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Cherwell

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Independent since 1920

UCU MEGA-STRIKE: “Oxford is a Tory finishing school”

Freya Jones reports.

Oxford University teaching staff took to the streets to protest against “shameful” working conditions on 1st February, in coordination with other workers’ strike action across the UK. In a march through the town centre, Oxford’s UCU members, including lecturers, administrators, and security staff, were joined by staff from Oxford Brookes University, local primary schools, and rail workers.

One lecturer speaking outside the Bodleian Libraries said, “we don’t get paid for the full time it takes to do the job”, claiming that lecture preparation and the time needed to mark students’ work is often “effectively unpaid”. For every one-hour lecture given, he stated that only an extra half-hour’s pay is received in many cases, which “is simply not enough time to prepare teaching materials of the calibre expected at Oxford”.

Attesting to this, a lecturer on strike from the Department of Anthropolgy told Cherwell that they were often working “late into the evening and at weekends” for no extra pay, in order to meaningfully mark student assignments. Endorsement of strike action is widespread in the Department of

Anthropology, either through UCU membership or “personal motivation”, with another lecturer saying they wanted to support the university workers on the lowest salaries, such as administrators and those on fixed-term contracts. “It’s incredibly difficult for young people coming into education to reach a permanent position” they explained, giving the example of two Mst. Creative Writing lecturers who are currently suing the university over “gig economy contracts” (p.3.) A third Anthropology lecturer at the protest added that “the commodification of education is getting worse every year”. They hope continued action and the potential to go on strike from marking exam papers in summer will result in positive negotiations with the University, for both permanent contracts and higher pay.

Gerard Ward, an associate lecturer in Law at Oxford Brookes University, believes that the ongoing decline in working conditions is due to the longterm “rinsing of the student loan system” by universities. Despite increases in undergraduate tuition fees and accommodation costs, Ward told Cherwell that the money often hasn’t been directed in the right ways, with funding being poured into “prestigious research projects” as opposed to workers’ salaries. Like those at Oxford University, Ward said many members of teaching staff at Brookes have precarious

short-term contracts, adding that, alongside the decline in working conditions, “general insecurity of staff employment is ultimately not good for students.”

John Wadesdon, a member of security staff at the Bodleian Libraries, said it was important that strikes are taking place here in Oxford. “It’s a Tory finishing school,” he told Cherwell, saying that the government officials who he believes are responsible for the deterioration of working conditions “all came here and were taught corruption”.

Oxford remains one of the most expensive cities in Europe to live in, with another speaker at the protest saying that it’s “shameful” that teaching staff on “most likely illegal” contracts are struggling to find affordable housing while employed by such a prestigious university.

Full story at [cherwell.org](https://www.cherwell.org).



The strikers are part of the biggest wave of nationwide industrial action in ten years.

Kick in the Balls: ticket prices increasingly unaffordable

Maggie Wilcox reports.

Cherwell has found that college balls are becoming less affordable, despite increased access initiatives. While the median standard ticket price has decreased over the last year, the median price of “access tickets” has increased. Students from low-income backgrounds or facing financial hardships are often priced out of attending balls, even at their own college.

Last week, the news of the St Hugh’s Ball cancellation angered many Hugh’s students

and raised concerns for those who had purchased an access ticket for this event. These tickets were amongst the cheapest on offer this season, being sold at half price, £57.5. Given that the stated reasoning for the failure of the ball was financial risk, tied to insufficient ticket sales, this raises deeper concerns than access to one event. In regards to affordability of balls at Oxford, there is a serious question for whether accessibility remains affordable.

The median ticket prices for both white and black tie college balls are lower than last year’s by about £11. The price of the

median access ticket, however, has risen by about £25. This exceeds the impact of inflation, meaning low-income students are paying more in real terms.

Moreover, the access tickets are amounting to less of a discount when compared to the price of a standard ticket. The median access ticket last year was 44% less than the median standard ticket, while this year it is only 41% less.

The value of the subsidies provided does not appear to correlate with the percentage of low-income students at each college,

Continued on p.6.

Cherwell survey: how “woke” is Oxford, really?

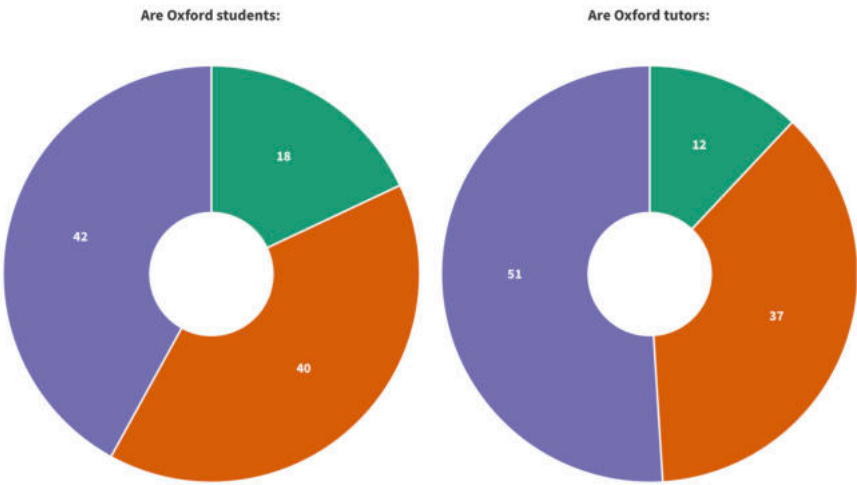
Bintia Dennog reports.

A right-leaning think tank has described Oxford as the second-most “radical progressive” university in the UK, following Cambridge. However, a *Cherwell* poll of around 200 students suggests that Oxford students disagree with this – 42% of respondents voted that Oxford students are not progressive enough and 51% voted that the teaching staff are not progressive enough. The college voted most ‘woke’ by a large majority was Wadham, receiving 33 votes out of 50. Civitas, a think tank described as right-wing by the Guardian, published their Radical Progressive University Guide as part of a series on new academic realism. According to their findings, the “best and most prestigious” universities tend to be the most progressive, exemplified by Cambridge and Oxford who, respectively, topped the rankings. Their results are based on universities’ endorsement of “trigger warnings, white privilege, and anti-racism” along with other factors, such as free speech controversies. Universities which have definitions of ‘white privilege’ on their website, or conduct anti-racism training are considered to be more radically progressive.

Civitas allege that this newfound ‘hyper-morality’ stems from the “mutation and splicing of past radicalism that include Marxism, postmodernism, feminism, Freudianism, and Maoism”. However, Oxford students are seemingly not in agreement with these findings. According to a *Cherwell* study, only 18% of respondents believed that Oxford students are too progressive. 40% voted that the students were “just the right amount” of progressive, and 42% voted that they are not progressive enough. The results for teaching staff are similar, yet more pronounced – only 12% thought that teaching staff were too progressive. 37% considered them to be the right amount of progressive and 51% of respondents voted that Oxford teaching staff are not progressive enough. When asked for thoughts on the subject, one student said that Oxford is “probably too woke in the sense of language policing /perspective exclusion but not woke enough in terms of keeping out and holding accountable people who do actual harm”. Another said: “New College isn’t accessible enough to have problems relating to class or race”.

How "woke" is Oxford? (%)

Too Progressive Just the right amount of progressive Not progressive Enough



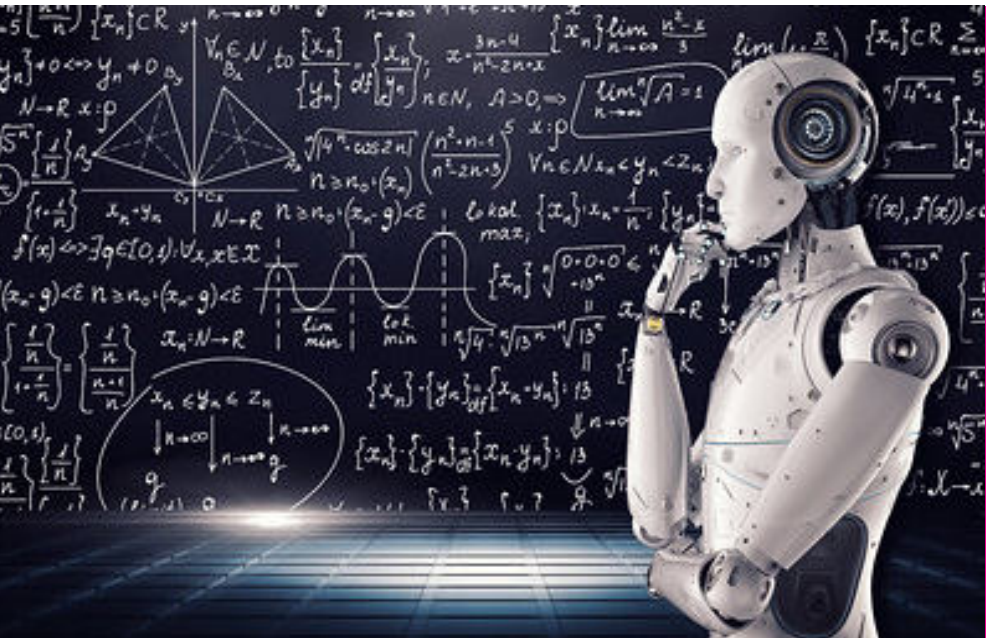
Oxford researchers warn of the dangers of A.I.

Rahul Jakati reports.

Researchers from Oxford University have warned members of parliament that artificial intelligence (AI) could “kill everyone.” In an ordered inquiry by the Science and Technology Committee of the House of Commons, researchers Michael Osborne and Michael Cohen of Oxford University, as well as Katherine Holden and Manish Patel from companies that deal with AI, spoke on the potential dangers of A.I. and the import of its proper governance. One of the issues that Osborne spoke on was our overreliance on A.I. as a beacon of the future, as something that would carry us into a new age of technological marvels and progress. Osborne referred to this phenomena as “bionic duckweed,” noting that it leads to complacency as people assume that problems of the present will be solved in the all-too-murky future, and assumes a utopian version of A.I. that simply does not exist, as A.I. is “meeting the goals we say, not the goals we want.” Osborne was also quick to point out the various properties of A.I. that lend itself towards superhuman capabilities, namely in that of a capitalist economy that prioritizes production. “AI can work 24/7, and it does not get distracted [...] AI is scalable to a degree that humans are not.” The fundamental fear during the inquiry seemed to be what happens when an all-powerful artificial intelligence begins to decide for itself what it wants to do, calling forth images of Skynet from the Terminator

series, or HAL 9000 from 2001: A Space Odyssey. One member of parliament, Aaron Bell, voiced some skepticism at Osborne’s declaration of doomsday if A.I. was allowed to proliferate unchecked, asking “how realistic [did Osborne] think the bleak vision is?” Osborne replied decisively, comparing A.I. to nuclear weapons in their power, and warning against potential arms races that could begin between countries trying to build the most A.I., which Osborne noted was a “military technology” that could be used to control drones and kill combatants independently of any human intervention. “You do not just want to have a human dummy rubber-stamping decisions made by an AI...,” Osborne said. But in voicing an actual timeline between the relatively faulty models of A.I. present today and the generative, transformative versions seemingly afforded by the future, both Cohen and Osborne were reluctant to give any firm timetables. Cohen related a story of Ernest Rutherford proclaiming that nuclear energy was impossible, only for it to be achieved less than 24 hours later. “It might look a lot like it does today months before [an A.I. paradigm shift]. Technological progress often comes in bursts.”

Image Credit: Mike MacKenzie CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons



News Shorts



Oxford city council calls for Thames Water to go to public ownership

Evidence suggests water privatisation benefits shareholders, but is detrimental to people and the planet.



SU Elections upcoming

Voting for the new SU committee opens on Monday 6th February.



Oxford hosts Holocaust Survivor

Oxford University Jewish Society hosted Janine Webber in the Sheldonian on January 31st.



Oxford student jailed for crypto theft

St. Cross DPhil student Wyba Wiersma stole more than £2 million in cryptocurrency.

Two creative writing lecturers sue University over alleged “Uberisation” of teaching contracts

Rebecca Powell reports.

Two creative writing lecturers are suing the University of Oxford for misclassifying them as gig economy workers, arguing that the terms of their employment mean they were employees entitled to certain workers’ rights.

Alice Jolly and Rebecca Adams were employed on fixed-term personal services contracts for 15 years, working to supervise students on the Mst Creative Writing course. Yet, their contracts were not renewed in 2022. They maintain that due to the level of control exercised over them by the University and their treatment while working, they should have had employee status.

Talking about her motives, Adams says that “we are bringing this action on behalf of hundreds of Oxford University tutors who, like us, are employed on legally questionable casual contracts. Oxford is one of the worst offenders when it comes to the uberisation of higher education teaching, with nearly 70 per cent of its staff on precarious contracts.”

The case draws on from the 2021 Supreme Court ruling on the gig economy, ruling that Uber drivers were employed by Uber,

not self-employed, and were therefore, as employees, entitled to paid holidays and a pension.

According to their legal representative, Ryan Bradshaw, the University in a letter to the Society of Authors (SoA) said in April 20202 that they would offer more appropriate contracts, yet two months later their longstanding contracts were not renewed. Jolly and Adams had both been directly involved as members of the SoA, campaigning to be contracted as ‘workers’ and not ‘personal service providers’. They argue that this involvement factored into their unfair dismissal.

According to Jolly, “Creative writing courses are entirely dependent on the quality of the writers who teach on them and universities use writers’ CVs to market these courses.” However, frequently these writers are employed for years on precarious, fixed-term contracts. She claims that these “sometimes pay as little as £25 an hour. Often the hourly rates do not include preparation, so the real level of pay may be half of the stated amount.”

Their lawyer, Ryan Bradshaw, told The Guardian that “These are people who would ordinarily be perceived as white-collar, privileged workers – they’re highly educated, really respected authors and

writers, and they’re being forced to accept terms and conditions that undermine their legal rights.”

Vice President of Oxford University and College Union (UCU), David Chivall, believes that the long-term impact of these insecure employment contracts are that “people’s lives become so unstable they are unable to do their jobs to as high a standard as they would have been able to do if they were

employed fairly: in the end both teaching and research suffer.”

Over the course of February and March, the UCU have announced 18 days of strikes against these insecure contracts, pay, working conditions and pensions.

The claim was filed on 16 November 2022, with the university expected to respond in January and the resolution expected to be reached in the summer.



Trinity chemistry professor wins prestigious research award

Rahul Jakati reports.

Susan Perkin, a professor of physical chemistry and fellow of Trinity College at Oxford University, has won the 2023 Blavatnik Award for Young Scientists in the United Kingdom. The award, whose winners receive 100,000 pounds in unrestricted funds, is designed to promote the efforts of the fresh faces in academia within the “Life Sciences, Physical Sciences & Engineering, and Chemistry.” Perkin’s research, which falls into the lattermost category, concerns the study of ionic fluids—that is electrolytes. In an interview with Cherwell, Perkin admitted that:

“Most people, when they think of electrolytes, they think Lucozade, energy drinks, things like that, and they are not wrong—that is certainly an electrolyte,” Perkin said.

However, Perkin would go on to make the important addendum of the presence of electrolytes in not only food and drinks, but in our bodies and industrial tools—electrolytes are all around us. As Perkin would go on to explain, our world is full of electrolytes, with just a few examples being the electronic devices and tools we take for granted in our everyday lives.

“Our cells’ physiological environment is largely made up of electrolytes as well. It is well known among scientists that more than 60% of your body is water, but it would be more accurate to say that it is water and salts, which are electrolytes. The ocean is also a massive reservoir of electrolytes,” Perkin’s said.

“These are all natural electrolytes, and they make up a large fraction of earth. There are also synthetic electrolytes, which

we make when we try to design energy storage devices, such as in your phones and devices, but also in cars, where you need a large battery, which involves electrolytes as well. What they mostly have in common is that they contain a large number and concentration of ions.”

The current focus of Perkin’s research is describing the physical chemistry behind the high concentrations of electrolytes present in the many avenues of our life today. Although Perkin acknowledged that the scientific community has a number of good theories for solutions with a very low concentrations of electrolytes, the theories do not explain the behavior of electrolytic solutions as they exist in many real-life situations, such as in our bodies and batteries, which has implications for the understanding of any field that lies among electrolytes.

“And so the focus of our work is to understand the physics and chemistry of electrolytes which are at high concentrations. And it turns out, the properties of those electrolytes, are very different from the dilute ones. It’s really very different,” Perkin said.

“But why does it matter? If I go to my colleagues in biochemistry, they might be very focused on understanding how proteins interact with one another, or how they sit in a membrane, and sit in other molecules in a cell membrane, and all of this is happening within a sea of electrolytes, and so the nature of those interactions depends upon [electrolytes]. And the scientific assumptions that we have been making until now with these biochemical interactions have been mainly with the dilute concentrations of electrolytes. And understanding how these interactions

really work in the real world with the actual concentrations of these electrolytes, helps inform these other fields like biology.”

Perkin was not always interested in the finer details of chemistry, of electrolytes and their machinations. As Perkin would explain, she began as a lover of mathematics due to its neat resolutions and elegance, which appealed to Perkin’s sense of rigorous patterns and solutions to problems. However, it was after attending Oxford University, that Perkin attended Oxford University for her bachelor’s and master’s degree, where she discovered a love for uncovering the basal details of the sciences, where Perkin was able to find the root truths of a science that were often mathematically based:

“In my school, it was not very cool to be interested in what you were learning. [...] When I arrived at Johns, suddenly it was like arriving in a another world where I was surrounded by people who were really interested and talking about [their subject], and I loved that environment where you could sit down in the dining hall surrounded by people and find out they’re studying many different things, but they all have something interesting to say about what they just learnt. It was just electrifying fun,” Perkin said.

Indeed, Perkin acknowledged her academic debts to not only her education but to the scientists who came before. Many scientists are not as well known now, but were integral (such as David Tabor) in establishing the research methodology that Perkin employs: that of the Surface Force Balance. The Surface Force Balance, which was one of the main components behind Perkin’s winning of the Blavatnik Award, helps to measure “shear forces between

surfaces.” Looking to the future, Perkin hopes to build off the base of knowledge of her lineage and her own research towards researching the environment, and understanding the chemical mechanisms behind the various effects of pollution on marine biology.

