Our social lives are full of the same commitments that exist in our work.

I definitely don't imagine going on a Cherpse date or scrolling through profiles on Hinge is a very valuable use of our time. There's only so many times we can go "what college do you go to?" and "omg so do you know

XYZ?" before our eyes roll back into our heads. Dating can be tedious, and you don't want to waste time for socialising on that.

And even if you find the time, everyone else is going through the same thing. We all know someone who has sworn off dating to focus on getting a First and a job. "It'll come later", they say, and they're probably making the wiser choice for their career. Who isn't tempted to give it up? The pressure-cooker that is this university forces us to make tough choices, and love suffers for it. Some of us can make time for love; those of us with easier degrees and really good time-management skills. But for the rest, maybe it will come later.



Western attitudes to apartheid

Hamzah Sheikh

“I am the grandchild of Nelson Mandela” is a common expression amongst social justice activists from South Africa. The recent case brought by the country against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is inextricably linked to its past fight for justice and decolonisation. For many, the case is a moral beacon which challenges the Western hegemony over global politics – but what can South Africa’s history teach us about the present?

In South Africa, apartheid began in 1948. At the time, many white South Africans (‘Afrikaners’) felt that white domination was being threatened by an increasing number of black migrant workers in the country’s industrial centres; the ruling minority insisted that there should be a market for employment in which non-whites could not compete. The solution was a legislative effort to extend segregation, which had so far been the social custom, through a parliament in which non-whites could not vote. Apartheid was the legislative part of a system that exploited black labour and concentrated money and power in the hands of the white elite.

By 1964, 3 million white South Africans controlled the affairs of 11 million black Africans, 1.5 million persons of mixed blood and half a million Asians. By the beginning of the 1980s, South Africa had the highest wealth inequality in the world, with 40 per cent of the population earning just 6 per cent of the national income.

Looking through the archives of The New York Times between 1960-80, there are a few key ways in which apartheid was allowed to persist until the start of the 21st century.

The first was clever marketing. Afrikaners considered their rule as akin to an objective tribunal, like the Supreme Court. The United Party,

although not in favour of apartheid, argued that the role of the white government was to stand “above partisan passion and...defend minority rights, however transiently unpopular, from an excessive ‘democracy’ of a thrusting majority”. This was compounded by open fearmongering about what ‘black rule’ could mean for the country. In 1977, the Foreign Minister of Apartheid South Africa travelled to the United States to lobby Congressmen, businessmen and Senators against supporting ‘one-man, one-vote’, the slogan used by the anti-apartheid movement. The same slogan used by the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s, he said, would bring “violence, bloodshed and eventual destruction of the white population”.

The next was an obsession with discussing the way in which apartheid would end to detract from the vile racism and inherent violence of white minority rule. In 1986, four years before the negotiations to end apartheid, a New York Times opinion writer wrote: “None but the glib can foresee an easy, painless transition...oppression has gone on so long that even those most patient of people, South African blacks, are now smouldering with bitterness.”

The idea that apartheid could only be dismantled through excessive violence allowed many to continue supporting the status quo, even as increasing state violence was required to maintain the apartheid regime. When 7,000 black protesters rose up in opposition to the ‘passbook’, a government ID that defined your rights according to your race, police fired indiscriminately into the crowd and killed 69 people. UMKhonto we Sizwe, the paramilitary arm of the African National Congress (ANC), was formed in the wake of this atrocity, now known as the Sharpeville massacre.

Pervading this discussion were racist narratives that suggested that black Africans were not ready to

be given sovereignty and that they were too tribal, or inherently violent, to form stable societies. Many colonial enterprises relied on similar notions of stewardship, which gave Europeans the right to control African affairs. An opinion article in The New York Times in 1962 entitled ‘Africa Struggles with Democracy’ repeats long-cited ideas about the backwards, tribalistic people of the continent. Seemingly legitimate concerns about the rise of ‘strong man’ rule even suggested that Africans were somehow predisposed to it: “Now, having become the masters, they seem to many Western observers to be surrendering their new powers just as fast as they can, not to the white overlords, but to their own black leaders.”

Absent from this discussion was the fact that the white holders of power had, for the past four hundred years, undermined the rule of law and effectively precluded the formation of stable African societies. The apartheid government regularly stoked racial tensions to preserve its power, even to the end of its rule.

The final way the apartheid regime clung to power was to exaggerate claims of a greater evil. For many in the West, the “inhumanity of the South African system, its perverse racism, was a lesser evil” than the spectre of communism. The apartheid government, and its powerful allies in the United States and the United Kingdom, considered the ANC a terrorist organisation sympathetic to communism. After the United Nations published a report advocating for the establishment of a ‘non-racial democracy’, South Africa accused it of bias for drawing on sources which it considered “communist-infiltrated or controlled”.

In 1952, Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for ‘statutory communism’. He would later face charges of ‘high treason’ and ‘conspiracy to violently

overthrow the government’; the latter led to his famous imprisonment on Robben Island. In 2005, 11 years after apartheid was lifted, I had the honour of meeting him. Yet, he remained on the United States terror watchlist until 2008.

It is in this spirit that one should view the moral leadership of South Africa at the ICJ. In the words of Chief Albert Lutuli, a former President-General of the ANC: “Our

history is one of opposition to domination, of protest and refusal to submit to tyranny.” The struggle for national rights in South Africa has a 300-year-old history. It continues today, as economic and social apartheid is dismantled in South Africa and it challenges Western imperialism.

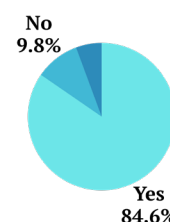
Decolonisation is not an easy endeavour, but history shows that it is inevitable.

The view from Oxford

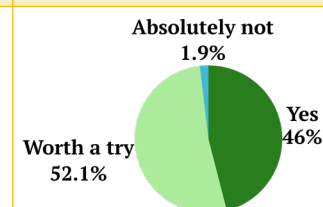


This week, we asked our Instagram followers...

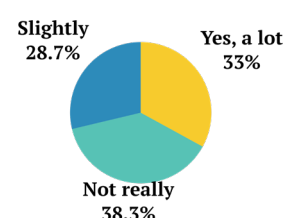
Are you part of a society?



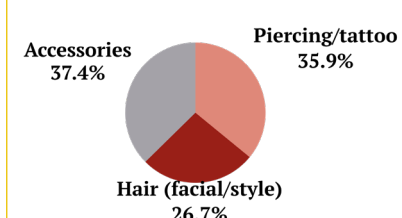
Does dating across years work?



Has uni influenced how you dress?



How have you changed your appearance?



A crash course in British politics

This week, Roy Shinar Cohen explores ‘party scandals in recent years’



After having clarified the basics – how elections in the UK work and looking ahead at who will be the next Prime Minister – this week’s article will look back at recent history. Specifically, this article will explain both parties’ recent scandals, which are paramount to understanding their standing today. First, since the Brexit vote the Conservatives replaced five leaders – Cameron, May, Johnson, Truss, and Sunak – in what was described as an implosion. Second, Labour’s Corbyn-antisemitism scandal.

The Conservative Party has governed Britain since 2010 – 14 tremulous years around the globe. The Arab Spring, democratic backsliding, the Trump presidency,

and the Ukraine War are some of the major events that shaped where we are now. Another major contender, especially in this country but not exclusively, is Brexit. In 2016 Cameron called a referendum, believing he could win and “put the issue to sleep”. However, to his surprise, after some of his closest Conservative allies campaigned against him, he suffered a narrow defeat – and resigned. The Brexit vote and consequent resignation of Cameron sent the Conservative Party into a tailspin, which it is yet to entirely recover from.

May followed Cameron as PM and served for three years (2016-2019), attempting to find an acceptable Brexit deal. However, upon failing

to pass her plan in Parliament three times, and in the process losing the support of her party, she resigned. Then came the controversy-riddled Johnson, whose tenure included unlawfully shutting down Parliament (2019) and corruption allegations (2022). But what eventually brought him down was “Partygate” – a series of illegal parties in 10 Downing Street during Covid-19 lockdowns. As a result, Johnson resigned (July 2022) and was replaced with Truss, who resigned 44 days later after causing an economic crisis through massive tax cuts and borrowing. Finally, Sunak became PM (October 2022), and although he has not achieved all his goals, he has at least held onto his seat so far.

Second, Labour’s antisemitism scandal (2016-2023). Under Corbyn’s leadership, Labour dealt

with a list of scandals regarding antisemitism in its ranks and improper handling of antisemitism complaints. Importantly, Corbyn himself was repeatedly accused of antisemitism, in addition to claims of antisemitism among his supporters. After Corbyn lost the 2019 general election, Starmer replaced him as leader in April 2020, and, later the same year, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) completed an investigation into multiple antisemitism accusations against the Labour Party. The investigation concluded Labour acted unlawfully and came to three conclusions: harassment, political interference in complaints, and lack of training on antisemitism. While Starmer apologised and vowed to change the party’s ways, Corbyn



rejected the findings and claimed they were politically motivated.

Corbyn’s reaction, seen by many as proof of the need for substantial change within Labour, led to his suspension from the party (which made him an independent Member of Parliament). Furthermore, in February 2023, Starmer announced that Corbyn would not be allowed to run as a Labour candidate in the upcoming general elections. The same month, it was decided that Labour’s implementation of change in regard to antisemitism was sufficient to take it out of the EHRC’s special measures.

To understand the current election, we ought to understand the things that shape them more than anything – including recent controversies. These events caused great ripples that shook the parties’ electoral bases and perception of them. Be sure, many voters will have them in mind when casting their ballots.

Image Credit: Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

“What you’re seeing is a distillation of millions of person hours into a two hour movie.”

Ananya Parakh talks black holes, spaceflight, and Christopher Nolan with VFX guru Oliver James.

Have you ever wondered how James Bond jumps out of an aeroplane? How *Interstellar’s* astronaut Cooper enters a black hole? How Rocky rides the pie machine in *Chicken Run*? If you’re a humanities student, let me tell you that none of this was real. James Bond didn’t almost plummet to death, Matthew McConaughey wasn’t sent into a black hole and, sorry to say it, *Chicken Run* isn’t real. The creator behind it all is the Chief Scientist at DNEG (Double Negative), Oliver James.

Oliver has created visual effects for Christopher Nolan’s *Tenet*, *Oppenheimer* and *Batman Begins*, along with a few *James Bond* and *Harry Potter* films amongst his other works. His involvement in *Interstellar* won him an Oscar for visual effects and awed the audiences with its simulation of a black hole.

It was through a passion for photography, knack for computing and deep understanding of physics that Oliver was able to find his niche. Not unlike Harry Potter, he says, “I was one of those kids who had a dark room under the stairs where I used to do my black and white photography.” During his time at Christ Church college, Oxford, Oliver enjoyed Physics and specialised in courses on light. “I was really interested in things like modern optics and laser physics and atomic physics. But after I graduated, I wanted a

the team. “You sweep the floors, make the coffee, lift the lights, but you also learn absolutely everything about the photography business.”

Harnessing his skills with Physics and Maths, Oliver’s approach to complicated problems is to abstract it into a way you know how to solve. Except the damp, dark rooms of Christ Church: “There was a photography club in the basement of Christ Church and my pictures would come out muddy. I did finally realise that this was because it was a cold, damp cellar. You get your chemicals the right temperature but 10 minutes later, they’ve dropped down to 5 degrees rather than 20.” It was a step towards learning how to do things properly and fostered an appreciation for the right conditions. Conditions to create a black hole perhaps.

Creating something out of thin air, something you’ve never seen before, and making it seem so realistic that you could almost say that you have really seen it, is no small feat. Oliver talks about his most challenging and rewarding project of them all: *Interstellar*. Although it was 3 years before the first photograph of the black hole, Oliver was able to simulate the prettiest picture to date.

“Kip Thorne (Nobel Prize winning physicist) was one of the writers for *Interstellar*. That means that he wrote a short draft of what the movie could be and got involved

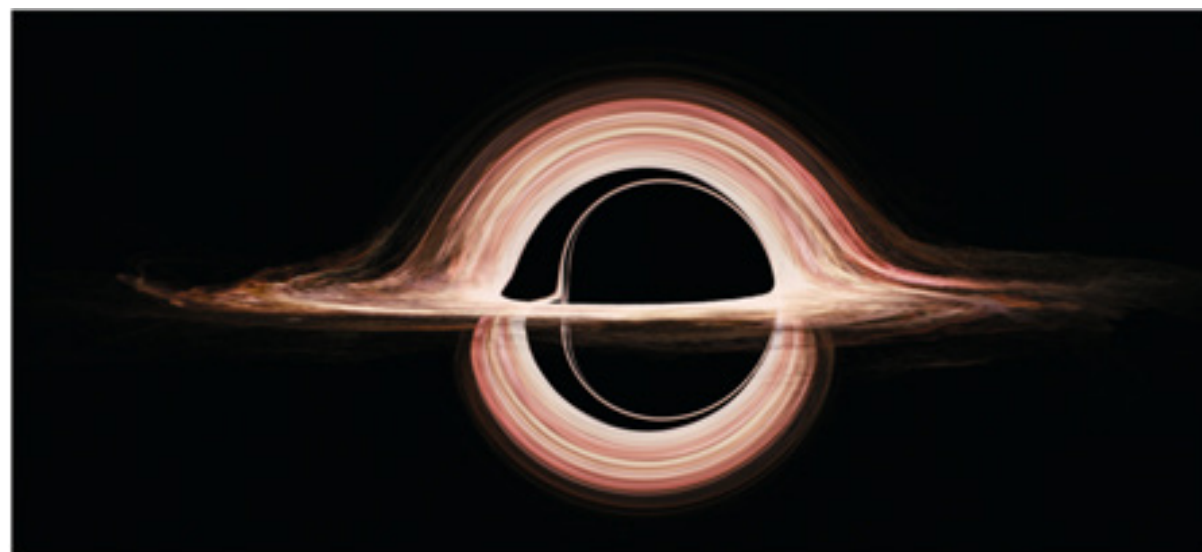


Image reproduced under CC BY 3.0 License from Gravitational lensing by spinning black holes in astrophysics, and in the movie *Interstellar*, Oliver James

pher Nolan that idea. So when they asked us to look at the black hole, he was available as a science advisor. There was one point, however, that changed things for me. At an early meeting, we were brainstorming about how you might depict a black hole. He was trying to explain over the telephone what would happen and what light does. At one point, I said, “Could you send me an equation describing the path of a ray of light around a black hole into an observer’s eye?”. And that must have struck the right note, because it’s literally 24 hours later that I receive a paper with all the equations I needed. And I realised that if I gave him very, very precise questions, he could give me, very, very, very precise answers to them.”

So here’s ‘How to Create a Black Hole 101’: “we started off by modelling just a black hole with no spin which makes the equations much simpler. But then there’s a plot point which needed the degree of time dilation to be right.”

For every hour spent near the black hole, 7 years passed on Earth.

“Kip Thorne made the calculations that unless the black hole has a particular spin you won’t have a stable orbit. In his mind it would be spinning at 99.8% of its maximum possible speed, but this breaks symmetry and makes the equation more complicated. So we went down that rabbit hole and designed to see what a spinning black hole will look like. And it’s actually quite subtly different from a non-spinning black hole. It looks slightly egg shaped rather than spherical.”

Christopher Nolan didn’t like the look of that, so they went 60% in the

end.

“If you look very, very closely, it’s in the movie. It’s that attention to detail that led us down wonderful rabbit holes, and it almost made that part of the movie-making develop a life of its own.”

Films can bring great things: “about a year after the film came out, Kip Thorne’s project, which is LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory), detected gravitational waves. He won the Nobel Prize off the back of that. It almost felt like the visualisations of black holes brought this idea that black holes are not some kind of funnel in space, but actually spherical objects that might collide and bash into things. I think it’s helped the public understand, maybe, the significance of his discovery in gravitational waves.”

In a slightly different universe, James Bond, in *Quantum Of Solace*, jumps off his plane with Camille, magically touching the ground undamaged. But what do you do when hair dryers aren’t enough to mimic the wind?

“They thought they could film it in his wind tunnel, to get something more convincing. They also want to be able to do more dynamic camera movements in a very limited space. So we came up with this idea of filming it from multiple camera angles, and then recreating the geometry as a post process. A lot of the challenge in that was coming up with a way of designing software that would take eight Dalsa cameras. These were some of the early digital high res cameras used on the Mars lander.” Proving again the potential for film’s imaginative impact in science.

When sitting through a two hour movie feels like a bit much for our attention span as a society attuned to youtube, the number of hours underlying the two that we see are more than one could imagine: “In some ways, it sort of sums up moviemaking. What you’re seeing is a distillation of millions of man hours or person hours into a two hour movie.” Speaking of behind the scenes, Ron and Hermione weren’t the only people that fell in love in *Harry Potter*: “In fact, I met my wife on the set of *Harry Potter*. We both were working at DNEG in different departments. She was going to be operating the Disney Animation and my role was working on a system for overlaying the character for Hagrid’s half-brother. So we ended up going to the studios, probably every day for a couple of months, or working on the scene. I suppose on the film set there’s quite high pressure for very short amounts of time. A lot of the time you’re sitting around waiting. Hanging out, drinking tea, eating cakes.”

Currently, Oliver is generating excitement with the integration of AI in VFX. “I didn’t really know what I wanted to do until I left university. Photography was something I’d always been interested in, so I took the plunge.” It’s often not easy to know what you want to do with your life, and much harder when your relatives ask. Whether you wish to remain an academic weapon for life, desk away crunching numbers on your laptop or bring your vivid imagination to life, there is room to do it all - if you’re anything like Oliver.

Images courtesy of Oliver James



Photo: Max Alexander / Starmus

bit of a break from that, and wanted to try photography as a profession.” A leap of faith landed him a job as an assistant in a photographic studio with only two other people on

very early on, and he wanted to stick to the premise that the movie would incorporate as much physics as possible while keeping it as realistic as possible. He sold Christo-

Quickfire Questions

Who is your childhood hero?

Filmmaker and oceanographer, Jacques Cousteau.

Is University Challenge on the cards?

No, I would be terrible at it! I’m much better at the opposite end of the spectrum, spending a longer time answering more complex questions.

Which film do you most want to watch?

I really enjoyed introducing my daughter to *Groundhog Day* last Friday (which was *Groundhog Day*). That’s a movie I could watch again and again. And again!

