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Cherwell

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City of shrinking spires: Oxford's housing crisis

Maggie Wilcox investigates the city's accomodation crisis.

When it comes to housing affordability, Oxford is well-behind its world-class peers. Researchers and academics at the University of Oxford are faced with some of the highest housing costs in England and elite academia. While Oxford is infamously an expensive city, it also has a reputation of elitism and prestige. It would be expected that employees at one of the world's oldest universities, where three course meals in ornate halls are a weekly occurrence, could afford to live in the ancient city. This is not the case.

Oxford's severe lack of affordable housing has been highlighted in recent years by city councillors, the Oxford branch of the University and Colleges Union, university staff and administrators. The university and other groups are taking steps to improve housing supply and commuting benefits. However when compared to other comparable institutions, particular-

ly in the United States, Oxford is far behind in terms of affordability - for reasons that go far beyond housing policy alone.

Housing costs high across the sector

The life of an academic at Oxford or Cambridge and that of someone occupying a similar post at a top Ivy League school or elite research university like MIT or Stanford is different in many ways. Those working in the UK generally receive greater social benefits, like maternity and parental leave. By contrast, salaries and scholarships starting at the graduate level are often more generous in the US. There is, however, one domain where top tier UK universities, and Oxford in particular, continually lag behind their American counterparts: housing affordability.

Rent is high across university towns. An analysis of rents in counties with elite universities in the UK and the US (Princeton, Harvard, Yale, MIT, Stanford, Oxford and Cambridge) puts both Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire on the cheaper end of the scale. As of April 2022, the median monthly rent for a studio apartment in both counties was £550, a far cry from the £1630.2 needed

to live in a similar sized apartment in Santa Clara County, home to Stanford University. However, larger two-bedroom apartments in Oxford are more expensive than Cambridge and close to the price found in those around Yale University in New Haven.

In terms of house prices, Cambridgeshire is the cheapest amongst these counties. Next lowest is Oxfordshire, where the median house costs £62008.40 more than Cambridgeshire. Nevertheless, homes near these British universities are cheaper than homes near American universities.

When contextualised within their respective country's housing markets though, Oxford does not appear as comparatively cheap. The rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Oxfordshire is about 41.7% higher than the English median, while rents in Mercer County (Princeton University), and New Haven, are 27% and 13.2% above the US national average respectively. Home prices in Oxford are 15.8% above the national average, not as great an aberration as those found in Santa Clara that average about 210% higher than the US average, but still greater than a New Haven home which is 10% above the national average.

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Cherwell meets the new Vice-Chancellor, p.3

Out with a “bang”: Oxshag dies a short death

Izzie Alexandrou reports.

Within 48 hours, the new dating website “OxShag,” aimed at offering Oxford University students a “casual shag,” had been launched and quickly shut down amid outrage from the student body. The site raised data protection concerns for using student information without consent, and for the anonymity of the creator.

The dating site initially worked by asking users to input their Oxford email addresses, and then selecting up to 20 people they'd like to “shag” from a dropdown menu. Privacy concerns arose after the names and

colleges of everyone who is on the University of Oxford internal email system appeared on the OxShag database. This included all students and tutors, as well as some mysterious names, such as “MCR Bike,” or “Gardens.”

Much of the information on this database is available in the public domain but using it in such a way is forbidden under the university's Ownership, Liability and Use terms, which prohibit “storing personal data derived from the website.”

Oxshag's data use also sparked anger in the student body, with one student telling Cherwell: “What's so insidious about this situation is the layers of danger there are.

This is a public site with the information of all students and staff, which includes freshers who are still minors, people belonging to the asexual or religious communities (I myself am Muslim), past victims of sexual assault now brought into the sphere of their abusers, and staff members (as if encouraging student-teacher relationships is ever a good idea). The thought of people having seen my name and imagined me in a sexually compromising position has left me feeling deeply violated and uncomfortable.” The unknown creator of OxShag told Cherwell: “I didn't realise people would take issue with having their names and colleges listed, but this was my bad, and I apologise

for the oversight. After I received complaints I immediately took the website down and reworked the structure of it so that people's names aren't publicly available.”

OxShag then changed to an “opt in” system, with participants going through a “sign up” stage before entering potential suitors' Oxford email address. Those suitors would then be sent a “generic email” letting them know that someone has requested they sign up. *Continued on Page 2*

WEBSITE – cherwell.org

INSTAGRAM – @cherwelloxford

FACEBOOK – @CherwellOnline

TWITTER – @Cherwell_Online

Continued from Page 2

After the matching deadline, the site would then notify participants of how many matches they received. The site would only send out notifications of successful matches, so non-mutual matches will not be disclosed. Furthermore participants would then be required to pay a fee of £1 (reduced from £3) to receive the names of mutual matches, which were set to be sent out on Valentine’s day.

Nonetheless, this change sparked further controversy due to the continued privacy threat. For example, a data breach could occur if the data was accessed by an unauthorised third party. This was a real concern for some students given that the identity of the creator of OxShag is unknown.

Another student told Cherwell: “Even though they’ve updated the website so you can only see names of people who have opted in, that information was still shared originally without our knowledge or consent and that could be leaked by the creator.”

Following these concerns, OxShag chose to suspend its operations, with the creator telling Cherwell: “Whether or not you choose to believe me, I started this genuinely with the best of intentions. I thought that it would spice up the Oxford casual sex scene (which is underwhelming and/or hard for a lot of people). As a concept, Oxshag isn’t dissimilar from something like Tinder, just a more effective way of matching compatible people together, leading to a more enjoyable experience for everyone.”

“I will admit that I made some poor choices with the initial website, which were not as carefully considered as they could have been and may have been surprising

for some. I apologised for this, and after receiving complaints I immediately reworked the website so that you had to opt-in for your name to be listed.”

“But putting it in perspective, your name and college, if not publicly available on the Oxford Search website (which they are for the vast majority), can almost always be found somewhere on the internet. Like seriously, it’s your name and college?! The site was only up for a few hours and the data that was available was seriously unlikely to cause any harm. While this doesn’t excuse the fact that I fucked up, what happened was an innocent mistake that has been blown massively out of proportion.”

“What could have been a fun event has been now ruined by the loud minority. Loosen up a bit, have a laugh, and take life a bit less seriously. I think those who are the most against Oxshag are probably the most in need of it.”

“At the beginning of next term, after a period of reflection (and some more resoundingly mediocre casual sex), I hope attitudes will have changed and I will poll the community to see if people would like me to give this another crack...”

Oxshag is continuing to receive substantial criticism from the student body and it is unknown whether the site will ever relaunch. One Oxfess commenter said that it was “violent and dehumanising”, and another wrote: “why are we minimising people to a ‘shag’ it’s the 21st century... Speaking personally (these views do not represent other survivors) to have your consent taken away from you is a massive violation. The concept of Oxshag is enabling a culture where consent is devalued.

Image: Oxshag.com



Purr-fect paintings: Herford to comission Simpkin portraits

Cecilia Catmur reports.

Herford College is hoping to commission portraits of the late Simpkins in Sub Fusc to be placed in a prominent position in college. The JCR hopes the portraits will be of Simpkin, Simpkin the Second and Simpkin the Third painted in black, with white chests to resemble the academic dress.

This follows the motion proposed by Jeremy Pirt to Hertford College JCR. His original idea was to have these portraits in Hertford Hall. However this was, Jeremy Pirt told Cherwell, revised in the JCR based on the conclusion that: “Giving a cat the same honour that is bestowed upon former Home Secretaries, leading figures of the reformation, or our modern ‘glass ceiling breakers’, in the words of our [Hertford] principal, would be offensive to those who have earned the honour.”

Aside from the dispute over the precise location of the portraits, the JCR reaction to the motion was, according to Jeremy, “generally positive.” He thinks “Most people loved the stupidity of it all.”

As Jeremy highlights, “There is something ridiculously Oxford about having, not just a college cat (which is silly enough) but a Dynasty of Cats spanning over five decades!” Having portraits of the late members of this dynasty, “would only add

to the ridiculousness of it all.”

After all, the Simpkin dynasty harks back around 50 years to the early 1970s when the first of these notorious felines was introduced to Hertford. According to Hertford’s website “for many decades” Simpkin has now been “one of Oxford’s most loved and most notorious inhabitants.” They have left “their own indelible marks not only on the college, but also the countless students who have managed to find a way of incorporating cat studies into almost every subject offered here!”

Jeremy Pirt seconds this: “Simkin IV is a much loved member of college life at Hertford, adding to the friendly homely feel of the place. Who can’t love a fat fluffy cat who invades the library to bring cheer when you’ve been stuck on a problem sheet for far too long!!”

Simpkin and his ancestors are, and have always been, very much a part of Hertford College and its atmosphere. They have a whole section of the College website dedicated to them, with details of their backgrounds, personalities, temperaments and mischievous adventures around Oxford. It is no wonder the College has now turned to portraits too to celebrate their beloved pets.

Image Credit: Charlie Hancock



News Shorts



Peter Thiel to kickstart Oxford Union’s bicentenary year

Centure-capitalistentrepreneur Peter Thiel built his fortune through entrepreneurship and investment, most notably as the co-founder of Paypal, Palantir, and Founders Fund as well as the first outside investor in Facebook.



Professor Irene Tracy appointed as new Vice Chancellor

The ceremony of admission took place on this afternoon in the Sheldonian Theatre, in which Professor Tracy became Oxford’s 273rd Vice Chancellor.



His Dark Materials exhibition continues

Treasures of the BBC’s adaptation of Philip Pullman’s trilogy, His Dark Materials are currently on display in Oxford museums.



St Stephens gives up its PPH Status to exclusively train priests

After a review by the University, St Stephen’s House will lose its status as a Permanent Private Hall (PPH) in September 2023.

Cherwell sits down with Irene Tracy, Oxford's New Vice Chancellor

Isaac Ettinghausen reports.

Professor Tracey was formerly Warden of Merton College, and was the Nuffield Chair of Anaesthetic Sciences between 2007 and 2019. A “local girl in every sense of the phrase”, she was born in the JR and grew up in Kidlington, just five kilometres from Oxford. With the exception of a two year stint at Harvard Medical School, she has been in Oxford since going up to study undergraduate biochemistry at Merton.

Between 2015 and 2019, she was the head of the Department of Clinical Neurosciences, with a speciality in the neuroscience of pain. Her office in the University Offices contains a drawing from one of her postdoctoral supervisees which refers to her as the “Queen of Pain”. On the contrary, when we meet her she is personable and very funny, keen to set out her vision for Oxford over her seven-year tenure as VC, the de facto head of the University.

She is also the second woman to hold the post, and the first ever former state school student, breaking a line of. She said that “I realised how important it was to others that I was a woman in science and in leadership roles. I feel more comfortable embracing that and recognizing that that visibility is empowering not just to women, but to men too, and for men to realise to support women in their careers.”

Tracey is ascending to the post in a time of vast educational debate over curricula, “wokeism”, and academic freedom. She describes herself as a staunch defender of freedom of speech, saying that engaging with arguments is an essential part of pedagogy: “when we are teaching you your degrees, we teach you how to look and understand that degree from all different perspectives. So naturally you are engaging with different viewpoints, and that’s partly what you’re trying to do and synthesise when you write your essays or when you’re trying to look and deconstruct a problem.

“I’m just focusing on how best we can equip you and prepare you. You’re arriving [in Oxford] not as the finished product. And we’re gonna evolve you to an independent adult out there in the working place, where you can be comfortable with different points of view; you can be really good and comfortable with how you receive criticism and give criticism, because that’s a big part of what you’re going to be doing in your job. This is a big part of what we do as academics.”

Similarly, Oxford’s university museums have faced questions over the repatriation of empire-era artefacts. When asked what role the University could have in these debates, she said “We have to have those discussions with ourselves and with our departments, with those institutions, and with the students. It’ll be something that

I’m sure we will discuss going forward. These are very live issues, and they’re really important ones. And again, people will have different views on them, so these won’t be easy discussions or debates to have, but hopefully we can have them in an intelligent, calm way”.

Last year, Cherwell reported on the vast inequalities between different provisions between colleges. Tracey told us tackling these imbalances was one of her key priorities, saying that she was “happy to be held to account. we’re not going to do everything in the first year. This is something that’s not just a student issue. It’s for academics too.” [See front page]

For graduate students, this is especially an issue. Tracey pointed out that while the ratio of undergraduate students was about 70% UK students and 30% international, this figure flips in postgraduate studies. She said that to attract the best researchers from around the world, Oxford had to “we’ve got to be able to offer graduate scholarships to every graduate that gets a place here [...] our competitors offer full graduate scholarships if you get a graduate place. So we’re gonna lose people if we can’t do the same”

Collegiate inequality becomes ever more apparent when looking at the levels of mental health and disability support available to students at different colleges, particularly with the centralised Disability Advisory Service and the University Counselling Service under increased strain since Covid. Tracey said that “This is a key area for me to focus on. I’m acutely aware. My experience to date as a College head really gave me insight to that in a way I didn’t see as a department head; the colleges are really dealing with a lot of this.”

We’re eventually told that we have one question left; Tracey, in her whirlwind schedule in her first month as VC, has a meeting to get to with the OUP. Asked what her biggest priorities are as head of the University, Tracey says that “in seven years I want to be sure that I’ve been part of making sure that we are still the most attractive place for the best and the brightest students, staff, and faculty to come. And when they do come here, they are operating in a place where they really can have a good quality of working life, but also personal life. Seven years is just about enough time.”

Image Credit: Coco Cottam



Space Send-Off: Oxford Students launch experiment to the ISS

Bintia Dennog reports.

A team of five Oxford University graduate students worked together with the International Space School Educational Trust (ISSET) to turn schoolchildrens’ ideas into an experiment to be launched to the International Space Station. On the tenth of November, the experiment was successfully launched into space onboard the Cygnus NG18.

As part of ISSET’s Mission Discovery programme 300 UK schoolchildren aged 14 to 18 competed to develop an experiment idea for space. They were assisted by space scientists and astronauts throughout the five-day-long competition in summer 2021.

One of the six winning experiments was then further developed at the University of Oxford – the first of its kind to be developed here. Ross Barber, Director of ISSET, said: “Mission Discovery was designed to enable the next generation of talent and we can’t think of a better place for these bright young minds to showcase what they have learnt.”

The experiment itself focuses on ferrofluids and how these behave in microgravity. Ferrofluids are liquids that contain iron particles, making them magnetic. Using electromagnets that manipulate the ferrofluids through a coil, a current is induced by the movement of the fluid. The Mission Discovery students believe that ferrofluids can be used as energy harvesters.

Over a year, the team of Oxford students, led by Daniel Molland and Daniel Cervenkov turned this experiment into a miniaturised version that would be able to function in a weightless environment – it had to be small enough to fit into a 5cm by 5cm payload for space travel. Dr Mike Foale, a former NASA astronaut, assisted the students with the project and visited Oxford in October 2021.

The experiment is designed as a pair, with one version remaining on the ground and one in space to help observe the effect of microgravity.

In November, the graduates were able to travel to the US, along with ISSET representatives, to help with final preparations and to witness the launch.

Daniel Molland, who is also the ISSET Chief Scientist at Oxford, said “I’m proud that I could help give that opportunity to my fellow graduate students alongside ISSET and help inspire the winning school children to believe that anything is possible!”

Vaibhavi Rajesh, one of the members of the winning team of schoolchildren, said: “I knew that Oxford would really put a lot of effort into [our experiments], but I didn’t realise the amount of work that goes into it, nor the extent of staff that work on it. It was so great to come in person to see our dream come true. It’s just been magic.” Their team was invited to Oxford to watch their experiment being built.

The results for the experiment are expected back on the SpaceX CRS26 return mission, beginning of 2023.

Half of Oxford students report having experienced sexual harassment

Becky Powell reports.

A survey by the ongoing project ‘OUR SPACE’, which seeks to investigate Oxford students’ experiences of sexual harassment and violence, finds that 50% of students have experienced sexual harassment and 18% have experienced sexual violence while at the university.

The project, launched in February 2021, argues that “sexual violence among higher education students is a public health issue”. Receiving university funding, it collaborates with the University and the SU in response to the increasing scrutiny.

Seeking to combat the “dearth of rigorous research assessing the prevalence of sexual violence among higher education students in the UK”, the survey’s findings provide qualitative evidence for what has long been known in ‘whisper networks’. This, it claims, is “essential for designing and resourcing responses, including monitoring the effectiveness of existing prevention initiatives.”

The survey’s findings highlight that sexual violence disproportionately impacts women, consistent with claims about the persistence of a ‘rape-culture’ at higher education institutions.

The systemic issues surrounding underreporting are reflected in the survey’s responses. Among the study’s respondents, only 1% who reported experiencing sexual violence and 12% who reported experiencing sexual harassment had made

formal reports.

The findings come in the aftermath of legal allegations surrounding the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), used to gag victims, both at Oxford and other Higher Educational Institutions, as well as reports testifying to hostile responses to sexual assault complaints.

In an amended statement, the university claims that “The University of Oxford does not and will not use Non-Disclosure Agreements to prevent the investigation of complaints of sexual misconduct or other inappropriate behaviour, or to prevent responsible whistleblowing”. However, this does not reflect the particularity of Oxford’s collegiate system, where only 3 of Oxford’s legally autonomous colleges have pledged to stop using NDAs for complaints about sexual harassment.

Universities UK acknowledges that universities have been “too slow to address this issue”. It warns vice-chancellors against using NDAs, also advising universities to “strongly discourage” sexual relationships between staff and students. Oxford university does not outright ban these relationships, only requiring that it is brought to the attention of the member of staff’s Head of Department.

Entering its next phase, the project is seeking to recruit students to engage in qualitative interviews, to better understand Oxford students’ experiences. In gathering such data, they seek to shape university policy and responses to reports sexual harassment and violence.



Oxford’s affordability crisis

Continued from Front Page
That Oxford is so expensive by UK standards distinguishes it from a handful of other elite universities. But, even those institutions located in areas where rents are more than double the national average are able to remain more affordable to staff because of the housing assistance universities offer.

Other universities offer assistance to offset cost of housing

The near-absence of housing assistance policies in Oxford places the university squarely behind its world-class peers. It does have a portfolio of university-owned rental properties, but it offers no university-wide home purchase or rental benefit. Some colleges provide joint equity purchase schemes and offer some short-term rental accommodation, particularly to graduate students, although this system seems starkly underdeveloped compared to other elite universities. Stanford, by contrast, offers five different loan programs to academics and has numerous rental options available for postgraduates and beyond.

Lack of support should not be viewed as an intrinsically British phenomenon. Many London universities offer generous relo-

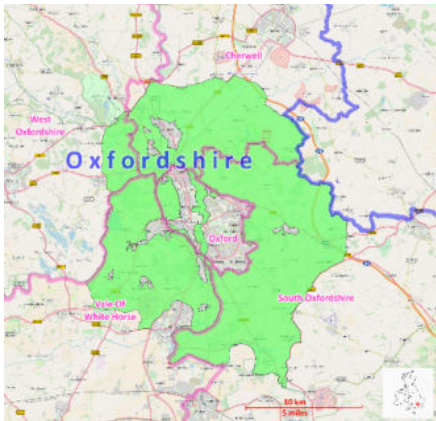
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Home prices in Oxford are 15.8% above the national average

cation allowances. UCL even offers home loans up to £50,000 for certain eligible staff members.

That being said, Palo Alto and London are extremely expensive housing markets, so it should be expected that a degree of assistance is offered to attract and retain talent. However, even cheaper areas like Princeton and New Haven offer far more housing assistance than Oxford. In Princeton, the average home price is about 5.2 times the base academic staff salary average and at Yale it is 4.5

times. At Oxford, an employee occupying the lowest strand in a full-time academic position could expect to pay a bit higher, 6.4 times their salary for the average home, but still these values are not vastly different. And yet, both Yale and Princeton universities have established loan and purchasing programs where the university covers parts of the cost of home purchases, through co-buying the home or payments directly to eligible staff members. These programs are not new either; Yale’s is over 28 years old.