“In the coming years, I really expect my research to look more towards natural electrolytes and mineralization processes and other natural processes that happen in electrolytes. I am interested in the way in which CO₂ from the atmosphere, which to a large extent is dissolved in the ocean into carbonates, forms large interfacial regions near rock surfaces which organisms then take in and process. Understanding how all these ions interact with one another, at very high concentrations, is very important towards understanding the CO₂ cycle,” Perkin said.

Perkin ended with a bit of advice towards those looking to follow in her footsteps, the next generation of young scholars looking to make an impact in academia, but in a world where there the job outlooks for fresh DPhils is increasingly grim, Perkin also acknowledges the harsh reality of looking for a job in an oversaturated, albeit growing market.

“My advice is just to do what you really enjoy,” Perkin said. “I just followed my nose and saw what I was interested in, and I did it to the best of my ability that I could, and opportunities just sort of arose. But I did not expect that these opportunities would arise. I was always ready to go do something else. There are a lot of great things to do in life, it’s a bit like children wanting to be a premier league footballer, but when it often does not work out, you can do something else, and that can also be great.”

Temple Lounge, in memoriam: legendary crewdate spot to close.

Suzanne Antelme reports.

Popular crewdate destination Temple Lounge has shut down. The building, currently undergoing refurbishment, will soon become home to a new restaurant called Mint Lounge. Naz Choudhury, who ran Temple Lounge, told the *Oxford Mail* in an article published on 24th January that Temple Lounge “has closed permanently”. He said the restaurant had been “successful for many years” and blamed the Oxfordshire County Council’s controversial low traffic neighborhoods (LTN) scheme for the closure: “The council’s decision to put these bollards up along Cowley Road was the main reason, people don’t want to travel here anymore. After Covid the council could not have done anything worse than what they have done to the Cowley Road area. They should be ashamed of themselves.” The old Temple Lounge premises at 21 Temple Street are currently shuttered and surrounded by detritus. Two paper signs stuck to the front door declare “New Mint Lounge Loading....” in big letters while the Mint Lounge website tells readers

to “[s]tay turned for Oxford’s largest premium shisha lounge”. The owner of Mint Lounge told *Cherwell* that it will be opening in three or four weeks time and also plans to host crewdates. They hope the new restaurant will be “much better” than Temple Lounge. Temple Lounge opened in Oxford in 2010 and offered Arabic and Asian cuisine in “a unique ambient heated Shisha Garden”. The venue became a favourite for crewdates. Balliol College Boat Club’s Social Secretary told *Cherwell*: “Temple Lounge closing is a massive detriment to the culture of crewdates. It’s a staple spot known and loved by many, and the uncertainty surrounding its rebranding really places a dampener on future socials for the boat club.” Alex Burson, a Sports Rep at St Edmund Hall, told *Cherwell* that his favourite memory at Temple Lounge was from the Hall’s football Christmas dinner, where “the food was exceptional” and staff were “very allowing of the slightly louder atmosphere that these events can create”. Burson said Temple Lounge “will be very much missed as it was one of a few staple options for crewdates and events like this”, and added that he hoped the new restaurant might provide a similar experience.



LMH “left in the dark” amidst ongoing power outages

Bintia Dennog reports.

Recent power cuts at Lady Margaret Hall have been the result of “simply using too much electricity”, according to an email the college sent out to its students. In an effort to reduce energy consumption, the residents have been urged to limit use of electrical appliances. Students were left in the dark as the power cuts occurred on Monday and Tuesday of Week 2, with the ones on Tuesday totalling around an hour, according to an LMH student. The outages were said to have resulted from “multiple electric heaters being plugged in”, as they use up a constant and significant amount of energy. Due to this, the main kitchens had little bandwidth when cooking meals which, along with the usage of kettles and cookers during meal times, caused the fuse to blow. LMH urged its residents to “help us all live together conscientiously for now”, adding that when “the weather warms up [...] we should have a bit more head room but right now we don’t have much at all”. The college requested that students “limit [their] use of high current items such as heaters, ovens and kettles. If you are cooking dinner please don’t leave an electric heater on in your room.” Commenting on the situation, one LMH student told *Cherwell*: “I completely understand where college is coming from in regards to reducing energy consumption. However their solutions to heating failure are counterproductive, giving out electric heaters to students

whose heating is broken rather than using their money to insulate rooms over vacation. “The way the emails were worded blamed the student body for the power cuts when we are paying 5.5k to stay here for 27 weeks and expect energy, food and heating at the least.” LMH told *Cherwell*: “Part of the college experienced temporary power failures due to an electrical overload. The college team was able to re-instate the electrical supply quickly. We communicated with our staff and student groups about the reasons for the outage, and about ways we can all work together to address the problems the college has encountered.” Students say intermittent cuts have continued into week 3.



All aboard! Oxford-Cambridge rail service to go ahead

Rufus Hall reports.

Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, has announced his backing of a ‘Pan-Regional Partnership’ for the Oxford-Cambridge region. According to the proposal, this partnership would unlock up to £2.5million in government funding, to be put towards “sustainable growth” and “environmental enhancements” in the region. These changes would include the building of the £5 billion East-West Rail service between Oxford and Cambridge, for which work is already underway. The green-light for the rail service came after a funding proposal was submitted to the central government by leaders of local councils, enterprise partnerships, the Arc Universities Group, and the subregional transport group for the region of England’s Economic Heartland. It is to begin with the recruitment of an independent chair, but in the interim, a shadow board is set to oversee the programme and decide on matters of both its governance and funding. Councillor Barry Wood of Cherwell District council is chair of the shadow board. He said: “We believe that by working together the whole Oxford to Cambridge region can be greater than the sum of its parts. With official status as a pan-regional partnership backed by government, we can unlock potential and further strengthen our area’s position as a hub of innovation, a globally recognised region of science and

technology that delivers prosperity for our communities.” Michael Gove recently defended his department against accusations of the South-East receiving an unfair proportion of money available from the Levelling Up Fund, despite its founding aim of combatting regional inequality in the UK. In conversation with Times Radio, Gove said: “It’s simply untrue that the levelling up fund is concentrated disproportionately on London and the south-east.” “If you look per capita at the amount we’re spending, the biggest winners are those in the north-west – and of course, yes there is some spending in London and the south-east, but there are some areas of deprivation in London and the south-east. But it’s overwhelmingly the case that the areas that benefit the most are the north-west, the north-east and the east Midlands.” Labour analysis, however, has predicted London to receive funds more extensive than both Yorkshire and the North-West as part of the next £2.1 billion round of funding for projects across the UK. This can in part be seen as a result of authorities’ need to promote development projects in order to compete for central government funding. According to the government Prospectus for Levelling Up, while “the Fund is open to every local area, it is especially intended to support investment in places where it can make the biggest difference to everyday life, including ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and coastal communities.” The proposed Oxford-Cambridge pan-regional partnership is likely to be an interesting addition to government policy.

Don in publisher row over “cancelled” colonialism book

Charlotte Lai reports.

Professor Nigel Biggar has accused Bloomsbury Publishing of cancelling his book on colonialism, in which he suggests that the British Empire has been overly criticised.

Bloomsbury, a London-based publishing house, has opted to pay off Biggar rather than publish his book despite initially describing it as a work of ‘major importance’.

Biggar, an eminent Oxford academic whose research includes the ‘ethics of empire’ and nationality, reports that the company approached him in 2018 to write a book about colonialism. The finished book was titled “Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning” and was presented to Bloomsbury in late 2020.

The book broadly deals with the historiography of the British Empire and argues that some historians have overstated the sins of the empire. Biggar argues that the abolition of slavery provides evidence that the empire increasingly came to be defined by liberal ideals and humanitarianism. He concludes his book by suggesting that despite moments of brutality and exploitation, empire also exerted a ‘civilising’ influence on its colonies.

Biggar’s work on rehabilitating the empire is controversial and has been criticised by other academics, particularly in light of an increased emphasis on anti-colonialism within academia and the

‘Rhodes Must Fall’ debate.

Pratinav Anil, lecturer in History at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, wrote *The Times*: “Biggar makes a good Samaritan of a gold digger. His Cecil Rhodes is an unrecognizable reformer, an altruist among entrepreneurs, rescuing African men from a ‘life of sloth’ and inebriation, donating land to natives, hammering out an interracial peace. This is hard to square with the facts of his life.”

Nevertheless, Biggar’s editor at Bloomsbury reacted with enthusiasm to the finished manuscript, remarking: “your research is exhaustive. Your argument is conveyed with care and precision. This is such an important book.”

However, three months later, Biggar received an email from Sarah Broadway, the Head of Special Interest Publishing at Bloomsbury, stating that “conditions are not currently favourable to publication”.

When asked for clarification, she explained: “we consider that public feeling on the subject does not currently support the publication of the book and will reassess that next year.”

Biggar replied asking for further clarification and pointing out that public feeling was ‘diverse’. The *Times* reports that in his email to Broadway, he questioned: “which public feeling concerns you; in what sense is it ‘unfavourable’ to publication; and what would need to change to make it ‘favourable’ again?”

Broadway emailed back, concluding that Bloomsbury had found the criteria ‘difficult to define objectively’. She added: “we have concluded that this subjectivity could lead to your book being in a limbo lasting more than a year or it might not but we don’t wish to put you in that position of uncertainty.”

Following this, she suggested that Biggar would be released from his contract with Bloomsbury. He replied: “it is quite clear ... the public feeling that concerns you is that of – for want of a more scientific term – the ‘woke’ Left.”

He added: “Rather than publish cogent arguments and important truths that would attract the aggression of these illiberals, you chose to align yourselves with them by de-platforming me. In so doing, you have made your own contribution to the expansion of authoritarianism and the shrinking of moral and political diversity.”

Biggar has previously been criticised for his ‘Ethics and Empire’ project, starting in 2017, at the McDonald Centre at the University of Oxford. Its aim was developing ‘a nuanced and historically intelligent Christian ethic of empire’. Jon Wilson, Professor in Modern History at King’s College London, responded in his blog: “Developing a ‘Christian ethics of empire’ is not an intellectually sound, let alone an academically robust, endeavour – it is a political project much as an ‘Islamic’ or ‘Hindu’ ethics of empire might be.”

In this collective statement Wilson further stated that ‘as scholars of empire and colonialism, we are disappointed that Oxford is prepared to support such a project.’

When asked by *Cherwell* whether he thought there was been a recent pattern where books are left unpublished due to ‘public concerns’, Biggar responded: “There is plenty of evidence that in both the USA and the UK publishers are either censoring or refusing to publish material that does not accord with prevailing orthodoxies about gender, race, or colonial history.”

He cites the example of Bruce Gilley, who has had ‘several publishers cancel contracts they’d made with him under online pressure from activists.’ Biggar has previously defended Gilley’s article ‘The Case for Colonialism’.

When asked about the implications this has on future research, he told *Cherwell*: “it means that important topics will not be examined and cogent lines of reasoning will not be pursued, for fear of not being able to publish the results and wasting one’s time.”

“Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning” is now due to be published by William Collins.

“We’ve got to start getting rid of this CO2”: Vice Chancellor speaks out on climate crisis

Canqi Li and Jack Twyman report.

Oxford University’s 273rd Vice-Chancellor and clinical neuroscience professor Irene Tracey caused a stir when she made comments earlier this month saying that fossil fuel companies are the key to solving the climate crisis.

“Some of the solutions will have to come from the very industry that’s part of the problem,” she told PA news agency before her inaugural address on January 10th. During the address, Tracey said it was time “to get serious about climate change”, adding, “I want Oxford to lead in addressing what is now the most pressing issue of our times.”

She claims that “to a certain extent there has to be still that recognition and engagement of that industry” as they have “a great science and engineering base to come up with some of the solutions” and that “they’ve also got the finances to do it”.

Her message is at odds with many students who are attempting to get the University to stop receiving money from fossil fuel companies. Oxford Climate Justice Campaign released a 2022 report that showed the University received £1.6 million from the fossil fuel industry in 2020-21. Tracey is not opposed to receiving such funds but said in her address that such money should be taken “only where the purpose explicitly relates to enabling meaningful accelerations away from carbon usage and speeding the transition to net zero carbon”.

Reflecting on her statements while taking

a walk in the Christ Church Meadow, Tracey told *Cherwell* that working with the fossil fuel industries “just makes sense”. “It’s a little bit from my medical area, how when you’re trying to solve a disease and a disorder, you work with the pharmaceutical industry... to co-create solutions,” she said.

However, she emphasized that there are still steps to be taken to get fossil fuel companies involved in the climate crisis dialogue. She said that as we are still dependent on fossil fuels, “there is this question around how we might be able to encourage the companies to take responsibility and ownership for dealing with the CO2 at source whilst we’re using the oil.”

Tracey also highlighted that asking fossil fuel companies to take this new responsibility is not a dialogue involving only University administrators and fossil fuel companies. “We’ve got to do this with our partner organizations and colleagues around the world, and that’s exciting,” she told *Cherwell*.

Tracey stated that she does not see fossil fuel firms recapturing their carbon emissions as the only action that needs to be taken. “[It] doesn’t mean that we don’t wean off fossil fuel use, but it buys us time to get there,” she explained. “It’s about the phasing and timing... There’s exciting, completely new and alternative energy potential sources coming our way.”

Furthermore, she believes that Oxford University’s science community is “very well placed” to make contributions in this interdisciplinary area. “We’ve got people who are working in the chemistry department in terms of ... green chemistry,

chemical developments that are more green and friendly, through to how we’re going to [make] better batteries, how we’re going to recycle plastics and convert that... And then, you got the big physics as well,” she stated. She added that we should not only think about developing and scaling up alternative energy sources but also “being a responsible citizen and a steward of this globe”.

She told *Cherwell*: “We mustn’t lose sight also of biodiversity and the other sorts of impact of climate as well, and the impact of changing climate on health - our medical division is very well placed as others in other universities around this country and around the world in terms of thinking about what the challenges will be in terms of the health problems that will come with global warming.”

Collaborating with an international team, Oxford University climate scientist and geosystem science professor Myles Allen published a scientific article in *Environmental Research Letters* earlier this month discussing Tracey’s statement about fossil fuel firms taking responsibility for their own emissions, a solution also known as “extended producer responsibility (EPR)” [1]. Allen emphasized that EPR may be a feasible solution due to its affordable nature. “We don’t know exactly how much the fossil fuel industry is making right now, but it’s a lot,” he told *Cherwell*.

“The big advantage of a carbon takeback obligation is it provides a very predictable route to net zero, no matter what happens to the cost of fossil fuels or the availability of renewable energy,” Allen stated. “To put this in perspective, natural gas in the UK currently sells for about 10 pence per kilowatt hour... A lot of (the money) is going

in taxes, but a lot of it is going in profit. And the cost of delivering that natural gas to your cooker or your boiler has not changed.”

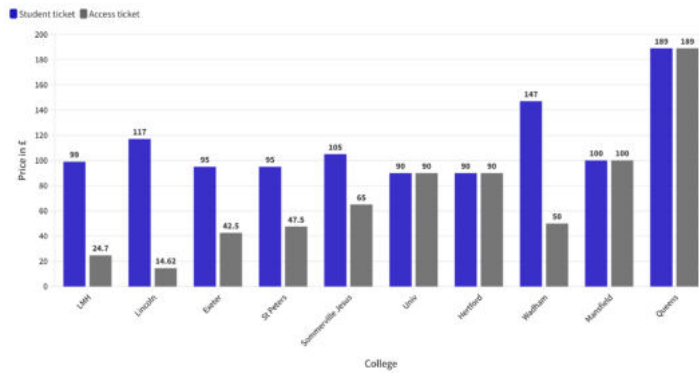
Allen also introduced ways in which carbon can be re-captured through both nature-based and geologically-based methods if EPR policies are implemented to target climate change. When it comes to geologically-based methods, Allen emphasized that “storage needs to be permanent”, making storage options limited. “The only one which has already been developed on any scale is to inject (CO2 emissions) as a liquid back underground... We know that it works, because the industry has been doing this for decades,” he said. He added that there are potentially cheaper geologically-based solutions under development, such as remineralization (turning carbon to rock) and enhanced weathering (accelerated natural carbon chemical drawdown), but “we don’t yet know if they’re going to work on the sort of timescales we need them to work”.

Nature-based solutions, such as tree-planting, could also offer an affordable short-term solution. However, a warming world will likely cause “many of the processes in the biosphere that might absorb carbon turn into sources and start to release it again”. Allen says, “In our paper, we say we use nature-based solutions up until 2050. But after 2050, we require 100% geological storage.” Allen added that a separate novel idea is to “cut down trees or gather fallen trees and literally bury them to accelerate the production of coal” but that more research is needed in this area towards the challenge of stopping decomposition.