Seeking asylum from Myanmar

Juliet Van Gyseghem and Kobi Mohan speak with asylum seeker, Jack Sanga, about Myanmar since the 2021 coup

Jack Sanga is an asylum seeker from Chin State, Myanmar, who has been in Oxford for the past year. He was a student when Myanmar's military launched a coup against its sitting government in 2021 and has since had to flee after protesting against military rule. He currently volunteers with the charity Asylum Welcome and is seeking to raise awareness of the ongoing violence and human rights abuses perpetrated by the present regime in Myanmar.

In spring of 2021, Jack was in his third year of university studying psychology. On the 1st February 2021, Myanmar's parliament was scheduled to meet for the first time since the election in November 2020, in which the incumbent National League for Democracy led by Aung San Suu Kyi won in a landslide victory. Instead, to the surprise of many living in Myanmar including Jack, the military seized power from the civilian government on that day in a coup, bringing to an abrupt halt a decade-long transition away from full military rule towards democracy.

Jack woke up that morning and turned on the television to find that all channels were out of operation except the military channel which was broadcasting propaganda. The coup marked a return to military rule which Myanmar has been subject to since 1962. The November election was only the second general election held in the country since an end was brought to full military rule in 2011 after years of insurgencies and civil protests by the Burmese people.

The military justified the coup by alleging widespread fraud in the 2020 election and declaring a subsequent state of emergency, though a number of independent observers have rejected the claims of widespread election fraud.

For young people like Jack, democracy had become the new norm and they had little memory of the decades of military rule that had dictated Burmese politics for much of the period since its independence. Having only known life under a democracy, he was completely taken aback by the announcement of the coup. He mentioned that when he first saw the broadcasts, he partially hoped the whole thing was some sort of joke, not quite believing what was happening, though the bleak reality of the situation soon set in.

Thousands took to the streets in cities across Myanmar in the months that followed to reject the coup and call for the elected government to be returned to power. Amongst them were Jack and his friends who organised the first non-violent demonstration in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-biggest city, attended by hundreds of people. The initial response to the coup,

which mostly constituted a peaceful civil disobedience movement made up of health workers, students and other civilians was met with a brutal crackdown. The military began its ongoing campaign of terror; quashing dissent with violent tactics, raiding homes, arresting and in some cases executing activists and those suspected of supporting democracy.

Jack recounts hearing about the first person - Mya Thwe Thwe Khaing - who was shot at with a live bullet at a peaceful demonstration in the city of Naypyidaw on February fourth as the police attempted to clear protestors. Despite contrary evidence from filmed footage of the incident, the military claimed only rubber bullets were used that day. She died in hospital on February 19th from her wounds. She was just 19 years old. After those first few days, Jack remembers dispersal

“Jack woke up that morning and turned on the television to find that all channels were out of operation except the military channel which was broadcasting propaganda.”

tactics only becoming more brutal, with tear gas, water cannons and live bullets being deployed regularly at subsequent protests. He described scenes of burnt tires, roads filled with rubbish and sounds of gunshots resonating through the city of Mandalay for the first time in his memory.

When schools and universities were reopened later in 2021 and in early 2022 after many months of closure due to COVID-19 alongside many other students refused to return to education in protest. Faced with gloomy prospects for the return of a democratic government and disgruntled at the state of the curriculum, shaped by what he found to be an intentionally exclusionary narrative, Jack continued his strike action. He received a number of letters from his university stating that if he didn't attend, he would be arrested. As his situation became increasingly unsafe, he made the difficult decision to leave his home and come to the UK to seek asylum.

Speaking about his experiences seeking asylum in the UK, he says that he is at once grateful for the people he has met in Oxford and frustrated with some of his interactions with the immigration system,



Village in the Chin state of Myanmar

Though the Home Office website suggests that it usually takes six months to get an asylum decision after interview, Jack has found this to be unrealistic in his and others' experience.

This reflects a national trend of growing appeal backlogs, resulting in longer average waiting times for decisions on asylum cases. According to the Migration Observatory, whereas 87% of applications received an initial decision within six months in Q2 2014, just 10% did so in the same time period in 2022. In 2021, UK asylum applications took an average of around 20 months to receive an initial Home Office decision.

As he awaits a decision, he has been staying in government accommodation on the outskirts of Oxford. He talks about how friendly and supportive many of the people he has met in Oxford have been. Since asylum seekers do not have the right to work whilst their claim is being considered, Jack has taken up volunteering with the charity Asylum Welcome, attends a local church and has sought ways to continue his studies and keep up his love of music.

He does so despite many barriers; unable to earn an income he can only access a government stipend of £8.86 a week - with a single bus fare into town from his accommodation costing £2, the possibilities of accessing any facilities or community spaces in town are extremely limited. There are also practical barriers to engaging with the local community - for one, despite relative proficiency in English, the language barrier can make meeting and getting to know people difficult as he found when he first joined his local con-

gregation.

In some cases, revealing his asylum background has provoked coldness or intrusive questioning, though there are still many who are welcoming and warm. He mentions that this is particularly true of those he's met through local music groups, with music often providing a common language himself and local musicians and enthusiasts can all share in.

Despite having his life upheaved almost overnight, forced to flee his home and living in a state of constant uncertainty, Jack is resolved to make the best of his situation. When asked what he thinks there is for us to do as students he stresses the importance of staying informed about the situation in Myanmar.

Some assume it is safe for Burmese asylum seekers like Jack to return home, questioning their right to seek asylum here. Jack finds this to be a reflection of a general lack of awareness about the ongoing brutality being inflicted by Myanmar's government on its people, particularly minorities like the Chin people, of which Jack is a part, who are not a part of the Buddhist-Bamar ethno-religious majority. Jack suggests that part of the problem is that media blackouts and widespread dissemination of propaganda by the military regime have limited channels for spreading information regarding the situation in Myanmar. At the same time, the fate of Myanmar is that of many countries stricken by violence and humanitarian crises - after a few months of taking up headlines, it lost the attention of the international community.

When Jack talks to us about the situation in Myanmar as it is today,

the air around him seems to change; his sunny optimism seems to give way to a certain graveness and urgency. Reports from organisations including the UN suggest violence and repression in the state is only intensifying as the ethno- nation-

“In 2021, UK asylum applications took an average of around 20 months to receive an initial Home Office decision.”

alist government faces various military challenges from armed groups in various states across the country. More than 2 million people have been displaced since the coup and the UN has noted the use of indiscriminate air attacks and scorched earth tactics by the military against opposition which constitute war crimes as well as uses of torture, intimidation and arbitrary detention and killing of civilians.

Jack could have never imagined the turns his life would take all of a sudden in his third year of university. He retains a great deal of hope and determination and continues to advocate for awareness of the plight of the Burmese people and freedom against repression and violence at the hands of its military dictatorship so that his people can live free from the threat of violence and he might one day be able to return to the place he once called home.

Image credits: Thomas Khaipi via Wikimedia Commons

CHERBADLY

Retiring Chancellor reveals himself as the Oxshitter

More than a year after the infamous 'Oxshit' scandal, outgoing University Chancellor Lord Christopher Patten has revealed himself as the person who defecated in a shower at University College in January 2023.

Patten announced he was the Oxshitter at a press conference this week, apologising for not coming forward earlier, but re-

marking that if he had, it could have "utterly tarnished [his] reputation" and "threatened [his] position of authority." Now that he was retiring, Patten stated, he felt he could be open about the incident.

Explaining his actions, Patten said: "Complete accident, I'm afraid. I just happened to be passing the Durham Building when I found myself rather caught short,

having eaten rather too much at a charity dinner that evening. I thought I'd pop in and see if I could locate a lavatory, but unluckily I'd mislaid my spectacles and I must've missed the bowl without noticing. Silly me!"

However, Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey has since rebutted Patten's explanation, saying "Chris wasn't at a charity dinner, we were out to-

gether on our termly Chancellors' Booze-Up. He was pissed out of his mind and loaded-up on curry, so he just clambered into the Univ bathroom through the window and drunkenly shat everywhere."

Tracey continued, "It was definitely a deliberate act. He's always hated Univ, because when people learn he's the University Chancellor, they think he's only the University College Chancellor, which is of course a less senior role. Plus I heard him cackling evilly while he did it, saying things like "This'll show the bastards!" whilst smearing it up the shower walls."

At the same conference, Patten revealed he was also responsible for another recent incident at Univ in which someone vomited down the stairs, again claiming it

somehow as an accident, although refusing to explain how so. In both cases, Patten said he would have paid for the cleanup, had he not been "a little short on cash at the time, you know how it is."

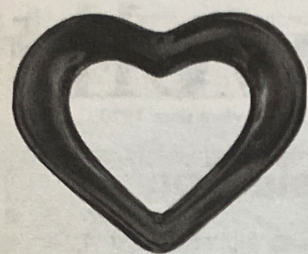
Reactions have been generally shocked and angry, with Shermar Pryce, who dealt with the Oxshit scandal as JCR President, remarking that Patten "claimed he was apologetic and embarrassed, but he kept smirking – he seemed altogether quite proud of himself." Indeed, some conference attendees noted Patten was wearing a custom-made 'I Was the Oxshitter' badge at the event.

Meanwhile, a student journalist present asked "Why did he call a press conference specially for this?"

2004: Never date a physicist

CHERWELL
archives
By Kelsey Moriarty

10 Cherwell Friday 29 October 2004



How to date: Across the Arts-Science Divide

Let ADELINE O'HORN take your hand and guide you through the maze that is an Oxford-based love-life

Almost anyone can join in a conversation about Shakespeare, or World War Two, or proportional representation. Talking about historical or literary figures is gossip masquerading as serious intellectual endeavour, which is why arts students really love studying their subjects. Thus the substance of an Arts tutorial can, if edited slightly, translate fairly well into a debate in the pub. The same cannot be said of logarithms or the reactivity of caesium.

Artists think scientists are boring, anal, ugly and probably bad in bed, which is true of physicists but not of psychologists. Scientists think artists are purely decorative, frivolous and spend too much time talking about sex to get around to ever having it, which may be true of English students, but is far from true for histo-

rians, who are known for their love-lives.

It is difficult for the two to meet in a mutually satisfactory relationship, especially given the 9am lectures. The two groups who get the most sex in Oxford are thespians and musicians; 9-5 labs mean scientists won't have time to join either group.

The idyll of long afternoons spent discussing Rousseau on a sun-dappled lawn while eating scones and drinking champagne is alien to anyone who owns a lab coat. When Oxford is all about aesthetics (the spirit of Oscar Wilde lives on), anyone who lives in a world which privileges experiments over books must be considered to have wasted their four years here, as well as excellent opportunities to exchange sultry glances across the Radcliffe Camera.

And, as every arts student knows,

scientists are nothing more than sullen interlopers: Classics was studied here several centuries before physics, proving that medieval monks knew what was important.

Scientists may be paid more in the end, smug gits, but the artists will probably have better sex. And money's not important anyway. Since most artists are hopelessly romantic, they're probably also peacenik socialists, which creates a problem – the artists protest against going to war, while the scientists are designing the bombs which will be used. Artists fall in love more often because they know that's why you're at university and it provides material for an awful lot of bad, if heartfelt, poetry. They'll talk a lot more because they have interesting things to say.

Don't even think about crossing that boundary.

As I said in the last print, it's just so comforting to know that the same debates and topics of conversation have been going on for far longer than you have. Just under twenty years ago (a number that represents a whole lifetime for second years!), an article in Cherwell recommended in quite strong terms against dating across the STEM / humanities divide.

Despite being titled 'How to Date Across the Arts-Science Divide', there is no practical advice about it. I'm not sure if there is any to offer. As a humanities student in a

relationship with a STEM student, the lifestyle they have is certainly confusing. They could quite easily have the same number of lectures in a day that I have in a term. Their work is quite physical, I think, in a way most humanities aren't. They have to physically be present for lectures and labs (whatever happens at those), whilst historians can quite easily get away with reading PDFs in bed. Each have their hardships, and I think of the two of us, I am more consistently stressed.

On top of that my college hus-

band is a Physics student who did not take too kindly to the author's portrayal of physicists as 'boring, anal, ugly, and probably bad in bed'. I think he once tried to explain general relativity to me, which he has since said is not actually possible, but we very rarely discuss the ins and outs of his degree. It's possibly just too uninteresting.

It's unfortunate that STEM students will be paid more in the end – 'smug gits', the author calls them – but there is comfort in knowing that humanities students will always be much, much more fun.

John Evelyn

16th of February 2024

Previously on *Succession*...

For some shocking reason, the entirety of committee appeared rather sleepy at Monday CC. Forced into the impossible dilemma that voters were faced with last term – choosing between the American Socialite and the Lord of the Tides – the Deep Slate decided to give up, pass over the Teddy Bear and entrust supreme power in the hands of the Rugger Enthusiast. In the newly created office of President-Not-Elect, he has only half the time and half the officer team most have to help them prepare for office, but strangely he doesn't seem too sad about his fate...

With Schrodinger's two President-Elect-Designate-Pending-Tribunals in retreat, the election that will never end has come to its conclusion. Unless, that is, a certain ex-COS has his way. Whipping up his army of the aged, the Barrister – rumour has it – is demanding a re-poll; clearly he thinks his apprentice, none other than Teddy's Panda, was not the representative that a man with the stature of the Lord of the Tides was entitled to. Perhaps the Barrister should have represented him, having more experience representing people facing harassment allegations.

The Rugger Enthusiast isn't the only person beaming this week. Recent events have swept all else aside in the collective-psyche, allowing no small shortage of embarrassing incidents to fade into darkness. RO World's Chosen One seems to have somewhat misunderstood his mission brief; history's most Silent Disco meant that last week's ball was concluded in record time. The Neighbour, blissfully ignorant of everything that occurred last Friday night – a fact



that seems to somewhat irk the otherwise preternaturally calm and composed Director of the East India Company – presented the Union with a taste of what his time as Head of Big Fun would be like. Bizarrely, members seemed less than enthusiastic about paying more than £20 for a social that nobody had ordered anything for.

India's only ever footballer and the international diplomat (who isn't even favoured at their own college being passed over for the diplo-brat) seem to also be passed over by another two standing candidates on their slate for the best fetuses (and the votes of a certain bloc of postgrads). With the entire officer slate making promises of lining votes, in reality the votes are all coming from the same pot. A Ponzi scheme where people keep putting votes in but with no pot of votes to extract. Will Teddy's Panda face the same consequences as Bernie Madoff and his two sons?

As the Mexican standoff between the Barrister, Teddy's Panda and RO Worlds Chosen One continues for the throne, more interesting is the race for Librarian. Obsessed with Watson and the TikTok Queen remain locked in a dead heat, whilst the Aragonese heiress, now with much more free time ever since she so gracefully departed Union Committee, marches to war with the Barrister, seemingly unaware that only two weeks ago said lawyer was offering to serve as the lieutenant for his two aspiring Presidential adversaries. Once upon a time this behaviour would be damned as rank opportunism, but it's difficult not to admire the man's clairvoyance. With the Number 2 spot now seeming more like the fast track to the throne than ever before, who can blame a person for taking a greater interest in reading?

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Anuj Mishra
Editor-in-Chief

This last week has been abundant in editorial inspiration: in the space of seven days we've had an SU scandal, a Union succession crisis, and, (by far the most important thing) the *Cherwell* sex-tigation. Amid a week of Oxford institutions falling apart, we can at least find comfort in the knowledge that one thing seems to hold: students are still having quite a lot of sex. To top it all off, it's week five, which has forced me into two heart-breaking realisations: that I am halfway through my degree, and that the next issue of *Cherwell* will be my last as Editor.

While I will be relieved to shed the burden of making it to our 9am editorial meetings and the unceasing influx of emails, I will, of course, be sad to leave behind



Oliver Sandall
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

I recently read about the 'influencer accent'. Well, actually, I watched a TikTok about it. That got me thinking: how will the influencers of 2074 sound, and how will media as a whole sound in fifty years' time?

The trajectory of technology's overbearing role in our day-to-day lives will not, foreseeably, flatten out in the next few years.

So, the question remains: what will the Campbell Pucketts and Madeline Argys of our children's generation sound like? What will short-form media, filled to the brim with product placements and questionable marketing techniques, look like?

But why make a fuss about this? Didn't our parents experience the same thing? The shift from VHS tapes and stiff, overly formal TV presenters all the way to primetime BBC News presenters flipping off

the slightly-damp and very dusty set of rooms that we like to call Choffice. (Yes, we do technically share our office with the Isis, Ox-Sci, and Phaser, but none of them use it quite as much as we do – I stand by the name).

Oxford life so often drives one into the rat race of doing as many things as you can physically handle until you crash and burn in week eight, only to recuperate over the vacation and start again. Being halfway through my degree with so many things left to do has made me to realise this: I got into *Cherwell* because I wanted to write, and, while I've done a fair bit of that, I have spent much more time reading other people's stuff. Now, I look forward to a term of writing where I get to leave the editing part to someone else.

Without letting meditation upon the transience of *Cherwell* editorship get the better of me – for this too shall pass – I turn instead to the watercolour image I have painted of what my Trinity will behold. Picture it: Port Meadow, wild horses, crystal-clear water (with only a thin layer of sewage), and me with a Tesco meal deal. I hear you cry: 'but it's only week five, there's four weeks to go!'. In response, all I have to say is that week five is the new week eight – no, I will not explain further.

their colleagues and having it plastered all over Instabook, SnapFace and WhatsMessage, does, actually, seem quite sizeable.

The independent and personal media sphere, that is to say, mainly what we now regard as social media, has always been more radical and one (or several) step(s) ahead of mainstream media in big trends. Social media is powered by people, no matter how much it may be influenced by big corporations and the mainstream media. But the changes in social media 'norms', the breaking away from tradition, and – most notably in recent years – the increase in informal short-form content, drive mainstream media changes.

I'm not a fan of this cheap, fast-paced media, especially in news reports from the likes of the BBC and ITV. Nothing frustrates me more than seeing a poorly edited green-screen and shoddy audio quality on an Instagram Reel or Tiktok from one of the big broadcasting networks. But for many, it doesn't matter. And, of course, I can see the benefits of accessible media – I just think it can be done better.

In any case, it tells us one thing: language is malleable and also often reflects a cultural shift. But this also means we get more media, quicker. If primetime newsreaders are now, in the space of no more than 20 years, no longer required to speak in RP and the six o'clock news can cover stories about YouTubers and TikTokers, who knows what the media, let alone the social media and 'influencer', landscape of 2074 will look like.