“
[Oxford’s] endowment of over six billion pounds would place it twenty-fifth in the US



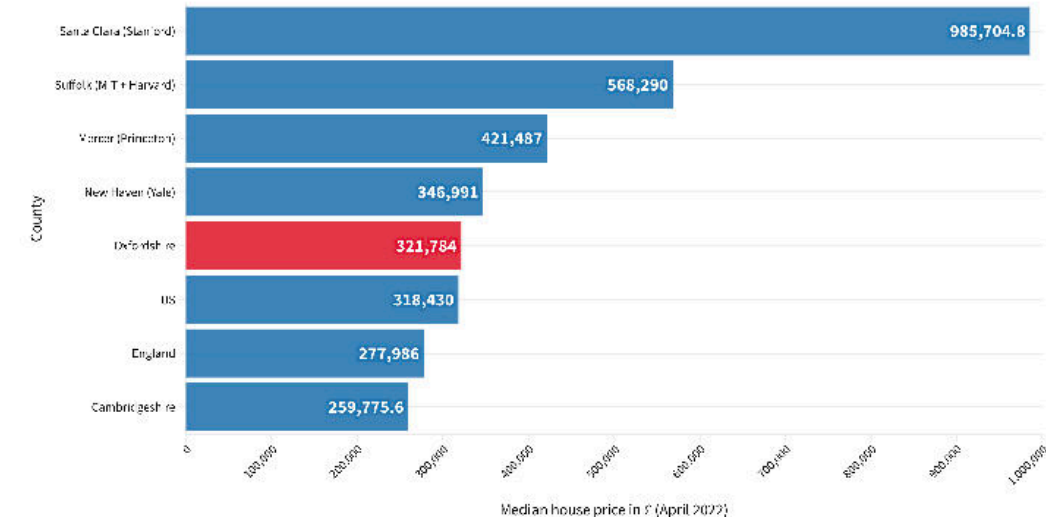
Even Cambridge appears slightly ahead of Oxford in terms of housing assistance, having recently constructed a dedicated community of affordable housing for its staff in Eddington. Some shared apartments here have rents, including utilities, for as low as £650 a month.

The problem in Oxford

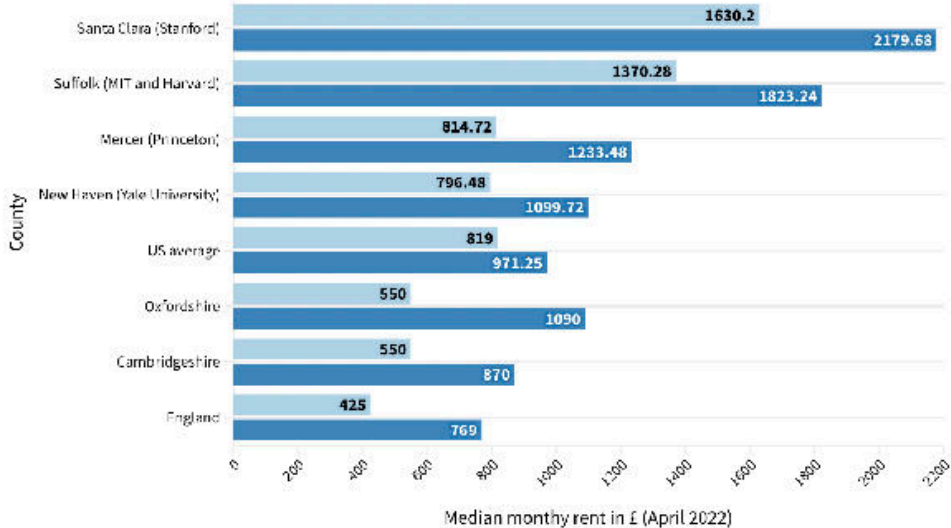
Housing prices and a lack of support from the university have combined to create the problem, but there are other deeper structural issues within the university and the town that must be addressed. First, land is at a premium in Oxford. More so than in the

United States, cities like Oxford- and Cambridge- lack land open to development on their peripheries. Much of the land outside of the current urban core area is protected, part of the “Green Belt”. This donut-shaped area includes many scenic woods, rivers and floodplains, as well as important farmland. However, it also encompasses motorways and open land, which despite not being of particular natural significance are still under restrictive regulation. Consequently, new outward development is often difficult around Oxford.

And then, there is the question of endowment. Its endowment of over six billion pounds would place it twenty-fifth in the US, about fifteen billion pounds lower than Princeton, the next poorest university examined in this article. It is lower than Cambridge’s as well by about one billion pounds. This lack of funds is longstanding and is one of Oxford’s greatest weaknesses, partially inherent to the structure of the university itself. Each college has their own endowment, strategies for growing said endowment and fundraising departments. Furthermore, American universities generally have a greater history of alumni philanthropy, with some Ivies like Princeton boasting close to 50% alumni donation rates. “Old Members” give generously at Oxford, but not to the same extent as in the US with donations split amongst college and university initiatives.



Source: Land Registry (UK) and National Association of Realtors (US)



Source: Office for National Statistics (UK) and HUD PD&R (US)

While a large endowment does not simply enable a university to spend vast amounts of money on whatever projects need attention, it does offer flexibility and contingency. A smaller endowment prohibits Oxford from establishing the types of housing benefits that wealthier universities in the United States are able to provide for their staff. As well, the relative lack of funds partially contributes to some of the salary discrepancy we see between British and American institutions. Though, as the UCU argues, the university has an obligation to pay its staff more. David Chibnall, Vice President of the Oxford Branch, says “first thing that the University could do is ensure that pay and PGR [postgraduate research] stipends keep up with housing cost”.

Efforts to improve the housing crisis

Increasingly, the university is acknowledging both the lack of endowment and affordable housing. Prof Dame Louise Richardson, former Vice-Chancellor, has acknowledged Oxford’s comparative lack of funds and has included steps to increase the university’s endowment in her strategic plan. In this strategic plan, the university has also set out a goal to construct one thousand new subsidised homes for college staff. The university has entered into a development partnership with L&G to reach this goal. Projects to date include the expansion of the Begbroke Science Park, which Current Vice-Chancellor Professor Irene Trace

highlighted in her recent inauguration address. She reiterated that the university “want[s] to do more” and the Begbroke development, currently in the planning stage, will “reduce strain on the city’s housing stock and public services”. The University and colleges have also made considerable investments in

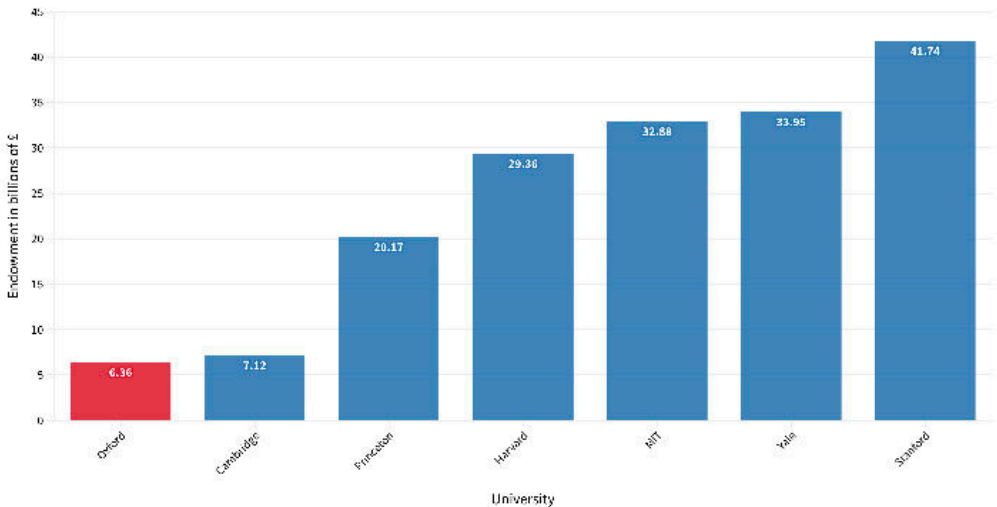
new undergraduate and graduate accommodation, which Dr David Prout, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources explains, has “reduced pressure on the local housing market”. Individual college land holdings, like St. John’s property in Woodstock and Christ Church’s Bayswater Brook area are also being transformed into innovation and living spaces. In the case of St John’s Oxford North, 35% of these units will also be designated affordable housing. Alongside university and college developments, Oxford City Council is also pledging to build 1600 new affordable homes by 2026 and claim they are “on track to exceed this goal”. The Council adds that their Local Plan “allows employers to provide employees with affordable housing on specific sites they own within the city”. Not only does this benefit university staff retention, it also frees up so-

cial rented homes. In the past ten years, the university has also devoted resources to lessening the expense of commuting, particularly those who use sustainable modes of transportation. This allows staff to afford the cost of commuting from Oxfordshire’s less expensive outlying villages. Benefits include bike purchase loans, construction of showers in department buildings and subsidising new electric fleet vehicles. The program alone is not a solution, however, and many American universities have similar programs in conjunction with more affordable housing.

A better endowed future

A greater supply of housing and new programs to assist commuters will, if properly

implemented, alleviate some of the cost of living and working in Oxford. These will come with a hefty price tag and are not the university’s sole priority. However, this crisis, intrinsically linked to the financial power of Oxford raises a more troubling question: can the ancient, tutorial-based university survive in the modern world? This is not a new worry, as calls to grow both Oxford and Cambridge’s endowments, following the professional investment management model of many American universities, have been around for twenty-five years. Unfortunately, like alleviating the housing crisis, growing an endowment to rival the size of elite American universities, will take decades.



Source: individual university websites

Bernie Sanders, Matt Hancock, and Julia Fox to speak at the Oxford Union in HT23

Freya Jones reports.

As the Oxford Union enters its bicentenary year, *Cherwell* can exclusively reveal the highlights of its termcard for Hilary 2023. Ahead of its full release on Friday 13th January, this is what you need to know about the main events. Bernie Sanders, the United States senator from Vermont, will be speaking at the Union on 25th February. Once a Democrat, Sanders is now the longest-serving independent

in US congressional history, but endorsed both Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden in their respective presidential campaigns. Matt Hancock will come to the Union on 2nd February. The former Oxford student was Secretary of State for Health and Social Care during the COVID19 pandemic but lost his job after breaching social distancing rules to conduct an extramarital affair. Hancock’s work towards rehabilitating his image has recently included taking part in the reality TV series “I’m a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!” Julia Fox, the Italian-American actress

best known for her role in the Netflix film *Uncut Gems*, will speak at the Union on 3rd March. Alongside an accelerating career in the arts, acting, directing, false claims around Fox’s personal life notably led to the coining of Oxford’s 2022 Word of the Year “goblin mode”. Further notable speakers will include Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the House of Commons, and the award-winning actor Natalie Dormer. The Union’s opening address for Hilary will be given by Peter Thiel. Thursday debates also promise to bring members some highly contested motions this term, with a re-run of the society’s historic King and Country debate set to take place on 9th February. Other debates will be on the topics of Scottish independence and the security threat posed by China, with Michael Gove, Sir Iain Duncan Smith, and Amanda Pritchard coming as notable debate speakers.

the Union has also “hinted” at a special bicentenary debate to celebrate its history as a debating society. Various Union alumni and ex-officers will be invited, with further details to be released closer to the time. The Hilary ball, on 3rd February, will have the theme “Ice and Fire”, while other socials and events will include a production of “This House” by OUDS in the Union chamber and a collaborations with the Ukraine Society and OxWiB. The President of the Oxford Union, Charlie Mackintosh, told *Cherwell*: “I am incredibly proud of the termcard my committee and I have put together over the last few months. I think that this termcard represents the very best of the Union; a huge variety of speakers and events that reflect a great diversity of views and provide countless opportunities for engagement, debate, and discussion. As we enter our Bicentenary year, we cannot wait to celebrate the rich history of the Union and look forwards to upholding free speech for centuries to come.” The full detail of events on the Hilary termcard will be released at the end of the week.

Cryptically,



Chancellor Patten's fiery speech at Tracey's inauguration covers economy, elitism, and freedom of speech

Olivia Boyle reports.

Oxford's Chancellor, Lord Patten, welcomed the new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Irene Tracey, in traditional Oxonian fashion in a ceremony complete with Latin rites, an impressive choir, and a few fancy robes. He opened his address with a summary of Tracey's impressive academic CV, Patten went on to address academic stakes in the state of the national economy, the Christ Church scandal, access and outreach at Oxford, and his belief in academic freedom of speech.

Patten spoke of the "poor lamentable state" of the national economy and the threat it poses for continuing university research. He said that government promises of funding for further education are insufficient and challenged the government's "likely" prioritisation of post-16 vocational education. Patten's vision for Britain's next "skilled workforce" is premised on a university education, so Oxford must "continue broadening access to able students from disadvantaged backgrounds" as well as "early- and mid-career students".

The Chancellor also commented frankly on Oxford infighting. Most recently, Christ Church's mismanagement of £6.6m attracted a warning from the Charity Commission. Patten hopes the warning

will be listened to but made it clear that internal college affairs were a "matter for the colleges themselves". He also addressed financial disparities between colleges that yield "unequal student experience". Collegiate differences, big or small, fair or not, however, do not lie within the bounds of Patten's responsibility but instead with the Conference of Colleges, as the Chancellor took care to point out. He labelled "unequal student experience" as "partly a result of history and luck".

This "history" was then unpicked by the Chancellor who gave his view on the purpose of an Oxford education. Patten has a productive desire to turn the University's reputation away from the elitist "Freemasonry of the clever", as he called it, and towards developing a "wide, diverse academic community". The wider reputation of Oxford, however, remains in the hands of those who have gone on to national leadership roles and while Patten says it is not "something of which we should be ashamed", the current government, whose frontbench is rather exclusively 45% Oxbridge-made, has yet to prove the reputation wrong.

He spoke at length on the purpose of university, saying that "We should not, of course, regard our main task to be producing generations of what one of our most distinguished scholars called 'plausible bullshitters'."

"What we should aspire to do is to



educate young women and men with a sense of civic responsibility, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and an understanding of how to tell the difference between truth and reason on the one hand and nonsense and mendacity on the other. This may seem prosaically obvious but it is a central part of our contribution to the marriage of private and public good in the outcome of a university education.

Patten proceeded with his most extensive section which was on the importance of "liberal values" as a guard against being "colonised by a modish political correctness". For Patten, protecting freedom of speech is the key to avoiding outside interference in academic, intellectual endeavours. He said that Universities "should be bastions

of freedom in any society: free from government interference in their teaching and research, while promoting the clash of ideas. Freedom of speech is fundamental to the identity of universities, enabling them to sustain a sense of common humanity and to uphold the tolerance and understanding that underpins any free society.

"When some students and teachers in both America and Europe argue that students should not be exposed to ideas with which they disagree, they are plain wrong. No ifs, no buts. 'No platforming', to use a graceless phrase, is wrong; so too is the call for 'safe spaces'. A university should not be a 'safe space' intellectually. That is oxymoronic."

County Councillors receive death threats over false rumours of a 'climate lockdown'

Suzanne Antelme reports.

Oxfordshire County Councillors have received online abuse and death threats following false rumours of a 'climate lockdown' circulated following the approval of six new traffic filters.

Duncan Enright, Oxfordshire County Councillor and cabinet member for travel and development strategy told the BBC he has been left feeling "bruised" and "cautious" after receiving death threats.

After staff at both councils received threats online and over the phone, Oxfordshire County Council released a joint statement with Oxford City Council saying they are "taking appropriate steps to provide staff and councillors with support" while working with the Thames Valley Police to address "the most extreme abuse". They attribute the abuse to "inaccurate information" spreading online about the recently approved traffic filters.

One article, published online at the end of November and subsequently fact checked by Reuters as false, claimed the Oxfordshire County Council had approved plans for a 'climate lockdown' where residents would be locked into one of six zones and prevented from leaving or travelling between zones without Council permission. According to Reuters this article has been shared thousands of times.

Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council have endeavoured to "set the

record straight" in their joint statement, where they note that online misinformation links the traffic filters with proposals to develop '15-minute neighbourhoods' and incorrectly suggests the traffic filters will trap residents in their neighbourhoods. In reality, all areas of Oxford will still be accessible by car with the traffic filters (requiring at most a detour to the ring road) and the 15-minute neighbourhood proposals "aim to support and add services, not restrict them", with a focus on bringing shops, healthcare and parks within easy walking distance of local neighbourhoods.

The traffic filters, approved by the County Council's cabinet at the end of November and due to come into force in 2024, constitute a £6.5 million trial scheme aiming to divert traffic from congested roads at peak times. The County Council claims that the traffic filters will make walking and cycling safer and free up bus routes, as well as tackling climate change and air pollution. At each traffic filter, a camera will monitor licence plates and if a private car passes through the filter between 7am and 7pm (excluding weekends for some filters) they will be fined £70. Oxford residents can apply for a permit allowing them to pass the filters up to 100 days a year, and there will be a variety of exemptions for blue badge holders, care workers, businesses and others. The filters have no effect on buses, bicycles, or pedestrians and are apparently expected to generate about £1.1 million in fines.

The traffic filters have faced their share of legitimate opposition, with over 3,400

people signing a petition against two of the filters in particular and a further 1,700 people expressing fears that Botley Road will be overwhelmed by traffic if the Council does not reconsider. According to the BBC Liam Walker, shadow cabinet member for highways, is worried the plans will cost residents and impact businesses.

Before approving the traffic filters, Oxfordshire County Council carried out a public consultation on the proposal from 5th September to 13th October which had 5,700 respondents. The results of the consultation were then analysed and summarised by an

independent research company and used to update the proposals and inform the County Council cabinet meeting on 29th November where the filters were approved.

Reflecting on the threats he has received, Councillor Enright told the BBC that he thought he had been "built up into some huge monster" and protested he is "not a lizard ... [and] not a person from another planet who is trying to take over people's lives".



Typical day in the life of a Brookes student

Living in the city of spires outside the “University of” walls.

Michael Pista

Living in the student city of Oxford is such a unique experience. In a place holding two large universities, chaos and activity is expected. However, the life of a Brookes student - campus, home, social - is slightly different to the life of an Oxford University student. Although we share a similar environment, your culture and our daily lives differ.

In relation to our schedules and how we spend our time on campus, I suspect it’s unlike that of an Oxford University student. At Brookes, our courses are typically taught in lectures, then solidified in seminars. Our lectures are usually two hours

long and used for introducing, explaining and exploring new content. This is done in large groups with minimal participation. Most of the time, seminars come right after lectures, and they last for about an hour. Here we are in smaller groups discussing the content learned, exploring it further, and clarifying things where needed. This is an opportunity for us to dig deeper and interact with the content, as well as with each other. This structure works well and manages to effectively teach difficult topics and concepts.

On a normal week, we can expect four days on campus, with a lecture and seminar on each day. Occasionally, as a part of certain courses, workshops require attendance. This would usually be an opportunity to work on more practical skills. For example, a ‘communication skills for lawyers’ workshop is required as part of the Law LLB course, where practical court etiquette is taught. As Brookes students, we are fortunate enough to have a dedicated bus route with Oxford Buses (U5). This service is free to all Brookes undergraduates, and is a lifesaver all year round in terms of saving time and money.

“
One thing we may have in common is that after hard work comes a hard party.”

While on campus, there is also plenty to do. One of our greatest features is access to modern sporting facilities such as pitches, courts and gyms. These facilities are available to Brookes students at all times, for free or for just a small fee. Going to the gym on campus can save almost £15 every month when compared to other memberships in the area.

During term-time, home life has proved to be a positive experience for Brookes students as well. We have a selection of university and private company accommodations available to us. Typically they are in the areas of Headington and Cowley, as these are close to the campus. Luckily, most of the student accommodation also falls on our free bus route, resulting in incredibly convenient, free travel to campus or town. Furthermore, Oxford Brookes provides affordable houses for students in the same areas. The prices are fair and facilities are of high quality- no complaints.