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

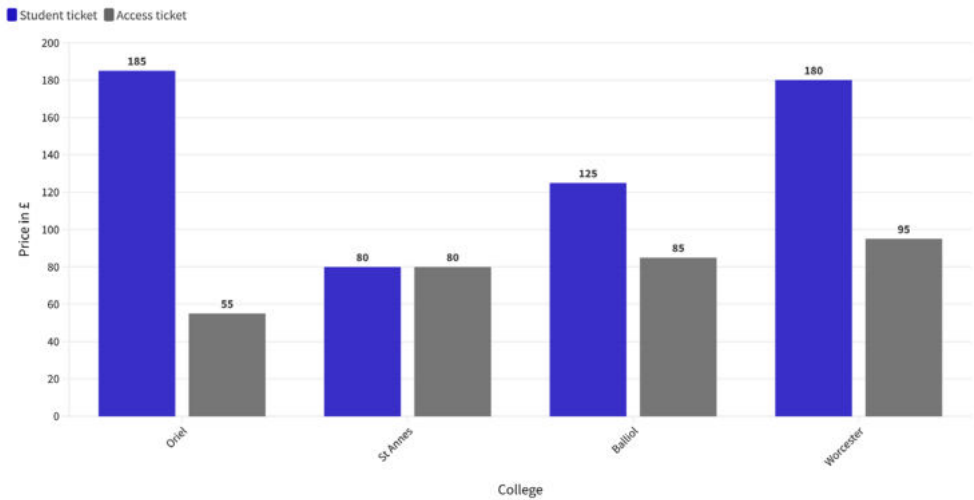
Continued from front page

according to figures listed in the 2021 annual admissions report. Colleges with a proportion of low-income students above the university average of 13.3%, like Mansfield and Hertford, did not sell any access tickets last year. Meanwhile, Lincoln College, where only 5.9% of 2021 admits were from low-income backgrounds, offered some of the most generous access



Not all colleges that offer subsidised ball tickets are represented here. Only those with fixed "access ticket" prices feature on this graph.

ticket prices at 25% of standard price or free. The disparity of subsidies across colleges demonstrates that access measures are not always adapted to assist those with the most



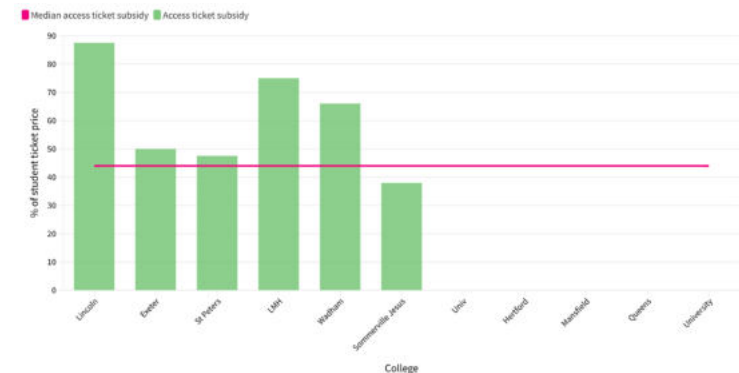
Not all colleges that offer subsidised ball tickets are represented here. Only those with fixed "access ticket" prices feature on this graph.

need. The relative wealth of a college has an understandable impact on the availability of access tickets, though not as dramatic as may be expected. All but one of the five wealthiest colleges per capita did not offer subsidised tickets for its students. On the lower end of the scale, the poorer colleges tend to not offer access tickets, with the significant exception of Lady Margaret Hall, which boasted comprehensive access schemes for their ball. At LMH, all Crankstart scholars and those who have previously completed the Foundation Year programme received half-priced tickets to the 2022 ball, while those currently on the Foundation Year programme attended the ball for free. This comparison does not take into account colleges which offer flexible

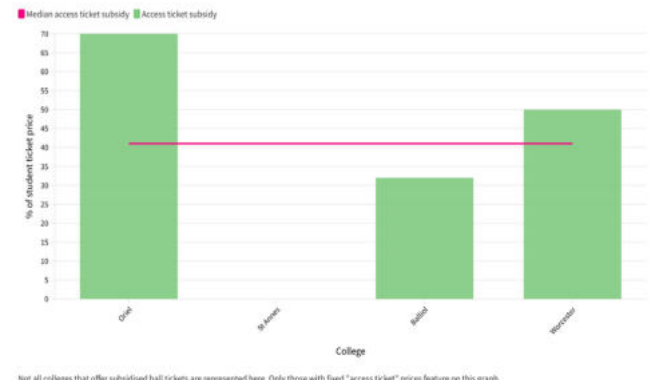
reimbursement or other access schemes of unspecified monetary value. Three balls fell into this category last year, including St Catherine's ball, "Eclipse". The Catz JCR voted to put aside £5000 to ensure "that any JCR member that wants to come to the ball but for whatever reason is unable to pay the full ticket price can get support". Following this announcement, an email was sent to all undergraduates a week before ticket release explaining how to apply for "a fully-subsidised or partially-subsidised ball ticket". Amongst the balls in 2022-23, three balls are implementing similar broad affordability schemes, including Merton's and Magdalen's white tie commemoration balls. On the whole, it seems that those wishing to attend a white tie ball are more likely to find access tickets: six out of seven of the commemoration balls within the past two years offered subsidies and reimbursements.

Many white tie balls also develop partnerships with local dress shops and clothing rental services. New College, for example, partnered with Rathbone Tailors to provide a 20% discount for clothing hire. However, hiring a full suit with a tailcoat or an evening gown with optional gloves and tiara, as is required by the dress code, can cost nearly as much as a ticket for a cheaper ball. The only white-tie ball which did not offer significant quantities of tickets at low cost was Queen's's, the cheapest white tie ball in 2022. General rather than targeted affordability seemed to be a priority of

planners in this case. David Hamer, Co-President of this year's Crankstart Ball, understands this strategy. Since the allocation of access tickets is limited, means-tested, or restricted to a certain bursary category, it can be difficult to fairly distribute these subsidies, especially since financial information is protected and personal. Hamer admits that "you could definitely argue that the only appropriate action is to reduce the cost of the ball for all and



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“*There has absolutely been an expectation at Oxford for students to go to balls*”

Loan has not risen on par with inflation over the last year, rising only 2.3% while the Consumer Price Index has risen 9.2% year on year as of December 2022. In contrast, the university's flagship scholarship program for students from lower income households, the Crankstart Scholarship, has risen by £500. College financial support varies from dedicated bursaries to hardship funds.

Nonetheless, there are options for students whose college does not offer a sufficiently inexpensive ball. Many society balls, like the LGBT Society's Glitterball or the University Biological Society Ball, offer ball tickets below £60, though some require membership to obtain the lowest priced tickets. The Crankstart Ball, the first event of its kind dedicated to low-income students in many years, sold all tickets for under £70, including guest tickets. Crankstart scholars also received tickets costing around £49.

The Crankstart Ball organisers wanted to make the event as "accessible as possible". In Hamer's experience, "there has absolutely been an expectation at Oxford for students to go to college balls." This expectation - combined with the decision of many colleges to evict students from certain areas of the college on the night of the ball - means that even those who cannot afford the tickets feel pressured into buying them anyways. With the increase in cost of living and the decrease of access tickets, balls are becoming less affordable for low-income students. If only the most extravagant commemoration balls, at the richest colleges, offer meaningful access schemes, then the tradition of the Oxford college ball may become increasingly out of reach.

6 out of 7 commemoration balls offer access tickets, compared to 8 out of 12 of black tie balls.

sacrifice some of the extravagance for accessibility". However, he caveats his statement, adding that the money lost in cheaper tickets would have to be made up in college support or sponsorship. This year, the overall decline in ticket prices does not help the students who would most benefit from subsidised tickets. Bursaries from the UK government, the University of Oxford, and colleges help students pay for living expenses and other costs of student life. However, the government Maintenance



The culture at Brookes

Michael Pista

Exams, assessments and deadlines. College life sometimes feels like a relentless combination of the three. But the landscape of our university lives is so much more complex than that - there are social, political, cultural, artistic scenes to join and sports and parties to attend. So what do Brookes students get up to in our downtime?

Oxford Brookes is a very diverse place, with alumni spread over 170 countries across the globe. You'd think that catering for this abundance of multiculturalism would be incredibly difficult! Surprisingly, Brookes makes it look easy.

When not being swamped with lectures and seminars, there is plenty of culture available on and around campus, to absorb and to be part of.

“So what do Brookes students get up to in our downtime?”

Brookes Sport has been established as a source of physical support for the students here. There is an abundance of opportunities and events for an individual to choose from. There are numerous high end sporting facilities, in and around all the campuses, so evidently the advantages that come from sports have been recognised. There are well-maintained pitches, courts, gyms, climbing walls, and even a rowing centre!

But there are still potential chances for development. Whether the intention is to get fit, try something new or excel and compete in a sport, Brookes is able to cater for it. In fact, this focus on development is a very important aspect of the culture at Brookes. This is why there are plenty of chances to compete at national or even international levels.

In the academic year of 2021, we had the highest amount of engagement. Over 2000 individuals signed up to over 30 very different and diverse sports. Those who have been determined to make it definitely made it, and have achieved Olympic levels of success. This all stemmed from the support and opportunities available to them from this part of Oxford.

Brookes' downtime culture thrives on the variety of societies the university offers. These are created and run by

the university as well as students. The diversity within this institution ensures that there are many different interests, beliefs, and goals that are looked after.

There is so much to get involved in, ranging from A capella Society to Zumba Society. If an extracurricular is not yet available, students are constantly encouraged to make it happen for themselves. These are excellent chances to get into roles of responsibility in a nurturing environment. As well as this, these are the best places to meet new people, work on skills and experiences, and all while having fun in the process!

If none of this sounds appealing, there is always more. In addition to all these activities available on campus, there is a lot to get involved with outside as well. All throughout the academic year there are events. These can be anything from parties, to public lectures, to debates. We clearly cater for an eclectic crowd!

These events are fantastic opportunities to be social and relax all while not breaking the bank. Because these events are typically made for students, they are also priced for students. This becomes the best excuse to go out partying on a Monday night.

Well known events such as “Fishies” are incredibly popular because of the affordability and the well planned atmosphere. Moreover, there are a lot of themed parties. These are the best places to have a drink and find “your people”. There are plenty of opportunities to gather your friends, get ready and go to events, such as Bollywood night. These sorts of events are great entertainment and a chance to soak in the “uni culture”.

Then there are the educational hidden gems. From film screenings followed by interviews with the director, to in depth debates on contemporary topics such as “who owns football”. If partying is not your scene, and societies are not your cup of tea, then this is definitely where you can find something of interest. Events are updated and supplemented regularly, so there is always something to do.

The offerings of Brookes social, cultural, and sports activities are as diverse as its student body and extend as widely as our community's imagination. Many interests and hobbies are catered for, and if they aren't, it is just a great opportunity to organise it yourself. This is the place to try new things, meet new people, and learn something about yourself in the process.

“There is plenty of culture available on campus”

Jacuzzi, brings its famed glitz, glamour and gorgeous food to Kensington High Street

Oliver Hall

Fun, daring, delightful. Those three words have come to characterize the food and buildings of Big Mamma's Italian restaurants across London and the around the world. Jacuzzi Ristorante, their new site on Kensington High Street, is no different. It manages to capture that magic and spectacle synonymous with its sister restaurants while being brilliantly unique with new and exciting dishes served alongside famed favourites in an indoor garden setting.

The group always prides itself on service and a relaxed environment and Jacuzzi is no different. I was greeted at the door by a smiling Luisa and when we were seated the manager Ricardo was quickly over to talk through the menu.

The menu itself is incredibly diverse and draws on dishes from across Italy and its islands. Well-known favourites from Ave Mario and Circolo Poplare such as the Spaghetti al Tartufo and Tiramisu return but they are accompanied by a superb selection of new inventions and twists on

classics.

The drinks list is similarly eclectic. Not only are there cocktails galore but the wine list is extensive and caters to all tastes and price points. By the glass, there is a great selection of grapes and varieties from across Italy but buffs won't be disappointed either. Superb vintages of Sagrantino di Montefalco (2011) and Tignanello Antinori Supertuscans (2011-2019) are standouts.

I started things off with Lo Sgroppino, a truly unique drink with homemade sorbet, limoncello, and champagne. The texture was thick and creamy and combined with the lemon and champagne for a perfect indulgence. The OJ Spritz was a straightforward classic done well too.

For antipasti, we were suggested Crochette di Vitello Tonnato, Crudo di Gambero Rosso, and Burrata al Pistachio alongside a warm freshly baked focaccia. The crochette are croquettes filled with pulled veal and a coating of tuna salsa. The combo of flavours was intriguing and the caper on top finishes off the dish perfectly. The burrata is light and fresh in contrast with some heavy options and the ceviche stood out. These Gambero Rosso from Sicily are chopped and combined with a mix of lime, celery and red onion on a burrata base. The punch of the fish is freshened by the citrus and the burrata for a complete bite. Oysters came along as a surprise treat and my word was I happy to see them. I'm usually firmly in the camp that believes that oysters are at their best plain, simple, and without dressing. These though completely changed my mind about that. They are served in a balsamic reduction that brings a sweetness to the salty shellfish. I would still ordinarily revert to the more traditional serve but the dish is a must-order as a one-off.

Our pasta of choice was the Raviolone Bicolore. A new dish, it consists of elongated ravioli parcels filled with either lemon or spinach ricotta. The pasta itself is good and holds its firm consistency well



but the dish is punctuated by a provolone cheese sauce, toasted hazelnuts, and toasted sage leaves. In a peculiar way, those and the sauce and the most flavoursome element.

Desert wise it is difficult to know where to start. Ricardo was keen for us to try chocolate fondue and it is the new showstopping addition to the menu here. The chocolate is still sweet despite masquerading as dark on the menu but is irresistible when placed on the candle stand in the centre of the table. The accompanying churros were what confused me most - long, chunky, and neither authentically Italian nor Spanish for that matter. They were by no means bad but seemed a strange straying from the patriotic nature of the rest of the menu.

I had no such objections to the Pistacchio Profiterole Napoletana. The serving of ice

cream in the pastry 'sandwich' is beyond generous but doesn't overpower. The warm hazelnut chocolate sauce poured over the top is genuinely to die for.

The Limonemissu was the final delivery to the table and an example of a better-executed twist on the classic. The génoise was thick but the mascarpone, marmalade, and limoncello balanced everything off and resulted in a much lighter way to finish the meal than the other desserts on the menu.

Jacuzzi Ristorante is both alike the other Big Mamma restaurants and entirely unique. The constants of good service, stunning setting, and brilliant food continue but new, unique additions and environments make each one different. At times it might all feel like a bit of a show but the quality of food ensures that the important things remain front and centre.

Racers, start your engines: Oxford's drag scene is thriving

Introducing you to the Kings and Queens of Oxford.

Jack Twyman

Oxford, like much of the UK, has experienced the phenomenon of drag over the last few years. The unprecedented success of RuPaul's Drag Race has allowed a generation of young people to have grown up watching drag, and consequently, many want to try it for themselves. The drag scene in Oxford is a relative unknown for much of the student population here - and this article aims to change that.

There is a thriving Drag Scene with performers from both the city and universities alike. Drag and Disorderly at Plush sees a plethora of Drag acts perform, as does Haute Mess at the Bullingdon. Getting into drag has never been easier in the safe space created by the Oxford LGBTQ+ Society, which hosted a drag cuppers competition last Michaelmas. The two winners of the competition now perform professionally. And in an exclusive announcement, we can confirm a Drag Ball is actively being organised by the Society.

Miss Take (she/her), also known as **Alfred Dry (he/him)** out of drag, tells me she is "the sultry, irreverent teacher of your dreams". A humorous queen, she "first got into drag as an attempt to bring queer expression and joy into a small little corner of Suffolk. My Catholic school held a talent show in which straight boys often threw on a dress and had a laugh, so I wanted to finally bring some true, informed, celebratory drag to the stage. On the day of the show, I was told that drag is a 'disrespectful' art form, and I was not allowed to do it. So now I get into drag to represent a respectable, glorious, and glamorous art form."

"The Oxford Scene has been very welcoming," Miss Take says. "I have been given some amazing opportunities: I am the first and only drag queen to perform at the Oxford Union. I am beyond grateful for the love and support I have received from the community in Oxford, both queer and straight."

I ask Miss Take what makes Oxford drag unique: "We are lucky in Oxford to have artists who

come from different backgrounds and approach drag from different perspectives. Thus it is difficult to define Oxford Drag as a whole - it is each individual performer that makes Oxford Drag the unique scene it is". Though she is quick to add "The most beautiful, talented one of all is Miss Take, who has just been awarded Ofsted's 'Sexiest Teacher in the Universe' for the fifth year running".

Bad B (she/her), one of the winners of Drag Cuppers, is next. She told me her experience was very rushed: "I made the last-minute decision only an hour before the event actually started to take part." But after the support of her 'super encouraging friends and the other competitors, her performance "went down super well with the judges and the crowd".

Bad B opens up to share her motives for getting into Drag. "I'm a pansexual woman and I never truly felt at peace with my sexuality and my identity as a queer woman. I felt biphobia like I was a "fake" or that I didn't belong in queer spaces". Getting in drag and performing for the first time was "a life changer" for her. "I finally felt valid in my expression as a queer artist and felt the acceptance and love of everyone in the room".

"Oxford drag is unique to me in the sense that all of the artists I've met have been really authentic to themselves and their drag personas".

She tells me her advice for someone wanting to get into drag is "Don't be scared!". "Watch some makeup videos of queens you admire, buy a glue stick and practise! Ask your friends or reach out to any local queens if you need any advice or to borrow anything. The queer community at Oxford is so welcoming so it's the perfect place to start."

Bad B adds that "All of my experiences in Oxford have been super positive and everyone has been really respectful." However "as an afab [assigned female at birth] queen I've been asked personal questions about my genitalia and

I've been told that what I do 'isn't real drag'. Furthermore, "Consent is also a bit of an issue in the drag community. Some audience members think that it is ok to touch performers especially in 'sexual' areas."

Danny Issues (he/him), known out of drag as **Ruby Firth (she/they)** is the first drag king on our list.

Danny is keen to emphasise "I'm very much not a performer by nature, so getting into drag was a scary concept to me. I entered into Drag Cuppers on a whim. But as your classic high-strung

Oxford student, I couldn't just do things halfway: I had to put in FULL effort. This involved at least half a bottle of hair gel and at least an hour spent working out how to do my makeup and bind my chest! (And also I somehow came out with a fully conceptualised character. I think it's my law student brain crying out for some creativity...)"

"The only negative experience I've had is.. confusion? I think particularly drag kings (rather than queens) have not been given much of a platform in the past - so people don't always quite know how to react to Danny!" Danny tells me that their "overarching thought about drag in Oxford is one of immense gratitude. As a person with a generally anxious disposition, I have been pretty intimidated from the start. But everyone has made me feel so welcome, and I am learning so much!"

Rusty Kate (she/her) is perhaps one of the most well-known Queens in the student scene having been a columnist for Cherwell, and an avid performer. In a bout of quick wit she tells me "Rusty started as a cure for a very serious chronic condition I had as a slowly ageing twink in Oxford: I wanted more attention. There's something about a crowd screaming for you that fills me with more serotonin that a father's love could

ever provide. What once was a busted princess lip syncing to Toxic by Britney Spears is now Rusty Kate: a busted grandma singing Toxic by Britney Spears". Rusty's success is unquestionable: "In the last two years, I've rusticated and have now gone into drag as a full-time business. I travel all around the country doing shows wherever will take me, from club nights to prides, one-woman comedy shows to campy bingo calling. I love what I do, and I'm so lucky to have made a viable career for myself in the arts."

Rusty loves the Oxford scene as it "has quite a bit of variety for such a small scene". "I'd say what makes Oxford drag unique for me is the types of jokes I can make. I can toe the line on sensitive topics and make niche political commentary that just wouldn't land if I was around a load of middle-aged Tories in a small town in the Midlands. It's the student crowd that are so supportive of the art that really inspires the next generation of Oxford Kings and Queens to don their wigs."