Bintia Dennog
Editor-in-Chief

Every time I have opened my Instagram app in the past week, a Halfway Hall post appeared. And then I would scroll, and there would be yet another one, without fail. It's quite strange to constantly be reminded that you are halfway done with your degree and potentially with Oxford. Amid fifth-week blues and the everlasting essay crises, there is barely any time, or even will, to process this. At least not until the "what do you want to do after Oxford" questions begin to roll in, and you inevitably have to face the limited time you have left here.

Although Halfway Hall is indeed accompanied by some anticipatory nostalgia, it's still such a cute, little moment to celebrate surviving half – or in some cases 3/8ths – of your degree. I'm particularly jealous of the Worcesterites' tradition to dress up for midway in silly group costumes.

However, the Lincoln awards didn't disappoint. My personal favorite was the open-nomination category for 'most likely to have sex in the Glink', which was awarded to two of my fellow PPEists. As if our reputation wasn't going down the drain already...

Luckily, the Glink didn't come up a single time during our Sextigation – and this, despite over 40% claiming to have had sex in a public place. The Vere Harmsworth, the Sackler library, and even a lecture hall were however all mentioned, along with many much more disconcerting responses. It's quite interesting to see just how much information people are willing to disclose online, and especially how keen they are to share this – within four hours of our survey being open, we had already received over 200 responses. Shocking, right?

But maybe this is just what the masses want. Our blind dates have similarly experienced an increase in demand, with over 100 of you signing up to find your scientifically proven perfect match. While this does unfortunately lead to a very, very long queue, you now have a whole new *Cherwell* print to read in the meantime. Read our beloved Cherbadly, skim through the sextigation, find your horoscope (or don't if you're a Gemini like me), or even try to solve our most Cryptic Crossword. By the time you're done, the long-awaited email will hopefully be in your inbox, and you'll have forgotten all about how fast time actually flies here.

Oxdoku by Lewis Callister

Find the second Oxdoku on page 24, along with the Crossword and Puzzle!

	3	8	2					
7					9			
6	9			1				
	4	3	5	8			1	
1				3				5
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					8	1	9	

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The Cherwell Sextigation 2024

Amelia Dovell, Rufus Hall, and Jui Zaveri reveal the realities of Oxford students' sex lives

Cherwell's Sextigation is back and better than ever. After 450 responses and some pretty groundbreaking analysis that followed, the results are in.

This year, 55% of respondents were female, 38.5% were male, and 5.6% were non-binary. In a slight dip from last year's survey, the (mean) average number of sexual partners comes in at 4.5, compared with the 5 from last year. Taking a closer look at the numbers yields a different picture. For female students, the mean average is 3.9 sexual partners, with a median of 2. The mean male student has had 5.2 partners with a median of 2 as well. Non-binary students come out on top with an average of 6.2 sexual partners, with a median of 3.

However, not all students share the same experiences. 13.2% of Oxford students have had no sex since matriculating, with 9.9% of students having never had sex before. The most common number of sexual partners for an Oxford student, since being at Oxford, was 1, at 28.9%.

As they say, good things come in threes. 69 respondents (lol) claimed to have had sex with two or more people at once, with 18 students confessing to a threesome, 4 to a foursome, and 1 to a five-and-sixsome respectively. Having googled the term 'orgy' to find it constitutes 4 or more people, perhaps having that as a single category would have sufficed. However, the survey's level of detail was not lost on the two adventurous students who clocked in with a tensome each.

Knocking St Peter's from their throne, this year, Regent's Park took the trophy for sexiest college, with their students averaging a whopping 11.7 sexual partners since being at Oxford. Close in the runnings were

Catz, Anne's and Worcester, whose students averaged 9.8, 8.6 and 6.9 sexual partners respectively. At the other end, Blackfriars, Kellogg, St Cross and Harris Manchester came bottom of the pile, doing a disservice to Dominicans, post-grads and mature students everywhere.

"I have used a copy of Cherwell to wipe away my partner's semen"

Whilst Peter's has been relegated to the middle of the pile, Merton, who came second in last year's survey, is the undergraduate college whose students have had the fewest sexual partners since matriculation, averaging just over 2. Clearly, the singular Mertonian who drove up the average last year has since moved on to bigger and better things.

As for satisfaction levels, this year has seen Oxford graduate from 2023's 'mid' to an average score of 3.5/5. In fact, an encouraging majority of students (82%) would rate their sex lives at a 3/5 or above. Even so, some people had gripes with the "conservative" nature of Oxford's sex scene, with one student expressing frustration: "too! Vanilla!!!". Breaking down satisfaction ratings by college reveals a more marked difference, too. While Queen's students rate their

sex lives 4.4/5, bad news for LMH students who sit at the bottom of the pile with an average rating of 2.6/5.

This year, Geography takes the lead as the top-shagging degree, boasting a whopping 14.7 average number of sexual partners since coming to Oxford. This is followed by Biology (13.5), English and Modern Languages (7.8), Law (7.6), and Biomedical Sciences (7.5). This is almost an exact return to 2022's "degrees which get the most action", with last year's top shaggers, the medics, taking a backseat. Geography has been the only degree consistently in the top 5 of each Sextigation.

On the flip side, Maths and Philosophy come in as the subject having the least sex, with an average number of 0 partners post-matriculation. They are followed by Physics and Philosophy, History and Modern Languages (both with 0.5), and Computer Science and Philosophy (0.75).

Low body count does not necessarily mean an absence of sex, however (apart from for Maths and Philosophy students, sorry). 70.9% of respondents in a relationship of any kind reported having sex more than once a week with their partner. Quite impressively, 7.4% of respondents overcame the challenging Oxford work-life balance, recording that they have sex with their partner multiple times a day. Perhaps this is made easier by proximity: 32.1% of students admitted to having had a

relationship with a member of their college.

Importantly, where mutual pleasure eludes us, in Oxford, self-love is always close at hand. When asked about masturbation, the majority of respondents said they masturbate at least 2-3 times a week, and nearly 3 in 4 do so at least once a week. Male respondents were the most frequent masturbators, with over half saying they masturbate at least 4-5 times a week, whereas 8.6% of female respondents said that they never masturbate. Whilst the most popular frequency of masturbation for both female and non-binary respondents was 2-3 times a week, male respondents preferred masturbating 4-5 times a week, with 1 in 4 saying that they do so at least every day.

(Right) What is your sexuality?

A major development from last year's survey is that the percentage of queer and questioning respondents has officially overtaken the percentage of heterosexual respondents, with the proportion of heterosexual respondents falling from 50.4% to 46%. The makeup of queer respondents is as follows: 32.8% bisexual, 14.5% gay, 1.8% pansexual. 4.9% don't know or prefer not to say.

The average partner count for queer people since matriculation is higher than for straight people by one whole person (4.6 vs 3.5), whilst the total partner count for LGBTQ+ was 9.1, vs 5.4 for straight respondents, suggesting that LGBTQ+ beat straight respondents at Oxford and have more sexual experience before coming by an even greater margin. One respondent summed up the scene wistfully: "so much sex, so little time...". Though one respondent said that the dating pool offered "too much choice tbf it's like trying to shop at one of them massive tesco(s)", others noted its limited size. One respondent wrote that "everyone has shagged everyone." Another particularly effusive respondent said: "There is a tiny pool, and an even tinier selection of attractive / genuinely normal queer people (ie a lot are a bit too unhinged etc for me)," noting Oxford's peculiar standards for sexual eligibility: "Being attractive and confident often is seen by others as being narcissistic or a bitch (in this city), so weirdly I don't get nearly as much attention here as I do in other

cities etc." Others, however, enjoy the drama: "It's messy, we love it".

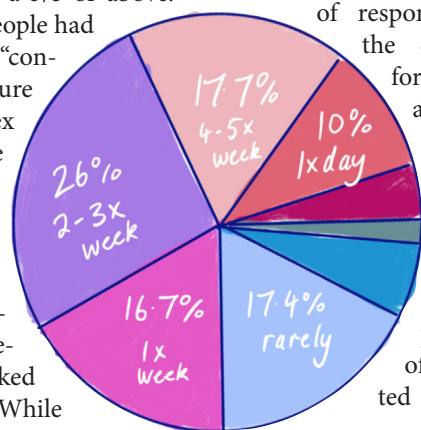
There is a marked difference in hookup culture for sexual orientations. Several gay men complained about being pressured into engaging in frequent casual sex, more so than other demographics, and while hookups may be easy to find, one respondent characterised the dating scene as "horrific". "The stress of life here (and) the fact everyone's always busy means that many are inclined towards casual sex/hookups", contemplated one student.

Particularly those seeking female partners reported difficulty: "There are no lesbians here!!!", said one such respondent. Several bisexual women commented on the difficulties of finding female partners, with one person replying that the experience is "upsetting in the way it sometimes feels like I'm contributing to the erasure of my own identity".

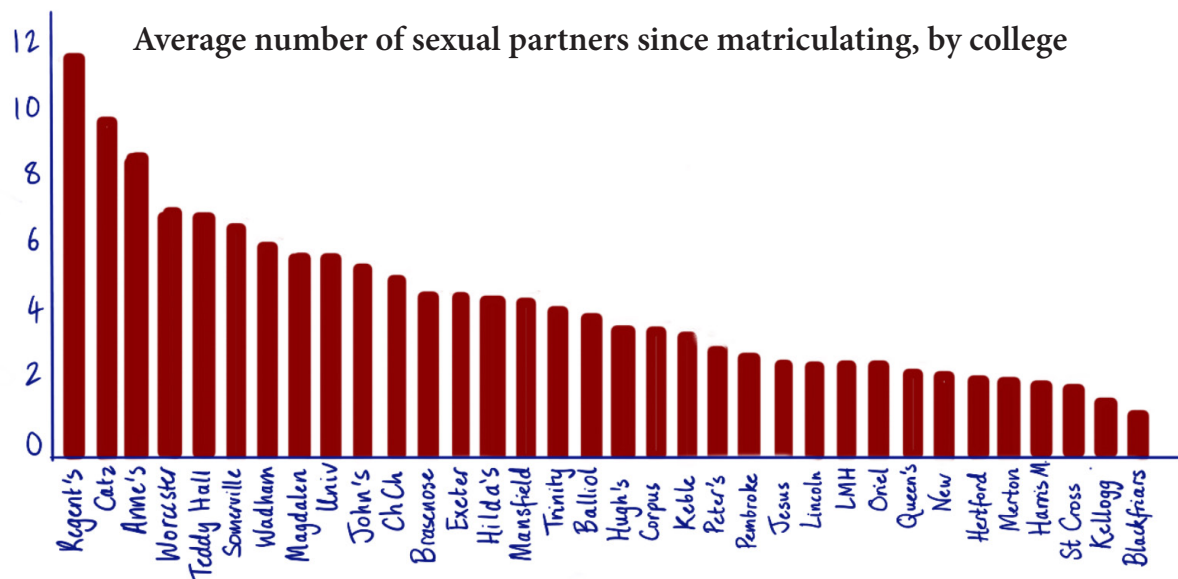
But while some find "the Oxford gay scene is grim", for others it has been an "incredible" chance to explore their sexuality in a city with a "much higher volume" than other places. "Shout out to tuesgays", remarked one respondent.

Speaking of, the best place to find hookups in Oxford was Plush, receiving the highest percentage of votes at 24.8%. This checks out with the 6 people who admitted the weirdest place they'd had sex in Oxford was the Plush dancefloor/toilets (but only "briefly before being asked to leave..."). While Atik and Bridge offer similar opportunities at 17.7% and 14.8%, respectively, don't bother trekking to Cowley if you're looking for a fling: O2 Academy and Bully only received 2.2% of the total votes.

Casual sex is not overwhelmingly popular with Oxford students, with 42.3% of respondents reporting they had not had a one-night stand before. Even so, there was a large range in those who had experienced one-night stands, from the most significant portion having had a one-night stand 2-4 times (43.2%), to the 14 respondents who reported over 20. However, there remains the challenge of deciphering the intentions of those inviting you back, as highlighted by one respondent's memorable encounter. This expe-



(Above) How often do you masturbate?



rience involved a wrestling fetish, donning leotards, and staying up until 3am with the initial guy and his unexpected friend.

On hook-up culture in general, 54.6% of respondents found that there was no real pressure to participate in it, or at least the pressure was “not worse than anywhere else” and was “just the same as other uni culture”. “It’s easily accessible for those who want to find it but there’s not a pressure to participate”, summed up one respondent.

(Right) Is there pressure to participate in hookup culture at Oxford? As for why, one person commented “everyone’s doing too much work to fuck around”, while another supplied a different reason: “people are clapped”.

However, a significant minority of people who responded either with yes or maybe – 18.7% and 26.2% respectively – worried that there was an expectation to sleep with people they had got with in a club, with one respondent noting “you can’t really get with anyone in a club without being told you have to go back to their accommodation”. Similar pressures were sometimes present while dating, with one student commenting, “when I’ve gone on dates the expectation seems to be to hook up”.

A related aspect of Oxford’s sex life is slut shaming. A third of respondents - 33.5% - felt that there was a culture of shaming people for promiscuity. It seems that this is more nuanced than “actual slut SHAMING”. Instead, it underlies the lighthearted merriment of

“It is really difficult to have sex in the Bridge of Sighs, but I managed it”

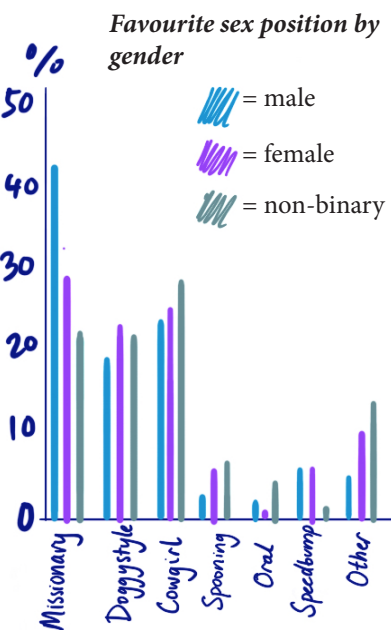
“things like sconcing on crewdates” - as explained by one respondent, “even though it is funny, getting sconced every couple of weeks for something that happened once can start to feel a bit like a form of slut shaming, especially for girls”.

29.8% of students answered that they do use dating apps to find sexual partners, with Hinge being the most popular dating app, beating Bumble, Tinder, and Grindr. Students seem to use dating apps for a variety of purposes, mostly with the intent of finding longer relationships: “most people... are looking to

meet people and go on dates more than just hook up”, wrote one student. For the LGBTQ+ community, however, dating apps seemed more limited in providing opportunities to meet partners, who are “few and far between”, due to the limited user base.

Regarding the types of relationships Oxford students enter with each other, 51.1% of respondents answered that they had entered an ‘official’ relationship while at Oxford. As some students noted, the culture in Oxford seems to be “way more focused on serious relationships or at least fwb”. While universities, in general, can provide the meet-cute needed for any good love story, Oxford is apparently the 2nd university in the UK where you are most likely to marry the partner you meet here, at 21%, aligning with the 36% of respondents who have had an official relationship of a year or more. Situations followed, with 40.5% of participants having not put a label on it, and one student creating their own category of relationship: “Pure delusion :D”.

When it comes to sex positions, of the 268 people who gave a pref-



erence, 33.2% said that missionary was their preferred position, with cowgirl coming in second at 24.2%. Oral sex was nominated overwhelmingly by non-binary respondents, with no female respondents saying that it was their go-to.

For some respondents, it was not the position, but satisfaction that counts above all. Viewing the question in a more abstract sense, one respondent wrote that their preferred position was “seeing her happy.” Another respondent was either flustered by the subject matter or spoilt for choice, writing: “I don’t know :(” Others were fans of some more niche positions including “seashell”, “the big dipper”, and - the ominously titled - “French delivery.” Nevertheless, nearly 80% of those who gave a preference said that either doggystyle, cowgirl or missionary were their favourites.

Evidently, when it comes to go-to sex positions, in Oxford, you can’t go wrong with a classic.

There has been little change in relation to the safety of sex in Oxford since last year. This year, 59.2% of respondents said they ensure that some kind of contraception is used when having sex, whilst 26.3% said that they do not, up a perhaps concerning, but marginal 2.5% on last year’s survey.

Do you use contraception of any kind?

(right) Much like last year, condoms were the most used form of contraception, used by 51.6% of people who use contraception.

As regards to the differing attitudes towards contraception of female, male and non-binary respondents, the differences were relatively minor. Whilst female respondents were most likely to ensure contraception was used - 71.1% of female respondents who gave a definitive answer said that they did so - non-binary respondents were the least likely to, with only 63.2% answering positively.

Besides being “too! vanilla!!!”, we wondered whether there were any other peculiarities that make sex at Oxford stand out. Some respondents noted with great fondness some classic aspects of the Oxfordian sex life. One in particular recalled “leaving someone at 5am to go to rowing practice,” whilst another reminisced about “being asked for my LinkedIn after a hook-up,” a testament to how truly no kind of relationship is sacred for Oxford hacks and careerists. Another respondent ruminated that “less neeks would vastly improve the quality of sex at Oxford.”

The city of dreaming spires is naturally home to some more un-

“Fewer neeks would vastly improve the quality of sex at Oxford.”

conventional locations where one might “get jiggy with it.” Particularly astounding was one respondent, among the 43.1% of respondents who confessed to having had sex in a public place, who “had sex in the Bridge of Sighs,” noting that “it is really difficult to have sex in the Bridge of Sighs but I managed it.” Other notable sex spots included: the Radcam, the Sackler, apparently everywhere in New College, Ex-

eter College chapel, the alleyway between the two Spoons pubs, St John’s boat house, Green Templeton’s garden, and “... Brasenose.”

Some students noted their frustration with Oxford sex life.

One respondent took issue with its stiffness in particular, writing that “everyone needs to loosen up.” Another wrote regretfully, “I wish I hadn’t had sex here. I’d have been happier waiting until marriage.” Others noted troubles in finding sexual or romantic partners around Oxford. Besides expressions of disappointment such as “How do people ever enter relationships with each other?”, another respondent spoke to a feeling

of alienation arising from Oxford’s clubbing culture: “It’s just hard to get into if you don’t go clubbing, I think. Lots of people just want one-night stands while they’re drunk, not friends-with-benefits arrangements or, God forbid, proper relationships.”