One thing we may have in common is that after hard work comes a hard party. Oxford is one of the best student cities in the UK, and caters to us in endless ways. The diversity of food, drinks, and entertainment is one of the best things about it. Our favourite restaurants include European cuisine such as ‘Moya’ just by St Clements, or Nepalese

cuisine such as ‘Yeti’ in Cowley. For some well-priced and deserved drinks, the ‘Swan and Castle’ is a regular, in addition to smaller and cosier pubs such as the ‘Corner House’ in Headington. When on a bigger mission, and celebrating hard, visits to clubs such as ‘Atik’ and ‘The Bridge’ are a must. These are amazing nightclubs right in the heart of Oxford, that are loved by us all. When the party’s over, making use of the parks and greenery around Oxford is essential. Among our favourites definitely has to be ‘South Park’, or the ‘Shotover Country Park’. These make for great walks and talks, and are definitely popular among the Brookes students living in the surrounding areas. As well as this, we all make sure to make use of the brilliant museums such as the ‘Ashmolean’, and other attractions such as the ‘Botanical Gardens’, which are all free to us students. Not to forget, visiting the ‘New Theatre’ and catching a show has also proved to have

“
Living in Oxford as a Brookes student is, most of the time, trouble-free.”

been fantastic. A breathtaking tribute to ‘Pink Floyd’ was on just before the new year, and it was the best £30 spent! Living in Oxford as a Brookes student is very pleasant and (most of the time) trouble-free. The city is incredibly well adapted for all the students that live here, and our universities act as great support.

Despite holding two large, very different universities, everything is in order. While our learning environment and methods may perhaps differ, I suspect our social lives are very similar. After all, every student is always

Wags in the Rag: Oxford’s most lovable college pets

Looking at St John’s new, and adorable, members.

Ciara Rushton

One of the real joys of the vacation is getting to go home and spend time with my pets. Living in a city, there are less opportunities to spend time with animals, especially with the stress that term time often brings. Getting to see my three cats at home was the perfect way to decompress and unwind over the Christmas holidays.

However, as I showed in this column during Michaelmas, and will continue to do this Hilary, there are plenty of pets within our own college communities that we can spend time with during term. Often brought in to help with student welfare, college pets become an integral part of their respective communities, and icons across

the university. I found that I missed my cats even more than usual when I left to return home at the end of Michaelmas, but I took comfort in the fact that I would still get a chance to spend time with animals upon my return to Oxford

The newest additions to Oxford’s collective of animals have recently moved into St John’s College. The President, Professor Dame Sue Black, welcomed three kittens to College during the winter vacation, and they were hugely anticipated by the community. After consulting all John’s students, the cats were given the names Case, Laud, and Baylie, after three well-known John’s Fellows.

The college did have another cat in the past and a previous President kept chickens, but the kittens are the first pets that St John’s has had in some time. Described as a “cuddle of kittens” by the President, they were brought to the college primarily to help with student and staff welfare and to make the college feel more homely. Once mature, the three will be encouraged to wander around the grounds to help destress any anxious students. They were introduced at a carefully chosen time of year and should be mature enough to roam around outside once the weather improves, but for now they live in the President’s Lodgings which will remain their base.

Though they are still young, the kittens have already developed their own distinct characters. Case is the largest of the trio and has the biggest personality to match. He’s full of energy but he also loves a cuddle, and will surely welcome the adoration he is bound to receive. Baylie is described as the most handsome, though he is more



timid than the others. Finally, there is Laud. Initially, the intention was to introduce only two cats, but when the President found out he was the runt of the litter and the last boy left, it seemed impossible to leave Laud behind. Despite his size, he runs the show, even stealing food from under the noses of his siblings.

Indeed, the kittens’ cuteness will help them do their job well. They’ll be improving college wellbeing one purr at a time. They

will be fed and will sleep in the President’s Lodgings, but we hope that they will be all over the college in the coming months acting as welfare assistants. The kittens are a snuggly reminder of the real value of having pets around college for comfort and support, and their ability to make what can be a daunting place feel just that little bit more like home.

Image Credit: Professor Dame Sue Black.



“All it takes is one yes”: In conversation with Sian Eleri

Discussing radio, rejection, and music recommendations with the host of Radio 1's Childest Show

Meg Lintern

It's a rainy January day and I'm sitting alone in my room, anxiously scrutinising my face on Zoom as I wait for Sian Eleri to join the call. Sian is one of my personal heroes: a new addition to the Radio 1 team, she is the host of the Power Down Playlist on BBC Radio 1 four nights a week, as well as the Childest Show for two hours every Sunday. I am used to hearing her dulcet tones interspersing a tracklist of mellow music as I squirrel away in the library. It's strange to see the face accompanying the voice pop onto the screen as Sian greets me with that familiar Welsh accent and an equally warm smile.

Over the past couple of years, Sian has achieved a dream that's been years in the making: she has secured her own regular show on BBC Radio 1. “It's been a whirlwind,” she tells me. “A really life changing year.”

There is a very real sense of the hard graft and dedication that has gone into securing this position. Even though Sian had no idea what she wanted to do with her life when she was at school, studying two arts and two sciences at A Level to keep her options open, she did know that “the two things I liked were music and people.”

Sian applied to study history at Leeds University, but “within maybe one or two seminars, I already knew I hated it. I knew I couldn't do something for three years, get into debt for three years, with a degree

I didn't want and a degree I knew I couldn't do anything with. So, I dropped out and then reapplied to the same uni for the following year to start broadcast journalism. And it was almost like the best mistake I ever made.”

After doing placements with local radio stations, as well as working for Leeds Student Radio, Sian realised: “That's my thing, I suppose - it's radio”.

She says that Radio 1 “had been staring at me in the face my whole life, because it was such an enormous part of my childhood, from waking up before the rest of my family to listen to the breakfast show when I was in primary school, to sitting in the car in the driveway after swimming lessons on a Friday night just to listen to Zane Lowe.

“But it felt so out of reach that it was just like, ‘Don't even dream of it because you're just going to set yourself up for failure’. So I feel incredibly lucky that for some reason they thought I was decent enough to have

on their roster. I feel really privileged to have the job that I had silently dreamt of, but never thought would be achievable.”

This dream was by no means one that came true overnight. For the first couple of years of Sian's career, it felt like she was wishing on an unforgiving star. “I was desperate for a full-time job in radio for just the sense of security, but also to feel like I was progressing or having the space to progress

in a workplace. But I was never able to get one because it's such a competitive industry. Everyone was clambering over each other to get these jobs, and they're so few and far between, so it was years of freelancing, mainly in production.”

That struggle for work, as well as the constant onslaught of rejections from job applications, was something that ground down her resolve. Sian remembers, “I was just so desperate for work and applying for everything under the sun and either getting ‘No's or no-shows. And it was brutal.

Because again, I think for me, as quite a competitive person and someone who puts 110% into everything... after a while getting so many rejections in a role can feel quite crippling on your self-confidence.

“I remember there was a moment a few years ago where [I had] had enough. I'd kept a spreadsheet of every job I applied for, and there were hundreds on there. And maybe there were like two that were in green, [but]

I think I'd just had one more rejection. That was one too many, I suppose. And I remember breaking down in the middle of my partner's living room, on the floor... I was just like, ‘I don't know how much more of this I can take, and whether what I'm pursuing is completely pointless and impossible’.”

Just when it seemed like giving up might be the only option, one of Sian's colleagues from her freelancing jobs pushed her to apply for a spot at Radio 1. “He was the one that really pushed me because he was just like, ‘Sian, what

is one more no? What's one more no?’ And that was enough for me to be like, right,

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It's been a whirlwind. A really life-changing year.

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I remember it being really hard - being constantly put down and feeling that I was delusional... but yeah, all it takes it one yes.

okay, I’ll make this demo. See how it goes. And lo and behold, a month later, I got the call to do a one off show. And I thought, Oh, my God, like, this is the thing I’ve been waiting for.

“I think it’s easy to say now in hindsight that all it takes is one yes. Because I remember it being really hard - being constantly put down and feeling that I was delusional, you know, that I wasn’t good enough. But yeah, all it takes is one yes. And perhaps if I’d gotten a yes, before [Radio 1], then maybe I wouldn’t have gone for the Radio 1 thing at all.

“I don’t believe in fate, but I think there’s certain parts of it where I’m glad I persevered.”

That perseverance has certainly paid off. With regular live shows, as well as replays on Radio 1 Relax, a new platform playing chilled-out tunes, Sian is consolidating her presence.

Her role also comes with full control over the music she plays on her shows. Considering the volume of songs and album cuts that she is sent by aspiring musicians and their record labels, this is no small feat. This responsibility is even more significant in light of the increasing pressure on festivals, music labels, and radio shows to increase their diversity. In August 2022, Sian’s friend and Radio 1 colleague Jaguar commissioned a report into gender representation in UK dance music through the Jaguar Foundation. The report revealed that just 5% of dance music in the UK charts had exclusively women or non-binary artists as the primary artist and feature, and less than 1% of the top 200 airplay tracks across 2020-21 on twelve UK radio stations featured only female or non-binary artists. Whilst dance music is not the focus of Sian’s shows, she is evidently aware of the need to bring greater attention to artists who have historically struggled to gain an audience.

Due to this, significant thought goes into curating the tracklist for each Radio 1 show that Sian hosts. She tells me that she has a spreadsheet detailing the songs she will play in each show, which has “a little column on the side, where we can specify the gender of the artist. So for every show, I make it ‘Even Stevens’, or as close to ‘Even Stevens’ as I can.”

The same is true of regional disparities. Sian says that when looking through the

spreadsheet, she’ll make mental notes: “Oh, there’s no one from Scotland, and I didn’t have anyone from Scotland last week. Okay, let’s, let’s change that.”

She continues, “It’s a matter of making sure that there’s a diverse range of artists that you’re representing on your show, from different walks of life and different communities, because it’s so important, even as a listener of music, if I can hear that a DJ is one minute supporting someone from Walsall, the next minute, supporting someone from Carmarthen, and the next minute supporting someone from Aberdeen. And I mean, it’s like, it’s huge. It’s a really, really important aspect of music curation. And it does feel like a responsibility, but one that you’re quite proud of taking part in.

“I think if you’re showing different sides, and how diverse the country is, then it makes it a more rich tapestry, I suppose, of music that you’re showcasing. And a more colourful palette in general, I think. [And] it is also things like making sure that you have various different genres that you have different ethnicities. It’s a default responsibility at this point that is just... it’s just the way things are when we’re creating the show.”

Undoubtedly, Sian Eleri has her finger on the pulse of the music industry. In 2022, she introduced artists ranging from Piri and Tommy to Rachel Chinouriri who would go on to soar to stardom or release hit singles. In 2023, she has her eyes on one band in particular: “I love Gabriels. I’ve seen Gabriels a few times live now, maybe two or three times. And every single one, I’ve just left in tears.”

She added, “I think Flowerovlove is also really exciting. She’s so young. She’s like 17. And it scares me how confident she is. [I’ve] spoken to her a few times now, and I’m always taken aback and like, whoa, where’s

this come from? But she’s so talented, and so kind of self-assured as an artist, and I mean, being young doesn’t make a difference.” One of the features on Sian’s Sunday slot, the Chillest Show, is called the Support Club. Listeners from across the country write in to voice whatever’s on their mind, from trivial concerns to monumental life events. A large number of these listeners are students. Generally, these students are talking about universal struggles, with exams or deadlines approaching. Sian says that their concerns can range from anything from

a need for reassurance, to a bad case of writer’s block, to exam anxiety. “It’s not just a matter of me being an agony aunt,” she says. “It’s more about saying, ‘It’s okay to feel the way that you’re feeling. I understand you, and thank you for taking the time to reach out. I hope everything is okay.’”

Sian elaborates, “There’ve been a lot of messages that I’ve had in the past where I’m pleasantly surprised, but also in awe of listeners who feel like they can be so confessional with [me]. You get a window into someone’s life in that moment that feels incredibly intimate, and maybe sacred. Honestly, I know it sounds dramatic. But I think they paint a picture of what they’re going through at the time. And you feel like you need to treasure that information. And the fact that they’re willing to share this on a national platform is amazing, kind of miraculous in a way. And so you want to do them justice.”

Sian is building a strong base of fans among radio listeners, which bodes well for her future at a station that has produced no shortage of national names. I ask Sian if having her own name listed alongside some of the radio greats, such as Greg James, Scott Mills, and Clara Amfo, is intimidating, and what it’s like bumping into big names in the office.

“Someone I have met was Grimmy,” she tells me. “It was just before my first ever live show. I was in the office, I was cacking my pants... I remember him coming around the corner, and one of the engineers [introduced] me to Grimmy saying, ‘Oh, she’s Sian Eleri, she’s starting in the next couple of days’. And he was so lovely, like he was honestly the nicest, [most] calming presence, but also really fun and compassionate. Just like he was on the radio.

“I remember asking him, how would you handle making a mistake? [I’m] really scared of making a really big error.

“He went, ‘if you make a mistake, it’s charming’.”

This advice, Sian tells me, is something that has reassured her throughout her career. But what about her own advice to students and other young people trying to make their way in the entertainment industry?

She tells me, “going to networking events, I think, really benefitted me in the long term. Because you are building a network and basically establishing yourself within this industry. Particularly if you don’t have an immediate connection to it, you’re almost ramming yourself in, forcing your way in. No one’s gonna look at you sideways doing that.

“Also, be nice. Nobody wants to work with an asshole. People, they’ll be nice back, hopefully they will, and they’ll want to work with you.”

Finally, she gives her words of wisdom for day-to-day life: “There’s something good in every day. And I think that applies so widely, if you’re struggling with exams

and stressing out, or if you’ve had an argument with your best mate, or maybe you’re just super hungover. Maybe all day feels rubbish. But then you might have had a lovely cup of tea in the morning. Maybe you had a really nice text exchange with your mate from home. Or maybe you just had a bangin’ sandwich. I mean, there’s so many teeny weeny little things during a day... [although] small embers, they flicker in the darkness of that day.

“Focus on those small aspects of life that give you true pleasure, and [don’t] put so much pressure on yourself. Just take things easy. Don’t sweat the small stuff, and embrace the little things.”



““

It’s a matter of making sure that there’s a diverse range of artists that you’re representing on your show, from different walks of life and different communities, because it’s so important

““

She has her eyes on one band in particular: “I love Gabriels. I’ve seen Gabriels a few times live now, maybe two or three times. And every single one, I’ve just left in tears”

Oxford and Empire: An “uncomfortable” history

Our University is stained by its imperial legacy, so why is ‘decolonisation’ seen as a dirty word?

Meg Lintern and Matus Lazar

Oxford life is tied to tradition. From reciting Latin at the start of formal hall to donning gowns for prelims and finals, our university’s history pervades our experience today. The darker side of our history thus also casts its long shadow over the present. In 2016, the Rhodes Must Fall movement spurred an international debate about certain statues in Oxford that honour those involved in some of the darkest aspects of the British Empire, leading Oriel College to promise to remove its own Cecil Rhodes monument in 2020. A year later, Magdalen College MCR members voted to remove a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, arguing it was a symbol of “recent colonial history”. The flares of fierce debate surrounding Oxford’s past connection with the Empire and its response to this connection have generally been short-lived, soon dampened by promises of new changes to curriculums and admissions processes, and quickly replaced by a general silence from the university on the topic of decolonisation.

Why is this silence the status quo?

Oxford University does not seem much inclined to dwell on its colonial past. This past is made more complicated by the collegiate system. All of Oxford’s forty-four colleges and PPHs have different ages and histories, and have long had different teaching methods, different alumni, different investments, and different leadership. As a result, the colleges have unique histories that often need to be addressed separately, and many have varying levels of ability or interest in doing so. In the Spring of 2016, Oxford launched the Oxford and Colonialism Project “in an effort to reflect on the University’s historic ties with Great Britain’s colonial past and the ways in which the University’s colonial legacies reflect on the present, and our vision of the University’s future.” Its website contains substantial information about the colonial histories of departments, faculties, and colleges. However, with very little effort put into advertising it, these histories and the project itself often do not make it into mainstream conversation, with most students not even knowing it exists.

Certain external groups are taking action to shine a light on Oxford’s colonial past. Uncomfortable Oxford, founded by DPhil students, leads fantastic tours around the university, seeking to generate discussions about racial inequality, gender and class discrimination, and the university’s Imperial legacy. They also attempt to foster systemic intervention in Oxford, pressing it

to engage with its past. They told Cherwell: “The University of Oxford does not seem to have made any active or unified response

to its colonial history and does not seem to engage as a whole with this topic - or indeed, legacies of colonialism in the form of fossil fuels investments or student representation. We have seen, however, substantial forms of engagement emanating from individual colleges, departments, or academics. These are attempts, within their own sphere, to recognise this history and find ways to address it, in the form of research, scholarships, and public engagement events (such as exhibitions). The decentralised nature of the University of Oxford allowed it to benefit greatly from colonialism in multiple ways, but this decentralisation is also one of the reasons for its lack of responsiveness.”

The spokesperson continued, “Recognising is a first and necessary step. However, it is also crucial that it be followed by representation through scholarship AND recruitment programs. Furthermore, given the university’s research-oriented goals, diversifying both the areas of research and the scholars and subjects in curriculums would also be some of the many appropriate courses of action to take.”

Matus Lazar, an alumnus who studied history at Oxford and a history YouTuber with over 185k subscribers, recently published a video about Oxford’s colonial history. While conducting secondary research for the video, he uncovered details about certain investments made by some Oxford colleges. In the footnotes of a seven-volume book set on the history of Oxford, mentions of some Oxford colleges’ connections to colonial enterprises and organisations were recorded. Lazar sat down with me to discuss this evidence of Oxford’s “uncomfortable history” and the legacy that this has left on the institution as a whole.

Although the collegiate and university’s financial records were inconsistent until the 1870s, the remaining records show that much of their wealth came mostly from holdings and investments they had accrued over their long existence. During the last five centuries of British history, some of these holdings and investments directly contributed to the economy of the empire. Certain colleges have more traceable histories of investment in colonial

corporations than others. For instance, Wadham and New College put money into the South Sea Company, which was granted a monopoly to supply African slaves to the islands in the “South Seas” and South America in 1713. Colleges also benefitted from funding for professorships and scholarships that was received from parliament, the monarchy, and prominent individuals. Such positions include the Boden Professor of Sanskrit, funded by Joseph Boden, a soldier of the East India Company, the Beit Professorship of Commonwealth History

funded by Alfred Beit, a precious metals magnate in colonial Africa and the Oxford Forestry School funded by the Indian Colonial Government.

The individuals and organisations providing this funding often had very strong links to slavery, imperial companies, and colonial economic exploitation. For instance, Edward Hyde, the first Earl of Clarendon, was involved in the conquest of Ireland, the procurement of plantations in Ireland, and the colonisation of South Carolina. Clarendon later became the University of Oxford’s chancellor and donated substantially to the university, hence the naming of the Clarendon building right across from the Bodleian Library. Although Oxford colleges are not believed to have owned slaves, as is the case with certain American universities like the University of Virginia, it is undeniable that they did benefit from the financial support of those who did.

This year, Stephen Fry attended the Oxford Union to debate whether artefacts obtained through imperial ventures should be returned to their original countries or ethnic groups. This is a particularly pertinent question at Oxford, which owns many old books and artefacts that have been acquired illegally or taken through imperial coercion. For example, the Totem pole in the Pitt Rivers museum was forcefully taken from the Haida people of Western Canada in the nineteenth century and sent to Oxford. This is why the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums, which have close ties with the university, are currently being called on to repatriate some of their artefacts. The wider university’s possession of items with dubious histories should perhaps also be called into question.