Shroom (they/she) has a very bubbly personality. They described themselves as an "aggressively passionate vegan" who studies Maths and Philosophy. "It was inevitable for me to get into drag" she said, "when I was younger I made people sit down and watch me lip sync to songs." Shroom told me in a "juicy scoop" that they realised they were gay at age 10 "sat on the toilet wiping my ass. But I thought I can't be gay - I'm not Ellen De Generes - I don't have a pixie cut - how can I be a dyke?".

Shroom talks openly of her experiences in the typically male-dominated drag scene. "I was very aware of it at the beginning. I thought I had to wear nails to every gig. Part of the reason why my makeup is so exaggerated is because I was like, 'Well, I can't just look like me and makeup' - I have to clearly be in drag. I wore heavy padding and stuff like that." But Shroom goes on to say that "And as time has gone on like now I literally don't think about it that much. It's just like another part of it. I do face some bullshit - people will tell me I'm not a drag queen - And I'll be stood there in full wig with fake eyelashes glued to my face looking like a very intense sexy clown or strange alien stripper. Tell me what I am then if it's not drag?".

Shroom has experienced some "gross" things said to her by non-Oxford queens too, mainly because of her gender identity. However, Shroom says Oxford Drag "feels very much like a family." "Everyone's super supportive, we always gossip."



The biggest challenge Shroom says is that “You have to be funny to survive. Because we all just make such fun of each other. Like, the reading is really knee deep, and intense. So sometimes I’m like, oh my god I’m really draining my last bit of wit to try and keep up but it’s the best.”

I asked all the drag artists about their perception of the drag scene in general. Firstly to attain whether there was a divide between university and resident performers. Miss Take said “There has never been a divide between us, and I am proud to be a part of such an uplifting family of performers”. Adding that “A hierarchy exists only because some of us wear higher heels than others”. Bad B says “There is a real sense of sisterhood and i always felt respected, even when competing for the first time in drag.” Jake Hall says the supportive atmosphere of the Oxford scene “has led to there being no division between the local and student acts. The only major difference between the two is availability as students have coursework as a priority and many of them go home over the breaks. Despite this, we have managed to even book them gigs when they return to their hometowns!” Shroom says “Regarding Town people its mostly just felicity really – she was doing drag before an Oxford drag scene – and I consider her a veteran even though she is 23 - literally our age - we all have a level of respect for her.”

Salmonella (they/them), AKA Acid Sally reveals a different side to the Oxford drag scene, one we don’t necessarily see “There has always been an unnecessary divide between local and student performers, potentially due to the lack of support from students for non-student events and performers, and many student events being hosted on weekdays making it harder for non-students to attend or perform. Especially since returning to in-person studying after the COVID lockdowns it seems like there are far fewer people wanting to experiment with drag and seek performance opportunities, and this may be largely in part due to the saturation and RuPaulification of drag”. They added that “In my opinion a lot of the charm of drag comes from the rough around the edges, messy, sweaty imperfections. The unrealistic standard of drag to aspire to a homogenised depiction of drag as synonymous with female impersonation, and the lack of transgressive and politically engaged drag all around has made drag much more sanitised, which is damaging to the performer community, and especially POC performers, AFAB performers, drag kings, and those seeking to explore less crowd-pleasing themes through their performance.”

Salmonella is also a drag performer, host and DJ, they founded Haute Mess, “Oxford’s longest running and premier drag pigsty disco dance party” to embrace the diversity of the Drag experience. Salmonella tells me “When I started going out and dressing u p in Oxford there weren’t many people doing drag or dressing up to clubs, and my clubbing experience started to feel homogenised and judgemental”. Therefore,

“Haute Mess started because we wanted to give ourselves and others a space to express themselves without judgement, experiment with dressing up and gender performance, to be messy, and to be vulnerable.”

Donna Marcus Duke (they/them) collaborated with Salmonella to found Haute Mess. “At the end of my first year, I met Salmonella, one of the only other students doing drag at the time. We bemoaned the lack of intentionally queer spaces in the city – for as amazing as Plush was, their nights weren’t exactly havens for queer, trans and gender non-conforming folk.” Donna tells me that “A few student groups were experimenting in university theatre spaces, and Ginger Tarte began Oxphwoard – a queer/drag cabaret event at The Bullingdon”. But that “Salmonella and I wanted something more nightlife orientated...So, we started Haute Mess in 2016 as a way to develop an alternative nightlife scene in the city (but mainly also to be able to give ourselves gigs lol). Somehow, it’s kept on going and here we are in 2023 still slogging away.”

After coming up on the scene as a student Donna tells me they found that “the student body in Oxford is fabulously political, and it was a generative (if not brutal) place to come up as a drag queen.” Recalling a Wadham roundtable in 2017 where “the compatibility of drag and trans issues was discussed. Though it was a tricky conversation for all involved, it was a testament to the nuanced politics the scene held at the time and was incredibly beneficial in helping us hone our own politics and code of conduct in drag.”

Donna tells me that “In Oxford, we [drag performers] are very lucky.” What makes Oxford stand out for them is the crowd: “Since graduating I’ve been touring around the UK and Europe, and honestly no crowd is more generous, more excitable and more grateful than the Oxford crowd.” This reputation is being noticed amongst outside performers “as one of the most enjoyable to perform to”. For Donna

this is important as “Drag is such a community-orientated creative practice” and a performer is “only as good as the scene that supports them.” In Oxford “there is a bit of a DIY element as the core of Oxford drag – but that also just might be me”. In Iconic words Donna says “In the face of the city’s grandeur, it’s so tempting to run around looking like shit.”

I asked all the drag artists about the perception that Oxford’s drag scene has a smaller profile than other university cities.

Bad B said that “Compared to larger cities like London and Manchester the drag scene is smaller in Oxford but it is larger than other cities like my home town. The Oxford drag scene is only getting bigger, especially thanks to the work done by Rusty Kate, Blues Events and the Drag and Disorderly brand. I think there’s a really exciting future for the Oxford drag scene so watch this space.” She adds “it seems like a really organic scene which has developed with the expression of Oxford’s gay population.” Miss Take imparts some wisdom with her response: “Drag takes time. Time to learn how to do your makeup, time to build a persona, time to construct and perfect a show. Oxford holds two universities and many of the student population simply do not have the time to devote to drag.” Rusty understands the complexities of a student drag scene with limited term time and that its difficult “Unless you fob off your degree and wear charity shop dresses like me.” She also tells me to “Look at the state of the Oxford drag scene five years ago - where was it? There was next to nothing going on, and now there are so many different drag events all competing for attention in a tiny city.”

Drag is the queer community’s most visible expression, and its significance cannot be understated. Therefore, it is not without its controversy, even in Oxford. Last August, the County Library hosted a Drag Queen Story Hour. The library was closed to

the public over security concerns, and police had to separate protesters and supporters by fences. Leaflets described the drag queen attending the event as “a mentally unwell man”. Miss Take says “These kinds of protests influence every

dragartists’ work. It is easy to get comfortable performing in queer spaces and forget there is still a world out there which does not understand, accept or tolerate diversity.” Adding “It’s important for children to be informed about drag; expressing who you are, however, you are, is not something to be ashamed of. Drag is not to be hidden away, but instead made accessible and enjoyed as a diverse community. On that note, I am a teacher, and I will leave you with my most important lesson: love who you are, but love me more!” Rusty Kate is candid: “Honestly, at the time we were terrified. We want to do what we do and feel safe but had a constant worry. I thought about toning down some of the things I do. I thought about how I justify raunchier parts of the show. Then I thought, why on earth am I doing this? The political landscape in this country is down the shitter, granted. The last thing we should do is hide - we should be more visible than ever. Just not in daylight. Drag Queens don’t look good in daylight.”

The overarching theme of this article and throughout my encounters with Oxford’s drag artists is that this community is very special because of its supportive and kind members. As Shroom told me “The selling point of Oxford Drag is that it is so tight-knit which allows for the family vibes.” It exists in an “In-between space” where “I can go from fierce lipsync to then licking cream off myself”. Her description of the scene as a vibrant “Mixing pot” is spot on.

Drag performers rely on people “turning up to support their gurlies” as Shroom put it. She encouraged the girls and the gays to turn out in force to support their shows and buy the performers drinks and give a generous tip - a process which is sure to be fun based on Shroom’s description of it to me. The Drag and Disorderly Facebook page has information about upcoming performances, the next being on 19th February at Plush. You can catch Jake Hall’s “fabulous drag performers” every Tuesday at the City Arms for a drag quiz. And keep a look out for any extra events - including the famed Drag Brunch - coming up in the future.

Another Drag Queen, **Scarlett Von Kok (she/her)** also leads the Oxford Drag Collective at The Old Fire Station an Oxfordshire-based drag group that produces shows for both established and upcoming artists. Haute Mess at The Bullingdon “holds stinky sweaty club nights throughout the year” (Donna’s words not mine). They tell me “The next one on 2nd March will be our annual competition, Oxford’s Next Top Mess, where we’ll be crown the city’s messiest newbie. You can find tickets on our [instagram@hautemessparty](#)” Outside nightlife, Shroom is launching a podcast of 20-minute soundbites of chatting - found through her [LinkTree](#). Judging by our conversation it will be a lot of fun. Rusty also has a radio show on Oxide Radio called ‘Wine Drunk’.

Many thanks for all the Drag performers for their time and comments.

- Shroom: [@shroomdraguk](#) Bad B: [@_brodiebrain](#)
Danny Issues: [@itsdannyyissues](#)
Rusty Kate: [@rustykatedrag](#)
Miss Take [@misstakeofficial](#)
Salmonella: [@salmonella.zip](#)
Donna: [@donna.the.first](#)

Drag Queens (from left to right): Donna, Danny Issues, Salmonella.



Sextigation: St Peter’s top shaggers, Univ least happy with sex lives

The results of the Sex Survey are in, and they’re not all what we expected.

Meg Lintern, Jack Twyman, Coco Cottam

Almost exactly a year ago, Cherwell published its first ‘Sextigation’. Now, after multiple weeks of data-collection and over 400 responses, Cherwell’s sex survey is back again for 2023.

In an almost exact parallel to last year’s survey, the (mean) average Oxford student in 2023 has had 5 sexual partners since coming to Oxford. However, the types of averaging we choose to use can tell a very different story, because some particularly active individuals massively skew the mean. The mean female student has had 4.3 sexual partners since coming to Oxford, but the median has had 1.5. The mean male has had 5.9, but the median is 2. For nonbinary students, the mean is 4.8, but the median is 3.

Significantly 43.7% of students have had one or fewer sexual partners since coming to Oxford, with 16.9% having had no sex since matriculating, and 8.6% of students being virgins. Ultimately, what this survey shows us is a ‘tale of two cities’: one half highly promiscuous, the other having had very few sexual partners.

Indeed, those who are having sex seem to be having a lot of it. A whopping 17.3% of students claimed to have had sex with two or more people at once, with 56 respondents owning up to a threesome, 10 to a foursome, 9 to a fivesome, and 1 to a sixsome.

This year, 50.4% of respondents identified as heterosexual, 30.7% bisexual, and 11% homosexual, lesbian, or gay. The remaining 8% identified as queer, asexual, pansexual, didn’t know, or preferred not to say. This is surprisingly similar to the results yielded by a similar survey run by Cambridge’s Varsity paper, where “49.7% of the respondents identified as heterosexual, whilst 11.9% and 29.7%

identified as homosexual and bisexual respectively.” One Oxford student who seems to be having a little too much fun on their year abroad termed themselves ‘Españiosexual’.

There seems to be a significantly different experience of sex at Oxford based on students’ sexual orientation. The mean straight student has slept with 3.1 people since coming to Oxford, but for the median student, this number reduces to 1. For those who identified as queer, the mean post-matriculation body-count is 6.96, with a median of 3. Multiple respondents attested to “a huge gay hookup culture”, with Plush being voted the best club for finding a one-night-stand. As one slightly less eloquent respondent put it, “Grindr go brrrrr”.

The overall impression that the survey has given of Oxford’s sex scene is decidedly ‘mid’. One respondent went as far as to say, “the only good sex I had in Oxford was with a Warwick student”, whilst another remarked, “the odds are good... but the goods are odd”. A majority of students rate their sex lives at 3/5 or below, a value that stays consistent across all sexualities and genders. However, different colleges show markedly different satisfaction levels: the mean Teddy Hall student rates their sex life 4/5, but those at Univ award it a measly 2.9/5.

This variety of satisfaction ratings may owe to the fact that when it comes to colleges, some seem to be hosting a lot more action than others. St Peter’s came in as the college with the highest mean bodycount, at 13.5 since Oxford, 17 total. It seems that when the phrase “Merton is where fun goes to die” was coined, “la petite morte” may have landed surprisingly close to the truth, since in a surprising turn of events, the colleges with the next

highest mean bodycount were Merton (12.5 since Oxford, 14 total), Christ Church (7.8 since Oxford, 16.7 total), Magdalen (7.3, 11.5), and Teddy Hall (6.6, 10.5). However, since the median Mertonian has a bodycount of 0, it is fair to say that some have been skewing the stats. Indeed, none of these colleges made it to the top 5 last year, and Magdalen was relegated to the five that “get the least action” in 2022.

It seems that a lot can change in a year.

As for the colleges seeing the least sex, the bottom five were Univ (1.4 since Oxford, 2.5 total), Somerville (1.9, 2.9), St Hugh’s (1.9, 3.4), Lincoln (2.8, 3.9) and Pembroke (3.1, 4.3). We want to give an honourable mention to LMH, with a mean body count of 4.8 since coming to Oxford, but which reduces to 0.4 when we exclude one very prolific but anomalous undergrad.

As for subjects, it’s perhaps time to stop sympathising with the medics, who have still found time to be the top-shagging degree with a sizeable average of 16.4 partners since coming to Oxford. They are unsurprisingly followed by E&M (15.8, 22.3), Theology (8.4, 11.6), Music (8.1, 10), and Geography (8, 10). Four out of five of these subjects are new to the top rankings, replacing last year’s ‘degrees which get the most action’, English and modern languages, law, ancient and modern history, and biochemistry. Interestingly, Theology students have retained their title for another year.

Psychology comes in as the subject having the least sex, with a mean of 1 sexual partner since coming to Oxford and 1.9 in total. They are followed by maths (1.4, 2.1) and engineering (2.2, 3.5). The high performance of just two Computer Science respondents has lifted them out of the bottom spot that they occupied in 2022.

However, a low body count should not be read as an absence of sex. When asked “If you are currently in a relationship of any kind, how often do you have sex with your partner?”, 47.2% of respondents claimed to be sleeping with their partner at least once a week. With a quarter of respondents having had a relationship with someone of the same college, it seems that action does not need to come from one night stands. Hertford has seen the greatest number of incidents of college-cest, with 46.7% of their respondents having had a same-college relationship. They are followed by Trinity (37.5%), Linacre (35.7%), and Balliol (28.6%).

Perhaps more importantly, a lack of sexual partners does not necessitate a lack of sexual pleasure. 3 in 4 Oxford students masturbate at least once a week. However, masturbation statistics varied wildly by college, with 95% of Magdalen students pleasing themselves at least weekly, but

57.1% of St John’s students masturbating ‘rarely’.

Casual sex does not see overwhelming popularity amongst Oxford students. 40.1% of respondents said they had never had a one night stand. For those who had, Plush was rated the best club for pulling with 24.4% of the vote, followed by Parkend/ Atik at 19.3%.

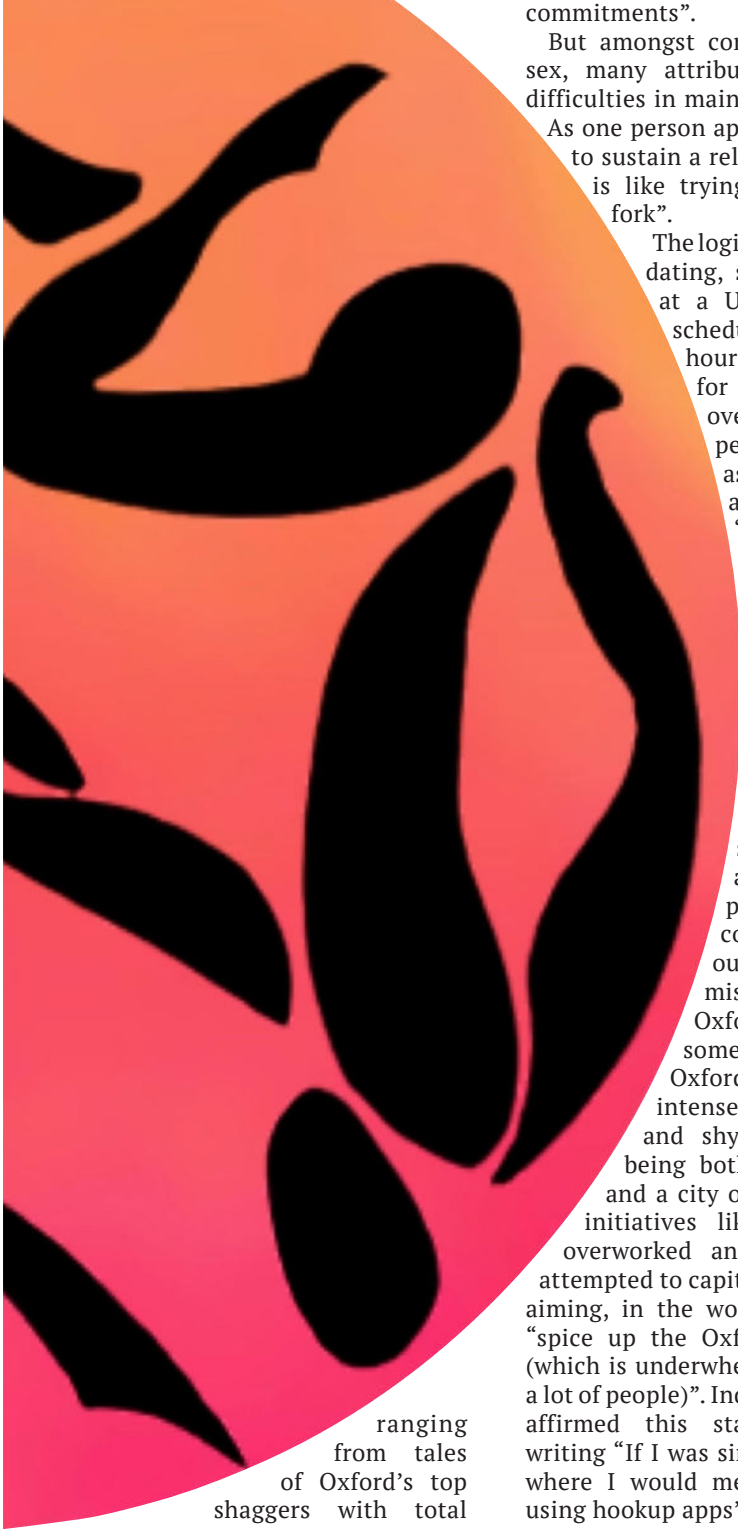
With 44.8% of students having had sex in a public place, clubs are clearly not the only place for a hook-up. Our most interesting sex spots include many a college chapel (shout-out to Exeter and Wadham), the LMH talbot laundry, Christ Church porters’ lodge, St John’s squash courts, Lincoln Entz

COLLEGES WHICH GET THE MOST ACTION	No. of sexual partners since matriculating
1. St Peter's	13.5
2. Merton	12.5
3. Christ Church	7.8
4. Magdalen	7.3
5. Teddy Hall	6.6

cellar and college library, Magdalen deer park, Worcester gardens, and the Catz moat (we're hoping next to and not in it). Students also testified to "head on the Oxford Tube", using "a remote vibrator at a college formal", and having sex with someone who "had a life-size cardboard cutout of Tony Blair in his bedroom".