“Everyone’s doing too much work to f**k around.”

Finally, while this sex survey sheds insights into the varied and diverse sex life of the Oxford student, one student remarked that they wished “people were more open about their sex lives, not because I want to be creepy or anything, but just because it would help me rationalise it all better (and hopefully let me know I’m not alone in my inexperience).”

On a more serious note, a number of respondents expressed concern at the normalisation of sexual

assault within Oxford: “the prevalence of sexual assault and rape here is absolutely insane. Even worse is the acceptance from the rest of the cohort, and apparent mission to protect their reputations once they find out”. Others noted the lack of education around consent, and that “some people arrive here and have NO boundaries”. But the problems seem to start earlier than Oxford – with one student attributing such attitudes to the culture in same-sex private schools, a reminder of the Everyone’s Invited initiative, which began in 2020 to eradicate rape culture, and allowing survivors to share stories. Within Oxford too, then, it seems there needs to be a change in countering such normalised practices, to “hold people accountable”.

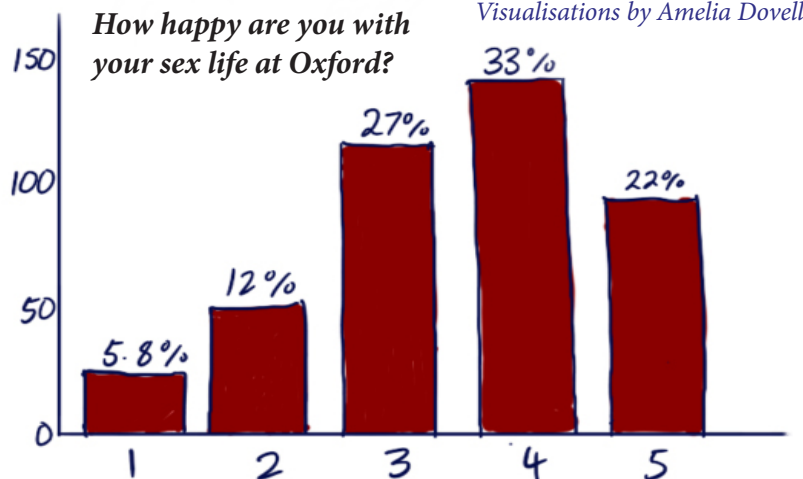
Concerned with the betterment of the sexual experience in Oxford, a number of students proffered insightful words of wisdom and advice. “Don’t f**k your ex or lend them £2,000,” wrote one student, whilst another suggested that the “walls ought to be thicker because I can hear you f***rs screaming.” Another took issue with the stiffness of Oxford sex life, saying “everyone needs to loosen up.” Whilst “Oxford has really hot women,” another respondent noted that “Oxford men are very disappointing (sorry).” One respondent suggested that a solution to this problem would be to “branch out from Uni of Oxford men” to other male residents, writing that “Oxford Brookes were better, but better still were the flight school and people who work around the city.” Good to know.

Despite the generally sex-positive attitudes students expressed, we found that there sometimes is a lack of conversation talking about sex at Oxford. While some students celebrated their friends as providing a “supportive”, “open, respectful”, space, others noted that “everyone seems to be having it [sex] but nobody ever talks about it”. Perhaps then the answer is openness, normalising conversations to understand that there is no singular sexual experience which defines the average Oxford student. As the wise Salt-N-Pepa once proclaimed: “Let’s talk about sex!”

With thanks to the respondents of the survey.

Charts by Rufus Hall

Visualisations by Amelia Dovell



Why are men still getting more firsts than women?

Emma Jeffries questions the prevalence of the gender awarding gap, at Oxford University.

Oxford University's Strategic Plan for 2018 to 2024 claims to prioritise the need to reduce the gender awarding gap. It aims to "set ambitious targets by April 2019 to reduce by 2024 gaps in attainment by gender, ethnic origin and socio-economic background." But, why should this be "ambitious" anyway? With 2023 coming to an end, it is time to assess whether this has been achieved and understand the problems that both students and the University face in addressing these challenges.

While preparing for my exams last year, I looked at the 2021-22 Examiner's Report for History. I felt uneasy when I saw that 50.7% of men were getting firsts compared to 34.9% of women in their finals. In the face of anonymous marking, I had naively thought that this was no longer a problem. However, there hasn't been much improvement since 2019, when 55.8% of men got firsts while only 42.5% of women did. In History at least, very little headway has been made in reducing the gender awarding gap.

This is not a problem exclusive to History or humanities subjects. In the 2023 Examiner's Report for Mathematics (Part A), 10.26% of women got firsts compared to 38.46% of men. These figures are only marginally better than the 2022 figures and significantly worse than those for 2021, where 24.39% of women got firsts compared to 36.26% of men.

The gender awarding gap is a problem almost unique to Oxford. In 2023, Statista have reported that in the UK in 2022, 14.8% of female students achieved an A* in their A-levels, compared to 14.4% of male students. In 2021/22, moreover, 35% of female students achieved a first compared with 31% of male students in UK undergraduate degrees. Oxford's problem is not reflected across other university degrees in the UK, and women who had been achieving similarly to their male peers are apparently no longer doing this once they arrive at Oxford. Something about Oxford is creating a gender attainment gap that wasn't previously there and

letting women fall behind.

What is it about Oxford that means that women are consistently underperforming in comparison to men?

One reason that has been suggested is that the structure and organisation of Oxford is not conducive to women performing their best. Unlike most other UK Univer-

"Something about Oxford is creating a gender attainment gap that wasn't previously there [...] letting women fall behind."

sities, Oxford continues to operate an eight-week term where work is concentrated in a very short time. According to Cambridge University's Information Hub, the "other place", which also operates an eight-week term, has a similar gender awarding gap. 25.4% of women obtained firsts in 2021-22 compared to 34.3% of men. While Oxford's short terms and their negative effect on students' mental health has been hotly debated, it appears that this issue may affect women disproportionately to men.

Another reason that has been suggested is that those undertaking marking are implicitly biased. With anonymised marking in place, overt discrimination is much rarer; however, handwriting is often an indicator of gender. Women do tend to perform better in typed exams compared to handwritten ones: breaking down the results for History finals from the 2021-2022 Examiner's Report by paper reveals that 47.6% of women got firsts in the compulsory thesis, which was typed, compared to 37.7% of men.

By contrast, in the European and World History paper, which was a handwritten exam, only 13.4% of women got firsts compared to 33.3% of men. But why is this happening?

This correlation could be because women perform better in coursework rather than timed exams. The assessment method of exams itself could be disadvantageous to women. With women outperforming men in GCSEs and A Levels, however, it doesn't seem sensible to suggest that women are unable to perform in either written exams or coursework, which may be indicative of gender awarding gaps not coming from female students' approach to exams and coursework. It could be that marking is implicitly biased, but it seems more likely that it's from the way women interact with Oxford.

What if it is actually the tutorial-style system at the heart of the gender gap?

Cambridge, which operates under a similar system, reported on the problem years ago in a *Varsity* article from 2013 – and still has them. The system may be more conducive to the way men have been taught to have confidence in their own opinions. A second-year History student, Eve Reynolds has suggested that "women feel the need to cover their opinions behind tentative language, just because of how we've been socialised". This may explain the gender awarding gap, therefore, in humanities subjects in particular at Oxford and Cambridge, if women feel unable to take advantage of tutorials as much as men do.

A typical 'Oxford' essay brings to mind very broad questions with lots of interesting ways to respond. They are designed as a start to an open-ended discussion to take place in tutorials. It is naturally in such essays that risk-taking behaviour is particularly rewarding, both in the mark giv-

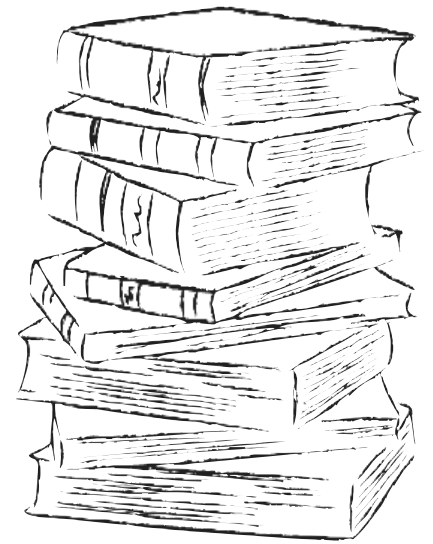
en to the essay itself as well as the quality of the learning in the tutorial as a result of the essay as new and interesting ideas are discussed. It may not be implicit bias that is occurring in marking, but explicit: mark schemes may be preferencing how men have been taught to think.

With the criteria for a first-class degree in many humanities subjects being "remarkable originality" (according to the current Examination Conventions for History), it certainly seems that the points women are making in their essays are holding them back – or the confidence women have in the points they do make. If, as a second-year Law student told me, men have "the confidence to make an outlandish point and back it [come what may]", maybe self-conviction propels them into the first-class arena. Is the 'confidence gap' holding women back? I don't necessarily think that confidence and originality are not criteria that should be considered, but I believe it should be recognised that this environment of relentless intellectual scrutiny may disadvantage women in comparison to their male peers. It may be helpful to research how women could be encouraged to take advantage of the tutorial system and how the system itself can be modified to better encompass women.

After all, the University's archaic system never rebooted when women were first awarded degrees in 1920. Oxford is still operating a system that was designed to educate men. More significantly, it was designed to educate upper-class white men, and almost naturally therefore preferences the confidence of a nineteenth-century Victorian gentleman. What Oxford needs might be a reassessment of the demographic it is teaching; we are no longer catering to the ultra-rich only.

In STEM subjects the gender attainment gap is slightly better than in humanities, with 36% of women getting firsts in Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences compared to 42% of men according to the *Oxford Gazette Supplement* published in 2023. While this is not as easily attributed to men writing more confidently since these exams also involve calculations, the educational environment may still be disadvantageous to women. It may be that women feel less confident to ask to target tutorials towards areas they would like more help with, particularly in the still male-dominated environment of STEM degrees.

As an Oxford University spokesman told *Cherwell*: "The University has set a target to eliminate the current attainment gap between our male and female undergraduates by 2030. The reasons the gap are



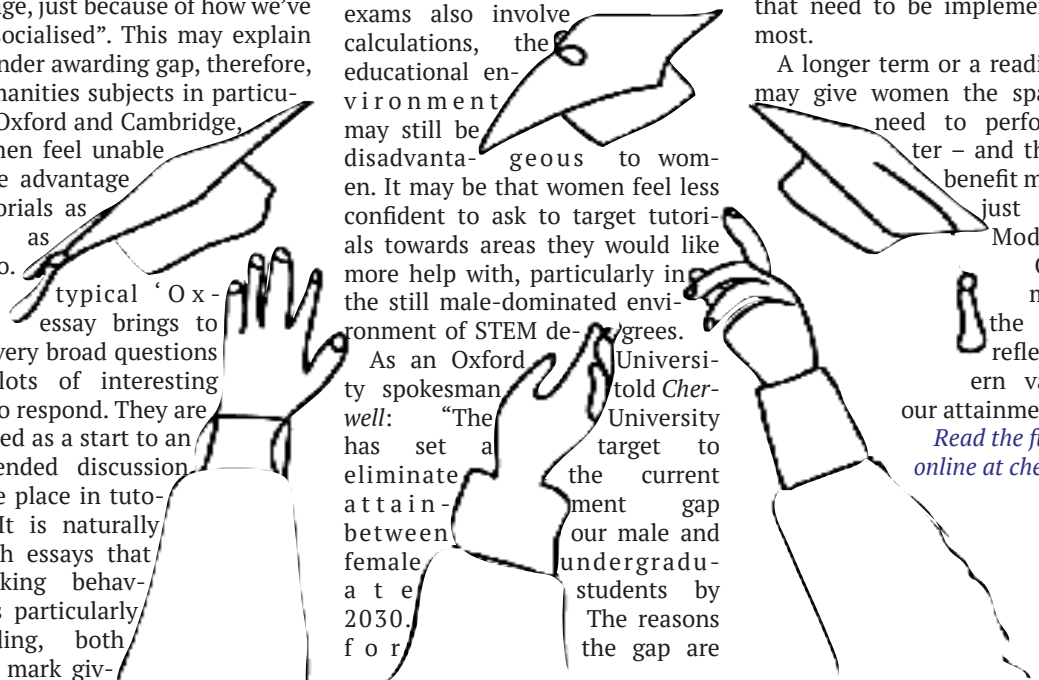
varied and complex. However, we are introducing a number of measures focused around flexible and inclusive teaching, mixed assessment methods, and study skills support that we hope over time will contribute towards a level playing field for all students and move us closer to achieving our target."

This suggests that the University believes that the problem of the gender awarding gap lies firstly in teaching, secondly in assessment methods, and lastly in how female students are studying. While it is unclear exactly what these measures are from this statement, which is worrying in itself, what is clear is that the problems pertaining to the gender awarding gap penetrate virtually all areas of the university's provision. "Inclusive teaching" remains undefined, and indeed what comes across most strongly from looking into Oxford's gender attainment gap is a lack of evidence of specific action taken.

I believe that educating women on the gender awarding gap is a vital step in closing it – a step that needs to come from both the University and the students themselves. Large parts of the problem come from Oxford mark schemes awarding behaviours that are typically encouraged in men, but discouraged in women. We need to encourage these behaviours in women and be transparent about what behaviours are being awarded. But there are also problems that are very specific to the structure of Oxford, and it is perhaps these structural changes that need to be implemented the most.

A longer term or a reading week may give women the space they need to perform better – and this could benefit more than just women. Modernising Oxford may be the way to reflect modern values in our attainment.

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



Music

Five songs for fifth week blues

Bryn Mollet

I believe that music makes a lot of things in life better. Fifth week at Oxford is no exception. Whilst it won't help you in an essay crisis, attend tutorials in your place, or shake a Park End hangover, it can help romanticise your university experience right at the time when it really needs romanticising. So here are five songs that I believe will help get you through fifth week blues:

Point and Kill – Little Simz (feat. Obongjayar) in *Sometimes I Might Be Introvert*.

'Point and kill' is a Nigerian expression derived from the marketplace practice of pointing at the live fish you want, and it being killed fresh for you. The song is all about going out, getting what you want, and achieving success; you can't let anyone get in your way and you have to keep your eyes on the prize. If that isn't motivation to finish your essay, then I don't know what is. The song is characterised by the distinctiveness of Obongjayar's Nigerian-British accent on top of a percussive and refreshingly energetic afrobeat rhythm. It features in Little Simz's album *Sometimes I Might Be Introvert* which explores themes of self-belief, feminism, and the artist's own introversion, and is worth a listen.

Keep It Simple – Raleigh Ritchie (feat. Stormzy) in *You're a Man Now Boy*.

Given that Valentine's Day is right around the corner, it feels fitting to include a love song. *Keep It Simple* perfectly encapsulates all the emotions associated with a new romance; happiness, nerves, and the incessant desire to spend all your time with that special person. One can imagine listening to it, skipping merrily back from a perfect first date. The title refers to the desire for love to just be nice and simple when everything else in our world can be so complicated. Ritchie's genre is hard to define, with the artist himself admitting he does not quite know what it is, though one could say, it sits comfortably somewhere between hip-hop and alternative R&B. This track is also blessed with a Stormzy feature (three years before he released his debut album) whose style compliments Ritchie's more songful vocals.

Comb My Hair – Kings of Convenience in *Peace or Love*.

But if your Valentine's Day was not all that successful, back then this song may be more appropriate. "What good is to comb my hair, It won't be touched by you?" is one of the many elegiac lyrics in this song that really condenses that feeling of having our everyday thoughts revolve around a distant crush. The dreamy guitar arpeggios perfectly symbolise that sense of the daydreaming and yearning associated with an unrequited love. Kings of Convenience are a Norwegian acoustic band, who create

the most gentle, sweet, and 'granola bar-esque' music, accompanied with poetic and thoughtful lyrics. All their albums make for great music to listen to whilst you study, or equally, whilst you hanker after your lecture crush who doesn't even know you exist.

But chin-up, there is always *Bridge Thursday*...

Australia – The Shins in *Wincing the Night Away*.

The Shins use the metaphor of Australia when it was a penal colony to portray the nature of a nine-to-five office job, as repetitive, draining, and limiting to the capacities of humans to really live their lives. Their philosophy is that people should not be confined to weekends to have fun, find love, and do the things that are important to them. The song warns how quickly this can be realised; "Well do it now or grow old, Your nightmares only take a year or two to unfold". The aim of the song is to persuade the listener to go out, live life, and pursue a career that truly fulfils them. Instead of being stuck in an office, "dammed to pine through the windowpanes" The Shins want you to "give [them] your hand, and jump out the window". The idea of optimism and looking for a better life is portrayed in the song's typical upbeat, guitar-led, indie rhythm, despite the bleak sentiments of some of the lyrics. Definitely a song I would recommend to any E&M students aspiring on a career in investment banking.

Space 1.8 – Nala Sinephro in *Space 1.8*.

If you are someone who enjoys listening to music whilst you study, then this is the album for you. I am convinced it makes you at least three times as productive, maybe even four? Sinephro is a Belgian-Caribbean performer and composer, who plays the pedal harp, keyboard, and a whole host of other instruments, including modular synthesizers. In *Space 1.8* she is accompanied by other accomplished drummers, reed, and bass players, with whom she creates an ambient, dreamy, soundscape, which one can very easily lose themselves in. The album has 8 tracks, which seamlessly blend into one another. Her motifs are developed gradually throughout, and alternative sounds, rhythms, and layers are introduced, punctuated by delicate saxophone solos. Its intensity and timbre fluctuate

dand demonstrate Sinephro's capabilities as an arranger and player. *Space 1.8* is a great way into the world of experimental jazz and listening to it is an experience in itself.

So, whether you are stuck on that last-minute essay grind, a hopeful, or hopeless, romantic, or just need something new to listen to, there is something there for everyone. The above songs have some rather interesting qualities and if you enjoy them, I would definitely recommend listening to the albums in their entirety to see if you discover something even more magical. No matter where you listen to these songs, be it alone in the sweet confines of your room, or marching down the High Street to attend your gruelling 9am lecture, I hope that they can help make your fifth week that little bit less blue.