However, the university did not only reap financial rewards from British colonialism;

it also supplied the Empire with crucial manpower, producing many of the administrators and officers that would be sent across British territories. The role of Oxford alumni in British imperial ventures can be traced to the very beginnings of the Empire. In the 16th century, the country’s colonial ambitions were spearheaded by Oxford-educated men like Walter Raleigh, Thomas Roe, and Humphrey Gilbert. Raleigh went on to found Virginia, Roe led an expedition to Guiana, and Gilbert was a pioneer of the English colonial Empire in North America and the Plantations of Ireland. Professor Judith Brown has used matriculation records to show that 345 Balliol graduates went out to work in India as colonial administrators between 1853 and 1947, including 273 who found employment in the Indian Civil Service (ICS).

It is important to note that during the same period, 88 Indian students studied at Balliol. There are many historical people of colour whose entry to the university should be celebrated. Cornelia Sorabji, the first woman to practise law in India, is one such example. Another is Christian Cole, who matriculated as the first black student at Oxford in 1873, reading Classics, and graduated in 1876. To give due credit to the presence of students of colour in Oxford’s history would take many more articles.

However, much of the rhetoric and ideology that bolstered Britain’s imperial campaign was consolidated by Oxford academics and circulated by the University Press. The historian Laurence Brockliss states that “it was considered to be Oxford’s primary function to take callow youths and turn them into intelligent, upright,

and dedicated servants of a British civilising mission”, and, therefore, various course curriculums were tailored to train the next generation of imperial administrators. This led Oxford to serve as a production line for imperial actors. Indeed, the printing press on Walton St helped circulate white supremacist ideologies, and professors taught the ‘theory’ of eugenics, with the arts professor John Ruskin lecturing on how England “must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able,

formed of her most energetic and worthiest men”. The Oxford history professor C. R. L. Fletcher wrote a book for primary school called A History of England, in which he stated that the descendants of African slaves in the Caribbean are “lazy, vicious and incapable of any serious improvement ... and quite useless”, black South Africans are described as “fierce savages”, and the

“
Wadham and New College put money into the South Seas Company

“
The University of Oxford does not seem to have made any active or unified response to its colonial history

“
The role of Oxford alumni in British imperial ventures can be traced to the very beginnings of Empire

aboriginals of Australia are “nothing but a few miserable blacks”.

Due to the tradition underlying the structure and content of various subjects at Oxford, relics of the old imperial ideology live on in some of our degrees today. In history, for example, the course structure still mandates that undergraduate students study a course syllabus roughly divided into a third British, a third European and wider world, and a third global history. This significantly restricts Oxford students’ ability to interrogate global history and explore cultures beyond the West.

This structure makes the subject anything but modern when compared to other British universities. Top universities like LSE, UCL, and Warwick have no requirements to study British history in their Undergraduate History Syllabuses. Likewise, in 2022, Cambridge produced a “substantially new and significantly enhanced curriculum” with far less stringent geographic study requirements.

Ian Archer and Lucy Wooding, the current directors of Undergraduate studies for the history faculty at Oxford, told Cherwell that “many of us tend to avoid the term ‘decolonising’ in relation to the [history] curriculum because of its contested interpretation, but as a Faculty, we are absolutely committed to diversifying our offering... Our Race Equality Action Group is committed to curricular changes which will promote the study of the Global South and introduce students to a range of historical approaches beyond those dominant in the European historical tradition. Race has been introduced as one of the categories studied in the first-year Approaches to History course; other reading lists have been reviewed to incorporate more diverse perspectives. We have introduced Arabic classes for beginners with a view to facilitating an Arabic pathway through the degree programme. We have also made appointments in black history, welcomed the first woman as Regius Professor of History, and have instituted the first professorship of Women’s History, alongside the

introduction of the Masters programme in Gender, Women’s and Queer History. We are looking forward to forthcoming appointments in the history of sexualities, and environmental history, so we are quite confident that our degree is far from archaic.”

Whilst changes to the structures of our university, from the physical fabric of its buildings to the contents of its courses, may be under review, this review is not only important, but perhaps overdue.

Overall, it seems that the legacy of Oxford’s colonial history is so nuanced and multifaceted that identifying the various areas that need to be addressed, let alone addressing them, is going to be a long process and one that requires significant investment in time and funding from the university. Matus Lazar argues that little progress has been made in this regard because “most people either don’t care that much, or the monetary aspect scares them away”. That is to say, the

decolonisation debate is generally either seen as a low-priority issue when compared to other questions faced by colleges, such as admission ratios and making money to fund their current cohort, and members of college administrations are frightened by the potential consequences on donations if they take drastic action to address their colonial past. That is ultimately the reason for the university’s silence on this

issue and why many professors tend to avoid the

word ‘decolonising’ in relation to the curriculum.

Indeed, Lazar believes that the monetary aspect is far more important to the actions taken by the university than any ideological incentive: as opposed to some genuine desire to protect relics of the imperial past, such as the Rhodes statue or the names of buildings, colleges and the university are prevented from acting due to a fear of the financial repercussions. In fact, according to The Guardian, Oriel’s reluctance to remove the Rhodes statue was spiked when “donors apparently threatened to withdraw millions of pounds in contributions or legacies if it did so”. The backlash against the college’s initial decision to remove the statue included a call by former Brexit Party MEP, Ben Habib, to return Rhodes’ endowment to his family and Daniel Hannan, a Conservative MEP who studies at Oriel, reportedly withdrawing his regular donation to Oriel and tweeting that “the first black student won a scholarship 5 years after [Rhodes’] death. Why would anyone give to an institution that treats its benefactors this way?”

In the eyes of Lazar, this debate in Oxford around finances,

reparations, decolonisation, and Oxford’s past Imperial connections is ultimately a matter of “memory vs history”. Many people in Britain have a positive memory of the Empire, and any attack on its legacy is seen as an attack on this positive memory. Lazar states that “in the end, this entire thing is

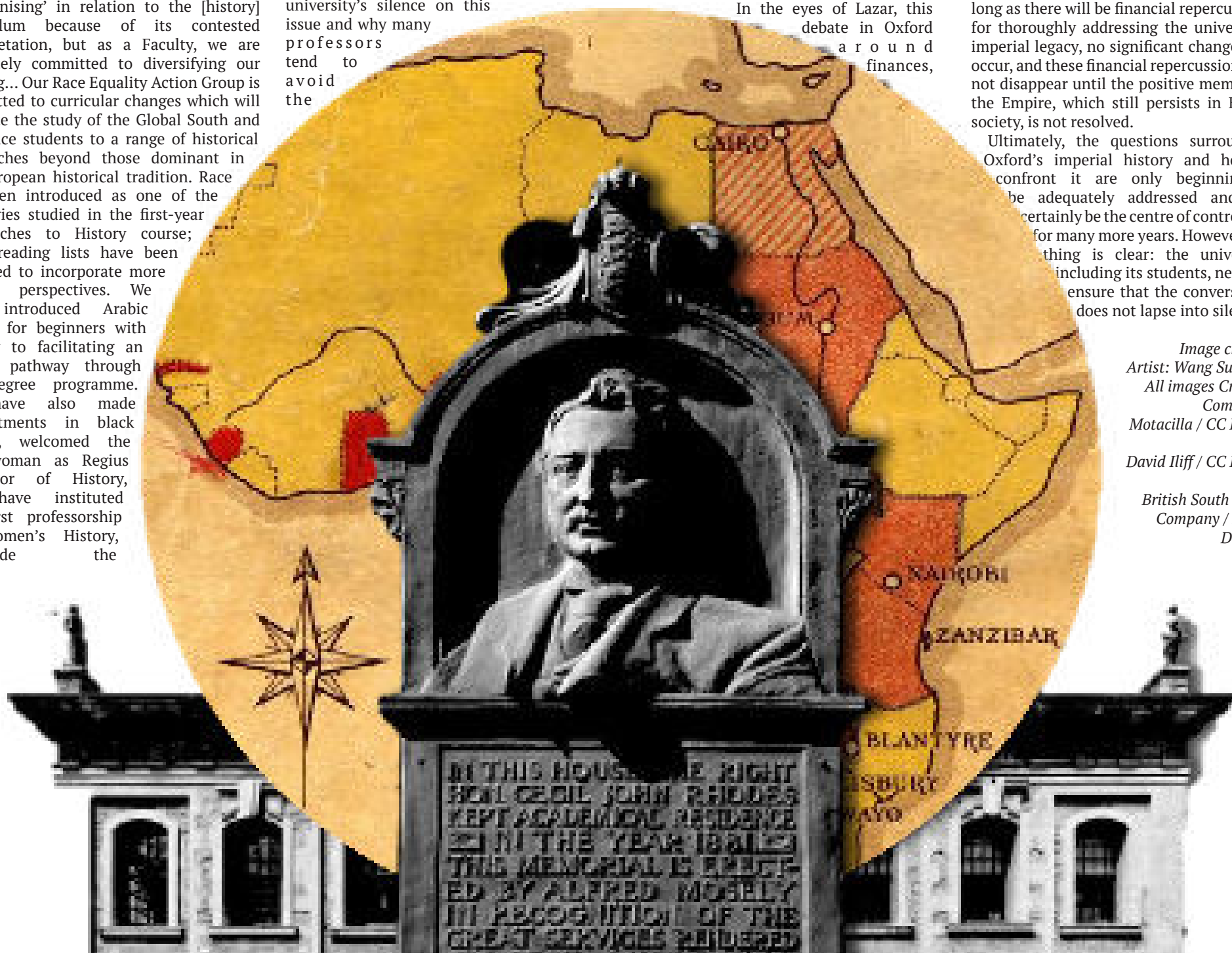
just an extension of the whole memory vs history battle about the Empire that is happening in the whole of Britain. After all, this wouldn’t be happening in Oxford if it wasn’t a contentious topic in the rest of the country.” From the statue of Edward Colston being thrown into the harbour to the statue of Churchill being tagged by graffiti reading ‘racist’, the battle of how we in the present remember the imperial past is very much ongoing. Whilst the university easily addresses the emotional element of colonialism, with apologies being issued

and projects like Oxford and Colonialism being created as a forum for discussion, the university tries to remain silent on any more significant changes. Lazar argues that as long as there will be financial repercussions for thoroughly addressing the university’s imperial legacy, no significant changes will occur, and these financial repercussions will not disappear until the positive memory of the Empire, which still persists in British society, is not resolved.

Ultimately, the questions surrounding Oxford’s imperial history and how to confront it are only beginning to be adequately addressed and will certainly be the centre of controversy for many more years. However, one thing is clear: the university, including its students, needs to ensure that the conversation does not lapse into silence.

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Whilst the university easily addresses the emotional element of colonialism... [it] tries to stay silent on any more significant changes

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CHERBADLY

REPORT: There Is No Such Thing as Merton

Local folklore has long held that there is a college at Oxford called Merton, which, so the story goes, was founded in 1264 and is one of the wealthiest and most beautiful of the Oxford colleges. As tempting as it may be to entertain such a grand tale, this reporter has seen no evidence that the rumored “Merton College” actually exists. Despite many students claiming to attend or to have graduated from the alleged college, it is impossible to confirm that such a place is anything more than a local legend.

One of these students who claims to attend “Merton College” responded to our request for comment saying “you’re an idiot.” Such a defensive posture suggests that the student was aware that her claim, that she was a second-year reading History at “Merton” was dubious at best. The student in question had even gone so far as

to have a puffer jacket made with the words “Merton College, Oxford” emblazoned beneath the crest of the fictional college, which she must have designed herself with her obviously hyperactive imagination.

Others quite famously claim that the author of the Lord of the Rings books, J.R.R. Tolkien was the “Merton” Professor of English Language and Literature for a time. While it’s no wonder that the famed fantasy author would be associated with what is a purely fantastical Oxford college, it seems many have begun to take these rumors as the unvarnished truth. A current Oxford professor of English responded recently to a request for comment saying, “what the hell are you talking about? Of course Tolkien taught at Merton and of course Merton is real. There is literally a street in Oxford called Merton Street that Merton College is on.” Clearly the crazed babblings of a poor, deluded creature.

Some locals even claim to have vivid visions of what they describe as a “13th century chapel bell tower” rising from what they believe to be the “Merton College” quadrangle. Such visions are difficult to investigate, but many of the sightings have occurred on clear, sunny days while students are walking along Christ Church Meadow. If only such a wonderful sight were a part of our physical realm. Alas, there is no such thing as “Merton College,” except for that ethereal “Merton College” of our collective dreams.

JOHN EVELYN

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to a #NEW era. Yet as the bicentenary looms, is history repeating itself? Having exorcised the Donnies, the Alcoholic Anglican has duly proved he may be Protestant in the head but is Catholic in spirit, consecrating the rise of the RONnies, with the Big Lash, (literal) Girlboss and Jersey PR all hailing from the murky ranks of inscrutable electoral ritual, social conservatism, masonic tradition, liver damage and sodomy.

The Compact Classicist seems to find both metal weights and other people’s work considerably easy to lift (and subsequently make a personality trait). The rent-a-debater has decided justifying such a sobriquet is a more valuable use of her time than work, if not in words but deeds committing herself to propose THB vac day requirements need not be Fulfilled. Mrs. Dick’s work ethic appears to have broken at the same moment as her arm, and whilst her finalist ancestor may be a NPC, with the Turn of the new year she appears to have resolved to emulate the graft of a particularly industrious sponsorship officer.

Look away now, both destabilised vegan prospective candidates and vegetarians alike, for this Hilary a distinctive aroma of the fishy variety penetrates Frewin Court. Not content with Highland salmon? A certain ex-CCC may have lost her keys to Aspirant Alito, but has since found a much sharper impediment and filleted the Optics Obsessive, in the queerest reverse echo of Michaelmas past. The burden of the Haram Hobbyist and Il-legal Illiterate lifted from

her suited shoulders, this Dark Horse has acquired the weight of a hefty slate in the form of Macaulay Culkin’s doppelganger, OUCAAG (reborn as a classicist, not a lawyer) and Liverpool Loverboy. With the Dark Horse having finally bolted from the hedge (or should one say hegde?) and into Keble for a night of welfare (foiled upon the arrival of a certain ex-international officer) future candidates promptly called Mr. Jacobs in droves for relationship counselling. What sage advice he (in his infinite wisdom on this topic) imparted, alas, we can only speculate. Either way, the Optics Obsessive promptly retired, if not electorally, to Nottingham, taking the impending term card deadline rather less seriously than recovering her slate. Will she succeed? Might the Compact Classicist lift her prospects - or prove dead weight? Stay tuned.

Do we not live in truly inspire(d) times? Yours in neither sorrow nor anger but lofty amusement.



Z NOVA

Our Agony Aunt answers your burning questions for this week...

I think my girlfriend is cheating on me. I don’t have any evidence but a really strong gut feeling that I just can’t shake. What do you think I should do?

Before you do anything too drastic, I want to start by telling you that you’re not crazy. This can be something that is super worrying for you and will probably mean you can’t concentrate on anything else whilst also simultaneously gaslighting yourself. When I say drastic, I mean breaking into their phone to try and read their messages/check for dating apps etc. If you really love and trust your partner, you should be able to ask them outright. Try not to make a huge deal out of it, confronting them in a super dramatic way, it might just be a case of mentioning it when you’re chilling together one evening. Whether or not you’re right (and I’m really sorry if you are, that sucks), always trust your gut and, even though it’s hard and scary because your instinct might be right, don’t let it stew because it’ll only build up feelings of resentment which will also damage your relationship.

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Honestly, not the worst addiction to have.



Image Credit: Naim Benjelloun via Pexels.

Someone told me I have a hummus addiction and now I

don’t know how much hummus is enough?

Honestly, not the worst addiction to have. Hummus is delicious and has many health benefits so I wouldn’t worry too much. However, if you’re incredibly concerned, I would maybe double check whether it’s drastically exceeding your protein intake? I’m not a nutritionist. For a fun twist you could also try varying the hummus intake with some vegetables to dip into it, or some nice bread. (Also, a good breakfast is hummus spread on toasted sourdough with sliced tomatoes, if you’re feelin’ fancy).

My flatmate doesn’t back me up when I tell them about my daily grievances. Is this toxic?

I think this might just be a case that you’re trying to vent to someone that you’re not necessarily close to. For a lot of us, talking about our daily grievances is a way to start a conversation with someone but sometimes, the person you’re talking to can’t really relate and so can’t sympathise with you like a friend could. However, it could be the case that you’ve been venting to this flatmate about the behaviour of the other people that you live with (dishes in the sink, shoes strewn everywhere, old food in the fridge etc.), and when you’re speaking one-on-one that they sympathise with you. But when you voice these problems to your other flatmates and this one doesn’t back you up, it may be time to ask for a bit of support because it’s not fair that they’re brave enough to have a collective rant in private but won’t support you in front of the other people you live with.

How do I know if I’m the more good looking in my relationship? I want to know who is punching...

Now this is interesting. My first question to you would be - why is this important to you? Why are you wanting to know which person owes the other because they’re going out with someone better or worse looking than them? I’m sure you could ask your friends, other people around you if you really want to know but I honestly think that this is not the healthiest way to approach or view your relationship with someone because it’s never good to frame yourself or the other person in a relationship as inferior to their counterpart.

Masthead

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Katerina Lygaki
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New Year, New Me.

Growing up, making New Year’s resolutions was never really something that I or anyone in my family really did. For us, it was always: New Year, Same Old Me. However, as I get older (and inevitably wiser) the New Year always seems like the perfect time for a new beginning. I’m not saying that I’m planning on becoming a whole different person in 2023: I just want to be me, but the 2.0 version.

In 2023, I’m resolved on doing all the healthy girl habits and working on my mental health (God knows I need it), but most importantly, I’m resolved on living in the moment. No more worrying about my post-uni plans months before I even sit my exams and no more stress about what I’m going to do next week or how anxious I’m going to feel in two days. My present will be my problem—I’ll worry about everything else when I get to it. And this is my plan with this paper moving forward: How can we improve today? How can we grow right now? I feel like as long as we try to do better today, then the future can only have greater and fuller days in store. This is my philosophy going into 2023 and leading this paper. I will try every day to live, learn and grow as best as I can.

Now with this new philosophy of living in the moment, you may naturally ask me what I’ve been doing to carpe diem and whatnot.



Oliver Hall
Deputy Editor

New term, new year, same old broken Britain. At a time of the year that is meant to be full of hope and aspirations for the 12 months ahead, it is instead impossible not to feel like the country is falling apart around us.

Right let me roll things back a bit – I hate to be so depressing right from the get-go, but that would hardly be helpful for everyone grappling with collections and the inevitable feeling of being overwhelmed that always comes with a return to Oxford. As lecture lists arrive in

Ceasing the day for me involves having a hearty meal and a soul-revitalising nap: it’s all about self-care baby. But, and this is a big but, I am challenging myself to get out of my comfort zone this upcoming term. Catch me doing cartwheels on top of the Rad Cam and throwing caution to the wind whilst farting as loud as possible in a really quiet and conspicuous place.

With this newfound bravado and the fact that the golden coin landed on my slice of Vasilopita this year (a Greek tradition for the New Year), I cannot help but go into 2023 with good vibes galore and ready to live, love, laugh my ass off.

In her best novel, *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf writes what I think is quite a beautiful description of being at university: “here at college, where the stir and pressure of life are so extreme, where the excitement of mere living becomes daily more urgent. Every hour something new is unburied in the great bran pie” (the fact that she was writing it of Cambridge will go without comment.) The afternoon that I write this — 11th of January — there seems like there’s a lot of newness in the air, a lot being unburied from Woolf’s great bran pie. I’m rushing to write up this editorial directly after interviewing Irene Tracey, Oxford’s new Vice-Chancellor, at the start of a new year, as Katerina and I finish laying in the first new (is it getting old yet?) issue of the term. Of course, in a town and a university in which the past is so treasured, a lot of things have also stayed the same; we still look up at the same buildings on our way to lectures that, we feel, must have been identical for the last century or so. We’re hot off a student scandal [see front page] which reminds us that Oxford’s people are still as weird as they were before we left for the winter vac.