Fortunately, the more insidious side of hook-up culture, such as both prude-shaming and slut-shaming, seems to be disappearing, with low numbers of respondents testifying to the presence of either. However, when broken down into gender, there are still identifiable disparities in students' sexual experiences. Only 1/5 of total respondents claimed that there is a pressure to engage in hook-up culture, but this increased to nearly 1/4 among men. Conversely, whereas 27.8% of overall respondents believe there is a slut-shaming culture, this increased to 33% among women.

The range of statistical responses we gained told us a complex story,



ranging from tales of Oxford's top shaggers with total body counts in the 100s to testimonies from those who remained happily and proactively chaste. The comments clearly revealed that Oxford's sex scene is perceived differently by all

who do (or don't) participate in it; yet the overall results suggest that sex is not as significant a factor in most Oxford students' lives as might be assumed. As one person pithily remarked, it's "very vanilla".

Issues of college accommodation come into play, as one person complains "Squeaky single beds against paper thin walls kinda ruin having sex in my own space", but several others put it down to being overworked. In a wider sense, the insularity of the university space is also a concern: "Casual sex is relatively easy to come by in Oxford but often chaotic and emotionally challenging – especially when you have to keep bumping into that person for the rest of your degree".

This idea of an incestuous dating pool is echoed by others: "Everyone knows everyone – you have to keep up". One person refers to the "whole thing about work making it 'too hard' to form a meaningful monogamous relationship", while another grumbles that they're "too busy thinking about my essays to have casual sex", and one ambitious Blue puts it down to "high workload and sports commitments".

But amongst complaints about casual sex, many attribute a lack of sex to difficulties in maintaining a relationship.

As one person aptly analogised: "trying to sustain a relationship in this place is like trying to eat soup with a fork".

The logistics of making time for dating, sex, and relationships at a University where even scheduling sleep into a 24-hour period is a struggle for some seems to be overwhelming. There are perhaps questions to be asked about the shifting attitudes to balancing 'work and pleasure' as an Oxford student: the decades-long mantra of 'First, Blues, or a Spouse' seems to have been swayed in a direction that favours the former whilst devaluing the latter.

However, a 'lack of time' for relationships seems to be only a small part of the problem. A recurrent complaint amongst our respondents is the misleading duality of Oxford's reputation, as someone writes "I think Oxford is a place of both intense sexual excitement and shyness. It's known for being both a city of nerdiness and a city of debauchery". Recent initiatives like Oxshag ("for the overworked and undersexed") have attempted to capitalise on this situation, aiming, in the words of its founder, to "spice up the Oxford casual sex scene (which is underwhelming and/or hard for a lot of people)". Indeed several comments affirmed this stance, with someone writing "If I was single, I cannot imagine where I would meet people outside of using hookup apps".

What these platforms have brought to light is the difficult co-existence of cultures of peer-pressure to have sex and slut-shaming. In the course of the survey, Oxford has been compared to both "love

island" and "a city of nerdiness", with one person lamenting that "There's no space for people who want meaningful relationships but also casual flings with interesting people". They go on to say, "You're either a slut or married. There's no in-between and it's extremely polarising and awful for the culture".

For most of those who do feel peer pressure to have casual sex, the pressure is often more subtle. One person suggested sex is "so prevalent and often talked about that those who don't participate may feel that they are missing a part of their 'university experience'". Another person responded that the pressure is "not explicit but [there are] feelings of exclusion if not involved". Someone else makes the argument that "casual sex is standardised, and many feel that traditional relationships are boring or unviable". These pressures are embedded in our social activities, from everywhere from crew dates which "valorise being a shagger and having funny sex stories" to Bridge and Atik, where there's a "pressure to hit the club and hook up".

The story looks slightly different when considering the dating experience of LGBTQ+ respondents. One respondent said "I think a lot of LGBTQ+ identifying individuals start exploring their sexuality at university, so there's a notion of 'jumping in at the deep end' that straight people don't really have". Another said their experience was "originally a bit traumatic; there was a real pressure to take part in that scene when I wasn't ready."

A different respondent stated that "women seem less likely to date a bi man here". However, they finished by saying "I've had a lot more sex at uni than my straight friends and acquaintances though."

"Casual sex culture feels more pressured than with my straight friends," said one student. This seems to be a common theme throughout responses, with another noting, "I think there is more hook-up culture for men who have sex with men."

Hookup pressure is the most common comment, with another telling us: "Sometimes I feel like there's more pressure to get with more people to prove your queerness, but I'm okay with not adhering to this anymore. I know I'm attracted to women and I don't need to make out with one every other week to prove that." Many respondents were candid about the additional challenges attributed to their LGBTQ+ identity. One respondent told us that "As a demisexual person, it's hard to meet people enough to form a relationship because there isn't enough time or opportunity", and another told us that "As a gay man, Body shaming and pressure to be skinny aka a twink is very common."

"I think if you're queer but not very outwardly queer presenting then it would be very hard

to be noticed by other queer students. I find that I'm not entirely comfortable with other queer students because I feel like I am not queer enough around them (which may just be a general issue)."

These challenges seemed harshest for trans people. One said, "being gay and trans makes hookups a very strange prospect, most of my prospects are people I already know." Additionally, "Dating/hooking up as a gay trans person is hard, because you worry about how people perceive you and whether or not it'll be safe, whilst also worrying about how having to acknowledge your own body too. If you find someone that's supportive, though, that makes things a lot easier."

However, there were positive comments too: "I have found dating quite easy in Oxford. I appreciate that the other person will have a similar workload to me, and therefore it is important to designate discrete times to see each other. This works very well for me as someone who likes to compartmentalise my day. I don't think this is much different to how heterosexual relationships must work in Oxford."

All in all, our survey has told us that sex in Oxford looks very different depending on who you ask. Initial surprise at the high mean average bodycount of students was replaced by equal surprise at the low median. Perhaps most interesting was the fact that lots of those having little sex assumed that they were in the minority, whilst many of those having lots of it thought that Oxford was not very accommodating for casual hook-ups. One student told us that "I feel guilty for putting so many "no" and "not applicable". I really need a therapist to tell me that being a virgin is ok here in Oxford." In contrast, another told us that "There is a bit of a cliché that Oxford students should have a lot of sex to alleviate stress." It seems that Oxford doesn't really have a strong sex culture, either pro or anti, yet our respondents frequently measured themselves against standards that simply don't exist. It seems that sex really isn't a defining aspect of University life after all.

Image credits: Wang Sum Luk
Background image credit: kytalpa via Pixabay / Public Domain

COLLEGES WHICH GET THE LEAST ACTION	No. of sexual partners since matriculating
1. Univ	1.4
2. Somerville	1.9
3. St Hugh's	1.9
4. Lincoln	2.8
5. Pembroke	3.1

CHERBADLY

Area student actually friends with kebab truck guy

Local Oxford student Timothy Beckwell has claimed that, while other students may frequent his favorite kebab stand, he is actually friends with the man who runs it. “The guy knows my order by heart,” said Beckwell, who is known to drop by the stand most nights around 1:30 am after a “few pints with the boys.”

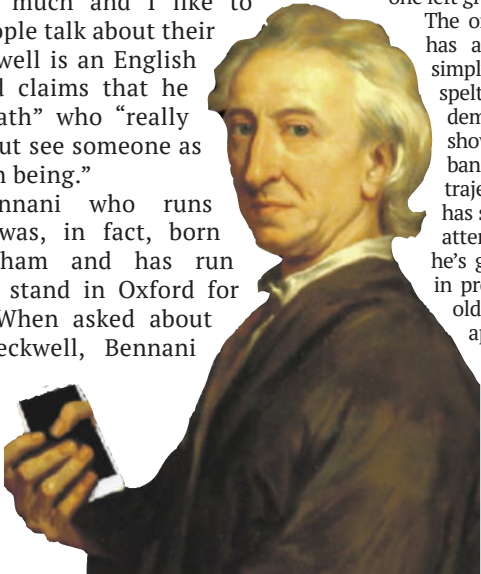
According to Beckwell, the kebab truck guy often sees him coming down the street and will wave at him and say, “hello boss!” before making his favorite chicken wrap with garlic mayo. Beckwell apparently often responds, “how ya doin’ my friend,” before making small talk while his wrap is being prepared. “I even know

his name,” said Beckwell, “it’s Ali... I think or... actually I think it’s Alex?”

Another student who goes to the kebab stand around that time affirmed that Beckwell, “really just lingers there and chats for a minute before walking off again into the night with his wrap. It’s really annoying because we’re all waiting in line to order and he won’t shut up.”

“I was just curious about his story one night so I struck up a conversation, and now we’re friends,” said Beckwell. “He’s been through so much like I think he’s Syrian... or was it Moroccan... honestly maybe he’s Italian? Regardless, he’s been through so much and I like to listen to people talk about their lives.” Beckwell is an English student and claims that he is “an empath” who “really can’t help but see someone as a full human being.”

Alfie Bennani who runs the stand was, in fact, born in Birmingham and has run his popular stand in Oxford for ten years. When asked about Timothy Beckwell, Bennani responded, “who?”



John Evelyn

Something wicked this way comes. Not the pale ghosts of Young Bright and On the Right descending on the Sabbath. Not the elderly patrons of the bar last Saturday. Not the Tabs (long may they be shoe’d) Northern wannabes (aka Oxford, but in Special Measures edition) or HM’s subjects from the Westerly British Isles who colonised the chamber that night.

No, dear readers, I speak of a man with a Rice Purity score of 11. For conclave met in the twilight hours and duly crowned the Electoral Gastronomist as this illustrious institution’s next bastion of stringent neutrality, following in the footsteps of those immune to the siren call of slating and electoral candidacy - looking at you, Big Lash and Mr. NEU. With any luck, he will restrict himself to eating the hacks for breakfast rather than the ballots, and the Haram Hobbyist will be the only one left grinding his teeth.

The one formerly called the Il-legal Illiterate has apparently learnt to read (so is now, simply, Il-legal). A petition - with everything spelt correctly, Johnny commends our new democracy enthusiast on this big step! - shows he is attempting to revive the “slate ban”. Not since the Minuting Maestro’s trajectory from ex-seccie to red rose soc sec has such an act of political necromancy been attempted. Perhaps that’s the most action he’s getting anyway. The Il-legal’s principles in proposing such a reform are of course as old as his mental age, given his enthusiasm appears to have originated after Banned from Maccies declined to join his own “slate: as Librarian. What would that slate name have been? #khan’t? #charmxvenom? Certainly not #come, as that is taken - much like a certain ex-hack and new hack. For ACDC may not be at the ball but ADCC will. Might John Evelyn suggest getting a room?

You are likely reading these

ruminations on the day of the ball, which looks to be a thoroughly well-run affair. That is, assuming that the Girlboss is suitably caffeinated, as is per tradition for forerunners of her position, and Charlie’s Angels remain rather more sober than their donnie predecessors. Indeed, at this week’s meeting of Access Committee (that bellwether of Society governance) the Alcoholic Anglican expressed a desire to purchase breathalysers. This was supposedly proposed as a way of policing committee drinking at the ball, but Mr. Evelyn’s hypothesis is obviously that since the NHS is as fucked as the Oxford New Labour Appreciation Society, he can’t be bothered to go private and so is simply expensing his new therapy tools on the OUS budget. (For legal reasons, this is not an accusation of financial impropriety, merely an expression of concern). Back to the ball - the Ice & Fire theme is really rather apt, given the constant Game of Thrones within these walls (and those of all the coffee shops in OX1). The Compressed Classicist’s presidential ambitions appear to have collapsed under the weight of mods (thus avoiding a second back-stabbing of the aWoken Librarian this election cycle), and the throne which Banned from Maccies had sat astride initially splintered, only to discover that three legs still held strong, her officer team now a blonde SWAT one. Perhaps it was to be expected that the aWoken Librarian was hardly successful in picking the splinters up, although given the questionable recruitment tactics she has stooped to deploying, it’s not exactly surprising she is having trouble Standing (as the Anti Sell-Out, told her in no uncertain terms, in keeping with her recent speech). Standing both future and present, that is - given before the Classicist abandoned his dreams of staging a coup, Macculay Culkin’s doppelganger lined in position to manage such a campaign, with the reputed support of his ever present (albeit not at bench-moving) Hertford wingwoman. Probably the best lining he’s ever shown. All this treachery, and it’s only 3rd week...

FROM THE ARCHIVES: 2014’S SEXTIGATION

“Sex isn’t the answer. Sex is the question, and the answer is yes” Is Oxford getting any? C+ investigates the sex lives, masturbation habits and relationships of Oxford students

Exeter student Alice Nutting on the real meaning of kinky

In the context of sexual and fetishistic activities, kinky falls in the realm of the sexually deviant. There's a great deal of subjectivity involved here but, as a general rule, having sex against the wall doesn't automatically make you kinky. Kink is often considered synonymous with BDSM - Bondage and Discipline (BD), Domination and Submission (DS), and Sadism and Masochism (SM). BDSM covers a broad spectrum of activities and types of play, but at its core is a healthy and consensual exploration of power dynamics. "Vanilla" is generally considered anything outside of the realm of BDSM.

The underlying principles of healthy BDSM are those of informed consent, SSC (Safe, Sane and Consensual) and its more modern, flexible RACK (Risk Aware Consensual Kink). "Safe words" such as orange and red are used to tell people to stop or ease off, and "check" words to tell someone to continue. It's important to have a negotiation conversation with someone you play with, to work out what you're both comfortable with doing.

Representations of BDSM in the media vary from the glorification of abusive relationships, as seen in 50 Shades of Grey (there's a hilarious yet disturbing chapter-by-chapter deconstruction on the internet if you search for it), to the outdated portrayal of kinky people as mentally scarred. Despite a 2008 study concluding that its kinky participants were no more likely to have been abused or coerced into sexual activity than their vanilla counterparts.

Although BDSM can be a very private thing, many kinky people form communities based on their shared interest, including in Oxford. Munches, initially named because their participants met up for food and conversation in American diners, are usually relaxed local pub meet-ups with a mixture of vanilla and kinky chat and occasionally a few board games. People also host rope bondage tutorial workshops, 'play parties', and more large-scale events. One of the biggest misconceptions about BDSM is that it always involves sex - sure, it can be sexually stimulating, but that doesn't mean you can't play platonically - or that its participants can't just sit down and have a normal conversation over a cup of tea.

Kink is a spectrum. It ranges from those who like being tied up and spanked in the bedroom to heavier forms of play and D/s relationships. Often people's preferences evolve and change over time. Healthy BDSM practice emphasises the importance of enthusiastic consent, not implied or reluctant consent. It values negotiation and personal space. There are all basic principles that the vanilla world can, and should, learn from.

Participation in kink can open up a whole new realm, an opportunity for the discovery of, as sociologist and psychologist Peggy Kleinplatz said, "the transformative potential of intense erotic intimacy".

Which college has the most sexual partners?

Balliol (2.71)
St. Hilda's (2.93)
LMH (3.7)
Merton (3.81)
Worcester (3.85)
St. Anne's (4.06)
Wadham (4.22)
Corpus Christi (4.38)
Keble (4.45)
St. Edmund Hall (5.05)
Exeter (6)

Which subject has the most sexual partners?

Biological Sciences (1.58)
Classics (2.99)
MH (3.75)
Mathematics (3.97)
Law (4.29)
English (4.54)
History (4.78)
Geography (4.90)
Chemistry (5.79)
PPE (6.7)
Physics (7.7)
Engineering (8.5)

C+ interviews Ava Gina, the pseudonymous writer of Creaming Spires

How many sexual partners have you had since starting at Oxford, and how many in total?

I've slept with roughly seventeen people in my lifetime, give or take a blurry handful. The majority of them have been fellow Oxonians; I had a relatively late start but didn't waste time making up for it.

Have you ever had sex in a public place in Oxford? If so, where?

I've never had the balls for a full frontal bang in Radcliffe Square. But I fuddled someone else in a club staff room recently. The manager wasn't too pleased to find his bartender swapping cocktails for fellatio.

Would you identify your sex life as kinky?

Nowhere near as much as I'd like to be. I reckon I've got slightly scarier tastes than the next twenty-year-old lady. Or maybe I'm just more vain than she is. I'm still waiting for a guy nice enough to be nasty.

How often do you masturbate?

This has varied enormously across my lifetime. Retaining my virginity through puberty was a relief. Now me and my index finger have fallen out of love. It's quite nice, actually. We still enjoy our weekly rendezvous, we just have other interests, too.

Have you ever had a one night stand? If so, how many?

Almost exclusively. If you can have multiple one night stands with one person, which I think you can (if a 'one night stand' is defined as something you don't intend to repeat) about 20.

Which nightclub in Oxford do you think provides the most opportunities for casual sex?

It's got to be Shark Inn. Specifically, the 'house' floor, where couples pump into taxis just to get away from the blood-curdling noise. Bridge is too sweaty. Raby Love too self-aware. Camera too embarrassing.

Have you contracted an STI since starting Oxford?