Image Credit: Kim Erlandsen CC BY-SA 2.0 via Flickr



Art

Crafting Kingship: Hellenistic royal portraits

Rachael

Cummings-Naylor

There was a shared goal for Hellenistic kings to establish themselves as rulers following the division of Alexander the Great's empire into three main kingdoms under the Antigonids, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (323 BC). This resulted in the development of a standardised visual vocabulary of royal ideology represented by statues and coinage.

A newer style of royal portraiture designed to represent the "charismatic, aggressively militaristic ideology of kingship," won the Successors (Seleucus I Nicator, Ptolemy I Souter and Antigonos the One-Eyed) their kingship in the absence of legitimacy. A common style across the coins reflected beardless, ageless, and jewelled images of Hellenistic kings. In an attempt to associate themselves with the legitimacy expected of a Macedonian king, the Successors adopted this style which evoked images of Alexander who appeared as such in royal portraits, although not originally in coinage.

Statues and coinage maintained a standardised style with defining features exhibited through similar expressions of body language,

physiognomy and degrees of divinisation. The use of 'display poses' and depictions of fighting figures became a universal language of power adopted by Hellenistic kings to showcase personal dominance. For example, the Terme Ruler (third-second century BC) displays the figure in a relaxed position indicating the fact that he is non-threatened, whilst the tilted pelvis may also reveal security or the absence of fear in the exposure of a man's most vulnerable area. This common motif depicted ruler figures as confident in their own forms of self-expression and thus in their presentation as kings.



Nudity was also a common theme among royal statues, reminiscent of the gods but adapted to suit them as rulers. This additionally allowed for displays of exaggerated muscularity and athleticism which are further enhanced by a raised grip, all of which are motifs of military and political power. The raised grip itself was a symbolic legitimisation of conquest ('spear-won land') initially used by Alexander and later adopted by the Successors as the legal basis for the Hellenistic kingdoms.

Both statues and coinage were heavily influenced by Alexander who popularised costumes and certain attributes to convey royal power and divinity. Hellenistic kings used ram's or bull's horns, elephant-scalp headdresses, winged diadems, solar rays and mythological props associated with him. It is common among ruler tetradrachms to see kings presented with royal diadems on their heads, paired with a youthful appearance and full hairline that was evocative of Alexander—asserting his royal authority and legitimacy onto themselves. The Ptolemies favoured divinising iconography which can be seen in the coinage of Ptolemy I and sculptures of Ptolemy II. The former coinage il-

lustrated a goat-skin aegis slung across Ptolemy I which was closely associated with Zeus and identified him with the king of the gods to imply his majesty. The latter portrayed Ptolemy II adorned with an elephant-scalp headdress reminiscent of Alexander's conquest of Africa, whilst his boots and club displayed the twin divine ancestry of the Ptolemaic dynasty through Heracles and Dionysus.

That is not to say there were no variations in style, as kings adopted different features to emphasise alternate aspects of royal ideology. This idea is demonstrated well by the use of 'jugate' portraits under the Ptolemies to convey dynastic continuity. Iconographic depictions of Ptolemy II and Arsinoë II as sibling-gods can be seen in Egyptian coin portraits. The style was a product of Ptolemaic ideology in an Egyptian cultural context and was adopted by other kingdoms, such as the Seleucids, as it was seen as necessary for promoting dynastic continuity and familial similarity.

Even royal female portraiture played an important role. It appears their shared styles with male royal portraits were used as tools to consolidate kingship and dynastic rule. The statuette of Arsinoë II closely resembles that of her brother-hus-

band Ptolemy II in its body language: the body is in a relaxed position to show she does not feel threatened and her arm is raised in a military style which could suggest her influence within the Egyptian government as Ptolemy's political partner. Alternatively, she is presented as feeling secure under her husband's rule and mirrors him as an extension of his royal power.

Hellenistic kings had a shared goal to establish themselves as rulers by communicating royal ideology through coins and statues which could be accessed by the public. Royal portraiture was broad but it had definable limits: variations in style formed part of a standardised set of visual elements which conveyed power and status. This form of self-presentation allowed Hellenistic kings to present their personal, charismatic leadership and statesmanship in the absence of legitimacy. As such, their kingship and their family's dynastic rule were established and maintained, whilst female royal portraiture seems to have acted as an extension of male self-presentation which borrowed from its style.

Image Credit: Mark Cartwright/CC BY-SA 4.0 DEED via World History Encyclopedia

Books

Review: "Chaucer Here and Now" at the Weston Library

Bryony Fishpool

I found I had a soul congenial to his, John Dryden wrote in 1700. 'He' is Geoffrey Chaucer. There is a three-hundred year gap between the former, a Restoration-era satirical wit, and the latter, a medieval poet. Despite Dryden's critique that Chaucer often 'runs riot, lacking a filter altogether, mingling 'trivial Things with those of greater Moment', something remains between their two souls. Dryden judges himself close enough in essence to Chaucer to deserve his role as translator. After a few terms studying Chaucer firmly within his own era, I was interested to see how much truth there was in this statement, whether our own souls could indeed be made more congenial.

The question of what 'remains' is the focus of 'Chaucer Here and Now': an exhibition at Oxford's Weston Library, running from December to April. It is wonderfully curated by Marion Turner, the current J.R.R. Tolkien Professor of English Literature and Language. The exhibition itself is absorbing; as you move through it, an argument unfolds. It is tightly structured, tied together by the concept of 'reinvention', as Turner shows how every century from the fourteenth to the twenty-first has moulded Chaucer to their own tastes. We begin with the earliest manuscripts, featuring mansplaining scribes, scandalised censors,

and unfinished endings. Even from day one, there is no stable and single Chaucer: manuscripts are notoriously collaborative. Chaucer was not too bothered about his endings, leaving works like *The Cook's Tale* hanging after only fifty eight lines; scribes often finished this for themselves. The exhibition then dedicates a whole section to *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, which Dryden famously refused to translate; he declared 'tis too licentious' for all its talk of 'bigamy' and 'octogamy', as well as its ironic stabs at Biblical hypocrisy. King Solomon was hardly the paragon of monogamy.

But it is really the beauty of the books that makes the exhibition come alive. Gathered partly from the Bodleian's archives, all the famous Chaucers are on show. William Caxton's 1483 edition, complete with early woodcuts is unmistakable, helping to bring Chaucer's pilgrims to life. The 1896 Kelmscott Chaucer, though, a huge Pre-Raphaelite edition covered in white pigskin, is most spectacular; its creators called it a 'pocket cathedral' for its magnificent illustrations - seriously, Google it! The interwoven vines, scattered autumnal leaves, and monochrome illuminated lettering play into the Victorian re-imagining of the medieval era, full of rural idylls and tragic Arthurian love. It is an attractive idea, making for an attractively illustrated text. But it is also entirely inaccurate, skewing the reader's understanding of Chaucer.

Turner is keen to avoid a 'Merry England' view of Chaucer in the exhibition. As in her recent biography, *Chaucer: A European Life*, she emphasises the deeply cosmopolitan side to Chaucer; he was multilingual, travelling to Spain and Italy, in contact with then-modern Italian writers like Petrarch and Boccaccio, and importing new and innovative forms like the rime royale stanza into his poetry. It is this (then)-edgy experimentalism which we value most today. He blends and juxtaposes registers, characters, and influences; his diverse group of pilgrims meet in a pub in Southwark, telling a range of tales from the high-status knight to the bawdy

millar. The exhibition has screens and headphones to watch an early-2000s BBC adaptation of a few of Chaucer's tales, which convey this eclectic mix well, as the animators use a different style for each tale.

Medieval studies are currently under fire, steadily losing popularity in a time when 'relevance' is looked for above all else. I found 'Chaucer Here and Now' to do a brilliant job of communicating the intrinsic interest of Chaucer's works - much more humorous, witty, and experimental than we give him credit for - whilst also seeing them as a lens through which to explore the culture in which they are received. Inevitably, each reader will set him against himself, recognising the sparks of immediacy which chime with their own experience. The exhibition's final section, focusing on postcolonial re-imaginings, shows just this. Turner offers us a wide selection of books - also available to read in the Weston's sofa area - such as *The Refugee Tales*, which expands upon Chaucer's idea of movement and displacement, as well as Zadie Smith's play *The Wife of Willesden*, and Jean 'Binta' Breez's 'The Wife of Bath in Brixton Market'. Do go and see this exhibition; it will shake up your understanding of the medieval period, just as it helped me to reinvent an author who can be far too easily pigeonholed into his exam-essay context. Or, if nothing else, there's birdsong playing as you walk in.



Film

"Hurt people hurt people": *The Holdovers* Review

Barney Cowles

Hurt people hurt people. *The Holdovers* is a film that understands this.

Crucially, however, it also understands that hurt people can heal. In Alexander Payne's latest movie, Paul Giamatti plays Mr. Hunham, a misanthropic classics teacher at the elite boarding school Barton Academy; a man who is universally hated by his students and colleagues. He is a man disappointed with his place in life, and is more than happy to drown his problems in a bottle of Jim Beam. As punishment for refusing to give a particularly entitled student a free pass, he is forced to look after the children who have been left behind for the Christmas holidays. Amongst these 'holdovers' is troubled teenager Angus Tully, played by newcomer Dominic Sessa, who has been left behind by his distant mother so that she can spend time with her new boyfriend. One by one, the other children leave, until Angus is the only one left for Christmas, which he must share with his least favourite teacher. The pair are joined by Mary (Da'Vine Joy Randolph), the head cook at the school, who is mourning the death of her son in the Vietnam War. Each of these characters has their own reasons

to hate the world, but over the course of the movie they come together, learn from each other, and maybe allow themselves to heal.

The *Holdovers* feels like a film ripped straight from the 1970s - everything from the stylised opening credits to the grainy film stock and even the score reflect the period in which it's set. Story-wise, the film feels like an homage to an era of cinema where subtle, character-driven stories were much less rare than they are today. This is helped by the stellar performances of the three leads, who all bring a candidness and depth to characters which could have easily devolved into caricatures. Giamatti delivers a career-best performance, maintaining a delicate balance between bitterness and vulnerability as his character grows. Sessa is wonderfully sarcastic and provides an excellent foil to

amatti's firmly austere performance. Da'Vine Joy Randolph shows incredible range, switching from warmth and humour to absolute despair with ease. Her character is an island of emotion - in one scene, the weight of the world can be seen in her eyes as she folds long-treasured baby clothes. The performances of the three leads play off each other in a way that is constantly shifting, consistently excellent, and never less than completely engaging.

The film touches on issues such as racism and toxic masculinity, which are unfortunately as important now as they were at the time it is set. Mr. Hunham constantly reminds his students of the duties of a 'Barton Man', while constantly ignoring his own advice. Mary only took her job as a cook to get her son a place at the school, but couldn't

afford to send him to university, so he was conscripted, while his white classmates went off to college. At his memorial service, the school's sympathies ring painfully hollow. While these are perhaps not as deeply explored as they could have been, they are integral to the characters and to the heart of the film.

The 'dramedy' is a notoriously difficult genre to perfect, as hard-hitting dramatic moments can often feel unearned in a film littered with jokes. The *Holdovers* avoids this potential pitfall by ensuring that the comedy comes from the same place as the drama - both are rooted in the relationships and motivations of the characters, so the comedy serves the story, allowing the dramatic moments to be all the more impactful. It is a shame that much of the marketing portrays the *Holdovers* as a comedy, as it is so much more than that. While it is frequently funny, the humour is secondary to the drama, so those looking for straight up comedy may be disappointed. What they will get, however, is a mature, heartbreaking and hopeful film, with an alchemic blend of heart and talent. The *Holdovers* is a pure delight and has the potential to become a modern Christmas classic.

Image Credit: Public Domain via. PxHere



WHAT'S ON...

The ultimate guide to what's happening where in Oxford from 5th to 7th Week...

Stage: *The Storyteller*
@The Burton Taylor

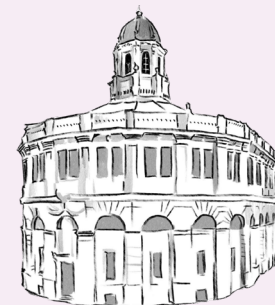
20th - 24th Feb

Think Waiting for Godot vibes, *The Storyteller* is an absurdist drama, where a time-travelling astrologer and an immortal storyteller argue about immortality, clay tablets, befriending trees, magical fruit, and much more, written and directed by Patrick Painter.

Art: *Mischief in the Archives*
@Weston Library

27th Jan - 7th Apr

A new pop-up exhibition by Baritone and Artist Peter Braithwaite, aiming to 'challenge preconceived racialised narratives and restore dignity to those the archives have long



Music: Jazz Night, ft. ENKI Quartet

@Mad Hatter, Iffley Rd

Tues 20th Feb

Join Oxford Jazz Soc and the ENKI Quartet for their weekly Jazz night!

Film: *Julius Caesar*
@Merton- T.S Eliot Lecture Theatre

21st - 24th Feb

'The company that brought you *Hamlet* now presents *Julius Caesar*, set against the whisperings and the champagne and the stars of an imagined 1939, and the smoke and mirrors of film noir.'



Fashion

The fashion of *Poor Things* deconstructed

Amina Poernomo

Yorgous Lanthimos, the award-winning director of *The Favourite* and *The Lobster*, worked with the costume designer Holly Waddington, known for her work on *The Great* and theatre costume design, to concoct the beautifully complex character of Bella Baxter, both through cinematography and fashion. The 'coming of age' flick mesmerises via surreal visuals, that organically evolve alongside the development of the protagonist's progress from infancy to maturity. *Poor Things* explores the life of Bella Baxter, played by Emma Stone, who, revived in a Frankensteinian manner, seeks out adventure beyond the home of her unorthodox creator, Dr Godwin Baxter.

The pseudo-Victorian setting for Bella Baxter's eccentric life provides the perfect arena for Waddington's beautifully bizarre costume creations. Having worked on period drama before, Holly Waddington is well-versed in the intrigue of historical costume. The absurdist parallel universe of *Poor Things* provides Waddington with the free reign to

playfully reimagine Victorian staples. Bella's costuming is the stand-out of the cast, as her eclectic styles emphasise the rapid advancement of her mental state through her experiences. The supporting cast comparatively displays more stagnant 'uniforms', as the heroine appears in constant flux, while they represent figures of constancy within her story.

In the 'infancy' of Bella's reborn life, she is dressed by her maker and housemaid, a decision which powerfully infantilises the physically grown woman through the meticulously deconstructed costuming. Waddington aimed to mimic the 'undressed' state of toddlers, as Bella, like all children, is displayed missing key elements of her outfits. From voluminous blouses accompanied by bare feet to a bouncy 19th-century bustle erratically attached to a nappy-like pair of bloomers, we are encouraged to regard Bella as an innocent child. This is powerfully contrasted by Stone's bold appearance and overgrown black hair, heightening the disconcerting otherworldliness of her character.

Waddington's most wonderous creations appear at the core of the

film, as Bella sets off on her trip with the rakish Duncan Wedderburn, indulgently portrayed by Mark Ruffalo. Here, she begins dressing herself for the first time, which reminds the audience of our own mid-teen fashion experiments. The journey mirrors that of the custom of the Grand Tour, where young gentlemen embark upon an expedition through Europe as an educational rite of passage. Bella has taken both the direction of her intellectual and physical development into her own hands, as her wildness is outwardly portrayed through her costuming. Most memorable is her Lisbon day attire, as she steps out into the street in only her knickers, which are based upon 30s style underwear. Her jacket's organic jellyfish-like texture gives her a contrasting upper silhouette of Victorian modesty, while her boots are based on 1960s French designer Andre Courreges' space boots. This mishmash of garments powerfully presents Bella's bold adolescent spirit as she explores Lanthimos' dizzying representation of Lisbon.

As maturity and a semblance of reality kicks in on the cruise chapter of *Poor Things*, Bella appears in one of

her few fully dressed costumes of the film. Bella is framed as a true fashionable upper-class woman, with an ivory brooch at the centre of her dress, representing a realisation of her privilege. Waddington further presents a shift in Baxter's mentality through what she has amusingly branded the 'condom coat'. Bella's stint as a prostitute begins as she is clad in the awkward, slightly disconcerting-looking overcoat, which wholly embodies the more strained, yet illuminating period of her growth.

Essentially, the costume design in

Poor Things is used as a centrepiece of the theme of progress throughout the film. Voluminous shapes and unique textures of the designs certainly serve as

inspiration to many a fashion enthusiast, as we are seeing a similar surge in maximalist and deconstructed looks. Disturbing and spirited, *Poor Things* unconventional story is truly supported by equally unconventional but meaningful designs.

Image Credit: Photograph by Amina Poernomo



Stage

Review of *Gawain and the Green Knight*

Ralph Whitworth

Gawain and the Green Knight was a play I was eager to see. The title promises strange and exciting adventures from Arthurian myth; the promotion posters gave us an eclectic image of Green Knight mask (a very well made prop) with its hollow eyes and crown of leaves. Performed in the BT studio, the playgoer has to dip down a side street behind the Oxford Playhouse and ascend a tight staircase to the very attic. It was all very mystical. Going into the small theatre, however, I hit a stumbling block at the sight of the set, decorated solely with mudstained sheets with runes scrawled on them. It wasn't exactly Camelot, or the woods of Arthurian myth. The play hit another wrongfooting before it had even begun, with the jarring sight of the Green Knight himself crouched diminutively in an alcove behind the curtains, probably hoping not to be seen. As we waited for the rest of the cast to arrive, I puzzled over whether these little oversights were simply anomalies, or a taste of things to come.

The first thing I noticed was the costumes. In the first scene, these were very fun, and the Green Knight was decidedly impressive. Arthur's Court wore black tie, but augmented with fur capes, jewels, horns and

silver makeup. It was a fashionable and modern take, and we were back into that realm of the mystical and supernatural that all the advertising had tried to put forward. The Green Knight wore a makeshift ensemble of cardboard, plastic plants, green paint and a wetsuit, but thankfully it didn't look like it - in the dim lighting he still made a fantastical figure. But as the play went on, costume quality began to deteriorate. Once Gawain reached the castle, he was greeted by a cast of servants whose modern uniforms were plain and unoriginal. Worse was the Lady herself, whose uninspiring green dress may have been salvageable were it not for her glittery green shoes. They were unpleasant to look at and made it hard to take her seriously.

this was sadly something else the production was lacking. Set design was reduced to the ugly aforementioned sheets and occasional use of a carpet or a box. The set was at its weakest in the scenes where characters went behind the sheets to have conversations. They were semi-transparent, but not enough: I found myself straining to see what was going on. Lighting went some way to saving the situation, however, particularly in the Green Chapel scene where green lights and a forest soundscape did their best to offset the lacklustre set.