Being amidst the “stir and pressure” of all this newness and oldness has given me pause for thought on the way in which Oxford, a historic, and — as they feel obliged to constantly, constantly, remind us — very old institution, must poise itself to prepare



Isaac Ettinghausen
Editor-in-Chief

for the challenges of the future. Speaking to Professor Tracey was very thought provoking in this respect, and — provided that Katerina and I haven’t majorly fucked up — you can find the interview on page 3. It was clear that the challenges facing the University, and the world in general, are many; climate change, inequality, and unaffordable prices pose a threat to the University’s ability to maintain its high reputation and provide the best possible experience to its students. However, Oxford’s stature and history means that, while it may suffer more from these issues, it also has the power (and, in true Spiderman style, the responsibility) to be at the forefront of solving them. It was encouraging that in our interview, Prof. Tracey said that she wanted to focus on affordable housing for students and researchers, responsible investments, and carbon reductive policies. Such a big undertaking, she said, relied on the cooperation of the University, its colleges, and its faculties, but most importantly its students. We’re very privileged to attend such a historic university, and, by taking part in wider University life — whether this means JCRs, societies, or, God forbid, the SU — we can have the ability to make a real difference, ensuring that people can continue taking bites out of the great bran pie, long after we’ve graduated.

Leader: Assessing our present and looking forward

inboxes far too late as ever and tutors demand schedules that clash in the most frustrating way possible, let Cherwell be your outlet for relaxation. I really am so excited for what we have got planned at the paper this term across all our sections. From food to theatre and even the return of Oxpops (contain your excitement), we’ll be here for you all term to entertain and inform you.

We will also continue to bring you hard-hitting and insightful coverage that has defined us over the years. Starting this week with our feature on Iran, the student body has so many stories to tell and we want to shine a spotlight on the diverse voices that define the university.

Returning to my depressing opening salvo though, it will also be impossible to avoid the strikes and chaos

that left much of the country paralysed over Christmas and look set to continue into 2023. When you can’t get a train, get an ambulance, go to a hospital, take a driving test, use the roads, or get an education, the government’s continued refusal to even sit down and have a conversation on pay is having an inevitable impact on the whole country. Along with the rising cost of living and energy prices, students are taking the blows more than most and we will continue to ask you about your problems, worries, and ideas for solutions.

So, sometimes it is hard not to be downbeat if you look around and see the crises hitting every area of life but I urge you to try your best to beat it back. Try something new, take some time to yourself, get some fresh air, and take a step back. We’ll try our best to help you along the way with our mix of insightful, important news and light, reassuring entertainment.

“
Let Cherwell be your outlet for relaxation.

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It is impossible not to feel like the country is falling apart around us.

It wasn't me: is cheating (in exams) morally wrong?

Matthew Oulton

Between Sam Bankman-Fried, the former crypto billionaire who was arrested in the Bahamas last month on charges of fraud, and George Santos, a Congressman-elect in California who appears to have fabricated his entire life story, family background, educational pedigree, and career, it feels like a bad time for liars and cheats. But in the light of these high-profile downfalls, I have begun to think about all the people who get away with it.

In particular, when the Pandemic forced exams online, there must have been a coincident outbreak of cheating. Was it wrong for people to cheat in these circumstances? And will they get their comeuppance?

When I started my undergraduate degree in Economics, I found the lecturers seemed quite relaxed about cheating. As good economists, they trusted their system. Go ahead, they seemed to say, try whatever strategy you like, but it won't work better than just studying legitimately.

And yes, in an ideal world, cheating would be impossible; the only way to improve your grades would be to improve your knowledge and skills.

Sadly, we don't live in an ideal world. There have always been ways for enterprising students to improve their marks, such as buying online essay services. For the most part, these were kept in check by the threat of enormous reprisal if caught.

In 2020, though, things changed substantially.

The pandemic meant that most university examinations across the country were conducted online, introducing a whole series of new opportunities for deception. Now, lecturers implored us not to break the rules of examinations.

The incidence of cheating sky-rocketed, with one in six students owning up to cheating in an anonymous survey.

And on some level, who can blame them? After all, exams can make a big difference. They affect where we study, what jobs we can get, as well as social pride and respect. Furthermore, the risk of being caught in an online exam is very low. Cheating goes from being an easy cost-benefit calculation to a moral dilemma. A rational agent seeking to maximise their marks will cheat, given the very low chance of being caught.

Obviously, it was down to poor examination design that people even faced this issue. Departments should have taken more measures to ensure that collaboration was impossible.

But was it wrong to cheat, if you could get away with it?

Yes, in short.

Firstly, let's deal with the old myth that cheating is a victimless crime. Many exams, it's true, are not graded on a curve, meaning that your grade doesn't depend on the marks of others. Most institutions, however, practice some form of scaling, meaning so that the performance of other students can affect you. Even when markers do not adjust classification boundaries at all after an exam, they are still benchmark quality against other students. As a result, you might not distort the curve this year if you cheat, but instead you will distort for every year in the future.

In arts subjects, where quality is generally subjective, markers' rating of an essay or other piece of work is obviously given in the context of other work they've seen before. As a result, effective cheating has to lower the expected grade for other people in the long-run.

Now, it's true that the system shouldn't allow people to cheat, just as government officials shouldn't be able to embezzle money, and bank robbers shouldn't be able to make off with bags full of money on their shoulders. That sometimes, people can do this, doesn't morally justify it. You can't take someone's bike off the street and argue 'this should be impossible; they should have locked it up.'

It's wrong that you can cheat – you shouldn't be put in the position of weighing academic success against moral integrity. Examiners need to take the counsel of economists and consider incentive design. But it's also wrong to choose to cheat as well. We can only hope that as each Sam Bankman-Fried or George Santos is revealed, people's sense of morality is not dilapidated. After all, we can all bemoan the lack of a utopia, but it doesn't excuse our behaviour in the world we've got for now.

Oxford's 'BNOC' culture is sympomatic of the political ills of today

Jack Twyman

Most people in Oxford know what constitutes a BNOC as the acronym for 'Big Name on Campus'. *Collins Dictionary* defines it as 'a student who has gained wide recognition or notoriety among [their] peers'. These are the types who believe a degree is much more than just studying. They relentlessly engage in extracurricular activities, particularly in the Oxford Union where they regularly try and win votes by sending a flurry of copy-and-paste messages to members they may only have met once to try and secure a top position.

All this activity is to secure a leadership position in a society with the main role of putting on events and finding speakers for them. When we see Union Slates (political running mates) named 'Imagine' and 'Fulfil' with huge promises to transform the Union, and sounding quite similar to a national election manifesto. It is clear to see the exaggeration of these pitches as like those of today's politicians, who are bound to inaction by our broken system, they have little power to achieve any of this in reality.

Instead, hidden behind the facade of these pitches is a common drive from wannabe-BNOCs to place themselves ahead of the rest of the pack. Will it help in the real world? Potentially it may, as in many highly competitive industries it takes a focused mindset to achieve this, and BNOCs will acquire employable skills in their roles. But then again, nowhere is it likely to have a whole three years to focus solely on getting to the top of your position, while simultaneously managing independent adult life and the complexities of it.

If we look to history as a judge, the Union, and Oxford as an institution, have produced some notable figures in public life today. Boris Johnson is a former Union President, with Michael Gove and Jacob Rees-Mogg also BNOCs in their time. But that was thirty years ago, and times have changed in manifold ways. In politics, those playing the game are now seen by some on both the left and right as enemies. We only have to look at the scenes over electing a new speaker of the US House of Representatives to see that the establishment, rightly or wrongly, is under attack. It is clear we need innovation, not the status quo. The Union may have produced the politicians of today, but in an ever-connected social media-dominated society, it could be said to be unlikely to produce the politicians of tomorrow.

The issue is that there is no other alternative clear-cut route into politics or top roles of society without connections in the field. The most 'Oxford' individuals in Oxford can be the Etonians and Winchesterians, but for the most part, are those from more humble backgrounds who aspire to be the Oxford-type, analogous with success. Whether this be from an internalised insecurity and or a career-driven mindset, it is a recipe for people putting themselves as a person before their stance as an individual. The normal path for a gifted student is aspiring to Oxbridge, but once here they find themselves overshadowed by a plethora of successful people with individual brilliance, and unable to continue standing out solely because of their academic excellence.

I believe the main reason for the BNOC culture in Oxford is the opportunity to make connections. Those coming from a top school are likely to already have many connections with top roles, their friend's father might be the Director of a top company, and using a school like Eton's repertoire gives a springboard from which a successful BNOC career seems like a given rather than an earned prospect. Those who are using Oxford to make their connections cannot be faulted for their proactivity, as these connections are an asset to have. However, the manner they are sometimes garnered is eyebrow-raising. "I only make friends with people who can help me in life, not because they're

actually my type of person." This is a statement many will hear uttered during their time in Oxford, and is perhaps one of the saddest.

I sympathise with students who have few connections before coming here; I am one of them. And I look to those who choose to disregard this extra-curricular area of Oxford life and instead fill their time with partying not with disdain but with acknowledgement. We at Oxford are free to choose how we engage with our student community. Becoming a BNOC is not a necessity but a chosen path, and we should place enjoyment of our university experience on par with forming connections. It is very possible to do both. Those who enjoy the chase of becoming a BNOC should not be frowned upon, but we should recognise and respect every individual choice of how they consume university. Being a BNOC does not make you better than anyone else. It takes a person who thrives off attention, and validation from others, and those may not materialise to be helpful traits in the future.

What is a glaring error in our politics is the desire to get to the top of the pile not because of what you believe in, but because you want the title out of vanity. The 'hackery' of the Union and student politics alike, if left unchecked, will continue this cycle into the future. So perhaps it is not a bad thing that times are changing. When we look at the Harry and Meghan saga, the consequences of an institutional monarchy unable to be held to account become clear. Regardless of your opinion on the pair, the family drama and supposed treachery within is not a shining example of favouring the continuation of the monarchy. Yet the politics of today would be unlikely to produce a brilliant candidate for head of state either. We need a reevaluation of who politics is for, and what it is about. It is for the people, not the person. The sustenance of BNOC culture in Oxford is pervading the ills of politics we suffer from today, and the first step to tackling this challenge is to stop revering BNOCs and free students from the pressure of becoming one.

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The House of Lords - reform or revolution?

Cartell Cheem urges caution over the long-debated second chamber.

A recent YouGov poll confirmed that the most important issues for Britons are the economy, an overstretched NHS, and a beleaguered immigration and asylum system. Unsurprisingly, major constitutional reform is not high on the list of priorities for the average voter.

Yet the Labour Party has placed major constitutional reform on its agenda for the UK. The leader of the Labour Party, Sir Keir Starmer, and former Labour prime minister Gordon Brown, have joined forces to make the abolition of the House of Lords, the upper chamber of the UK's parliament, a "radical" centrepiece of the Labour Party's 2024 election manifesto. Sir Keir has described the House of Lords in its current incarnation as "indefensible" and pledged his commitment to abolition "as quickly as possible". In its place would stand a democratically elected assembly of nations and regions.

The issues with the House of Lords

Admittedly, there is credence to the criticism that the House of Lords has become unjustifiably bloated in size and its composition unrepresentative of the UK. For instance, the size of membership is north of 800[5], which makes it globally second only in size to the Chinese National People's Congress (which caters for a country of over a billion people), and the size dwarfs the 100-member strong US Senate. Not to mention that the average age of a sitting peer is 71 years.

There are also undeniable problems related to the manner of appointment. Despite the enactment of the House of Lords Act 1999 by New Labour, which removed the entitlement of most of the hereditary peers to the Lords, there remain 92 peers who trace their role in the legislative process of the UK to their birth[7]. The current system also places no real limits on the number or quality of members who may be appointed to the chamber by the prime minister. Despite the existence of the independent House of Lords Appointments Commission, which vets party political nominees for propriety, the vetting criteria is relatively narrow and the recommendations are not binding on the prime minister. For example, in 2020, Boris Johnson could simply overrule the concerns raised by the Commission over the appointment of Peter Cruddas. These shortcomings have ultimately led to concerns that appointments to the Lords have been "rather profligate" and led to "unchecked political patronage".

Advocates for abolition also focus significantly on the need to allow the nations and regions of the UK to be better represented. But, it is not clear that a democratic upper chamber, like the one in Labour's proposal, would be able to deliver on this ideal. Voter engagement in the UK is consistently at a level lower than at most points historically, casting doubt on whether there is an appetite for yet more elections.

One would need to carefully define how the chamber would interact with the devolved assemblies so that there is not a conflict of responsibilities, and there would be a danger that the party-political candidates nominated would simply duplicate the current diversity of sitting MPs, which one may argue is not adequately representative.

The case for retaining the House of Lords

Yet, there are more fundamental critiques of the case for abolition, especially in light of the idiosyncratic role that the House of Lords serves in our constitution. It is precisely the Lords' uniquely unelected character and sui generis composition that enables it to enrich our dynamic political constitution.

Firstly, the House of Lords is conventionally known as the 'revising chamber', given that its primary remit is to scrutinise and amend legislative bills drafted by the government. In this manner, it serves as a pivotal check on the power of government and functions as an effective counterbalance against elective dictatorship by preventing bills from being passed with minimal scrutiny by the party-political House of Commons. An elected upper chamber would upset the Lords' remit in balancing the House of Commons. Currently, and indicative of its mature average age, the Lords is composed of a panoply of personally distinguished experts in their respective fields, from politics, the arts, finance and manufacturing, which can lead to debates of high quality and a broad level of intellectual firepower. It is this that makes peers uniquely positioned to temper problems with proposed legislation, maximise legislative effectiveness, and hold the government to account in a way that elected representatives may not be able to do. This is epitomised by how the Lords' Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee was able to prevent a statutory instrument from being instituted by the government that would have slashed billions of pounds of welfare payments without a debate on the issue in the Commons.

Secondly, the unelected nature of the Lords facilitates independent thinking as members are free from the constraints of party whips or the ever-present threat of re-election, both of which affect the decision-making of MPs. Indeed, currently about a quarter of the Lords' members sit without party political affiliation – 'crossbenchers' – and even the ones affiliated with a party need not worry about defying the government for threat of expulsion given their security of tenure. These facets of independence combine to enable the non-partisan scrutiny of government bills, less rancour and more collaborative debates, and concerted cross-party work, allowing peers to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the minutiae of bills and how the law will impact the UK. For example, in 2020, the Lords defeated the government and the House of Commons

in its bid to enact the Internal Market Bill on the grounds that the provisions would break international law and erode the UK's international standing. An elected chamber poses a distinct risk of sacrificing this expertise. In all likelihood, the electoral system, with its campaigning, canvassing and electioneering, would encourage seasoned political operators (former MPs and Ministers) of the major parties to run for election, leading to the most politically astute candidates or best campaigners, not necessarily the most competent, winning on party-lines at the expense of the most expert and nonpartisan professionals. This political bias could limit the industry-based capital of a second chamber.

Thirdly, Labour's report has not made clear the precise power distribution and relationship that its second chamber would have with the House of Commons; this is problematic because a new chamber could challenge the primacy of the House of Commons. The members of the new chamber would have just as much legitimacy as the members in the Commons, which could lead to the expansion of the chamber from a revising one and the upsetting of numerous political conventions constraining the Lords. Hence, the proposal could risk legislative inertia from longer delays and the frustration of the elected government's legislative agenda due to blockages.

A more pragmatic approach to reform

Instead of expending vast amounts of political endeavour on abolition, a more pragmatic approach would be to enact targeted reform to the existing model which would neatly preserve the Lords' constitutional effectiveness.

Firstly, as opined by the Lord Speaker's Committee in 2017, its size could be capped

to around 600 members, which would make total membership slightly less than the House of Commons but large enough to allow it to maintain its current level of activities and expertise[16]. This is a sensible idea and akin to what happens in most legislative chambers globally. If appointments could only be made when there are vacancies or prime ministers could only appoint members from an annual party allocation, the numbers would remain stable and appointers incentivised to only ennoble those genuinely intending to make a contribution to the House. This limit could be complemented by a mandatory retirement age, modelled on the compulsory retirement age of 75 years imposed on the judiciary[17]. The corollary would be the continued space for new members, refreshing the Lords' expertise with up-to-date business insight, and the maintenance of public confidence in the health and capacity of members to work.

Secondly, the House of Lords would greatly benefit from a more demanding appointment process and a more robust appointment commission. The independent House of Lords Appointments Commission could be endowed with a statutory mandate to veto 'unsuitable' nominations by the prime minister and political leaders. Buttressing this power should be more demanding propriety criteria, which could include requiring nominees to demonstrate a sufficient willingness and capacity to contribute to the work of the House of Lords.

It is, thus, accepted that the House of Lords is imperfect and would undoubtedly benefit from constitutional reform. However, Labour's answer is regrettably to use 'a sledgehammer to crack a nut'.

Read the full article online at cherwell.org

Brazilian Political Chaos

Oliver Hall

The worrying scenes in Rio on Sunday evoke the turbulent political instability of days gone by in South America. Usually a bastion of stable government for the region, the country is now in danger of slipping into chaos again. The impact in the long term will be down to how both Bolsonaro and Lula respond. With thousands already arrested, the extradition of the former head of state seems on the horizon.



Adam Saxon



The attack on Brazil's institutions this week just days after the second anniversary of the US capitol riots remind us that a loud minority has the potential to cause severe damage to democracy. Manipulations of events and accusations of election fraud are a chilling throwback to the final days of the Trump administration and indicate to us the continued threat of the far right. If democracy is to prevail then we need a new generation of political leaders with the ability to unite countries in spite of damaging polarisation caused by social media.

For the first instalment of The Source this term, editors **Max Marks** and **Leila Moore** have exchanged archives and chosen which piece of their friend's writing makes it to print. They may now know each other too well...

APPEAR QUIET

linen suns on threadbare skin
(telemachus)

maybe there is light
surely it reaches these depths too –
there is light.
glancing off green glass and tired hands
i see my father in you or think i do
in twenty seaborne shifting homes
frail still but ever bright
half-lost or found half-sunk in sand
i close my eyes and turn to face you

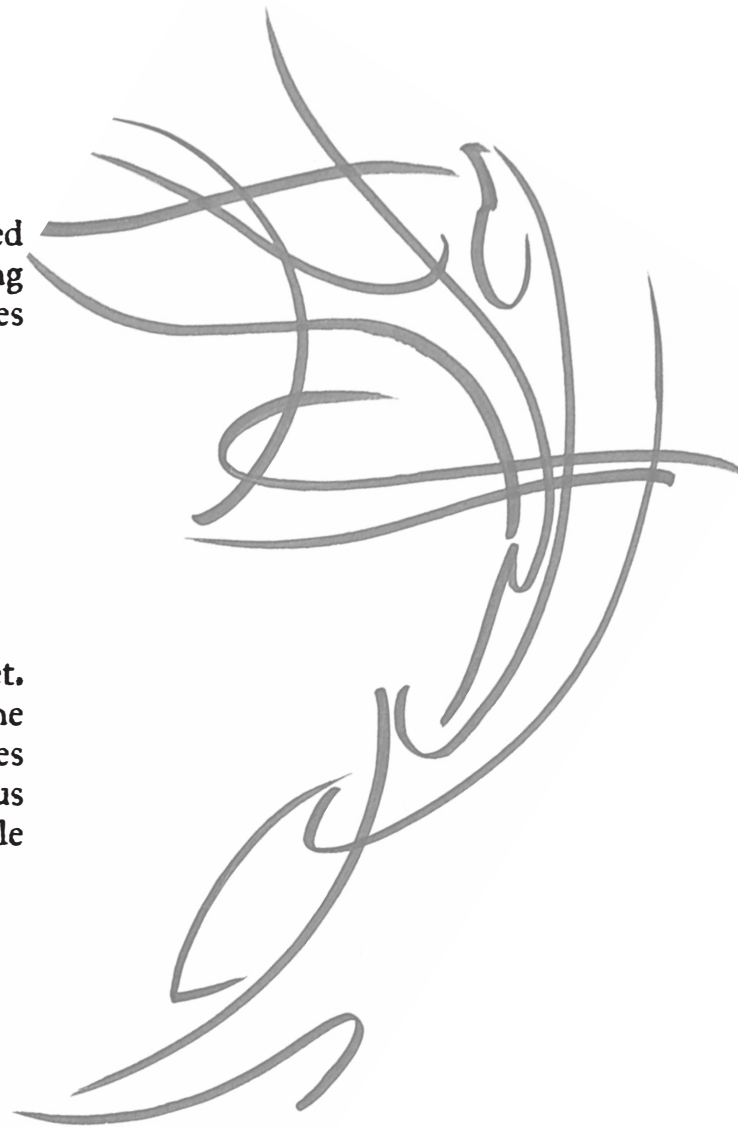
who are you? does it matter
when there are songs to be sung yet
beyond you or i
when it means the same to remember or forget
to draw or redraw the line
to raise the moon on my hunched shoulders
i strain no longer
i appear quiet.