No. I had my fair share of bad luck at work, but I managed to unwittingly exchange my virginity for a goody done of Chlamydia. I'm a little disappointed. I would've liked to add something tropical-sounding to my repertoire.

Do you always ensure that you or your partner wears protection during sex?

I guess this is why my change is so regularly clean: yes I do. I always ensure that both me and my partner use condoms, lubricant, drugged and ready to rumble, relaxed and wet: free. Both sexual partners are always protected.

In general, how do you feel about your sex life at Oxford?

I would describe it as more joyous tribulation than Samantha Jones. It is friendly for the most part, and varied, but on more than one occasion I have found myself embracing more over his en-suite than his schlong. But I wouldn't take it back: I would best describe my feelings for my sex life at Oxford as 'fond'.

What would you say is your top tip for those looking to spice things up?

Don't do the library-sex thing, it is uncomfortable and deeply unoriginal. Don't change the venue, change the tactics: more people enjoy the introduction of handcuffs, handcuffs etc. than don't. If you are still eating vanilla, now's the time to graduate. And for those of you who already have, one top tip is pretty futile: sex is like a box of chocolates.

Oxford CU President Josh Peppiatt, on sex and Christianity

Sex is everywhere. Film plots, newspaper reports, not to mention our real lives, all revolve around it. Relationships are central to what it means to be human, and romantic relationships are some of the most important. I think our culture is ambivalent towards sex, on one hand it is deified, for some having lots of sex is just about the highest state possible, there is often a feeling that we need it to have intimacy and contentment. But sex is also degraded. It's with a view that it is just about satisfying sexual appetites, or having a bit of fun. The other person doesn't really matter. It's just about whether you got laid.

This view of sex is rarely countered by those student unions and UK campaigns, many of which suggest that sex whenever or whenever is fine, as long as it's safe.

I would like to see that better perspective on sex and sexuality. I think the best way to have a new sexual experience is to have a conversation with a man who has had a lot of sex, puts it well.

In this secular age where men no longer believed in or devoted himself to God, salvation could only be sought through love. That love was a new religion - romantic love, devotion to the female - and women were goddesses who could be saved through worshipping.

Based on everything that I'm sure is true: we all look for salvation, for redemption, and many of us look for it in relationships and sex. But when we do, it doesn't always fulfil that promise. So either we begin to be disillusioned with sex or look for it in other forms. There is unsurprisingly the most serious search on the internet.

Christianity strikes a refreshing balance: the Bible is very positive about sex. God's first command was to be fruitful and increase in number. Yet it regards it as truly precious: people often mock the Christian belief that sex outside marriage is wrong, but to a woman it's the ultimate romantic position: sex is so special it's for one person, and it's something done in the security of publicly promised, committed faithfulness. This is hard for us to grasp given our culture is so far removed from the concept.

The bigger issue though, for those of all of us, is not 'what is the place of sex?' but 'what can truly redeem me?' I have discovered that the answer to the 'what' is a 'when'.

For people who follow Jesus, sex and romantic relationships are important, but not everything. They don't have to carry the burden of our identity and how we feel about ourselves.

That central question of identity for the Christian is found in relationship with Jesus. We're loved as God's children, no matter our sexuality, sexual performance, and sexual history. We are free from any guilt, or shame, or fear. It means we can be satisfied whatever our sexual status.

Quick facts

- 32% of Oxford students are very satisfied with their sex lives
- 1 out of 5 Oxford students have had sex in a public place
- 26% of male students masturbate once a day
- 505 responses to the C+ sex survey
- 7/10 Oxford students have been in a relationship since starting university
- 12% of female students masturbate once a day

Masthead

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Katerina Lygaki
Editor-in-Chief

I don't know if I'm not interesting enough or what, but I never know what to write for these editorials. So far, my approach has been to talk about something relevant to me, and being the self-absorbed gal that I am, that's what I'll do this week as well. I realised that the reason why I don't really know what to write is that reading the news stresses me out. I don't think that I've read the news section of any newspaper in the past year. When reading The Times, I go straight to the culture section. If you want to hear about a riveting review of the latest London play, I'm your gal, but ask me anything about the latest political scandal and I'm immediately out of my depth.

The way I get my news is a two-step process. Step one, where I read the Instagram stories from outlets like The Times or The Guardian, along with their captions, and call it a day. Step two is a bit more risky and involves a trickle-down effect where I receive a wildly inaccurate but extremely entertaining version of a current affair and then I have to go do some research so I don't look like a fool if the story turns out to be false. Like the other day, I recounted a vividly gripping account that I had heard from a friend, only to have another friend show me that it was a Reddit story.

In moments like this, it is so embarrassing not reading the news. Am I part of the fake news problem? Should I inform myself a bit

better? I am self-aware enough to realise that this is sad. I am a twenty-one year-old woman so I better start acting like one. On the other hand, though, I got to protect my inner peace. If I don't look out for Number #1 who will?

Jokes aside, the news nowadays are really tricky to navigate. I know I'm not the only one that feels uninformed but also dreads reading sensationalist headlines about the latest climate catastrophe, the newest economic crisis or a current femicide. I don't have the answers to the perfect balance, but I wanted to write this piece for everyone else that is on the same boat as me: know that you are not alone in living your "no thoughts, head empty" truth.

Today marks the start of Valentine's month (?), and you might have seen the release of Cherwell's annual sex survey in the features section. Its the culmination of Meg, Jack, and Coco's amazing research work, as well as the helpful input of 427 Oxford students. On top of all the library sex, thin walls, single beds, and an alleged instance of a crisp packet condom (!!!), a look at the survey's results also has some genuinely interest insight into the way that people in Oxford think about sex and relationships. When discussing the survey with my friends, a lot of them seem to think that Oxford dating life pressures you to get in relationships, as quickly and intensely as possible (helped, no doubt, by the popular "Blue, first, spouse" maxim). At first glance, this seems pretty true; my first year saw loads of people in my cohort (myself included) get into relationships of varying lengths and quality, with only a couple lasting out the whole year and the long, long summer. Like a sort of Freudian psychodrama, this year's freshers seem to be repeating the mistakes of their parents; it was only yesterday that I overheard a pair of Univ first-years in Pret talking about the fact that everyone was "coupling up" (the use of Love Island parlance seems too significant not to point out).



Isaac Ettinghausen
Editor-in-Chief

However, there is also a flipside; many of the weird social contexts one finds oneself in at Oxford seem to encourage strictly casual sex – the apps, the Bridge smoking area, and of course, the infamous crewdate, which, with its speed dating, clothes swapping, and over intimate sconcing, is pretty much designed to facilitate one-night stands. If you get up early enough on a Friday morning, you're guaranteed to spot at least a couple of people in college football ties, sports kit, or chicken costumes shuffling awkwardly down the High Street. The effect of legendary sports club hangout / alleged restaurant Temple Lounge closing (page 3) has yet to be seen. It was also notable that many (but not all) of the survey's LGBTQ+ respondents observed that there was a higher pressure for casual sex than among their straight peers.

What strikes me as weird about this is that the two sides seem almost irreconcilable. Oxford's "relationship people" can't fathom the idea of going home with a sweaty rugby player they've met two hours ago, and its casual daters seem unable (or unwilling) to hold down a more intimate relationship beyond a few weeks. Maybe we are all a little repressed and messed up sex-wise, or maybe, like one respondee wrote, Oxford's dating scene is simply "a fucking hell hole".

Leader: The return of our Sextigation

fun.
The combination of college rankings and references to sex means that a lot of people will be intrigued enough to read our survey. This gives us a couple of options in how to approach it. On the one hand, we could keep it short and pithy, stick to sensationalised statistics, and make a very big deal about all the sex students are or are not having. On the other hand, we could draw from the deep pool of comments that students left us to try to get into the nitty-gritty of not just their sex lives, but their happiness with those sex lives. And, obviously, we could leave in the sensationalised stats for good measure. Whilst this might make for a longer article – potentially one that a small proportion will get to the end of – I think it tells a much richer story.

Sex is something that students talk about. In some cases, we talk about it a lot. However, the sex we discuss is smoothed around the edges, much glossier and more salacious than the reality. Usually, we leave out the awkward details that don't make for a good story: the physical insecurities, the anxieties about getting 'too little' or 'too much' action, the fear that something associated with the 'student experience' is not fulfilling us in the way that it ought to.

Sure, the mean average student has had

5 sexual partners since coming to Oxford. But the median has had 2. Sure, some students thrive off of one-night-stands. But others are just 'relationship people', craving that emotional intimacy as much as the physical. The one consistent factor between these students is the tendency to 'measure up' against whatever we're not. At Oxford in particular, perfectionist tendencies and self-deprecating habits mean that many of us are constantly seeking to identify that 'thing' that everyone else is doing well that we should do well too. Are our peers scoring great internships, getting great collections results, or heading to Vinnie's on the weekly? Who is sat in hall in a scholar's gown? Who is having loads of great spontaneous sex through Tinder? Who has found a sickeningly adorable relationship?

At the risk of attaching far greater significance to the sex survey than it deserves, I think that we can learn a lot from it outside of college bodycounts. It shows us that no matter what we think everyone else is doing, or what we think we ourselves should be doing, we are often looking at a very skewed set of data. If we approach it from a new direction, the picture becomes a lot more messy, complicated, and often simply boring. Ultimately, it becomes a lot more human.



Meg Lintern
Deputy Editor

So... the sex survey. It's a controversial one. How can we make such bold statements with such small sample sizes? How dare we pass off our shabby google form as a 'study'? How can we make claims about the sexual experiences of all Oxford students using the data submitted by people who spend their spare time reading Cherwell, so 'surely aren't getting any'? I'm awaiting the Oxfesses with bated breath.

Of course, I'm making no pretences that our 2023 Sextigation approaches anything close to science - far from it. The disparities between this year's and last year's results show us just how temperamental it is, and how much the responses of a few students can sway the averages of whole subjects and colleges. The sex survey is, as I believe more student journalism should be, just a bit of

Crossing the pond

Thoughts of a Prospective Transgender Studies DPhil

Mizy Clifton

After finishing my undergraduate degree last summer, I crossed the pond and went absolutely nowhere, from Cambridge to Oxford. I'm clearly a fan of jaw-breaker degree titles: Human, Social and Political Sciences (pretentious, low word-to-substance ratio) and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies (ostensibly much more intelligible, though ask me to define any of those constituent terms conclusively and I'll be obliged to give you the poststructuralist spiel about the dangers of definitional certitude - the first article on our reading list was Wendy Brown's "The Impossibility of Women's Studies").

I'm hoping to pursue a career in academia, but I forgoed applying during this year's admissions cycle. I did this for self-preservation purposes, mostly. If the pressures of Oxford are bad enough, try waiting on what will inevitably feel like yet more judgement about your academic worth or indeed, even being in close proximity to those who did decide to take the plunge and apply.

I also did this (or rather, didn't do anything) because the state of my field, trans studies, is pretty dire in the UK, to say the least - aside from ruining the Harry Potter series, the hostile climate of trans-antagonistic rhetoric and government policy makes it difficult to research anything more interesting than that pertaining to the defence of my existence, let alone receive funding for it. A provisional dissertation thesis carrying the title "Genital Imperatives, Sticky Penises, and the Trans [Un]remarkable: Toward a Trans-Inclusive Sexual Ethics" doesn't stand much of a chance. Every academic that I've spoken to here has advised me to cross another pond, the Atlantic Ocean, where apparently the grass is comparatively greener and the money somewhat more available. One gave me a rather ambivalent motivational speech suffused with existential warning: if I lived and breathed learning and couldn't see myself doing anything else, then by all means go ahead, but be prepared to frequent food banks for at least a few years.

The politics of PhD departments and funding opportunities are bewildering, especially for a still somewhat doe-eyed Master's student. It is undoubtedly a privilege to be able to consult a whole network of eminent Oxbridge professors with insider knowledge of the process, but I've somehow found myself caught up in precisely the frame of mind that I was once trying, I think judiciously, to avoid: that of obsessively poring over Sociology department websites and emailing potential supervisors about whether they're open to expressions of interest from prospective PhD applicants.

On that note, there's something simultaneously self-flagellating and self-aggrandising about having to write those emails - "please consider me". I'm trying to calm down; to breathe, and know that I've done what I can so far. *Continued online...*

West-Eastern Storyman: Lord Patten on China and diplomacy

Notes from the Chancellor and last governor of Hong Kong's speech

Luke Dale

Lord Patten's address on "China and the Future Global Order" began in the wrong place at the wrong time, as he delivered two opening anecdotes not about the dominant Asian power and its geopolitical significance, but rather about the Europe of bygone centuries

The first was from the Congress of Vienna. During those days in 1814-15, as the aristocratic diplomatic corps of the old monarchies descended on the Habsburg capital, their lavish lifestyle aroused the scorn of certain ambassadors. "The Congress does not march to its goal," wrote one; "it dances". And yet—as Patten emphasises—the diplomacy of that celebrated conference delivered peace for a Europe stepped-in so far in conflict. The manner and ritual of diplomacy may have changed, but the fact remains: well-brokered treaties can usher in decades of prosperity.

The second anecdote was from the life of Jewish author Stefan Zweig. This son of Vienna, who toured that city's high society circuits a century after the restorationist diplomats, was later forced to flee his home under the threat of Nazi persecution. Having settled in Brazil, he wrote "The World of Yesterday", a literary ode to the dying life of the Habsburg Empire which Lord Patten numbers among his favourite books. Zweig and his wife committed suicide after completing the book, with no hope for a return to the eulogised status quo ante. Patten suggests that Zweig would have been heartened by post-war developments, but this story is essentially tragic, illustrating the cruelties unleashed when the seething cauldron of international relations is allowed to boil over.

Two anecdotes: one with a message of hope, the other of losing it. To say that these represent two possible outlooks on China's relationship with the Western Bloc would be impossibly reductive. But nor were they just arbitrary, indulgent ramblings of the kind popularised by another Balliol politician. Both historical vignettes speak to the complexity of international relations and its continuity between past and present, between West and East. And as the last colonial governor of Hong Kong, Lord Patten's life serves to bridge these eras and civilisations.

This governorship he presents as a kind of Indian summer on the Pearl River Estuary, his paternalistic leadership serving to sweeten the memory of imperial rule. In fact, Patten is not just looking back through the rose-tinted glasses of an inherited colonial ethic: his time in office was indeed one of democratisation, liberalisation and a distributive economic policy of such a vigorous nature that, as he recalls, the CCP accused him of being a socialist. But the arbitrariness of his accession does have a whiff of old regime Europe to it: "I became

governor of Hong Kong because I lost my seat in Bath," he muses; "Sweet are the uses of adversity".

Such experiences naturally shape the political outlook of their subject. To some extent, it seems, Lord Patten senses a loss akin to Zweig's grief for a departed belle époque. As he reminds us, his lifetime has seen unprecedented peace in Europe. Born on the day the Wehrmacht surrendered in Crimea, the post-war order, forged in his infancy, created a world in which Westerners lived under extended conditions of prosperity and, after 1991, security too. The CCP's—and particularly Xi Jinping's—pivot to a less open policy, both economically and socially, threatens this peace. For Patten, the possibility of an invasion of Taiwan is a case in point: a westernised democracy facing an ever-less cooperative revanchist neighbour. If this cauldron boils over, the rules-based international order may be the first victim.

The volte-face of CCP policy, from Deng's apparent willingness to integrate fully into the global economy, to Xi's record of non-adherence to international treaties (including trade treaties) is of course far from inexplicable. To explain it, Lord Patten furnishes us with another fascinating anecdote, this time from his own life. He recalls a visit of Wang Qishan, the current Vice President of the PRC, to Oxford, where he expressed particular interest in the Bodleian's Tocqueville collections. Wang admires L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution above all else, presumably because he has

never been made to write a collection on it. The text, Patten suggests, gives him two crucial insights applicable to China: firstly, people don't get easier to govern as they grow wealthier; and secondly, authoritarian regimes are more vulnerable when they try to reform. In a remarkable show of east-west engagement then, it seems the CCP's anti-revolutionary policy is taking notes from the errors of the Bourbons. Of course, this hammers home an earlier theme: the principles of governance are perennial and international. The earlier invocation of nineteenth and twentieth century European diplomacy is to be understood in this context.

Lord Patten lived the imperial life decades after most of Britain's colonies broke free from their imposed tutelage. As such, he talks like a man from the deep past, weaving personal and historical anecdotes together with such effortlessness that one struggles to distinguish the two without reference to his birth date. His opinions carry the authority of all his cumulative experience. He warns us that Hong Kong is the canary down the coal mine: China mistreats her now only how it intends to mistreat other polities it gains dominance over. So the west must, he concludes, constrain if it cannot contain and limit the extent of China's wrongdoing, while accepting its inevitable role on the world stage. Such realpolitik may not reinvigorate the lost pax americana which his generation has so much enjoyed, but it perhaps takes its lead from the great nineteenth century statesmen whose determination for peace refused to let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

Image credit: © Pruneau / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 3.0



Dear Oxford Union: What was the Point of That?

Jack Twyman shares his thoughts on the Union’s debate motion “This House Supports Same-Sex Marriage in the Church”.

A slight disclaimer before I begin. I wish I didn’t have to write this. I wish my fellow community members and I could live without additional complexities, barriers to jump and hurdles to cross. I wish that my sexuality could remain just a part of me, and not my defining feature as society continues to force it to be. So with that:

When I paid my £250 for membership I expected to hear world-class speakers, be immersed in a diverse and vibrant events calendar, and experience a part of Oxford that I believed was integral to my Oxford experience.

What I didn’t expect - rather naively, I have come to believe - is for my rights to be up for debate. I didn’t think it was a debate still being had. Not in the Oxford Union. A secular space free from the bounds of regressive forms of religion that persecute those their saviour is bound to love. Jesus loves. Homophobes don’t.

Quite why the Union sees giving a platform to the institution most opposed and hellbent on restricting to free speech in the form of dissent to promoting the concept is baffling. .

My issue is with the debate motion ‘This House Supports Same-Sex Marriage in the Church’. What does the committee expect from this motion? A fairytale accolade when everyone lives happily ever after and reaches a conclusion that solves the problems the church has been in turmoil over for centuries? I can’t imagine anything remotely positive will come from giving a platform to those who are so bothered by their own celibacy that they feel their time is best spent preventing those who love from doing so. It’s not an intellectual exercise, it’s people’s lives. And indeed it didn’t.