Again, none of this is fatal. The best actors can save any production. *Gawain and the Green Knight* sadly did not have them. You would think, from the title of the play, that it would be a somewhat two man show, and it would have been better had this been the case. Whilst neither Gawain nor the Green Knight / Lord were astounding actors, both showed an impressive degree of skill and were enjoyable to watch. The supporting cast, however, failed to blow me away. Performance was often lacklustre, or otherwise felt forced and artificial. Jokes frequently fell flat and an emotional connection was hard to make. Gawain and the Green Knight went some way to offset this, but it remained a somewhat disappointing spectacle.

To be fair to the cast, they were let down by an equally disappointing script. It is hard to be funny when the jokes aren't, and hard to be convincing when the dialogue isn't. Grappling with a traditional medieval story, the writ-

Stop Me If You've Heard This One Before...

Rufus Jones

While we were fearing it, it came—
But came with less of fear
Because that fearing it so long
Had almost made it fair—

There is a Fitting—a Dismay—
A Fitting—a Despair
'Tis harder knowing it is Due
Than knowing it is Here.

They Trying on the Utmost
The Morning it is new
Is Terrible than wearing it
A whole existence through.

Emily Dickinson

You've been dreading this tutorial all week. The essay question was incomprehensible. Everyone else has grasped it, obviously, but you're the odd one out. If the momentary embarrassment isn't enough, your tutor will probably suggest rustication or even expulsion; never have they witnessed such an academic car crash in all their years of teaching. The tutorial comes

er seemed unsure as to what period their language was coming from, and it floated uncomfortably between archaic terms and modern ones. The story was changed very little from its inspiration, but notable was the conclusion, where Gawain's harrowing experiences and the apathy of Arthur's court provoke a grim realisation, whereon the lights fade to black. This silly detail felt like a botched war flashback and created an abrupt and uncomfortable cliffhanger.

Gawain and the Green Knight is a

around and it actually goes fine.

Writers have been grappling with why we do this for centuries; why we are more often troubled in imagination than in reality, as Seneca put it. Dickinson's pithy, eloquent and nuanced contribution sees it anew.

What Dickinson reflects on that's often neglected is why we let ourselves get so carried away. While it's partly an evolutionary boon poorly-suited for the modern age, when we dwell on something for a while, there's something perversely comforting in indulging our fears despite the incommensurate stress and anxiety they cause. We feel that we're merely preparing for the worst, steeling ourselves for the trials ahead, when more often than not we've left reason far behind and are simply deluding ourselves. This poem is a concise and hopeful reminder that we must be vigilant and remember things will probably turn out alright.

challenging piece of source material to compose a play from. The titular characters tried their best, but sadly, it was not enough. Initially at least aesthetically pleasing, this play stumbled from one poor decision to the next. It would be unfair to say that *Gawain and the Green Knight* was all bad, but the ultimate effect was one of disappointment.awas one of disappointment.

Photo: Freddie Houlahan, art by Maria Beltechi.



Prompt: Love letter to someone unexpected

The Source

Ode to a Nearly Beloved

Sophie Harrison

Your name is a colour
I see the world in these days,
A tinted lens which deceives the eye,
Fills street corners with the shade of you.

As though through tracing paper,
I etch your features onto faces
Of strangers I'll never know;
Now that's what you've become.

Conversations echo, distorted by
Memory's sleight of hand,
And recycled phrases I regurgitate,
Half-made up in the space of silence,

Until all meaning has leached away.
I'd still marvel at your poetry
Dissect each phrase, until it collapses
Into letters of unravelling form.

Are words just words?
Or is there something caught
In the snare of subtext
That would explain it all?

Fill in the gaps left by things unsaid
To form a dot-to-dot picture
Consisting only of negative space,
Shaped like the distance between us?

You

Me

I know now not to analyse nothingness,
Now I know that's what I've done all along.
So I've stopped conjuring your name onto
The pixelated screen of disappointment

Watched a firework fade into a piece
Of sky in the jigsaw of the world,
My eyes tracing the pattern,
Though I know I'll soon

forget.

The Sainly Lives of Students

There, there('s) a graveyard in the college where drunk
students in funeral suits smile through t o m b s t o n e teeth.
There, there('s) a misty haunt of fresh deathly stares
between stony, stoned eyes. Dewy days of Monday's
mo(u)rnings, book bags as big as eye bags from staying up on
Sunday nights resurrecting the Lord from his day of rest to
pray you meet the deadline. Forty days and forty nights
sleeping like the dead - "It's blues week" they said. There
there, you're nearly there! Where? Back to the graveyard, in
the mist, in the midst of it all again? For the saintly college
name et the degree deity the student body is a martyr:
devoted but dead. When we drink our wine and eat our
bread at formal "wake" it's the communion of the
community. Santé. Cheers to its continuity!

Ellie Beckett

Tangerine

Kiaya Phillips

Sticky sweet sensations
swimming across my tonsils
Symbiotic euphoria of the senses
Picking apart the peel of the ripest fruit
Prying open its flesh,
segmented, raw.
White strings – veins to trace its story.
Pushing to the lips
Eternal glory
Swishing over the gums
Diving down the throat
Entering the stomach
to reside.

Forget Her Not: Rediscovering

Women in Music

Keziah McCann

Of all the artists I have written about, Mimi Bergman (aka Mimi Bay) is by far the least well known (and thus underrated).



The Swedish singer/songwriter/producer started off as a YouTuber posting tranquil vlogs, video diaries and 'favourites' videos alongside vocal/ukulele covers of La Vie en Rose and City of Stars (the latter racked up 1.5 million views). Her career in music began when she started to release music on Soundcloud (and indeed still does, especially demos). Tracks such as Time and I Will Be Okay, released on Soundcloud in 2017, are intimate, heartfelt and soothing, impossible to not immediately fall in love with. Transportative and balmy, her angelic voice shines through as the ukulele soothes and cheers. You can tell she was particularly inspired by Choker, Frank Ocean, Florist, Nick Drake, Beatles, and SZA, as she told online magazine Clout.

Mimi Bay has since then released 47 songs on Soundcloud, gained almost 80,000 Spotify monthly listeners and a substantial following on YouTube and social media. Her characteristically heart-on-sleeve lyricism is particularly evident upon listening to her most recent singles, Sad Part and Helium Cowgirl. The latter retains Bay's characteristic placidness yet feels darker, more personal and introspective; she herself has expressed that her newer music in particular feels like it was ripped from her own diary, an artistic choice showcased in many of her lyric videos.

Mimi Bay's lullabic singles wyd, daydreams and 2am apollo are collected into a small 2019 EP, aptly named daydream, encapsulating the subject, tone and energy of the three songs. Written when she "was in between chapters" (Euphoria Magazine, 2019) of her life and would stay up late in summer reflecting and penning lyrics, as her debut EP I Will Be Ok also did, daydream feels as though it embodies summer, yet the words themselves are much more bittersweet, almost. Or, at least, reflective and fully and completely honest.

If one thing is certain, it's that Mimi Bay is excited to make more music. After the release of her EP, SoundCloud has seen a steady stream of her demos and unfinished tracks, so fingers crossed for an EP or album soon!

My personal favourite songs of hers: I Will Be Okay, Someday, Time, helium cowgirl and really.

Dating apps: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

Lucy Pollock discusses her relationship with dating apps

They say you leave Oxford with one of three things: a first, a Blue, or a spouse. I can't do sports, and I'm more of a slightly mouldy academic sponge than an academic weapon. So, marriage it is, I guess. But dating in Oxford is quite possibly a new circle of hell. Dating within your course is awful; I missed about half of my lecture series last term because of a drunken mistake. Dating within college is just so convenient until suddenly you can't go to the library because seeing that person

"It's taken all the love out of dating."

would be too awkward. Even joining societies is no use: one misstep and you can never return. Ultimately, the only real option is a dating app. Good old Hinge.

I wish I could say that Hinge, or any other dating app, is a good idea. But between my flatmate spending hours trying to find my profile and then messaging me "you want me", and the guy

who told me that by the time he was done my "guts would look like Zeus's hair," Hinge has been nothing but a solidly harrowing experience. I'm not saying it's impossible to find love on Hinge - I'm sure some people do - but if given the choice between going out with my friends or trekking the twenty minutes to Magdalen to hook up with a postgrad who said he "likes undergrad historians," making the choice to go on dates becomes less and less tempting.

What is it about dating apps that has had this impact? Why is it that people feel comfortable sending messages that are too graphic to put into this article, when they would never say the same thing to a stranger at a bar? Online anonymity has been an issue since its advent, yet it can become so awful on dating apps. I guess there's something to be said for the relative anonymity of dating apps: if you don't like the person, you can just unmatch them and never see them again. It's easier than having to end things. It's also taken all of the

love out of dating.

Hinge is dehumanising. Six photos and three prompts to sum up a person. Are you vulnerable? Funny? Sarcastic?



Charming? I have said before that Lord Byron would have loved Hinge, but I no longer think that's true. How would a poet describe themselves on Hinge? Humans separate

ourselves from animals through communication, so what are we when that communication is stripped down to its bare bones? We take ourselves apart for the sake of the hope of finding love, and our parts don't even approach what makes us whole. Nothing will make you realise this like seeing your friends' Hinge profiles - seeing the people you love reduced to a few words and photos. Seeing people who you've made memories with and stayed up until 2am laughing with make themselves fit into small palatable boxes - for what?

It's not like the matching part of Hinge is any less dehumanising. It's a modern problem: choice overwhelms us. You don't want to rule anyone out, because what if no one likes you, what if you're unlovable? You match with people you have no real interest in simply because you need to feel wanted. You accept people who have matched with you even if they're not your type because the validation you get from them sending you a Rose makes you feel like you're worth something. Every

"Seeing people you've made memories with and stayed up until 2am laughing with make themselves fit into small palatable boxes - for what?"

minute you spend on Hinge, your self-worth becomes more and more inextricable from your looks. People don't care about personality on Hinge. It doesn't matter if you have nothing in common. All of us become vapid and shallow, seeking validation from whoever will give it to us.

I think dating apps have ruined love for me, just a little. The hopeless romantic who grew up on Disney movies and romcoms is gone; the cynic rules now. People are no longer people on Hinge: we're options, like choices in a Tesco meal deal. Hinge isn't good or bad, it's just ugly, and it's made dating uglier too.

Cherwell

Cherwell sent two lucky readers on a blind date, here's how it went...

ROMEO	JULIET
First impressions? Friendly and well spoken.	First impressions? She seemed lovely.
Did it meet your expectations? Yeah.	Did it meet your expectations? I suppose. I wasn't really expecting much from a blind date.
What was the highlight? I learnt a lot about different colleges. I feel like I could be an Oxford tour guide now.	What was the highlight? Finding out about her college. It seemed quite a lot different to mine.
What was the most embarrassing moment? When she asked if I went to a private school - but I'm from basically the opposite of that.	What was the most embarrassing moment? It was just slightly awkward. Not great.
Describe the date in 3 words: Alright. Nice coffee.	Describe the date in 3 words: Short and sweet.
Is there a second date on the cards? No.	Is there a second date on the cards? No. Definitely not.

Looking for love?

Email lifestylecherwell@gmail.com or message one of our editors!

The patience of ordinary things

Evelyn Power discusses one small, mundane pleasure of life... This week, **doing nothing**.



It has been a week. Read that last word in italics, if you will - I am unsure if the *Cherwell's* print formatting will allow me to place the appropriate emphasis on the word, and it is not an emphasis on which I am willing to compromise. Because, as I have said, it has been a week. Middle-of-term blues are a known event in the Oxford calendar, marked by Welfare Weeks and posters advertising Mental Health Dog Walks - all valiant and admirable attempts from college JCRs to mitigate the inevitable drag of university without reading weeks - or really any breaks at all.

Perhaps the strangest part of my recent stranding within a long period of breaklessness has been the fact that, eventually, it ends.

Essays get handed in (even the worst ones) tutorials finish (even the worst ones), and suddenly I have found myself at something of a loose end.

I have, for a moment, time on my hands.

It is time I am lucky to have, and

time that should really be spent productively, in cleaning and essay prep and every other useful task I'm forgetting right now - yet it is a stillness I welcome.

The presence of spare time is almost startling, after its absence.

It takes a moment of recalibration, a breath

in which you remember that you are an actual person; with spare time, I drink coffee for the taste, not the caffeine, walk places that aren't the Bodleian, make jokes without self deprecation. I remember that I love my course, that I am grateful for my friends, that I can be, when given the space for it, funny and kind. I wear outfits and not just clothes. I decorate my room, cook meals and make tea for anyone who will take them, desperate to anchor this



remembering of how good things are in something physical, something that I can point at later and say here it is. I write sentimental articles.

There is, possibly, an element of bragging about this - a lot of people don't ever get these moments of pause. It's probably not a moment of

pause I should be taking. In a week I will probably read this column back and wish I could grab the girl writing it and tell her to put down the smug article and actually work. My future self is probably right.

But spare time, being hard to come by, is even harder to give up. Tomorrow I will get back to work, as I did yesterday and the day before.

Today, I think I'm going to have a nap.

The rooms before me

Zara Arif

The first rooms that are fully our own once we leave our family homes become part of our identity and sense of self. Being able to decorate a space and fill it as you want allows for an exploration of the self that is fuelled by a limitless freedom of expression. A university room is both a private and shared space. Visiting someone's room can give an insight into who they are, what they like and even who they want to present themselves as being. A room is therefore more than a space we occupy but a representation of the self.

A room at Oxford, a city with centuries of history, adds interesting layers to the room as an exploration of the self. Many of us occupy rooms in buildings that are hundreds of years old and have had hundreds of previous occupants. The college system even means that we often know the previous occupants of our old or future rooms. We often even walk past our old rooms on a regular basis and see a new person taking up a place that was once so personal and unique to us. So how can we make a space our own, for the brief interim where it is indeed our own, when we know that it carries so much history of so many people before us, within it?

The fact that a space already has a history and individual stories tied to it does not necessarily make it any less meaningful for each person who comes to reside within it. This plurality and layering of meanings speaks

to the university experience itself. Thousands of students pass through Oxford for only three years at a time. They make memories in the city that are unique to them but also tied to the academic and social traditions that have come before them. This is true of any space – our memories and perception of it are based on and inspired by what we already know to be true of it. In this way, an Oxford bedroom does not exist within a vacuum or present itself as a blank canvas for us to fill on individual terms. It is instead a chance to add our own story to a wider and more extensive narrative. This narrative and history is perhaps what makes the Oxford experience so unique. We are 21st century students with modern perspectives and stories but by existing in this city and partaking in all its traditions we are always in contact with and tied to the generations of students who have come before us. A city is nothing more than a geographical limitation without its inhabitants and their stories, just like a room is just four walls without those who have lived in it.

But does positioning our individual stories within a greater history risk erasing the particularities of our experiences, and our identities? Is the thought of all the history which surrounds us not a terrifying reminder of our transience?

If we see our rooms as an expression of ourselves, then the thought of our transience does not need to be so terrifying. Who we are, as we conceive ourselves and project outwards, is always constantly chang-

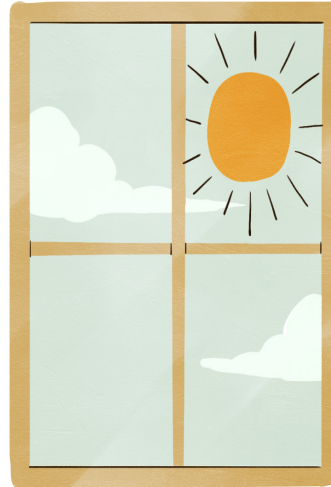
ing and evolving, especially in our university years. Our rooms each year should therefore be seen as a space that a certain version of ourselves once occupied at a certain point in time. A box room with a dodgy sink might have been the perfect home in first year, for a past version of ourselves. The nostalgia we have for our previous rooms, is of the past, along with our versions of ourselves. But despite this nostalgia, it doesn't feel like these versions of ourselves and our spaces lie in our future. We can memorialise these spaces without seeking to return to them.

This idea of memorialisation links back to decorating our spaces and expressing ourselves. In my own experience, as I have moved from room to room over the course of the last four years, I have taken the same photos, posters and decorative pieces with me. So, even when I feel a twinge of nostalgia as I walk past one of my old rooms, I don't experience a complete sense of detachment from that space or the version of myself that occupied it and that is because I still have the things that filled that old room. I still have the same postcards on the wall in my current room and to them I have added all the others I have accumulated from my year

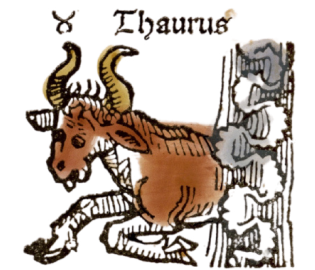
abroad travels. Looking at my walls, therefore, reminds me of the past but situates it within everything that has changed since then and everything that is still yet to come. Ultimately, for me, that is what space and the things we take ownership of are all about. It is more about the memories and the meanings, the versions of ourselves which are tied to them, than the actual thing itself.

The university experience is all about changing and growing as an individual. The rooms we live in, where they are, how we decorate them, what we choose to do in them, can therefore be used as markers of this individual change. Embracing the room as a metaphor for change and development allows us to reconcile the dissonance between acknowledging that a space is ours but has also meant something different to so many others before us.

A room is much more than just four walls. It is a space of expression and personal freedom. Thinking about all those who came before us and our relation to them allows us to understand ourselves. Spaces are defined by the people who inhabit them and are therefore marked by and themselves symbolise the change and development of each person who lives within them.



You are the reason your tutors do it all. They will read your essay five days post-deadline; it's what they live for.



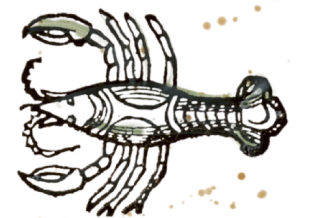
I see a darkness in your future - but sunrise is 07:15 tomorrow.

II Gemini



Hilary sucks, anyway. Irritation and malady are the internal symptoms; you control the outward expression.