An Address Made While Watching Cranes Shudder in the Rain

I write you in a thunderstorm.
Minutes ago you wet a
Bare forearm, quenched its brushed fingertip
Dreams, throwing down symphonies as grain
Is scattered to the animal
Frenzied with hunger.
Does it bring you joy,
Hearing the willows groan in relief?
We'll take you to bed with us,
Like the pleasant reminder of sweat
Dried on loved skin.

restless in my earthen bed
tracing and re-tracing
old lines

and so appear quiet.
needle-pierced to clean grey bone
all laid out like pages
from that forgotten diary, telemachus
far from battle



Editor's Note: APPEAR QUIET

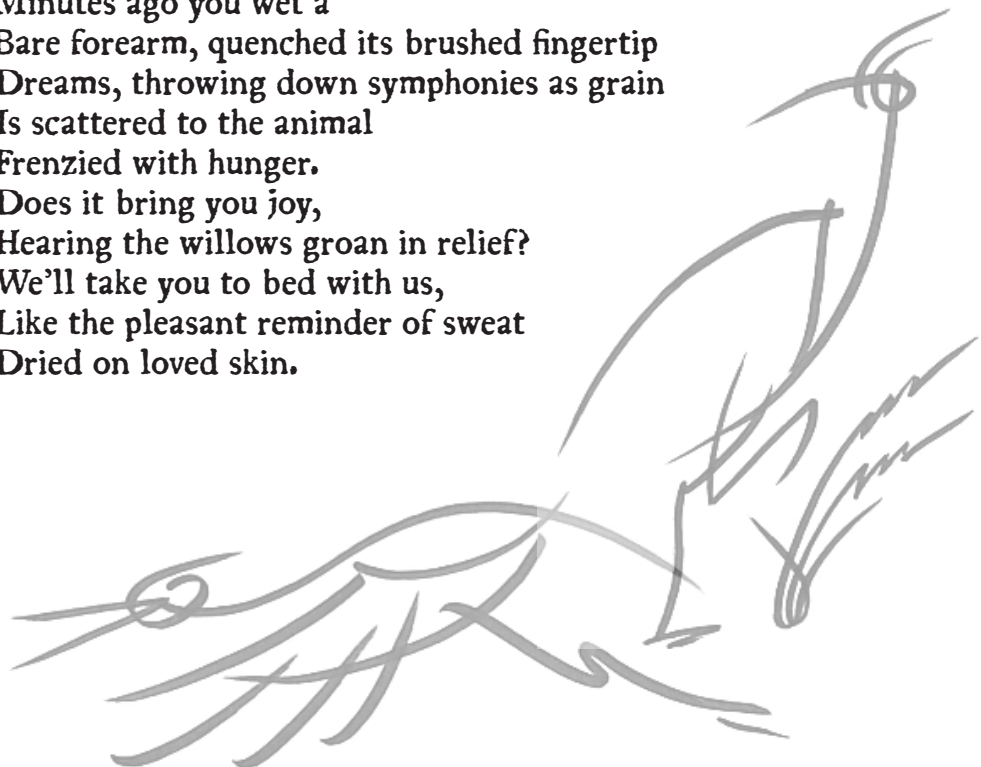
Reading Max's poem, I felt as if it was silently threading itself through my heart. His words are both open and closed, inviting us into a moment of pre-dawn intimacy yet detailing the almost painful endeavour of keeping oneself inert, infallible. Moments of clarity – there is light, needle-pierced to clean grey bone – show their faces for only a millisecond. We ask ourselves: how is it possible to know anything, to know anyone? There seems only one answer, to settle ourselves into this shifting chaos, and in it appear quiet.

Editor's Note: An Address Made While Watching Cranes Shudder in the Rain

"I write you in a thunderstorm": the captivating thing about Address is that its words aren't just representational. Dreams, throwing down symphonies as grain – they feel musical. This was the shortest of the poems we exchanged, and I think I settled on it because it manages to do so much with so little, to create its own tender world while remaining somehow intangible. It's impressionistic: fragments of thought and feeling strung together in a shifting passion, viewed through a haze, much like shuddering cranes appear through a curtain of sizzling rain.

Write for The Source!

If you are interested in writing, illustrating, or poem-exchanging for the Source, email us at culturecherwell@gmail.com



Hilary’s recommended reads: for Hot and Cosy Girls*

Our book editors recommend five comfort reads to curl up with for the start of term, as well as a fun guide which may be the key to having a ‘Hot Girl Hilary’...

The Homesick Booklist

Andy Kovacic

It is the beginning of a new year and the end of cosy nesting at home. The great student migration back to Oxford is already underway given the commencement of Hilary Term. It can be difficult for many of us to leave the sanctum of home and return to a routine that looks less like lazy mornings and more like caffeinated all-nighters. It can also be hard to say goodbye to our loved ones, not to mention the family pets. To bring some warmth to those chilly homesick blues we’ve compiled a list of five comfort reads. This fiction will ease you back into college life with their shared themes of friendship, adventure and endless possibility.

1. Sweet Bean Paste by Durian Sukegawa
This is a short and sweet read that can be enjoyed by anyone. The language is easy and well-translated from the original Japanese. It follows an ex-con named Sentaro who works at an unpopular confectionary stand that sells the traditional street food of dorayaki, which are small pikelets sandwiched together with a sweetened red bean filling. Sentaro is adrift and alone, he is struggling to reconcile with his past crimes and his lost future potential. One day Sentaro meets Tokue, an elderly woman who happens to make the most delicious red bean paste Sentaro has ever tasted. Throughout the story, Sentaro grows a genuine friendship with Tokue but also becomes aware of Tokue’s own past tragedies. Sweet Bean Paste shows us the beauty in strength. It is a gentle narrative for readers who need to feel a little uplifted.
Comfort Level: like eating pancakes in bed.

2. Sweet Bitter by Stephanie Danler
This read is for foodies and drama lovers. Sweet Bitter is about Tess, a twenty-two-year-old who moves to the Big Apple and stumbles into a backwaiter job at an exclusive high-dining restaurant in Manhattan. Tess has left her broken home behind and is desperate for a new beginning in the city of dreams. We follow Tess and her turbulent experience working in the high-pressure restaurant industry. She must navigate being ‘the new girl’ in a complicated workplace that is both punishing and alluring in surprising ways. Gradually, Tess finds her own sense of belonging in the city where dreams are made.
Comfort Level: like a second (or third) glass of wine.

3. The Secret History by Donna Tartt
This read is the best college-campus murder mystery novel: think Dead Poets Society meets Gossip Girl (dark and juicy academia).

The story is told by the protagonist Richard, an underprivileged student who has just enrolled in an elite college in Vermont. Richard is surprisingly accepted into an exclusive Ancient Greek class where he joins five other hand-picked students. This begins Richard’s obsessive friendship with this snobbish yet brilliant group of privileged misfits and marks his strange descent into their darkest secrets. *The Secret History* may not be Donna Tartt’s most famous novel but her readers often regard it as her masterpiece. It is a contemporary Greek tragedy that is a consuming and addictive read for those who desire escapism.
Comfort Level: like a Netflix binge after the exam period.

4. Before the Coffee Gets Cold by Toshikazu Kawaguchi
This is a short read that is both delicate and profound but very simply written. The book is sectioned into four character-driven short stories that occur in the same retro coffee shop. In this place, time travel is possible. In each story, the characters are given a second chance to confront their past for a short time. More often than not, these confrontations lead to an emotional moral awakening of some kind. *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* plays with the heart. The book reminds us about the brevity of love and life and the importance in relishing each and every moment of this world before we leave for the next.
Comfort Level: like being inside on a rainy day.

5. Cloud Cuckoo Land by Anthony Doerr
This long read will reward readers for their patience. The narrative is comprised of three storylines in different times: the past, the present, and the future. The past is set

in 1453 and mostly follows a young girl and boy who bond over the discovery of an ancient transcript. The present is set in 2020 and narrates the story of a troubled young man who becomes embroiled in a dangerous environmentalist plot. The future is set on a spaceship and describes the life of a girl who might be the last hope for humanity. By the end of the novel, we discover how all three stories are bound together by a shared legend. *Cloud Cuckoo Land* is not only an action-packed epic but is also an example of masterly written storytelling.
Comfort Level: like a long walk through the woods.

Have A Hot Girl Hilary!

Deborah Ogunnoiki

It’s officially Hot Girl Hilary, the season for getting your freak on, the only time it’s acceptable to get with a guy from Christ Church on a Bridge Thursday (acceptable may be a strong word, I’m judging you a just a little bit for your choice in men). However, if you want to live Hot Girl Hilary to its fullest, *The Big O* by sexpert Oloni is a must-read.
Described by Vogue as “the reigning sex and relationship guru of Twitter”, the British-Nigerian sex-positive educator writes the ultimate sex-positive manifesto to help women reclaim and pursue their sexual desires and autonomy. It is a book that doesn’t gloss over the facts and details, expressing Oloni’s clear wishes that we become less squeamish about sex. Sex is

something that women are too often taught is something that happens to us, rather than something that we enjoy. Oloni’s dedication at the beginning of the book “To the women who refuse to let society dictate what they should or shouldn’t do with their bodies” expresses her desire for sexual freedom for women, and what better book for me to recommend to the Hot Girls* of Oxford University.
Many of us can remember our own experiences with sex education at school, which basically consisted of “penis in vagina”, “here’s a condom, now put it on this cucumber”, and my personal favourite, the ever-helpful “do not have sex or you WILL get pregnant”. For most of us, this is cisgendered-focused, heteronormative, and rather patriarchal form of sex education did nothing to quell our curiosities about the act of having sex. We grew up watching RnB and Hip-Hop music videos with video vixens shaking ass on TV, belting out the lyrics to Ignition (we didn’t know about R. Kelly back then, we were just kids!) – sex was everywhere, yet no one was telling us about it. But as Oloni points out in her book, “talking about sex on a biological, emotional and physical level are all vital. It helps us not only to understand how our bodies work, but also to become comfortable with them. We become empowered when we make what feel like the right sexual decisions in our life.”
In March 2022, *Cherwell* did a sex survey which revealed Exeter College as Oxford’s ‘top shaggers’, and as an Exeter student myself, I believe that I am the perfect messenger to tell you about *The Big O*. It’s hard as an Oxford student to navigate an active and healthy sex life. Between essay deadlines and (for male-attracted individuals) the quite frankly immature student male population, it is difficult to find the time to get to know their bodies and what they like on a sexual and emotional level. Despite having a vagina myself, I realised that I knew next to nothing about the organ. Thankfully, Oloni gives us a rather helpful diagram of the vagina and penis, including the star of the show, the clitoris.
Oloni’s book gives us all the details that a student at university needs to hear, during a time which is often pivotal for sexual exploration. Dealing with slut-shaming and purity culture in a world that is less than kind to women, and seems to express distaste towards sexual pleasures outside of heterosexual missionary, means that a lot of us don’t get to explore what sex means to us outside of these confines. Oloni writes about a range of topics, from consent and heartbreak to kinks and fetishes. Its slightly ambiguous title also means that it can be on your shelf without your nosy parents clocking you! Overall, I think it is a great book to help you learn about yourself, your body, and your pleasures.
*The terms ‘Cosy Girl’ and ‘Hot Girl’ are open to any gender.

Image Credit: Priscilla Du Preez on Unsplash.



Cherwell Recommends



LITTLE GIRL BLUE
Nina Simone
- Evie Sharp, seconded via
heart reaction by Leila Moore
Image: Public Domain

“The song ‘Kepko’ by Sega
Bodega and the book ‘Young
Mungo’ by Douglas Stuart go
well together”
- Max Marks



ANYWHERE BUT HERE
Sorry
- Florence Allen
Image: Paul Hudson via Flickr CC BY 2.0

Vivienne Westwood: Cultural Provocateur and True Original

Memorialising the life and work of the late icon, activist, and trailblazer.

Iseult De Mallet Burgess

When Vivienne Westwood was granted an OBE medal in 1992, she wore a sombre grey skirt suit to meet Queen Elizabeth II. Outside Buckingham Palace, she twirled for the photographers—sans underwear. The Queen was supposedly amused. The provocative mother of punk had little time for prudery or propriety. Westwood took the anti-establishment ethos of punk and allied it with haute couture, rewriting the rule book of fashion. While the designer may be remembered primarily for her sartorial ingenuity, she was also fiercely political, an enemy of convention, and a relentless climate activist. She was a rebel with a cause.

From her early days of championing the punk look with then-partner Malcolm McLaren and the Sex Pistols, Westwood knew that fashion could—must—be political. “I was messianic about punk, seeing if one could put a spoke in the system in some way,” she said of the punk years. “I realised there was no subversion without ideas. It’s not enough to want to destroy everything.”

Westwood and McLaren opened a scene-establishing boutique on King’s Road in

1971, which took on several lives, including rebranding as Sex in 1974 and as World’s End in 1979. It was a haunt of the bands she outfitted, a spiritual home for punk fashion, and a finger up at the establishment. The clothes were deliberately transgressive: bondage trousers, rubber skirts and safety pins mocked polite society. Westwood and McLaren designed the 1981 New Romantic-inspired Pirate collection, their entrée into high fashion, under the World’s End label before they parted ways.

Westwood’s runways would continue to remix and invert historical references: crinoline re-cut as the ‘mini-crini’ took inspiration from 17th century style, corsets played with 18th century dress. She parodied British looks, reinventing materials such as tartan and Harris Tweed. Westwood relished the tension between conservative historical references and anarchic subversion.

Her catwalk was also her political platform, though her activism extended beyond fashion. In 1989 she posed as Margaret Thatcher, whom she thought had done “real damage” to the world, for the cover of Tatler magazine over a caption that read: “This woman was once a punk.” Months after the shooting of the innocent Jean Charles de Menezes in London,

T-shirts from her spring/summer 2006 collection were emblazoned with the slogan “I Am Not A Terrorist, Please Don’t Arrest Me”, in a bid to challenge the government’s proposed anti-terror legislation. In the July 2008 issue of Dazed, she incited readers to “Get a Life!”, subvert the status quo, and think about rising sea levels.

Westwood was intensely committed to the fight against climate change. She launched her campaign to address climate change issues, Climate Revolution, at the closing ceremony of the 2012 London Paralympics; her autumn/winter 2015 show called for viewers to “VOTE GREEN”; placards at her spring/summer 2016 show penned the slogans “fracking is a crime” and “austerity is a crime”; she supported PETA, Oxfam, the Green Party, and rainforest charity Cool Earth. In 2015, she took the fracking debate to David Cameron—by driving an armoured vehicle to his house.

Westwood was, in many ways, full of contradictions: a revolutionary honoured by the Queen, anti-consumerist despite her own business interests. Yet she did not turn away from the fact that fashion plays a huge role in the climate catastrophe. In fact, she was one of the first to raise her voice and demand that fashion do better.

Film

Glass Onion Review: Those ‘Knives’ Need Sharpening

Why Agatha Christie would not have approved of this Netflix mystery.

Beatrice Ricketts

This review contains spoilers.

“Well, here’s another clue for you all: The walrus was Paul.”

So jeers John Lennon in The Beatles’s “Glass Onion”, a song plied with red herrings to laugh at those who read far too much into the band’s lyrics.

Rian Johnson’s *Glass Onion*, which was released on Netflix in December, is the sequel to the well-regarded (perhaps too much so) 2019 *Knives Out* – and similarly refuses successful detective work by the spectator. With twists, turns, and flashbacks, the viewer is never given the opportunity to believe that they could work out the mystery.

Miles Bron (Edward Norton) is a Zuckerberg-Musk-esque tech billionaire who invites a star-studded group of old friends to his private island for a murder mystery game, where he will be play-murdered. But, surprise! In the first (and most obvious) of the film’s promised twists, the game is quickly cut off and a real murder occurs instead. In fact, there are several, including one before the time of the film starts.

And who is there to solve the case? Daniel Craig’s drawling southern Benoît Blanc, of course. With the help of a handy ‘twin’ device (played by Janelle Monáe), over the course of the film we find out the motives of each character on the island. Finally, we find out who the murderer is in a lengthy final scene culminating in the Mona Lisa burning to ashes. Gone is the eerie and autumnal Art Deco of the first film, all we get this time is stifling heat, and swimming pools.

Johnson’s plot borrows heavily from – if not pillages – Agatha Christie. The concept of a cast of eccentric characters stuck together on an island is not new (see *And Then There Were None*, 1939), nor is the opening declaration of a death before it has happened (see *A Murder is Announced*, 1950). Whilst *Glass Onion* is rife with intrigue and clever ideas, if we were to raise Christie up from the dead to give Johnson a few pointers, I think she would advise the following:

Firstly, spend more time with each character individually.

Caricaturing Elon Musk, Norton’s Miles Bron turns out simply bland in comparison. His group of friends is not much more compelling. Despite a clever, and quite literally ‘on the nose’ scene in which the politics of each character is demonstrated by their mask-wearing style (the film is set in May 2020), the men’s rights activist

(Dave Bautista), scientist (Leslie Odom Jr.), and corrupt politician (Kathryn Hahn) do not develop much further from their introduction. Their possible motives are identical and vague: save their own career by backing the rich guy, rather than the truth. An oddly-integrated mix, the friendship of the self-described “Disruptors” is hard to believe, and the dynamics appear much weaker than in the intriguingly dysfunctional family of the first *Knives Out*. The film mocks its characters, but we have no reason to care.

Secondly, allow the viewer to believe they can guess the culprit (even if they will inevitably be wrong.)

Johnson seems to laugh at the watcher. A third of the way in, he pulls us back: none of what you just saw was the whole truth. An element of the viewer’s trust is lost as previous scenes are peeled back to reveal missed dialogue. The basis of the ‘murder mystery’ genre is eclipsed by clever scene cutting and a self-referential script which claps itself on the back (“Stop these malapropisms!” Blanc reflects on Bron’s previous lines.) Anything from this point on could still be a lie, for all we know.

Finally... the twist is based around a twin. Really?

The film is certainly entertaining and flashy enough to fill its 139 minutes, yet for all its cleverness, perhaps it needs to go back to Agatha Christie a little.

Cherwell Recommends

BOOKS

Into the Woods by John Yorke
- Hannah Selig

I’m Glad My Mom Died by Jeannette McCurdy
- Deborah Gunnoiki

Being a Human by Charles Foster
- Thomas Bristow

Conversations on Love: with Philippa Perry, Dolly Alderton, Roxane Gay, Stephen Grosz, Esther Perel, and many more
by Natasha Lunn
- Iustina Roman

FILM

Decision to Leave (2022)
- Kobi Mohan

My Beautiful Laundrette (1985)
- Anuj Mishra

“Who am I, and who do I love?”

A review of Neil Bartlett’s adaption of *Orlando* at The Garrick Theatre.

Ursula White

The life of Virginia Woolf’s immortal Orlando (played by Emma Corrin) is adapted by Neil Bartlett and directed by Michael Grandage to create a modern, theatrical piece centred around the question “Who am I, and who do I love?”. The question that pervades Orlando is equally relevant from the Elizabethan to Victorian eras and remains pertinent today, uniting the audience with the characters, and evoking an emotive response to the production which follows Orlando through the centuries, from life as a Elizabethan teenage nobleman to the perils of Victorian womanhood, with tantalisingly hints at the future beyond. Corrin’s sardonic portrayal of Orlando lacked nothing when it came to the comedic catapulting between eras, pulling the audience with them on a fast paced adventure. However, while I thoroughly enjoyed watching them ask “who do I love?” over the course of several hundred years, the lack of narrative structure and glancing pace lacked the emotional depth that was hinted at in the beginning and end, leaving me with a sense of having missed something in the character of Orlando.