If we look at the church, its supposedly liberal image is a mirage disguising a bed of hatred. The Archbishop of Canterbury - the person who is given the right to broadcast a Christmas Message every year on the publicly funded BBC, called gay sex a sin last summer. So, I can imagine that his views on same-sex marriage will not be the most productive.

If we look at the announced opposition, one member Dr Ian Paul, is at the college of St Johns. How are those members of that college going to react to a senior figure parroting hatred? His beliefs extend far beyond same-sex marriage. His blog psephzio has an entire page dedicated to sexuality - placed more prominently than Biblical Studies and Life & Ministry. Here he espouses his disdain for those who see LGBTQ+ lifestyles as ‘legitimate’ and who want to shift the church’s view ‘in relation to the appropriate pattern of sexual relationship’.

Paul says ‘Biblically, the witness of Scripture is uniform in its negative moral judgement of same-sex sexual behaviour but in places permissive of divorce.’ Yet there is not a single mention of homosexuality in the bible - nor any homophobia - until the

“Oxford’s union lags behind its counterparts.

unprecedented scale. But what I hope anyone does not let Ian know, for his sanity’s sake, is that King James I was... not exactly straight. Historical records have documented his relationships with both men and women, and proven he was most likely bisexual. A BBC Scotland documentary by historian Emma Dabiri, said ‘it’s no surprise that James was gay or bisexual — as his letters to George Villiers confirm, the two were in an intimate relationship.’ James was well known to have male ‘favourites’ as one courtier said that ‘I never yet saw any fond husband make so much or so great dalliance over his beautiful spouse as I have seen King James over his favourites, especially the Duke of Buckingham.’ It is rather ironic that Paul’s comments on divorce were soon after he got a new boss - King Charles III who is divorced and remarried. Perhaps much bolder in the bible than any discussion of homosexuality is Malachi 2:16: “I hate divorce, says the LORD God of Israel.”

Biblical Authors were writing at a time when sexual orientation was not understood. This means that any Christian arguments opposing continued opposition toward same-sex relationships and LGBTQ+ identities must be based on something other than these biblical texts.

Ian calls marriage the tip of the ‘sexual revolution iceberg’ claiming ‘I don’t think it is really possible to separate attitudes to gay marriage from these wider themes’. Paul uses an aggrieved tone to describe how ‘The church is then being called to shift its understanding and teaching, including in relation to the appropriate pattern of sexual relationship’. He understands past negative attitudes to homosexuality in the church as ‘due to church teaching and an understanding of sexual ethics and what patterns of behaviour fall into the category of sexual immorality (porneia) against which Scripture constantly warns’. These claims are found in 11 articles which obsessively pedal this viewpoint. The Union cannot try and say that for this speaker of the opposition, this is a debate purely about marriage, and will not touch

on a debate about same-sex tolerance in general.

The other speaker of the opposition, Calvin Robinson, has made a career out of the culture war he so despises the left for creating. He told his 242-thousand Twitter followers that ‘Pride is a sin. The debauchery and degeneracy on display highlights why.’ Robinson believes Western countries are “fighting tooth and nail for the survival of our way of life.” Robinson hosts a GB News show where his bio says his show aims to “Reclaim our country from the woke. Join me in my crusade for common sense.” On the show he has peddled the ideology of far-right politician Enoch Powell, declaring he “was right on many points” and even changed his Twitter banner to include a photograph of him.

The disarray of the Church over the topic

should be enough to prove the debate is not ready to be had yet. And the choice of speakers to this debate suggests its purpose is very different to purely a debate on the right of marriage. The Union is no stranger to the topic, having held a debate in 2013 on whether gay parents should be given the right

to raise children, and a pointless debate over whether “This House Regrets the Prominence of Allies in the LGBTQ+ Movement”. Consistently seeking to divide and fracture, the Union needs to rethink this route. While the top echelons of Committee are dominated by straight men, the lower ranks have a strong LGBTQ+ representation, and we must ask why this is. I wanted to believe the Union wasn’t just an old boys club - but after the Saturday bicentenary debate it became clear that Oxford’s Union lags behind its counterparts, both in terms of representation and attitude.

Read the full article online at Cherwell.org.

“I wanted to believe it wasn’t just an old boys club

“Too Big?”- Height as a political weapon



Adam Saxon

Many may have thought that with the exit of Boris Johnson from office last year an era of petty personal politics had come to an end, but Keir Starmer’s comment in PMQs last week that Sunak is not big enough for the job indicate that this is really just a core characteristic of our politics. The raucous atmosphere of the House of Commons lends itself to sly digs that gain cheers from your side and jeers of discontent from the other. PMQs especially has always been a mud slinging contest: think Blairs ‘weak, weak, weak’ attack on Major, or Cameron calling Milliband a ‘mug’. Really it is unsurprising that such personal attacks should continue in an era of celebrity-like leaders.

Daniel Thomas

If it were up to me, there’d be a strict Parliamentary code of conduct to crack down on jeering, name-calling and other childish behaviour by M.P.s of all parties- but we don’t live in that world. Politicians have said far worse in the House of Commons than a teasing jibe at Rishi Sunak’s height. Any manufactured controversy over this is a storm in the teacup, engineered to distract from this abysmal failure of a government.



Oliver Hall

PMQs has long been a venue for humorous jibes and criticisms but Starmer’s comments last Wednesday were an unnecessarily bad look for Labour. So far ahead in the polls with the Tories embroiled in so many scandals, it is hard to see why Keir felt the need to stoop to the personality politics of his opposition. Boris Johnson and Liz Truss tried and I think it is fair to say the the public are now tired of it. Perhaps he has been spooked by the criticisms of his ‘boring’ character but the public are ready for boring. Going forward, he will do far better if he sticks to policy easy blows on the floundering government.

An American In Paris: “A fantastic story of love and liberation”

In conversation with director Ollie Khurshid, and lead cast members Cormac Diamond and Molly Jones on the upcoming 00Productions’ rendition of the classic musical.

Anuj Mishra

For our readers who aren’t so familiar with the show, could you give us an outline of where we find ourselves in *An American in Paris*?

Ollie: The scene is set in the chaotic and vibrant world of post-War Paris: American soldiers and Parisians are trying to build their lives. We meet Jerry Mulligan, a young GI soldier, who falls in love with a French ballerina, but there are many more complications along the way... The show portrays a world trying to understand what it means to be liberated, and moves towards the future after so much conflict.

How did you respond to the challenge of attempting to reinvent such a well-known and well-loved musical production?

Ollie: *An American in Paris* is a huge show, and it is such a spectacle, but there is also a fantastic story of love and liberation at the centre of it, which has been fantastic to re-explore. At the same time, the show also presents these massive choreographic challenges, which are something that Oxford student drama doesn’t always necessarily have to deal with – so it has been such an exciting challenge as well as being a great opportunity to showcase the dance talent we have here. The score is so unlike other musicals in that it is so whimsical and fantastical. Jake Sternberg, our musical director, has done a fantastic job with our band – a 20-piece orchestra which will be on stage alongside the dancers, which should really allow us to showcase this union of dance, music, and story.

Cormac: I’d say that my original conception of the show was very ballet-heavy, and some people may have this image of *An American in Paris* as being like a static series of beautiful images. But I think at the core of this production lies the humanity of all the characters, which is really brought to life by the acting and song and dance.

Is there anything that you would say drew you to directing this show?

Ollie: I saw a West End production of the show and it screamed spectacle – but revisiting the show has, personally, been a really fun chance to explore the story and understand what it means to perform it now. It’s been a process of figuring out how we can tease out those themes of love and liberation: fighting for love and for self-expression, how do you love other people in the million meanings that ‘love’ has. We’re not just restaging the show, but reviving it. Even with the choreography we’re trying to shake it up a bit, with some tap, some jazz, some ballroom as well!

How has learning so much choreography, alongside the script, been for you [the cast]?

Molly: Terrifying! I’ve always described myself as an actor-singer, not a dancer,



so it has been very daunting to rise to the challenge. Cam Tweed is fantastic as a choreographer and he brings so much joy to the show, it’s been fabulous to work with him and all the other dancers as well. I saw a West End production of *An American in Paris* in 2017 and don’t remember much from it – apart from the dance. It’s been great to revisit the show and realise that there is such a rich narrative at the centre of it.

Are there any cast-favourite lines or scenes?

Cormac: We’ve been enjoying our scenes as the central trio of mischievous young men out on the Paris town, the writing is very funny and light, as well as dramatic when it needs to be. There are so many jazz standards and favourites, so it’s been really fun to sing as a trio, “They Can’t Take That Away From Me” has probably been my favourite song.

What can audiences expect from this production of *An American in Paris*?

Cormac: I think audiences can expect to be surprised by how much relevance they find with it. It’s not a cold product of ‘40s beauty, but, as tiring as a pandemic comparison is, I find the idea of a story following many confused people trying to shape their own identity relatable. I know that, even from my experience from first year of having come to Oxford just after lockdown, there is a commonality in this idea of people working on how to love, and express themselves between the post-War period and now.

Any final thoughts you would like to add?

Molly: Performing in The Oxford Playhouse is always so exciting because for a week, or two, you get to feel like a professional, which is really exciting. The Playhouse offers so many possibilities with light and sound in such a large space. *An American in Paris* is very much like an ensemble piece, there are lots of different stories and ideas of love which are weaved into and explored by the story.

Cormac: The Playhouse has also offered us the possibility of representing Paris on such a large scale. Take, for example, the band, which is huge, and potentially bigger than what you would see on the West End.

Ollie: The crew have also been fantastic, we have over a hundred people working on the show and it’s been wonderful to be supported by such a huge crew, a huge band, and a huge cast as well.

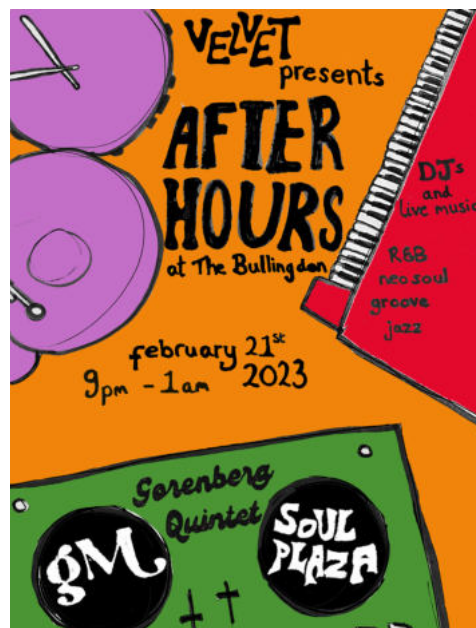
00Productions’ *An American in Paris* will run at The Oxford Playhouse between the 15th and 18th of February. Tickets are now on sale.

Image Credit: Emma Earnshaw

An Interview With VELVET

Cherwell sits down for a chat with some of the members of Velvet, one of Oxford's most ubiquitous bands, about their sound and influences, ahead of their upcoming gig at The Bullingdon.

Florence Allen



Although Oxford is home to a plethora of student bands, Velvet is one that truly stands out from the crowd. If you haven't heard of them, you should have. One month before what you could consider to be their upcoming magnum opus gig at The Bullingdon, I sat down with bassist Rupert, guitarist George, drummer Joel, and keyboardist and singer Dec to find out more about the band.

With the band forming at the end of their first year at Oxford, in June 2021, Velvet has accomplished a lot in a short space of time. They formed much like any other group, with a few friends in St Anne's College deciding to make a band, yet less than two years later, there are few venues in Oxford where they haven't played. Starting off in college bars, Velvet worked their way up to paid gigs at multiple halls including Merton, Brasenose, and Exeter, "a LOT of Freud", as well as at the Crankstart Ball most recently. Dec caught sight of them for the first time at an open night before joining them in time for a Pink Week gig. While their line-up has changed a little over time, occasionally needing some deps for bass and keys, and now playing with their new saxophonist, Rupert, the band has mostly kept the same members, forming a close knit group of friends. Although they have so many members, the Merton Ball was a clear favourite event, with a circular stage and a great crowd, although Oxford Pride in Westgate was a close second.

The gig that the band are most excited for, however, is their performance at The Bullingdon on the 21st of February. With early bird and first release tickets

already sold out, and second release selling fast, this is not one to miss. Velvet have wanted their own gig since the start and are excited to show a big project they've been working on after doing two years of sets at events. The gig at Bully will be the first time that the band have really been able to craft a performance, as many events don't provide as much freedom about the set. Joel describes it as "the pinnacle" of their work, especially as it may be one of the last chances to see the band perform in their current iteration, with many members graduating this year.

While the band scene in Oxford is also mostly dominated by funk bands, Velvet leads more into Neo-soul, ditching the big brass sections of the funk band and experimenting with different instrumental mixes. One of their defining features is the presence of their flautist, Izzy. Joel's idea of adding a flute to the mix for a cooler texture is extremely effective and is complemented by the presence of BNOC Adam Possener's viola playing. The use of the flute and viola, especially now that Adam has a new electric viola, has completely changed the band's texture, giving them a unique and defining sound. Although the band has tried more classic funk songs in the past, like Corinne Bailey Rae's Put Your Records On, they decided that it "didn't feel like them", showing a clear sense of their identity. Despite having a strong idea about what they want to play, the band is certainly not against experimentation. They explained how Hannah, the lead singer, leads the direction and sound of the band, and how the others like her ideas because they're different and original.

Though Velvet tends not to do remixes of songs, one of the things they are aiming for is for the songs to blend into each other more during performances, with less talking time in between each one (although George adds that this would

also mean less clapping time). There is also the exciting possibility of them performing their own song at the Bully gig on the 21st of February. Joel describes how Hannah is writing bits of melody for a beat that he found, and the aim is for the other members to eventually add parts so that it becomes a fully fleshed-out song. However, he adds that it is difficult to come together and write something when there are eight band members with different ideas, so the only way we can find out is by attending the gig.

Despite the difficulty of bringing all their ideas together into one cohesive song, the differing tastes of the eight members contribute to the band's identity. Each member brings a contrasting background in music to contribute to Velvet's own sound. For example, Izzy plays a lot of folk music, so adds this influence and texture. Dec, meanwhile, is a member of Out of The Blue, which while being very different from playing in a band, still adds to the performative and creative process. Similarly, the band members generally listen to and draw information from a wide range of artists. Joel is into D'Angelo and Erykah Badu and enjoys playing RnB as it's well-known but they're also able to jazz it up. George on the other hand is a fan of Tom Misch and Radiohead, while Rupert likes rock and metal. None of the members are confined to one genre however, with music taste being shared. Dec describes how he is big into Bruno Major, lo-fi, and jazz, but is now getting into D'Angelo and Voodoo as well thanks to Joel's influence.

The band also show a lot of freedom in the way they rehearse, explaining how it doesn't feel like a chore, but rather more of a process. Their covers of songs are unique to them as they often play without parts. They begin by playing by ear and then writing a chord sheet, with everyone

reacting naturally to the music, adding an element of improvisation. Particularly as some of the members don't know music theory, playing things off of YouTube is an especially useful tactic. Although many believe that music theory is a necessary part of being able to make music, Velvet proves that it is more than possible to do so without, with Dec reflecting that it was often helpful to keep things simple, and to engage with the music through playing it.

One of the most common issues that bands have to deal with is performance anxiety. The band members reflected that some gigs feel more relaxed than others, but that bigger ones can be more nerve-racking. An event organised by the Jazz Society was especially scary as people would generally know the song, and there was more of a sense that they were listening carefully, so certain members felt the pressure a bit more. This wasn't an overwhelming problem though, with there being a consensus that the best way to deal with it was "have a pint" and enjoy the performance while trying not to worry about judgement.

Focusing on the fun of performing is the best way to ensure the audience's enjoyment. Velvet is the perfect band for anyone looking for an event filled with lively and unique music that guarantees a good night out. The gig on the 21st of February promises to be an exciting and unmissable show, as well as a refreshing dose of live music in place of another night at Atik.

Thanks to George, Rupert, Joel, and Dec for the interview. Follow their Facebook or Instagram @velvetgrooves_.

Image Credit: Riya Kataria (edited)



International Queer Cinema

Five films that transcend borders, on multiple levels.

Matthew Clemmet

Hollywood has made major strides in LGBTQ+ representation in recent years, but it is small-budget international features that have been ahead of the curve in telling queer-centric stories. Smaller audiences and budgets allow international filmmakers to bring a liberated sensibility to their films, busting taboos, and disregarding the expectations of mainstream audiences. International cinema displays queer lives in all their diversity and beauty, in a range of contexts far wider than we can see in Hollywood.

The following list could be endless; there is a great variety of international queer cinema on offer - yet here is where to start.

One of the big names in international cinema is Spanish filmmaker Pablo Almodóvar. Starting out in the 1980s, and gaining international recognition by the late 1990s, his films are characterised by melodrama, bold colours, complex narratives, and irreverent humour. Perhaps his most famous film is 1999's *All About My Mother* (*Todo sobre mi madre*), which won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2000. The film tells the story of Manuela, a nurse whose son is killed in a car accident on his seventeenth birthday. She travels to Barcelona hoping

to find her son's father, a transgender woman, who she'd never told about her son. The film is a celebration of women and sisterhood, and it explores issues such as AIDS, homosexuality, faith, and transgender identity.

Almodóvar treats his subjects with generosity and sympathy, which would have been especially significant at a time when there was still a huge amount of stigma around AIDS, and transgender representation in Hollywood was invariably damaging. *All About My Mother* stands out in its representation of trans women through the scene-stealing Agrado, a transgender sex-worker, notably played by a trans actress. She is witty, grounded, and sympathetic, delivering a monologue towards the end of the film that explores her trans identity in a way far ahead of its time; it ends with the memorable line, "You are more authentic the more you resemble what you've dreamed of being."

Secondly, French filmmaker Celine Sciamma has explored queer themes in a number of her films, but *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* from 2019 is her most widely acclaimed work. The film, set on a remote island in Brittany in the 18th century, follows the aristocratic Heloise, and a painter, Marianne, commissioned to paint her portrait which will be used to help secure her marriage to a nobleman. A slow-burn romance develops between

the painter and her subject, with the film exploring the nature of power and desire. Sciamma described the film as a "manifesto about the female gaze," the key theme of the film being what it means to be looked at, and to look at others.