♋ Cancer



This Valentine's Day, head to your Fac and find that one person who will do all your tute work forever. True love.

♌ Leo



Forecast as to future; platitude as to personality; incisive comment as to Oxford life.

♍ Virgo



You are a gilded bird in a beautiful, colourful, cage. Bite the hand that feeds.

Dear Cherwell, how do I balance all the people I love in my life?

Hey! I've just started dating a guy who I really like. We get on so well, have lots in common, and I can see it going somewhere. But he's taking up a lot of my time and I feel like I'm seeing less of all my friends. I don't want a relationship to come at the cost of my friendships, but I would also really like to see where this goes. How do I balance all of the people I love in my life?

Hello love-bird! I hear you, and to be honest we've all been there before! It's not uncommon to think about how your new relationship may impact your existing friendships and how to balance your time when you're getting to know your new boo.

Firstly, it is clear that this new guy you're dating is important to you! Let that be the case! Allowing yourself to make a meaningful and solid foundation with your new guy is not

only lovely and romantic, it's also very necessary for the framework of your relationship. One way to see it is as a time investment into your feelings and getting up to the cool things you have in common.

Bear in mind that it's important to give yourself some slack! Dating in Oxford can feel very different because of the time warp hole that exists here. In reality, you're probably dedicating the same amount of time to all your loved ones as you would if you were in a normal uni.

Equally, there is a possibility your new partner is dragging you into a love bubble. The early days of the relationship can be blissful, but, as you're aware already, following this rhythm can make it quickly fraught because you won't have yet established these boundaries - such as the boundary for time spent together. Even if you have loads in common, there's a chance that both of you are coming off too strong,

particularly if you're starting to notice that you haven't seen your friends in a while. Going down this path and realising what you're missing may make you resent your new guy for this - which would also be a bit unfair on him. Remember that it takes two to tango!

The most pragmatic solution I can offer you is to set some boundaries - both with your lover-boy, and your friends. Boundaries aren't meant to be off-putting or scary! The boundaries relevant for you here are more a kind of expression of expectations. How often do you want to see your friends, and how often do they want to see you? How much time is your partner expecting to hang out with you, and vice-versa? Your friends, who I sure miss you just as much as you miss them, would love to hear from you and have a candid conversation about what you're feeling. I remember feeling exactly the same way about my

current partner and having honest conversations with both of them at a time when it felt right for me. Both parties responded really well and it filled me with confidence that what I was doing was right and mature!

If you can really see this relationship going somewhere, at some point you're going to have to 'get real' with your new partner about this anyway, and it's likely that after a while with it unmentioned he could feel the same. If you're serious about him and he is about you, an equally serious conversation won't scare either of you away, actually, it will only bring you closer. The relationship with the right person won't cost you your friendship, and neither will good friendships cost you your love interest. Stick to your guns, and you'll always feel satisfied with your decisions. At the end of the day, it's also about being honest with yourself and your needs - that's not selfish!

Got a problem? Need some advice?

Email lifestylecherwell@gmail.com or message one of our editors!

♎ Libra



You've been inside too long; uncage the beast and flap your glorious wings.

♏ Scorpius



Accept those compliments. You're just too good.

♐ Sagittarius



Maximise time spent on useful stuff, and minimise time spent on fluff. Cut out vowels entirely. That's better.

♑ Capricornus



Maybe it's time to do the laundry? Maybe it's time to cut your nails? Up 2 U, funky.

♒ Aquarius



Learn Semaphore, signal across the RadCam and see what happens. There's fun to be found in total strangers: Hot Girl Hilary.

♓ Pisces



Look into insurance. Insure your laptop, your car, your heart - this year you'll claim...

Beating the Blues: Is it possible to overcome the 5th week blues?

Rhiannon Bradshaw

The 5th week blues are an infamous and universal part of the Oxford experience. They are as renowned as crewdates, formals, and bops - although not quite for the same positive reasons. As a clueless fresher at my first college-family formal, my parents gave me a run-down of everything I needed to know about Oxford, warning me about the 5th week blues looming ahead. I was told to be prepared for the stress, depression and overall gloom awaiting me in 5th week. However, after experiencing the highs and lows of my first Michaelmas term, I felt they were made out to be a whole lot worse than the reality. With that being said, my JCR did organise cookie decorating, hot chocolate walks and even breakfast burritos - which probably helped reduce the miserableness of the week. Despite all of that, I still feel like it is possible to beat the dreaded 5th week blues by yourself.

Now, in the 4th week of Hilary term, they are fast approaching again and while I feel like I overcame the 5th week blues well last term, there is still a nagging feeling that it will be different this time around. Returning to the exhausting schedule of weekly essays and lectures after a relaxing Christmas vac has made Hilary feel more overwhelming - does that mean that 5th week will be even worse this time around? Regardless of the different situation this term, I am determined not to let the 5th

week blues take me down.

What we really need to get through 5th week is a solid distraction. Whether this be a hobby which allows you to spend time doing something enjoyable, hanging out with your friends or even getting immersed in a really interesting part of your degree. Any distraction which reminds you of the fun in life can help. Spending time with my friends really helped me push through 5th week last term. I am a sucker for what my friends call 'tea-time' - essentially sitting on the floor of my friend's room, drinking tea and munching our way through several packets of boursbons and custard creams, all while having a good gossip about our day. This tends to go on for several hours whether we planned it or not. I would recommend adopting some form of 'tea-time' with your friends, just to prevent yourself from rotting away miserably on your own in 5th week. Of course, sometimes the best way to keep yourself going is to have a night out, to escape from all the stress and feel revived. I'm a personal fan of Parkend Wednesdays, and being mid-week, it rolls around just as the 5th week blues start to really hit. The DJ's shout-outs, overcrowded dance floor and well-earned kebab at the end of the night are often the best remedy for lifting your mood. Or, if you're more of a bridge fan, then no doubt you'll get some cheering up dancing in the sweaty rooms or chatting away in the smoking area.

A hobby which forces you to

just focus on doing what you enjoy can also drag your attention away from the gloom of 5th week. I love getting involved in college netball and no matter how terrible our skills on the court or the turn-out for weekly matches, I always come away feeling better. It could be anything from sports or societies to solo activities like reading, baking or drawing. Whatever it is that drags your attention away from that feeling of never-ending work and

exhaustion can help keep spirits high for the final few weeks. This is not to say that the work itself can't be a source of enjoyment. I personally love the paper I am taking this term and I really look forward to writing my essay each week. But that's not the case for everyone and even if you love your degree, it is still important to escape from the library to help get through 5th week. Whatever it is that works for you, I really do believe we can beat the 5th week blues. There is a way to have fun and keep spirits high for the last half of term, we just need to make sure we actively seek out the things that keep us going. Find that fun distraction and don't let the gloom of the mid-way point get to you this term!



Lessons from the landing...

Katya Ferrier brings you a musing and a meal... This week, 'half-way hall and a sunny side up - shakshuka-style'



This week saw me, along with all the other hordes of students in second year, cross the halfway mark of my degree. Maybe it's the fifth-week blues talking, but passing this seemingly ceremonial, and therefore somewhat inconsequential, boundary had me feeling rather existential.

What better way to ponder on your existence and life purpose than with eggs? It felt only appropriate to reward myself for making it to the second act of my degree with a Shakshuka. Full of bold, herbaceous and fruity flavours, the beauty of this Turkish dish convinced me to exist with my own thoughts during breakfast, rather than watching a slew of 'silly' instagram reels.

As I pierced the peppered white of a poached egg with a slice of toast, I watched my reflection dance in the sheen of the viscous yolk. Was I happy, relieved, or sad to have made it halfway? To be candid, probably a mix of all three.

The emotional growth I have experienced in just eighteen short months honestly, at times, feels like I've gone through three episodes of puberty all at once. Such rapid rates of maturing are not really helped by the sheer density and breadth of learning which all undergrads are tasked with. Often, daily life makes it difficult to be able to see the woods through the trees. Progress can feel slow when time passes so fast. Everything, from relationships to friendships, often feel like

supercharged emotional time bombs.

How do we process such a windstorm of feelings at the interval? Obviously, processing will differ from second year to second year. Nonetheless, the feeling that everything, yet simultaneously nothing has happened in the first act of the degree is a sentiment felt by many across the university. My suggestion is to cast your mind back to your matriculation, and think about how much growth that naive young person has achieved, how much their tastes have changed. If so much can develop in under two years - think about how much more growth can happen in the next two!

Getting to a big milestone, particularly when associated with ageing and growing up, can be a little unnerving to say the least. Coupled with the fact that Hilary can be a particularly dreary time, especially with the dingy skies of February casting a shadow on what fun can be had in such few hours of daylight. Whilst much easier said than done, it is worth maintaining optimism.

Briefly consulting the bigger picture before returning to the 'mundane' everyday can be incredibly refreshing and empowering. Although keeping a smile on one's face can be exhausting, especially when the eighth stupidly long reading list has hit the inbox, our lives are so much better enriched by looking for the light in our lives. Keep those eggs sunny side up!

Cherwell recommends...

Our life editor's suggestions for the best ways to enjoy Oxford's city life after hours...

1 Pub: Spoilt for choice, where do you end up? This life editor haunts OX4 establishments (redacted as to prevent overcrowding) but Chequers, Turf and the KA deliver. And if you're pitcher-minded there's always Spoons; I'm trusting you know which one to choose.

2 Nightclub: Perhaps an a too-soon bedraggled second-year shouldn't be writing this. But fond memories of cheese floor and the Bridge smoking area reminds me of what a great night out in Oxford can be like with an amazing group of friends (as well as a strong constitution). A return is planned for posterity, and so should you.

3 College Bars: Ah, this hallowed institution: providing an electric atmosphere, or a reminder of your college's dead social scene (I have one in mind). You down a pint of

subsidised beer only to slink back into the library because no, your academic 9-5 has not yet ended. Besides, do you want to encounter a crewie anyway?

4 You're going where? That random Union masquerade, European Night ball, or society soiree; these events are what makes Oxford weirdly fantastic. Show up. Meet new people. Carpe Diem etc.

5 For the Nerds: Leaving your college grounds after dark is not always the booze-filled social extravaganza some crave. What about that special society lecture, or a carefully-planned philosophy symposium? Oxford is a space of constant learning, of all sorts, and if you're feeling academically inclined this term, why not ditch the FIXR scrolling? Heck, there may still be a drinks reception...

When wine goes bad

Georgie Allan

It doesn't take a sommelier to identify when a wine has corked. It smells damp, unappealing, maybe a bit like wet dog, and tastes even worse. This occurs in around 10% of all bottles, when bacteria is transferred to the wine on the cork. The process is irreversible, and if you were banking on that bottle for a cosy night in, it could even be devastating.

Good wine vendors - such as our

friends at Oxford Wine Company - are happy to exchange the affected bottle in this unfortunate circumstance. But what do you do if you are stuck with wine gone bad? I found myself in this situation when I

turned to Oxford after the vac-champ wine, opened and left in the kitchen far too long. I am always loath to pour wine away, so I let it sit

until I decided what to do.

These bottles sat in the kitchen, abandoned and forlorn until inspiration struck - or perhaps madness. Ok, it was neither; I just hate putting away laundry so decided to spice it up by dyeing my shirts using, you guessed it, old red wine. I could pretend I thought this through, or at least googled in advance. Instead I shoved the shirts in a large bowl, poured two bottles of red over them, and kneaded the fabric with my hands like Bacchae at a midnight ritual.

I then let it sit on a shelf for three days. Why? Because that was how long it took me to be bothered to do something about it again. The next logical step was to wring out the wine and wash the shirts. This was something of a cathartic process, though I wish the blood red of the wine

had been retained in the fabric. Instead they were a dusky shade of pink.

This when the My grey. one more

could not be said they came out of washing machine. shirts had turned A nice grey, and that in truth I'm likely to wear than their original pink, but a baf-

fling, dark, almost blueish, grey. My flatmates, it turned out, had googled dying shirts with wine; you're supposed to heat it to get the colour to stick. This still doesn't explain the grey.

Regardless, my brief foray into insanity was fruitful - if you'll pardon the pun. I was grateful that it was. I found a use for the wine, I have a new look, and my peers regard me as more insane than ever. Bacchus would be proud. I've also learned not to be afraid of a little spilled wine on my collar - soak the whole shirt and you'll be turning heads.



Ancient Recipes

Broken heart or too much Valentine's chocolate? Try this medieval Estonian remedy...

Open since the fifteenth century, Europe's oldest pharmacy offers a scrumptious, sweet treat for the weebegone and lovesick. Raeapteek drug store in the Estonia's capital, Tallinn has been selling special, heart-mending marzipan for over 600 years. The exact recipe of the specific almond-based incarnation is kept a securely guarded secret. But, the next time you're in an aching, desirous pickle, bite down into a stick of marzipan - it might just make a difference.

Records show that the pharmacy used to sell burnt hedgehog powder, burnt bees, bat powder snakeskin potion and unicorn horn powder for an assortment of ailments.

The special marzipan is still on offer from the apothecary. At 72% almond, it can also stimulate brain activity - and heaven knows we all need that.

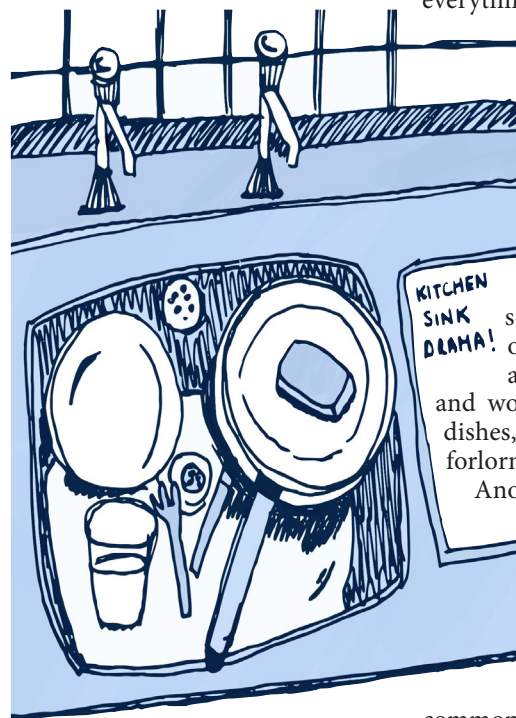
When it comes to marzipan, Estonia knows what it's doing. The art of marzipan painting is hallowed in the country; it is a fine, artisanal practice - with a lengthy process to becoming a master of it. The oldest cafe in Estonia, Maiasmokk (Estonian for 'sweet tooth') in Tallinn has a museum reserved for the almond fanatics. The museum attracts flocking pilgrims in search of the crafted beauty of 200 marzipan figures made from the moulds that have been around for a century.

Kitchen sink drama

Georgie Allan

In my household, growing up, there was very specific etiquette regarding use of the kitchen sink. Over the past few months, I have discovered that this etiquette is far from universal, though its importance has been magnified by the absence of dishwashers from the average student kitchen.

The first hurdle is whether used



utensils even reach the kitchen, let alone the sink, and the appropriate time for them to do so. It is commonly agreed that a mug or a glass can be used all day for the same beverage. The same rule can be extended to a teaspoon used in the making of tea. Most other kitchen equipment is single use only. This frequently does not stop sauce from crusting itself to a plate shoved to the side of a desk for a week. In your own space, that's your problem. In a communal

kitchen, it's sure to spark resentment, particularly if the abandoned matter begins to produce new life.

Once the crockery reaches the sink, there arises the issue of diversity of hygiene standards. Can a simple rinse under water suffice if it looks clean? Does the temperature of the water matter? Is soap always a necessity? There is also the problem of how to address what you find already in the sink on your arrival. I was raised to wash everything in the sink, regardless

of who made the mess - to do otherwise indicated a selfish disregard for others. This would usually include a quick scan of the surrounding area for anything that had not yet made it to either the sink or the counter beside it to be washed. I soon discovered that most of my flatmates did not adhere to this same policy, and would wash only their own dishes, leaving everything else forlorn in the bottom of the sink.

Another general principle of washing that proved to be far from universal was that of how washed items should be placed. In the absence of a dish rack, this was somewhat haphazard. I thought it

common practice to turn dishes with the capacity to accumulate pools of murky water upside down in order to prevent freshly washed items from becoming breeding grounds for bacteria in fluid form. Apparently not. Our tea towels are somehow always wet, so drying the dishes directly from the sink is never an option. I cannot imagine how a bowl can be expected to air dry if it contains an inch of water, nor how such a bowl could be considered clean for use. Fortunately, this bore little effect on me, as my

dishes were rarely washed by anyone other than myself.

One issue, which soon came to irritate me, however, was the constant pool of water on the floor in front of the sink. Yes, certain curved utensils have the capacity to project running water in all directions, but preventing this is not impossible. Nevertheless, I learned the hard way that the kitchen requires either shoes or bare feet, never socks. It doesn't help that the tap never completely turns off. Its

dripping haunts us all.

I am far from immune to lapses in culinary hygiene myself, and critical though this article may be, I am aware that the situation could be far worse. Horror stories of ants, overflowing bins, and food left to rot for weeks on end have thankfully not become a part of my personal uni experience. However, I have found the kitchen sink to be a fascinating microcosm of social and cultural differences within my flat.

Artwork by Taya Neilson

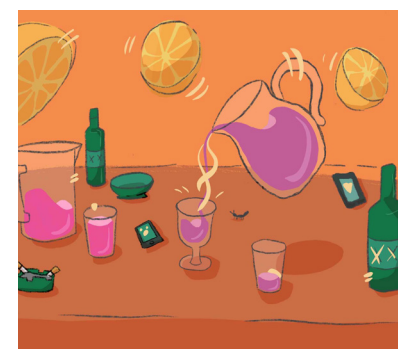
The pitchers of Spoons

Susanna Elliott and Reka Sztaray review another iconic Oxford pub...

The fifth week blues are hitting so we are combatting them with blue lagoons! Spoons pitchers are a student staple for a reason, and week we decided to try out some new flavours. This is our ranking of some of the Spoons pitchers, assisted by our expert friends.

From worst to best:

7. Bumbu Colada - this boasts a violent coconut flavour. Not to be touched unless you are a serious fan of Bountys. **2/10**
6. The Godfather - our friend described this as "pepsi and disappointment". If you enjoy cola you might enjoy this but save your money and just order a vodka coke, it will taste the same. **3/10**
5. Blue Lagoon - "it tastes like chemicals", "like eating a smurf". Despite this, the blue lagoon is a fan favourite, our friend Kit said he could drink it "all night long baby". **4/10**
4. Woo Woo - our friend says it tastes "like the colour red". A bit like watery squash, but we love it.