Upon entering the Garrick Theatre the first thing I noticed was the depth of the stage, which was sparsely set and painted black. The versatility of the stage was used by the actors to create the many lives of Orlando, becoming

the backdrop for several hundred years of history, not to mention multiple countries, a frozen river and a ship. The dominant prop in the production is a metal framed bed, which becomes central to the play’s overarching question, “Who am I, and who do I love?”, providing a setting for Orlando’s sexual relationships and the renowned gender change. The bed is wheeled between eras as Orlando becomes accustomed to life as a woman. As this occurs, we see the bed transition from a symbol of sexual exploration in heated scenes with Nell Gwyn and Sasha (both played by Millicent Wong) to a place of confinement in the Victorian Era, when Orlando lies in bed surrounded by tea-cup-bearing Virginia Woolfs.

The production deftly tackles the question of gender on both physical and emotional levels. Beginning with a cocky young Orlando strutting onto the stage in nightclothes, revealing the end of a prosthetic penis, stating that he is not a virgin and reciting a cringe-worthy rendition of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18, the play presents Orlando as the epitome of a stereotypical ‘teenage boy’. Corrin inhabits this role perfectly, from their bouncing stride to cheeky vocal winking, and charismatic communication with the audience. This boyish body language becomes gradually muted over the course of the play, with movements becoming almost imperceptibly smaller as Orlando transitions to a Victorian housewife, pleading with a chorus of Virginia

Woolfs to help them and imploring, “Come on, you wrote me”.

By exposing their body as they become a woman, the question is posed: why is it acceptable to see a topless male body on stage, but shocking when the female body is exposed? Throughout the next section of the play Orlando grapples with the perils of inhabiting a female body, from gawking Sailors (including Deba Baker’s laddish Captain) to the need to marry and the lack of property rights, all cheerily explained to them by Ms Grimsditch (Deborah Findlay).

Fundamentally the questions posed in Bartlett’s adaption are ones of identity, not physicality. The conversation created is an intimately personal one in which Orlando’s gender is just one fluid factor of this time travelling, omnipresent, immortal character. By placing Orlando’s gender change into a scenario where it appears to be the most natural of all the surprising events, Bartlett makes it feel expected and commonplace. This is reflected in Corrin’s nonchalant, unphased presentation of Orlando after the change; when Orlando wakes up as a woman, they appear not to have noticed, sitting up in bed and stretching, exposing the side of their chest to the audience. Even Ms Grimsditch is lighthearted, exclaiming, “knock me down with a flipping feather”, then continuing to dress Orlando in women’s clothes as they divulge how their life has changed.

Read the full article at cherwell.org.

Readers Recommend

ALBUMS

ANTS FROM UP THERE
Black Country, New Road

PREACHER’S DAUGHTER
Ethel Cain

STICK SEASON
Noah Kahan

KIWANUKA
Michael Kiwanuka

SONGS

ALL I EVER ASKED
Rachel Chinouriri

JOKE!
SE SO NEON

HYPNOTIZED
Fleetwood Mac

FLOAT
Olivia Dean

Music

The Most Anticipated Albums of 2023

Cherwell’s picks for the top 10 most anticipated albums of 2023 – including a bonus!

Maeve Hagerty

After a rather remarkable year for albums in 2022, with hard-hitters like FKA Twigs’ “Caprisongs”, Beyoncé’s Renaissance, Rosalía’s “Motomami”, and Ethel Cain’s “Preacher’s Daughter”, who knows how the albums rumored to be dropping in 2023 will measure up? There are several notable projects dropping this year that are bound to impress.

11. **Black Belt Eagle Scout** – “**The Land, the Water, the Sky.**” Black Belt Eagle Scout’s exploration of indie rock promises to be a journey of reconnection with her ancestors and a journey through the nature which she associates with them.

10. **100 geecs** – “**10,000 geecs.**” After an interesting, experimental release in their first album “1000 geecs” the duo is returning this year with a new project that promises to be just as weird and wonderful as the last. Doubtless an exciting contribution, “10,000 geecs” is definitely an album to watch for.

9. **Miley Cyrus** – “**Endless Summer Vacation.**” With possibly one of the only truly interesting, and not entirely sour, Pop-Punk albums of 2020 in “Plastic Hearts,” no one really knows what direction her new project could take this year. But, suffice it to say, we’re curious. Cyrus has proven she can be tender, sexy, edgy, and poppy over the course of her career, and this new album is intriguing. No one knows what side of herself she’ll be showing, and that’s the exciting part.

8. **Måneskin** – “**Rush!**” Following their

2021 Eurovision win, Måneskin has brought an edginess to glam rock and unique charisma which has gathered them a loyal following and which suggests that their forthcoming album will be one to remember.

7. **Samia** – “**Honey.**” After the breathtaking debut album “The Baby” (2020), Samia has promised a new project in 2023. She dropped the popular and diverging lead single “Kill Her Freak Out” in 2022, and described the song and the forthcoming LP as marking the end of the story of “The Baby” and her transition to a new chapter. Moreover, if “Honey” has even a dab of the indie charm and heartfelt nature of her first LP, then it is sure to be a success.

6. **A\$AP Rocky** – “**Don’t Be Dumb.**” Though he has not officially announced a release, A\$AP Rocky has been teasing a new album and even suggested that Metro Boomin’ will feature heavily as a producer. While some of his projects have proven relatively un-notable in the past, there is hope that we’ll see some artistic growth, as it’s been 5 years since his last full-length project, “Testing.”

5. **Kelela** – “**Raven.**” The R&B singer’s upcoming project is led by the mellow single “On the Run”, and in describing her new album she said that it was her “first breath taken in the dark, an affirmation of black femme perspective in the midst of systemic erasure and the sound of our vulnerability turned to power.”

4. **Yves Tumor** – **TBA.** After dropping the new post-punk single “God is a Circle” (2022) and EP “The Asymptotical World,”

fans can only hope that this visionary artist is hinting at a bigger project to come this year. Following the success and texture of “Heaven to a Tortured Mind” (2020), any new Yves Tumor project is something to get excited about.

3. **Gorillaz** – “**Cracker Island.**” Having made a name for themselves collaborating with artists from Carly Simon to Grace Jones, Gorillaz’s new LP promises an even more exciting lineup. With the release of successful singles like “New Gold” (2022) featuring Bootie Brown and Tame Impala, the rest of the album is supposed to feature the likes of Thundercat, Bad Bunny, Beck, Stevie Nicks, and Adele Omotayo. “Cracker Island” promises the much-beloved vision of Gorillaz with the aid of some imaginative artists.

2. **Lana Del Rey** – “**Did you know that there’s a tunnel under Ocean Blvd.**” Lana Del Rey just can’t stop. With the astounding, genre-defining “Norman F*ing Rockwell” (2019), and two more albums in the interim, Lana Del Rey’s upcoming 9th project seems to channel her signature dreamy, soul-crushing California Americana in a new direction for the same artistry that has made her so popular. The lead title single is nothing short of beautiful and hints at what’s to follow.

1. **Rihanna** – “**R9.**” All we can say is: please! Please, Rihanna, drop your album! After teasing it for years, and with her Super Bowl Halftime show approaching, is it possible that this could be the year we finally get the much-anticipated “R9?” It’s been 9

years since her smash success “Anti” (2016), and suffice it to say that her fans—and us—are desperate for this release.

Yves Tumor performing on tour in 2019.
Image Credit: The Come Up Show via Flickr.



Time to BeReal...all the time

How even the realest social media app yet is subject to “late” reality.

Phoebe Walls

Once a day phones across the world ping with the famous notification: “Time to BeReal - 2 mins left to capture a BeReal and see what your friends are up to”. BeReal provides spontaneous, unfiltered glimpses into friends’ lives, be it messy bedrooms or thousands of open tabs. Instagram offers the highlights but on BeReal, it’s acceptable to be out of focus and still in pyjamas at 2pm. The question stands: is this call for realness a burden or a blessing?

BeReal is an ideal way to keep in touch. Rather than liking someone’s glamorous Instagram, you see them everyday at a random time. Most importantly, it feels real; no filters or time spent choosing the perfect curation of life’s highs. The opportunity to flick through the calendar and see exactly what you were doing one day two months ago is also strangely satisfying. Not to mention the end-of-year replay: a short video created by the app that allows users to watch the year flash before their eyes. BeReal captures the magic in the mundane.

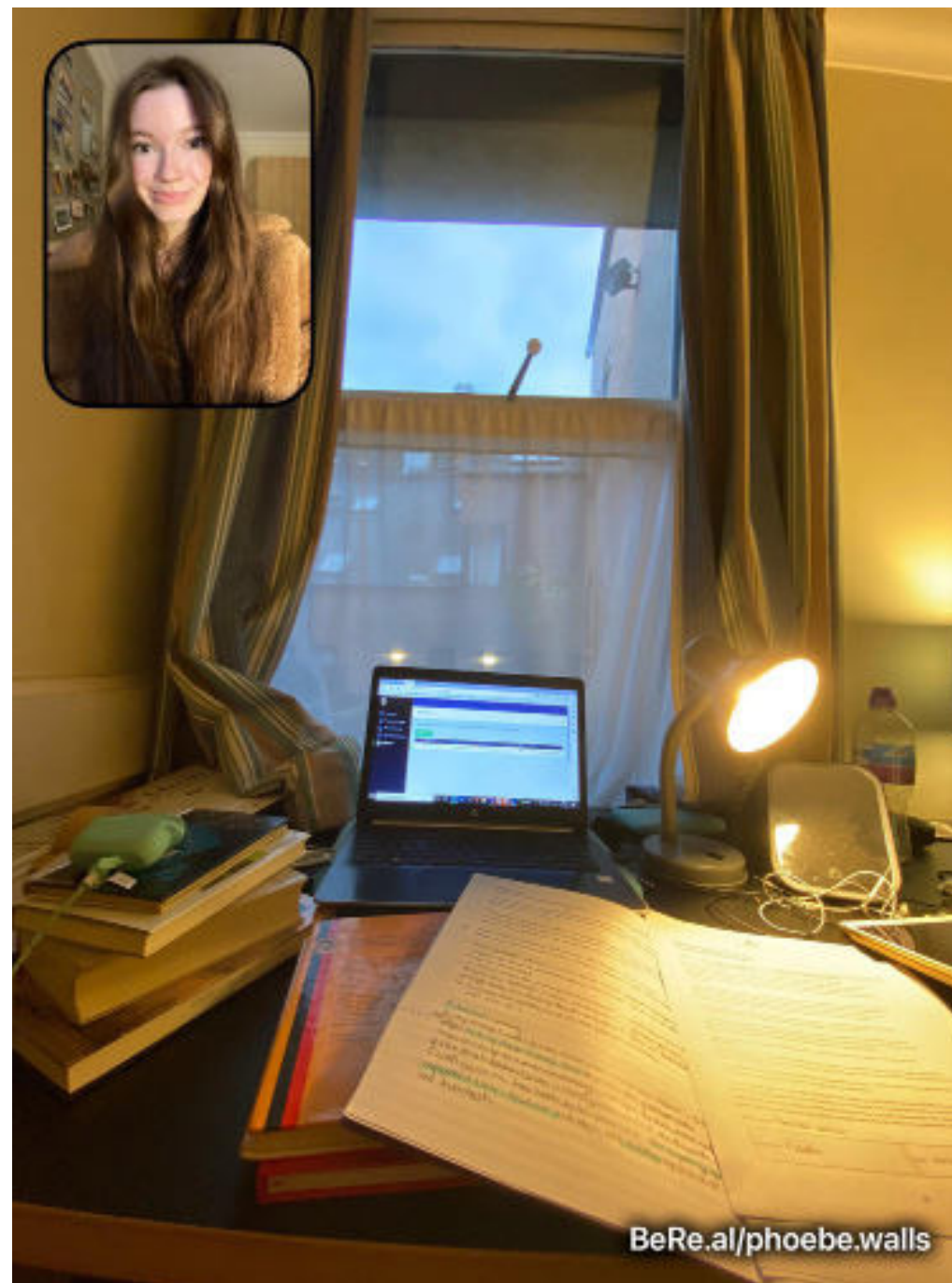
However, not everyone is being real. Despite the obvious yellow warning sign emojis, the pressure of the 2-minute timer is an idle threat. An increasing number of people post after the chosen time, sometimes as many as 20 hours late, at which point my phone is bombarded with notifications of a ‘late’ post. When it gets to that stage, I wonder what the point is. Surely then the app becomes just like any other social media platform. In a society where our identities are often defined by our online presence, the burden of being constantly available can make young people fear that they are boring. I admit I’ve sometimes wanted to wait until my

makeup is fully blended, or I’ve worried about still being in a dressing gown at 11am after the timer has gone off. I’d rather post when I’m with my friends than when I’m sitting at my desk. It can also be frustrating when I wake up to the notification with my eyes still clamped shut like a badger to then see someone else has waited twelve hours to boast their thrilling night out.

Sometimes the ‘realness’ also creates unnecessary pressure. My feed is full of Oxford students studying at all hours of the day, which makes me feel guilty for relaxing during the vacation. Even on Christmas Day, I was tormented by pictures of tutorial sheets and collections revision.

BeReal offers a sense of casual posting for people who prefer to maintain a sense of mystery to their online life. Those with one Instagram post to their name enjoy the lack of pressure on a photo that forms an archive only the user can see. It’s impossible to stalk a BeReal account and stumble upon a tagged photograph of someone when they were 13 years old. Posts disappear and instead form personal, private calendars. Nevertheless, my Nana was frightened of the app and ran out of the room before the timer got a chance to capture her realness...

It seems that the ticking time-bomb of the BeReal notification is just another excuse to stay glued to our phones. Although not as fake as the ‘photo dumps’ found on Instagram (a deliberate selection of photos), BeReal still offers the chance to post late and becomes like the forms of social media it has tried to estrange itself from. If we’re being truly real, this is just another online version of ourselves. Perhaps we should aim to spend more time in the real world, having fun with friends and doing things we love, rather than relying on social media to permit ‘realness’. Realness is all around us,



Aries 21 March - 22 April

People and activities that drain your energy and dim your famous spark. This year, make time for things that really matter, you can’t juggle everything!

Capricorn 22 Dec. - 19 Jan.

The quota you think you need to meet. You are as determined and hardworking as they make them, but self-care is productivity, too. You don’t have to burnout to feel

Aquarius 20 Jan. - 18 Feb.

Your hyper-independence. You balance it all and you don’t need anyone’s help. But in 2023, appeal to your human side – it’s okay to ask for support.

Pisces 19 Feb. - 20 March

The rose-tinted glasses. You see the best in people, but that includes the worst of people. Don’t make excuses for others, and only invest in relationships that serve and nurture you!

Taurus 20 April - 20 May

Your seat in the comfort zone. Seek new experiences, new people, new understanding. Not everything that is familiar is good for you!

Gemini 21 May- 20 June

That constant forward thinking. Of course, it’s good to plan ahead and look to the future but try to experience the present moment in its entirety instead of jumping from one fun thing to the next.

Leo 23 July - 22 Aug.

The comparison to others. Leo, you stand out – it’s what you do. But you can’t be the best at everything! Try not to view life as a competition, there is great value in not always being number one.

Virgo 23 Aug. - 22 Sept.

The need for control. Virgo, life is not perfect, and neither are people. Instead of trying to craft your ideal universe, take things as they come and do the best with what you have. Your eye for detail will come in handy elsewhere.

Cancer 21 June - 22 July

Your saviour complex. You can’t fix them, or save them, and it’s not your job to! Just love in the best way you can – try giving your loved ones space and allowing them to grow naturally.

Libra 23 Sept. - 22 Oct.

Your laissez-faire approach. You’re a peacemaker always, Libra, but this year you need to seek a deeper purpose. Don’t just sit back and observe.

Scorpio 23 Oct. - 21 Nov.

All that heartbreak. You love hard and feel deeply, Scorpio, but you need to work towards releasing that pain in order to live life to the fullest.

Sagittarius 22 Nov. - 21 Dec.

The gas pedal. Your excitement about the world around you is inspiring, but slow down! You need to pay better attention. There is magic in the mundane, too.

Horoscopes

As you enter 2023, let go of:

CHERPSE!

PARTON

First impressions:
That is one tall individual. Cool.

Did it meet your expectations?
I didn't particularly have any expectations coming into this so yeah absolutely, they were met in that sense.

What was the highlight?
Honestly, there wasn't really anything there in terms of a connection; nor was there anything memorable.

What was the most embarrassing moment?
For some reason I paused when meeting her and just decided that reaching out for a handshake was the ideal thing to do in the moment; which I personally think is quite funny and that kind of broke some ice.

Describe the date in 3 words:
A Learning Experience

“
There was a
very awkward
handshake...

DOLLY

First impressions:
We are very different people, but it was fun to meet someone new and go for a walk.

Did it meet your expectations?
I didn't really have any expectations as I just signed up out of curiosity.

What was the most embarrassing moment?
At the start there was a very awkward handshake.

Describe the date in 3 words:
A quick walk.

Is there a second date on the cards?
No second date.

What was the highlight?
(None provided...)

Looking for love?

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

Sex and the Spires

Dolores Grey

Once upon a time a young woman came to study amongst the idyllic spires of Oxford. She dreamed of being 'Crazy in Love' as she strolled hand-in-hand across the cobblestones, having 'Sex on Fire' beside a bookcase in the corner of the Old Bod, and of a handsome PPEist proclaiming his love to her by means of a placard and a stereo in the middle of Broad Street.

Instead, she soon discovered that she was not Crazy in Love, but rather driven crazy by her weekly essay; having sex that was far more forgettable than explosive. She was often found standing in the middle of Broad Street having yet another existential crisis, fuelled by her dwindling academic prospects and her romantic disillusionment that now involved 'she's as well as 'he's.

As I performed my umpteenth walk of shame down Broad Street at the end of last term, clenching my best Ann Summers lace bra under my arm, I couldn't help but wonder, *is romance dead?* And if so, who killed it? Or had I just been brainwashed by a childhood of Richard Curtis films into thinking that there ever was such a thing? Welcome to 'No Sex in the City', a hopeless (and single) romantic's attempt to put words to the often gruelling, but exhilarating, struggles of dating at Oxford University.

I recently read about a virgin in her late twenties who found the 'love of her life' through writing a sex and relationships column. And so, here goes... What's the worst that can happen? I find people throwing stones at my window overwhelmed by a desire to have me as their regular booty call? Or my innocent friends banging on my door to burn me at the stake after I expose all of their worst sexual escapades?

There are over 25,000 students at Oxford University. I only need one. And I'm not picky, but you better be good-looking, funny and about 500 other things (I can send the list to any potential prospects). From incestuous college flings,

uncontrollable horniness around housemates, to passing a one night stand on the tescalator, Oxford certainly throws up its challenges. But has romance become too much to expect? If you search for 'love' on SOLO, you'll find over 9 million results...so we certainly have enough reading on the topic.

Watching some of my friends' beautiful and mature relationships certainly helps to expel any cynicism I might have and so, I'm optimistic. Single life is the most practical option for many students; some of us are simply trying to make it out the other side of this place with a degree in hand. I've tried that approach - telling myself I'm far too busy and important to be obsessing over my love life, but then I find myself coming to the same realisation as Bridget Jones, "that unless something changes soon [I'm] going to live a life where my major relationship was with a bottle of wine". At least in my case, I've had three major relationships: with a bottle of wine, gin, and tequila.

According to a Student Room survey, 35% of Oxford graduates found their true love at uni and they fared as most likely to marry their university love at 79%. I'm not setting out to be part of that statistic but I'd certainly like to rack up a few romantic anecdotes that don't start with something like "that time in the Bridge toilets".