Artwork by Maria Mould

- 6/10
3. Mango Monster Mash - this drink tastes like a holiday. **7/10**
2. Bubblegin - this is our personal favourite. You can never go wrong with a bubblegin, it tastes like childhood and the glitter makes it even better. **9/10**
1. Candy Rosa - this is a new addition to the menu, and we were impressed. A very fruity cocktail, this arguably surpasses our love for bubblegin. It's safe to say we have found a new favourite and we would seriously recommend you go down to Spoons to try one of these. **10/10**

A review: How good is sport at Oxford?

Rebecca Pearson

There is no doubt that Oxford University is primarily known for its academic status. The spectres of its famous historical, literary and political figures, that seep even into the naming of college rooms, sustains a long and recognised history of academic prominence. It is easy to see how Oxford is upheld, in its own right, by a status that falls outside of sporting recognition and prowess, despite its similarly long standing record of sporting achievement. With the iconic measure of the Oxford Blues awards signalling individual sporting talent and excellence, how good is Oxford at sport, really?

In 2021, Derek Pringle sighted the end of first-class university cricket. After Covid-19 had rattled the progression of students advancing from home clubs to university setups, gaps in the standard of performance-level university games began to show. Despite Oxford and Cambridge's cricket matches once being considered first-class games, the ECB decided to revoke this privilege in 2021, leading to an uncertain image about the integrity of university-level cricket and the prestige of being part of the Blues

system. The ECB's decision reveals a perceived issue from the sport's board about how professional cricket should be categorised. However, every sport and every university has a bigger picture, beyond the decisions from sporting boards and university sport decision-makers, so how can we begin to form an image of sport at Oxford?

Speaking to a member of the Oxford Men's Rugby first-team, sport at Oxford offers a unique experience to move through a highly pressured academic environment whilst training with others and taking on the diverse sporting opportunities that Oxford's network offers:

"There's a really really good culture in the [rugby] club where we all work for each other and work hard, particularly as we're all under quite a lot of academic pressure [...] we really come together at training, lock in, and have a good time. [...] More than just the rugby, I've got such a good group of friends from Oxford and it feels like I've been here for ages."

Back in October 2023, it was announced that the Oxford versus Cambridge Varsity Matches would be moved away from Twickenham stadium after 100 years, instead moving to Saracens' StoneX stadium. The Rugby Football Union

(RFU) put the decision down to economic sustainability; they were struggling to sell out even a third of its 82,000 seat stadium. However, despite the controversy around moving the match away from the home of rugby, there is a growing sense that the move will bring a better crowd engagement, eliciting a positive move towards cultivating a closer atmosphere between fans and their teams:

"changing [the stadium venue] will open up a lot more opportunities, and I think it will be a really really good event - I implore as many people to buy tickets as possible."

With so much of sport's longevity, especially within university setups, resting on student enjoyment, spectatorship and cultivating social events that centre around watching good university rivalries and competition, the change in stadiums has been seen as a forward-thinking move that should support the growth of Oxford's rugby culture.

Oxford holds a unique position in its sporting endeavours. Compared to other top universities, like Exeter, Nottingham and Loughborough, all of which are frequently synonymised and marketed with sport as part of their university brand-image, Oxford is more likely to be stereotyped as a home for aca-

demia and rowing. Whilst rowing is certainly a cornerstone of Oxford's sporting image, the 81 university sports clubs and 200 college clubs that make up Oxford's sporting network offer more opportunities to get involved - an aspect that cultivates an enjoyment for sport and progression, alongside offering performance setups.

So, why is Oxford's image still firmly rooted in its academic interests? Cultivating a sporting university image has much to do with student perception and celebrating student-athlete achievements. Dissecting Oxford's sports-marketing provision reveals some gaps in its promotion of Oxford's sporting events, successes and opportunities through individual club's social media pages. Success feeds off of traction and interest, perhaps exposing social media as an area that Oxford's sport clubs are still yet to push.

At the highest level of Oxford's sports clubs, there is also still friction created by funding loops and the disparity in some men's and women's teams' opportunities. The strong uptake in sport at a college-level is often separated from the uptake at a university level, with much of the student participation relying on bottom-up volunteering

from student coaches, rather than a trickle-down of University-wide funding for sporting initiatives. This separation can also be seen at a higher level where, for example in Oxford's Men's and Women's Rugby teams, there is sometimes a disparity between the team's abilities to acquire funding from external sponsorships that would unlock further training and competition opportunities. There becomes a hard balance to strike between University funding interests, sporting opportunities, promotion and inclusion, whilst recognising that Oxford unquestionably pushes rowing and, during its history, 283 Oxford students have gone on to represent Great Britain in the Olympic games. In the bigger picture, Oxford is very much good at sport.

With such a pressured focus on academic attainment, sport at Oxford offers a unique opportunity to balance academic interests with sporting enjoyment, community and success. Whilst funding capacity is something that all universities are facing, it seems that, in the first instance, Oxford's sporting achievements merely need more promotion. Just how good Oxford is at sport rests a lot on perception, so perhaps it just needs some of us to shout about it.

Two champions join forces

Henry Kay

"Ask a child to draw a car, and certainly he will draw it red."

Enzo Ferrari's infamous adage encapsulates just how synonymous the iconic rouge of the Ferrari brand is within the world of motor racing and Formula 1. With people left reeling after the announcement that the sport's most successful driver, Lewis Hamilton, is moving to the Italian team for the 2025 season, remembering how iconic the Scuderia are in the sport sheds some light on the British driver's decision. Ferrari are the pinnacle of Formula 1, the most recognisable and successful team in the sport's history. They are the team of great champions such as Ascari, Lauda, and Schumacher, and they are the team that every driver dreams of joining. Hamilton's social media post discussing the announcement reveals these aspirations: "the chance to fulfil another childhood dream: driving in Ferrari red."

The romance of the move cannot be denied. And not only is Hamilton fulfilling his own dream, but also that of his idol and hero, the incredible Ayrton Senna, whose own ambitions of driving for Ferrari were shattered by his tragic death at Imola in 1994. It is also a move that strategically makes sense for Hamilton: he is still chasing that record breaking eighth world title, and

aged 39, he knows that time isn't necessarily on his side. That's not to say that his powers are fading, but rather the fact that he doesn't have the future ahead that he had when he jumped from McLaren to Mercedes in 2013. The Silver Arrows were knocked off their perch by Red Bull in 2021 and have since struggled to regain ground that they've lost on their mistaken development paths. Comparing the trajectories of Hamilton's current and future teams, one can argue that despite it having been 16 years since their last world title, it is Ferrari who are in a period of ascendancy and look capable of mounting a challenge to Red Bull.

After copious years of experience in the sport, we can be assured that Hamilton has made his decision based on trust in

the team, entrenched in belief in what he has seen from a technical standpoint. He clearly has greater faith in Ferrari's ability to assist his title ambitions than he does in Mercedes to put him back on top. Having been on the border of retirement following his heart-wrenching loss in 2021, and frustrated with Mercedes' stagnant development for the last two years, Hamilton's move is driven by a renewed confidence for what these new Italian pastures may bring. It was this same confidence in the face of public uncertainty that delivered his Mercedes success post McLaren-switch, and one has a feeling that History could be repeating itself.

[Read the rest online at cherwell.org](#)
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Captain's Corner

This week, Cherwell spoke to Saketh Subramanian, the Blues captain of the university's American Football Team, the Oxford University Lancers.

What drew you to the sport?

I moved to the US when I was four, where American Football is the dominant sport. My first memory of the game is watching Super Bowl XLII between the New England Patriots and the New York Giants. This was one of the greatest upsets in NFL history as the Giants took down the 17-0 Patriots, led by Tom Brady. From there, I was hooked. I'm still a Giants fan, something that I struggle with every season.

Were there any specific goals this season and how has the season gone so far?

Our one goal is always to beat Cambridge. With respect to BUCS, we focus on the process. The results take care of themselves if the team trains well and the players do their job on each play. The team is currently 5-2-1 (five wins, two losses, and one draw), which currently puts us in second place in Division One South and we will compete for the National Trophy in the playoffs. The Varsity Match is provisionally scheduled for May 11th in Cambridge.

What has been the best win of

the season currently?

Our biggest win of the season was a 26-12 home victory in November against Hertfordshire, who are five-time national champions and are currently top of our league.

What are your biggest sporting setbacks and successes so far?

The biggest sporting setback was our loss to Cambridge in my first year (2021-2022). We lost 14-12 and this was a tough way to send off our leavers after an undefeated BUCS season and being promoted from Division Two to Division One.

The biggest successes were our Varsity win and staying up in Division One last year (2022-2023), a first in programme history. Our current season is also promising, with the playoffs and Varsity still to come.

How did Varsity go last year?

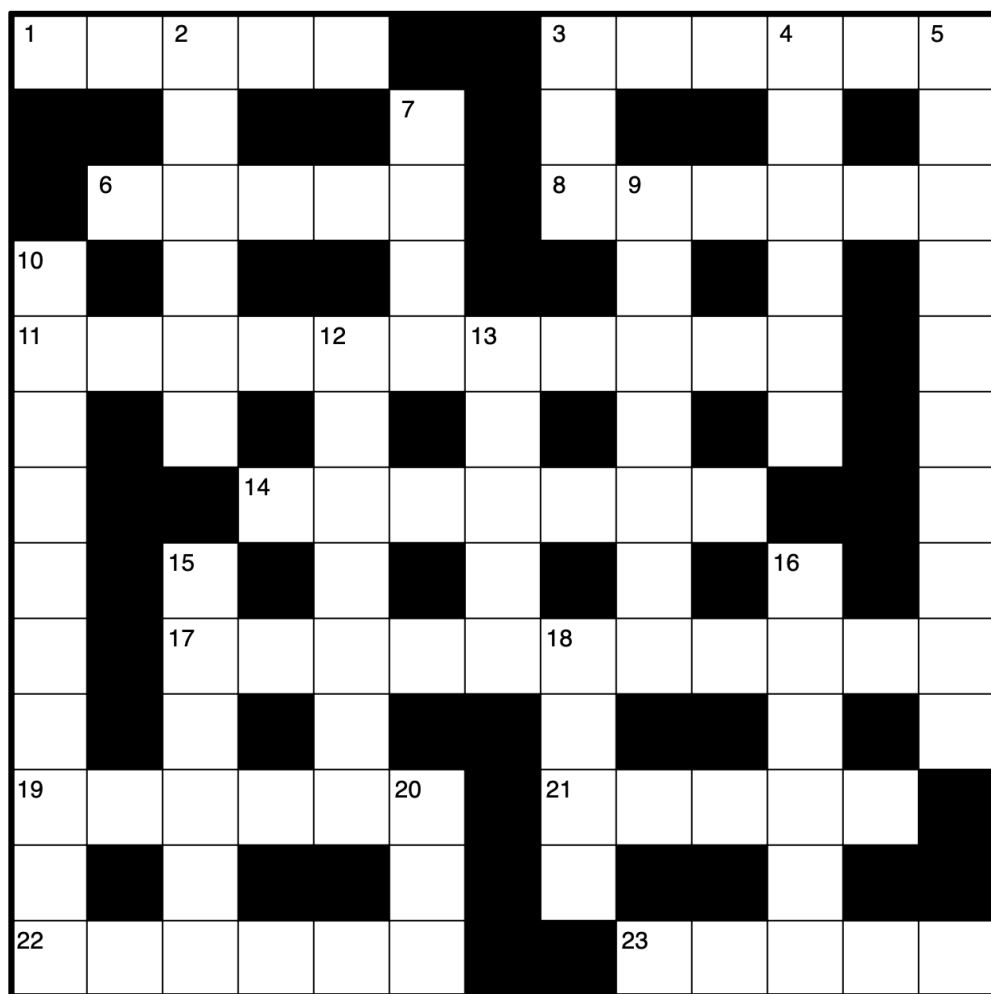
We had a historic Varsity match last year, as it was the first fixture hosted at the RC Millsap Pitch, our home in University Parks. We had a fantastic turnout of over 300 spectators in the stands, who witnessed us beat Cambridge 41-7.

Image credits: Graeme Chesters





Cryptic Crossword by Sarah Beard



ACROSS

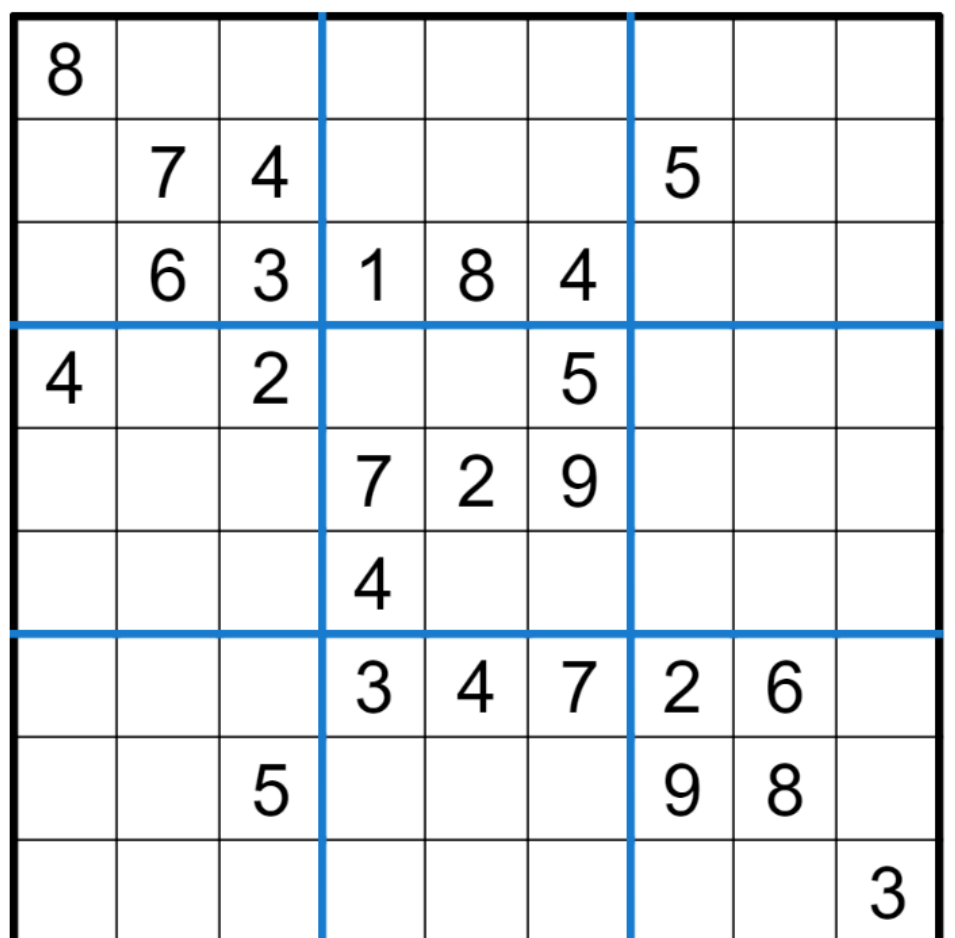
- 1. Sign of love, make out and a tango at the end (5)
- 3. Saw your French sister potentially flying? (6)
- 6. German woman starts hoax (5)
- 8. Starting with a scar makes you fearful (6)
- 11. Messy escapades of the highest value (3, 2, 6)
- 14. Sticky stuff stuck between Eritrea cleavage (7)
- 17. Stereotype of colour truck guy (5, 3, 3)
- 19. Navigator of river delta (6)
- 21. A missing letter from a Scandinavian country is impossible! (2, 3)

DOWN

- 2. Seen eye to eye, mostly avarice (6)
- 3. End of Spanish kisses is a sign of extreme distress (3)
- 4. Dead body of Romeo in the wood (6)
- 5. Ruby and her ring distracts you from what's really important (3, 7)
- 7. In March, beware most ideas (4)
- 9. Salmon garnish inside

- 10. Apparently it's not a good 24 hours for a large rabbit! - coiffure malfunction (3, 4, 3)
- 12. Pardon the IV offer (7)
- 13. Chickpea cellar conceals tranquility (5)
- 15. We hail chaotically in a bit of time (1, 5)
- 16. Little devil is half antelope (6)
- 18. Let out some French wind (4)
- 20. Bloody on the street, the last straw (3)

Sudoku by Lewis Callister



Quiz by Misha Pemberthy

- 1 There are 10 English words that can be found within the word therein, what are they?
- 2 The Super Bowl was hosted this weekend gone, but what number Super Bowl was it?
- 3 Phoebe Bridgers won the most Grammys this year with four, but who received the most nominations with nine?
- 4 How many candidates stood in the recent SU presidential election?
- 5 With Lord Patten standing down, what former UK Prime Minister once held the role of Chancellor of Oxford?
- 6 What country did Joe Biden accidentally claim that the President of Egypt governed last week?
- 7 Which of Reading, Nottingham and Norwich has the most public swimming pools per capita in the UK?
- 8 What are the names of the projectiles fired by a crossbow?
- 9 Are the following typefaces or FTSE 250 companies: Inchcape, Nordstern, Skia, Assura?

10 The US is the country with the largest distance between its two largest cities, what country is second?

Last edition's answers

3RD WEEK | HT 24
 ACROSS: 1) Dalmatian, 8) Sauna, 9) Room, 10) Graph, 11) Vain, 12) Relative, 13) Magenta, 18) Incident, 20) Lava, 21) Broke, 22) Visa, 23) Choir, 24) Bandwidth
 DOWN: 2) Lemon, 3) Three, 4) Asphalt, 5) Nah, 6) Tablet, 7) Gravy, 12) Rag, 14) Andorra, 15) Net, 16) Piracy, 17) Madam, 19) Naked, 20) Livid
 Quiz answers: 1) Mens: Luis Suárez (1961) Women's: Yui Hasegawa (2022), 2) Strengths, 3) Chain, 4) Soho and Brighton, 5) Oxford University without Christ Church with 16, the other two are tied on 14, 6) Roald Dahl, 7) The Netherlands, 8) Dean Phillips, 9) Colour, Horse, Colour, Horse, 10) Naw (6,7,8 and 9 in Welsh)