I've asked friends who are familiar with the show, which 'Sex and the City' character I most resemble, and I'm chuffed when I'm told that, of course, I'm Carrie. For those of you who don't know, that means I'm a successful columnist living in New York who is funny, sexy, insightful and incredibly attractive (okay, you got me, I don't possess all of her qualities). She's the natural leader of the iconic friendship group, strong willed and ever optimistic about finding true love. But I also recognise that I share the qualities I'd rather ignore: she's self-absorbed, has a problem with boundaries, and let's face it, spent 6 seasons,

2 films and a reboot completely obsessed with love, sex and men.

It's no secret that many of the tropes of the show are outdated and controversial, and in ways, have instilled many negative ideas about relationships and beauty standards in me, personally. The show is the inspiration behind this column but its similarities end here because unlike Carrie, it's not going to take me a decade of writing it to find 'the one' (it better not because a graduate writing for *Cherwell* is just too pathetic).

The Cherwell Sex Survey last year found that you're most likely to find someone to bring home in Plush and offering advice on finding sexual partners, a respondent said that "Piers Gav helps". I've frequented Plush more regularly and filled out a membership form for Piers Gav, but to no avail. So it's time for some new advice.

Because I'm a finalist and obviously have little work to do, I'll be devoting this term to an experiment in Oxford dating. The number of Tinder dates I've had rivals the number of lectures I've attended since coming to Oxford and Cupid's arrow over here at Cherpse has always missed the target. But I'm not giving up on love and in the name of my non-existent Cherwell readership, I'll leave no stone unturned. I'll be sharing my own experiences as well as the anecdotes of others, in an effort to shed light on what sex and dating is really like at Oxford. But I'd also love to hear from you! Your stories, suggestions and questions (maybe scrap that one because who am I to be answering them) and if you so wish, date offers.

XO
Dolores Grey

Email lifestylecherwell@gmail.com to get in touch.

A Case Against New Year's Resolutions
Why focusing on growth may be better than constantly starting over.

Jessica Mason

It's January again. Just like every other year. We are once again pummelled by the pressure to reinvent ourselves. New year, new you! Be different! Be exciting! Start fresh! All the trends in January, whether that's Veganuary or Dry January, say the same thing: maybe this year you can be perfect. Maybe this year, the unrealistic expectations you have set yourself every single January will actually work out. You're growing, you're improving. Don't eat chocolate, delete Tiktok, save money, wake up at 5am every day and meditate.

Honestly, it's really not for me.

I have always struggled to stop myself from making the most ridiculous new year's resolutions. As someone who always lived a life dictated by impulse decisions, I jumped at every chance to clear out the old and welcome in the new, the shiny, the interesting. I was so eager to discard the mess that the previous year had been. This led to the unrealistic expectation that I would be the "perfect" version of myself in this 'new year new me' fantasy. By February I would be left deflated and disappointed, laughing sadly at my naivety. In 2016, for example, I swore I would master the art of parkour. And I tackled this challenge probably in the opposite way to an actual athlete: I did loads and loads of research without actually doing anything. I wrote down a meticulous list, a step-by-step guide to teach me how to learn parkour, and I wrote pages and pages about my plan in a journal. I really thought it would work. But step one always left me blank, staring at the page: 'get really fit'. I did not like this step. I never did it. My dream crumbled.

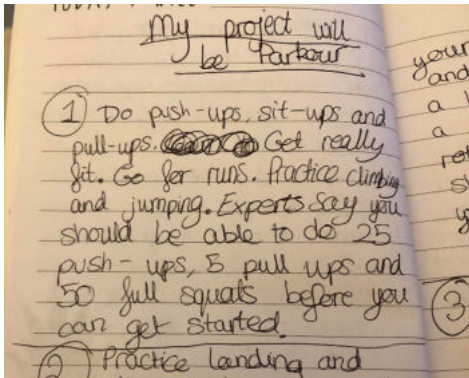
I don't really know why, at 13 years old, I thought parkour would be a great addition to my life. But what I do know is that I felt that pressure to reinvent myself, to be better, just because a new year had arrived. The years that followed came with more unrealistic resolutions, and it was only very recently that I turned around, had a look at myself, and thought, this is sort of stupid. Why aim for perfection? Isn't it better to mobilise the lessons and memories of the previous year? To live life as one continuous journey? I am grateful for all I learned in 2022. Why should I have to start fresh when I've just about worked things out?

In 2022, I held onto what helped me grow, the things that steadied me in times of stress, even when they may have seemed mundane and boring. Sunday breakfasts huddled in the tiny kitchen, 6 o'clock dinners where we complain about our tutes, trips to the Waterstones cafe. I enjoy seeing the stamps on my loyalty card add up as I buy yet another massive hot chocolate. I enjoy feeling like I've committed to something, like my life is progressing, and I can see that in the crumpled little stamp card in my hands. One fun fact about me is I have a really long Duolingo streak, 1186 days and counting! Although that could present me as slightly tragic, I want to emphasise the point that sometimes holding on to things that really nourish you is better than scrapping everything in favour of a 'new you.' I think there is so much peace to be found in small, familiar routines that ground us.

I have begun to find comfort in familiar songs, as if they were old, soft, worn

clothes. I smile each time I wear them and remember all that I associate with them. Memories latch onto them and deepen each track with a new colour as I live through something new. There is beauty in new things. There is beauty in witnessing your own growth. But growth doesn't always come with big sudden changes and bold sweeping claims about how we will change ourselves. Sometimes, growth is just about putting on your favourite song and admiring how different you are to when you first heard it. Sometimes it's about wearing a new jumper with the same old necklace you always wear, and enjoying this charming matrimony of novel and familiar. Sometimes it's about meeting an old friend in a new coffee shop. For me, keeping the same precious little routines helps me face all the new and terrifying things that inevitably come with the passing of time. I don't need to reinvent myself to face these things. New year, same old me. And that's enough.

Image Credit: Jessica Mason



Cowley’s Euro Supermarket and the comfort of finding authentic ingredients from home

Nicole Dimitrova details how her discovery of Eurosupermarket in Cowley connected her to her culture, and food from home.

I’ve always been interested in how food and culture intertwine, how certain foods can make us think of different people, places and parts of our own identity. I was lucky enough to get a chance to explore my own culture through food while in Oxford, and this came in the form of exploring my new favourite supermarket. Located on Cowley Road, this supermarket came as an absolute lifeline to me here in Oxford. Being a proud Bulgarian, I’m extremely connected to the food from my country. At home I regularly scoff down сарми (Sarmi) and fresh баница (Banitsa) made by my parents and I, with Bulgarian cabbage, cheese and yoghurt being sourced from our neighbourhood Bulgarian shop. However, when in Oxford I found I missed my food from home- and, while eating in hall is great, there’s nothing like home cooked food, especially when it’s from your culture. Alas, one faithful day during a stroll through Cowley, I stumbled upon a shop with my flag, plastered on the outside of it, adjacent to Polish, Turkish, Hungarian and Romanian flags. Without hesitation I stepped in. Immediately I was overwhelmed with options- not only did they have food from around Eastern Europe, but they also

had food from Bulgaria! Bulgarian brands, food I was bought up on, food I only ever get to eat when back in my country. I was truly spoiled for choice. As much as I love our little Bulgarian shop in my neighbourhood in London, the options there aren’t exactly exhaustive- so stepping into what I can only describe as a heaven for all things eastern European was a complete gamechanger. Not only did they have my favourite snacks, packaged foods and drinks, but Euro Supermarket also has a fantastic deli section filled to the brim with meats and cheeses from Poland, along with freshly baked breads and fresh produce (with the added bonus that it’s all loose without plastic packaging). I was also stunned by their selection of beers and other alcohol- including a wide selection of Bulgarian branded spirits such as мастика (Mastika), мента (Menta) and ракия (Rakiya). Quite literally bursting with joy, the following day I ditched the usual trip to Tesco and decided to base dinner around ingredients I could find from this beautiful supermarket I will now be calling my second home. Fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and onions were made into a шопска салата (Shopska salata), paired with



Serbian плескавица (Pleskavitsa), with an obligatory can of Bulgarian beer, my favorite being Каменица (Kamenitsa) with which to wash it all down- a classic meal served in Bulgaria that I would probably only ever eat during my holidays there. I felt so connected to my culture and country, in a way in which I hadn’t yet in Oxford, and I definitely couldn’t have done it without

finding this little pocket of culture in the city. Overall, it’s a remarkable supermarket with something for everyone, whether you’re looking for your favourite childhood snacks, a new spirit to get drunk on or to try a new food, I highly recommend going to visit. Image credit: Nicole Dimitrova



Image credit: Doug Beckers/CC BY S.A 2.0 via

A recipe for asparagus soup that everyone is sure to love

Nicole Dimitrova guides us through a step by step asparagus soup recipe sure to impress even the pickiest of eaters

This recipe is sure to become your go-to, whether you’re cold, feeling a bit under the weather or simply in need of some comforting soup, this is a must try- with shockingly little ingredients and time needed for how good it tastes! I first tried this as a starter in what was otherwise a seemingly underwhelming hotel restaurant. As someone who isn’t overly

keen on asparagus, it took my boyfriend convincing me to try it from his bowl for me to fall head over heels in love (with the soup of course). It was a beautiful bowl of creamy asparagus goodness, paired with stretchy salty cheese and crisp croutons on the side- and after some trial and error, I learnt how to make it at home.

Ingredients (4 servings)
3 **tblsp** of butter
2 **cloves** of garlic, minced
900g asparagus, remove the ends and cut remaining stalk into 2cm pieces
450ml Vegetable or Chicken stock
130ml double cream
Salt and pepper
A sprinkle of cheddar cheese (Optional) (make sure to grate it yourself- pre-grated cheese doesn’t melt as well)

Method
Placing your pot over medium heat, melt your butter and add your garlic, cooking until fragrant.
Add your asparagus and season with salt. Cook this until golden in colour.
Add your stock, cover the pot and leave to simmer until your asparagus is still green, but tender. This should take around 10-15 minutes of simmering.
Once cooked, turn off the stove and remove pot from the heat and begin to blend until smooth.
Once blended, add your cream, place the pot back onto the stove over low heat, seasoning the soup with salt and pepper to taste- when serving, sprinkle cheese on top of each bowl and stir (This is optional).
And that’s it! A soup that is easy to make, involves little effort, ingredients and time, and is sure to impress anybody who tries it! Not to mention- this recipe can be modified to be fully vegan! With plant-based butter and cream, as well as the optional cheese to go on top. You can also get creative and try adding more vegetables to your soup- my recommendations being onions, broccoli and potatoes- but add whatever you can think of really- its sure to win anybody over.

Buy of the week

Every week our Oli picks his supermarket pickup of the week - drop him an email at oliver.hall@magd.ox.ac.uk with your suggestions!

ManiLife Rich Cocoa Peanut Butter
This spread is peanut butter on a different level. A deep, rich chocolatey flavour pairs with the beautifully salty taste of the nut. As a bonus, ManiLife are an ethical brand that uses no palm oil, is vegan, and only uses 100% ethical cocoa. This is a hard product to find but a large Sainsbury’s will usually stock it. Image credit: phive/CC2:0 via iStock.



I tried out college football last term, you should too

Zoe Abereoje reflects on a term of trying something new

If you haven't tried a college sport, have you really gone to Oxford? Well yes, last year's academic stress and fatigue was enough to say been there, done that, got the t-shirt. Yet people commonly say that getting involved with college sports is the gateway to a good college experience. Like the nosey person I am, I had to see if it was true, and tried out college sports. More specifically, football last term. A term later, I would now say, it's at least worth a try.

Maybe it's best to give a little context. There's not a sporty bone in my body. I watch lots, (some say too much) safe in the knowledge that I can't catch a ball (or a break) or hit a beach ball with a mattress sized racquet, but I never was too keen on taking part. I peaked in Year 4 with my Essex County sliver in 600m and I hung up the boots then. Since then I've been savvy to avoid PE, with conveniently timed music lessons and so on. So back when I was a wide-eyed naive little fresher, you can only imagine my total joy and elation at hearing from almost anybody I spoke to, encouraging me to get involved with college sports. Curious by the high number and various types of people suggesting I do, I took the laborious first step of searching for and joining my college football group

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Provided I don't score an own goal next term, I'll consider myself proud!”

on facebook and never took it further than there. Maybe the occasional like of a post letting me know when the training was or telling myself that this term I was going to get involved.
Spoiler alert: I never did. But it's not just my chronic laziness that prevented me from doing so. The more of first year that passed along, the more and more negative things I started to hear about college sports. Specifically the side that wasn't to do with actual sport-ing. The crew dates that went too far, the socials that seemed terrifying. If my lack of sports acquiesce gave me cold feet, the social aspect of it had me turned off.
But when I found myself wheezing a bit too much after walking up one of the numerous flights of college stairs, I decided enough was enough. It was time for me to become a (barely) sporty person. Netball required too much coordination and rugby straight up terrified me, so off to football I went.
And after a term of going, I can say I was definitely not the best at it. But I definitely did try. What I really enjoyed (and did not expect to happen) was meeting the people like me who were also trying something new, and were okay with getting things wrong. The first time I showed up to any practice I was dragging my feet, but once I had gone to one session I started really enjoying it.

By the end of term I was genuinely looking forward to playing. I can't speak for all colleges, or all sports, but I can vouch for my college: it really is worth trying out. All the girls I played with were really nice and supportive, not like the netball girlies (omg netball girlies please don't take me seriously). This seems to be a general trend from people I spoke to outside of colleges too, not just mine. Even if you are terrible, you can still have a great time taking part. I've concluded that horrible people don't get involved in college sports.
While the social element seemed a bit intimidating given that it's not really my scene, it shouldn't put you off playing. They aren't going to bind you by your arms and legs and drag you to Jamal's. If you're not an extrovert or you don't really go out much, maybe you might know the names of the people you play with a bit better if you do go out. But from my term I would say that I still enjoyed myself playing, despite the fact that the day I'm sighted at a crew date is the day Phil Mitchell grows some luscious locks.
That being said, in the interest of being fair here are some of the genuine negatives.
It really isn't easy to be good, especially at football. I want to believe that one day I'll play and my skill will spontaneously appear. But no. Sometimes the ball goes really far away and I internally scream "oh naur!" because I know I have to run after it. Despite all of this, running is still one of the top ten worst things you could put a human through in my personal opinion. Not to mention the

awful soreness that comes from my rusty bones after running about for a bit.
But if anything, I hope that I showed it is, believe it or not, worth it. I'll go again this term with the hope that the pain of exercise can distract me from the miserables months of hillary. But in all seriousness if you were on the fence, or have been considering it and thought it was too late to try, it really is never too late and it is always worth it to try a college sport. You don't have to do football, most colleges do rugby and frisbee- last year I went to watch ice hockey cuppers. And after discovering the university has a team for the totally made-up sport "Eton Fives", anything is possible. it's worth having a look at what else you could try.
As for me, provided I don't score an own goal next term, I'll consider myself proud! As someone who avoided sports in first year like the plague and still gets the shivers when someone says the word PE, trust me, anyone can try.



Facing up to "Bazball" with relish are the Aussies, strong as ever under Pat Cummins, having demolished the Windies and South Africa. England's attack must find an answer to the Smith and Labuschagne question (last time it was knock them out), whilst also dealing with an in-form Head, a developing Cam Green and a scary Aussie attack. Along with the big trio, there are murmurings about Lance Morris, bowler of 95mph rockets. And if Boland comes along, which he surely will, England may well be all out before you can say "Build the man a statue!".
As with any home Ashes series, it's sure to be much more exciting than one in Oz. England have a wonderful chance to regain the Ashes. The Aussies have their own style of dominance. Strap yourselves in.
Image credit: CC2:0//John Sutton via Geograph

Looking ahead – Cricket in 2023

Henry Kay looks ahead to cricket in 2023.

2023 promises to be an exhilarating one for English cricket. As in 2019, fans will be treated to a home Ashes series and in October the return of the Cricket World Cup in India.
England will arrive in India as double-world champions having conquered the T20 scene in thrilling fashion in November of last year, thanks to a composed knock from test captain Ben Stokes, whose heroics in the 50-over final in 2019 will remain etched in English memories forever. England, as one of the top forces in white-ball cricket for the last few years, will be among the favourites for the title. Emerging stars like Harry Brook backing up the experience of Butler's squad are a testament to the depth of white-ball cricket in England.
Standing in their way will be India, buoyed by home fans who will be begging for a repeat of 2011 when Dhoni hammered a 6 to win in front of the adoring fans in Mumbai. However, despite having some of the finest talents to have played the game in recent years, this is a team that has faltered in major tournaments. Suryakumar Yadav, Bumrah, and Jadeja will do what they can to provide Kohli's apotheosis, but failure in the Asia Cup and demolition by England in the World T20 are signs that this team could be less than the sum of its parts.
Top-ranked New Zealand will want to avenge the final of 2019, but to do so they will need to continue firing on all cylinders. The Australians have the depth and the

firepower, but such traits can leave them with selection headaches and unbalanced teams that falter when the top order doesn't bring runs. This could, once again, be England's year.
Speaking of the Australians, they arrive in the summer for one of the most hotly anticipated Ashes series in memory. After the embarrassment of last winter England are reborn under Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum. Their new approach to test cricket – "Bazball" – has picked the England team up from its dire depths to a stunning run of victories. Their ultra-positive approach has yielded blistering victories and in Rawalpindi, a win that seemed impossible to create out of the most lifeless of surfaces. Everyone has bought into the approach that, whilst carrying risks, has paid off massively.
In terms of accumulating runs, England bear a potent middle-order; Root, Stokes, Brook, and Bairstow. A decision is needed over the gloves; do they go for Foakes, or use Bairstow, freeing up another spot in the team? The openers show frailties that too often see Pope walking out in the early overs, and the bowling attack needs to see a well-balanced mix of experience and youth. Anderson and Broad should play, but not necessarily together. Robinson has improved dramatically, Wood and the returning Archer bring much-needed pace, whilst Woakes and Potts have wicket-taking knacks.



Puzzles

Sudoku

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

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

College Confines

Colleges, represented by numbers have received new land by an anonymous donor. However they need to draw the boundaries to divide them according to the following rules:

Each piece of land must be rectangular

Only one college (number) may be in each piece of land

This number must equal the number of squares in the boundary.

6		4	4		3		
							3
					6		
		12					
							8
	8						
4						9	
			2				
6				6			

Cryptic Crossword

1	2		3		4		5		6	
								7		8
	9									
10						11		12		
				13						
									14	15
16			17			18	19			
					20					
				21						
22										
			23			24				

Across:

- 1. Mutual understanding in current thread (6)
- 5. One third of a game on Twitch (3)
- 7. Break a support (4)
- 9. Ionised sodium spilled over transcontinental country (9)
- 10. Husband is conservative? That’s old news!
- 12. Rips up signs of sorrow (5)
- 13. Create type of beer (5)
- 16. Odd pint includes uncooked crustacean (5)
- 17. Unconventional man suit makes a splash! (7)
- 21. Real idiot making opinion piece (9)
- 22. Top of the world skier’s aid (4)
- 23. One in the French illusion (3)
- 24. Quickly drunk on port (6)

Down:

- 2. Conservative Rishi’s empty hospital spells trouble! (6)
- 3. Strange thing in space according to David (6)
- 4. Type of kebab somewhat created on error (5)
- 5. Quiz teetotal about Spain (4)
- 6. Large bird sprinted in church (5)
- 8. Shirts from parts of golf course (4)
- 11.Beer ingredient with an unknown direction (5)
- 12. Exchange for tit? (3)
- 13. Deception with no clear way back (3)
- 14. Bid following independent one making a royal colour (6)
- 15.Allow after a Greek letter provided jewellery (6)
- 16. Rugby player used on set (4)
- 17. Early invention for cheese serving (5)
- 19. Exclusive ice cream serving (5)
- 20. English literature is over my head?