Other films take more abstract approaches to queer themes. *Titane*, for example, is a French body horror drama written and directed by Julia Ducournau: it became the second film directed by a woman to win the Palme d'Or in 2021. It is a bold, surreal, and often shocking film that mostly defies description. The protagonist of the film is a female serial killer who is attracted to cars, and is later taken in by a firefighter who mistakes her for his son who went missing 10 years previously. A strong stomach and high tolerance for weirdness is needed to enjoy the film, but it explores gender identity, androgyny, and the malleability of identity in a way that is truly unique.

There are also exceptional international documentaries that explore queer themes. French documentary *Little Girl* (2020) tells the story of a transgender seven-year-old living in provincial France, and the experiences of her and her parents as they struggle to understand each other and to gain acceptance in the wider world. The film is a testament to the strength of trans children, and the depth of parental love in the face of an unaccepting society.

The film's considered and empathetic approach is a welcome contrast to deeply polarised debates in the press about trans children.

Whilst artistic and entertaining, such films also have a unique social value. Roger Ebert, one of the most respected film critics of all time, described a film as "a machine that generates empathy" through helping us "understand a little bit more about different hopes, aspirations, dreams and fears." In this context, the utility of queer cinema is clear; empathy is a powerful tool in advancing LGBTQ rights globally.

Particularly noteworthy in this regard is *A Fantastic Woman*, a Chilean film from 2017 that follows Marina, a trans woman who deals with grief after her partner dies, and hostility from his family and Chilean society at large. Political scientists Carsten-Andreas Schulz and Cameron G. Thies argue that the international recognition that the film received temporarily made support for trans rights a matter of national pride in Chile, paving the way for the passing of new laws that advanced trans rights in the country.

This list is by no means comprehensive, but I hope that it may inspire anyone to step out of their comfort zone. These films may feel 'foreign' in their settings, subject matters, and styles, but in their humanity and empathy they are universal.

Books

Ghosts and Writers

How *Spare* made an art out of ghostwriting.

Charlotte Slater

The narrator of Robert Harris's thriller, 'The Ghost', has no name. He is only ever referred to as 'The Ghost', and the narrative - an international conspiracy surrounding the manuscript of an ex-Prime Minister's memoir - makes revealing his identity tantamount to a death sentence.

Subterfuge, however, doesn't seem to be of much interest to J. R. Moehringer, Prince Harry's unconventional ghostwriter. Having been profiled by everyone from Tatler to the Economist, this Ghost is evidently changing the criteria of what an effective ghostwriter is and does.

Amid allegations of slander in *Spare*, Moehringer has retweeted a slightly bizarre quote from Harry's memoir: "There's just as much truth in what I remember and how I remember it as there is in so-called objective facts." Harry's disdain for "so-called objective facts" also reminds us of the ways in which a memoir is fiction. That's not necessarily to accuse Harry of lying in his memoir, but to underscore the vital role of literary craft in wrestling the awkward shape of a human life into a coherent narrative.

Spare occupies a contentious space between autobiography and biography - between fiction and nonfiction. Being public about employing a ghostwriter for *Spare* means that the reader is uncannily aware that Prince Harry's voice is a manufactured persona adopted by Moehringer. This

technique is familiar to literary fiction, where we can never assume that a narrator is the author themselves. As Moehringer's Tweet emphasises, Harry has openly admitted his unreliability as a narrator.

It's tempting to read *Spare* in search of the ghostwriter, rather than Harry's 'truth'. Catching a glimpse of the author peeking out from behind the mask of character is an 'Aha!' moment that feels a lot like figuring out a magician's trick or spotting a stage's trapdoor. In *Spare*, Moehringer concerns himself with this kind of stage magic.

Harry confesses that he struggled to share his father's love of Shakespeare. "I tried to change," he insists. "I opened Hamlet. Hmm: Lonely prince, obsessed with a dead parent, watches remaining parent fall in love with dead parent's usurper...? I slammed it shut. No, thank you."

As Rebecca Mead's recent review for 'The New Yorker' points out, it seems that Moehringer has lent Harry the very Shakespearean reference library which he lacks. Moehringer makes Shakespeare a focal point in 'Spare', an extended metaphor around which Harry's difficulties with his father cluster. English cultural heritage morphs into Harry's own uncomfortable inheritance of a royal role which never quite fit him. A family visit to Frogmore Gardens is framed in these tragic terms: Harry, William and Charles "were now smack in the middle of the Royal Burial Ground," Harry describes, "more up to our ankles in bodies than Prince Hamlet."

Like *Hamlet*, *Spare* is punctuated by

howls of raw grief, even in its most bizarre moments. Harry recalls the very smell of his mother in the Elizabeth Arden cream he uses to treat an unfortunate case of frostbite on his 'todger'. As the ghostwriter, Moehringer ensures that the spectre of Diana casts a long shadow over every page of his memoir. In all earnestness, it is a very moving way to paint a sympathetic portrait of the prince as a boy who never recovered from the loss of his mother. How could he have?

Spare, unfortunately, has more ghosts to offer. However, the narrative spends far more time with the memory of Diana than with the 25 Afghans who Harry admits to killing. It breaks an unspoken military code of conduct to publicly own up to the number of lives one has taken during service.. Veterans have argued that he should never have disclosed the number of people he has killed; others may suggest that he never should have killed to begin with.

Though the imagery of *Spare* is ghostwritten, the confessions, after all, must be Harry's own. The most polemical moments of 'Spare' prompt us to question the ghostwriter's loyalties, and royalties; as ghostwriter, Moehringer is not acting as Harry's loyal subject, but instead, he seems to have prioritised making the book as controversial (and commercially successful) as possible. Again, Moehringer is carving out a new, less submissive role for the ghostwriter: a figure who is visible in his text and exploits the gap between author and narrator for his own ends.

Read the full article on cherwell.org

Current Reads

LEGENDBORN
by Tracy Deonn

Did you ever watch that Disney movie *Avalon High*? Where the legend of King Arthur came alive but the big twist was that King Arthur wasn't the super cool football quarterback? (That has to be the most American sentence I've ever typed.) I remember watching this movie and thinking it was so cool that they had a female reincarnation of King Arthur. It was literally the beginning of my girlboss era - a 'cultural reset', if you will.

This is what Legendborn is. But the black girl version. Taking place in an all-American town, our protagonist, Bree, investigates the death of her mother whilst attending college, the same college her mother attended and wanted her to have nothing to do with. Bree discovers an affinity with ancestral magic, both the Afro-centric kind, and the white American kind.

The story follows her along her quest for answers, as well as her journey to reckon with her traumatic past and history. She forges on to force a place for herself in an environment that rejects her due to her ethnicity.

It's the perfect book for those who are nerds for Welsh legends but still stay true to their girlboss roots.

Looking forward to the rest of awards season, I'm hoping for more experimentation with colours and silhouettes. With the industry becoming more diverse and accepting, and actors such as Emma D'Arcy speaking out about gendered acting awards, this should be reflected in the fashion on the red carpet, as stars step out of the dresses/suits binary or fuse the two together. As Golden Globes went ahead with very little discussion of the reasons for last year's boycott, and it has just been announced that no women are nominated for this year's Best Director Oscar, I hope that celebrities don't underestimate the political power of fashion.

Tongue-tied: thoughts of a wannabe bilingual

Discussing the notion of home and the pressure to fit into a culture.

Mei Law

I’ve never been a linguist. No amount of toil or prolonged manic Duolingo frenzy has ever or will ever change this. Nor will beginner podcasts, exchange trips, Quizlet revision lists, pen pals, foreign television, conversations with bilingual friends, or manifestation. Yes, I really have tried every possible option. I don’t mean to say that I was ever a bad student (God forbid), just that it never stuck. No matter how intensely I may have wanted it, it simply wasn’t destined to be. It wasn’t until recently that I devoted any time at all to thinking about why this could be or what this could mean. Language is, first and foremost, a means of communication. Being bilingual would undoubtedly have been a practical skill. Beyond this, the notion that bilingualism is a marker of identity solidified my (already ardent) intent to master a second language. I knew it to be a special badge that gestured towards belonging to something bigger than you, like the key to a secret society where the agenda was always to exchange inside jokes and mock the oblivious excluded commoners. And it was generally accepted that the English were the most painfully uncool, tacky, and obnoxious club out there, second only to the Americans. Jokes aside, if what I was really after was a sense of belonging, why was I not satisfied with my English?

I was brought up by an English mother and a Thai father. That I never learnt a word of my father’s first language and am to this day unable to communicate with my grandmother fluently has always been a sore spot. If I only share a language with half of my extended family, then it follows that my identity is not linguistically grounded. But then, I never watched the same television series (I’m thinking specifically here of ‘Strictly’), or grew up eating the foods that my mother’s family enjoyed so I always felt that I lacked the cultural milestones that otherwise would have given us a lot in common. In the

end, neither language nor cultural associations connected me to my family. I belong to an expat family; expatriates that live outside of their home country.

Twenty years ago, my parents (desperate to escape the confines of the United Kingdom) packed us up to leave and never looked back. Over the course of my schooling years I juggled three different languages as well as any primary school student can be expected to juggle (read, not very well): French in Mauritius, Japanese in Tokyo and Mandarin in Hong Kong. The common phrase I managed to retain across these languages is ‘Sorry, I speak English’ (very telling, I know). Other bits and pieces I’ve picked up along the way relate to specific -and not very useful - memories and experiences. I remember the incoherent and curse-word ridden French phrases scrawled across the school bathroom doors in Mauritius, how to explain how I want my hair done in Japanese (I was one of those who insisted on side bangs when I was in year 4), and how to ask the bus driver to stop in Cantonese, all of which doesn’t leave me much to work with today, and definitely doesn’t qualify me as being bilingual.

In the wake of moving around a lot as a child, and later as a teen, learning a language always seemed like an activity confined to the classroom, and one which I would inevitably abandon a few years in when my parents packed up to move us across the world again. It became an awkward cycle of doing well enough to pass whatever exams were coming up before starting the next. Later, gawky teen summers spent in the UK made it clear I didn’t fit in quite as seamlessly as I’d hoped; conversations usually involved nodding along and pretending I knew who the Go Compare guy was, or butchering pronunciations of British cities and streets (how is anyone going to get Marylebone right on the first try?) But when I went back home, I needed help from friends to translate the menus and I could never escape being profiled as a ‘gweilo’ (Cantonese slang literally translating to “white ghost” or “white devil” used to describe foreigners). I looked back on the many years I spent on the defensive

when people asked where I was from. I felt the need to accompany my answer with a justification as to why I couldn’t speak the native language. It’s hard to convince someone that my ‘home’ was the same place in which I couldn’t communicate with the majority of the population. Many clumsy explanations later, it began to feel like I had no tangible connection to my homes, past and present. I recognised more and more the implications of the subtextual coding of language as identity and where this left me: I was in a delicate state of limbo between not being British enough in the UK and being too British abroad, and I was condemned to this cultural no-man’s-land. It’s funny because the notion of ‘home’ seems so deeply private. It appeared antithetical for me to have been so desperate to cling to a culture of people I didn’t know, and to have been so conscious of how to justify myself to those people. ‘Home’ is meant to encapsulate where you fit into the wider world. I’ve come to realise that it is not as intimate or straightforward in reality as people might think. It bears notions of belonging, family, community, and background, and when these can’t be neatly reconciled, it’s bound to be confusing. I’m sure this is a sentiment shared by many, perhaps by fellow expat babies, children of a diaspora, mixed kids, and

probably more. Amidst these reflections I do not dispute for a second my immensely lucky and happy upbringing. Growing up an expat afforded me humbling exposure to the world, to which I owe not just the unique experience of having my playground span continents, but also my present sense of self. Today I am acutely aware of both the privileges and disorientations packaged up in expatriate culture. I suppose being an expat itself symbolises a weird intermediate state of community, like how once you get through security in the airport you’re technically in international waters already; you’re not quite one or the other but somewhere in the middle. To continue this awkward metaphor, I just had to find comfort and stability in this boat in the middle of the sea, turning this rudderless boat into a home, if you will (this is working better than you can imagine because we actually did live on a boat in Hong Kong). Now, the feeling of shame in admitting my monolingual limitations has almost dissipated. However, I will admit that every so often when it comes up in conversation I still feel a creeping urge to redownload Duolingo...



Aries 21 March - 19 April

Be inappropriate. They love passion and spontaneity so take them into the bathroom at Grandma’s 80th and show how much you want them.

Capricorn 22 Dec. - 19 Jan.

Power Play. Let them call the shots and make the decisions, and make sure you congratulate them on their maturity. But show some maturity yourself or they won’t care.

Aquarius 20 Jan. - 18 Feb.

Rule Break. Aquarians are non-conformists. Show them you don’t mind defying the status quo, whether in terms of politics, or fashion, or even the law; make your own

Pisces 19 Feb. - 20 March

Kindred Spirits. Pisces loves conflating the spiritual with the sexual. Read them a diary entry, take them skinny dipping in a lake; give them meaning.

Taurus 20 April - 20 May

Multi-sensory Immersion. Give them a well thought-out night of aestheticised romance. I’m talking flowers, chocolates, rising soufflés in the oven. Oh, and make them laugh.

Leo 23 July - 22 Aug.

Apotheosize. They need to have fun and feel adored, but like really. Do an exciting activity with them and tell them how fantastic they were at it. If that doesn’t work - straight up applaud.

Cancer 21 June - 22 July

TLC. Cancers are fragile glass ornaments and you can be their bubble wrap. Give them love, security, safety, gentleness. Once that’s covered, their well-hidden sexual appetite will surface.

Libra 23 Sept. - 22 Oct.

Finer Things. Libra is classy; classy food, classy cocktails, complex conversation. But NEVER trashy. Woo them with your elegance and intellect. If you boost their image, they’ll want you.

Scorpio 23 Oct. - 21 Nov.

High Stakes. Scorpio is the most sexual sign of the zodiac, but there needs to be a context. Play hard to get and make sure the tension is insurmountable before you shoot your shot.

Sagittarius 22 Nov. - 21 Dec.

Adrenaline. Be spontaneous and book a trip somewhere, then take a ridiculous detour on the way there. Paraglide or something, they’ll be down.

Horoscopes

How to seduce a...

Gemini 21 May- 20 June

Dirty Talk. Okay, not too dirty, but Gemini’s love to be tortured by fantasies, so if they’re thinking about it before it happens, they’ll be putty in your hand.

Virgo 23 Aug. - 22 Sept.

Tread Carefully. Don’t come on too strong, but give them food for thought when you do make your move. Follow a sexy script, try some role play, let their imagination roam.

CHERPSE!

SAINT

First Impressions?
She had a very cool necklace which was the first thing I noticed.

Did it meet your expectations?
Well, I had thought it would be really awkward and I'd never been on a blind date before so kinda catastrophised – but she was lovely,.

What was the highlight?
I think bonding over music and art, we both really like Mitski.

What was the most embarrassing moment?
Maybe when I had to go up and ask if she was my blind date – I was a bit nervous I'd asked the wrong person.

Describe the date in 3 words:
Fun, wholesome, entertaining

Is there a second date on the cards?
We're not in the same year group so alas only as friends :)

“

We both really like Mitski...

VALENTINE

First Impressions?
She was really nice! It was a bit awkward at first, but conversation soon started flowing.

Did it meet your expectations?
Yes, I had a good time. We talked for two hours and didn't run out of things to talk about.

What was the highlight?
Sharing gossip about our respective colleges.

What was the most embarrassing moment?
Thankfully, I don't think there was one.

Describe the date in 3 words:
Fun, cosy, casual.

Is there a second date on the cards?
I think so!

Looking for love?

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

Sex & the Spires

I agreed to get married this week. *Mic drop. Mission complete. Why, you ask, am I still writing this column then? Well, I did agree to get married. But only if I'm still single at 50. And to one of my closest friends, that is.

During a midnight platonic cuddle and a deep chat, I asked my friends about their greatest fears. Having spiders crawl all over them while enclosed in a glass box? Being attacked by rats in Room 101? Being eaten alive by spiders? The answer was far worse: being alone forever.

This isn't the first time someone has admitted this to me over the past week. In fact, it was even confessed to me on a date last weekend – to which, of course, I responded, 'sorry mate, but I can't say I'll be helping you eliminate that particular fear'. But if he feared forever remaining a virgin, I'm glad to say that I helped him conquer that one.

It's hardly a unique fear to have and unless you're committed to being a die-hard loner, you have or will experience it in some form. One friend told me that she would even agree to an arranged marriage if she didn't find someone 'in time'. She'll marry a total loser, a bore, an utter pain in the ass, rather than being alone. Imagine the most annoying person

we know, I said, multiply their annoying tendencies by 10, and picture someone who looks like Boris and Trump's lovechild. Yep, you guessed it, she'd rather put a ring on that than be alone.

But what does 'in time' even mean? The average age women find the 'one' is 25. It's 28 for men. A scary number if you're 21 and still feel like you're not even officially an 'adult' yet. The divorce rate in the UK is 46%. Surely that number is even scarier. I, for one, would rather have ten great years of love and a full life, than a lifetime of dread and anxiety over meeting the elusive 'one'.

On the other hand, I also share this fear. And yet, when asked if there will be a second date, I always laugh. Of course not, I'm a one-date wonder. Hypocrisy at its best.

According to the Bard himself, "Journeys end in lovers meeting". To the hard-core romantics out there, that might be a comforting thought. To me, it's terrifyingly fatalistic. Given that all signs point to his own marriage being a forced affair, I doubt we're meant to take the end destination as a romantic utopia.

But what is so wrong with being alone? Why is being alone synonymous with being

lonely? I ask you to consider the circumstances in which being single would be preferable.

At least I'm set. 'I still think we should make it earlier than 50', my friend tells me as I write this. She obviously doesn't think that my career move to Cherwell sex columnist will improve my prospects. Or maybe she's actually in love with me. Wouldn't that be a plot twist.

When my finger goes numb from swiping on Tinder, I can start planning my wedding. And yes, you are invited. You, who ghosted me after we spent the whole two hour date ranting about being ghosted. You, who abandoned me in Spoons so you could 'work some issues out' with your ex. And yes, even you, who told me while we lay in bed that your girlfriend would probably be back soon.

And so, given that my life path is now laid out in stone – graduate (hopefully), get job (maybe), buy house (probably not), become rich (easy) and marry my best friend – I can now spend the next 30 years living perpetually in my strong, independent single woman era. Hit me up if you fancy helping me make the most of my singlehood because before you know it, I'll be hitched.
xoxo

Tales from the Trip

Ayaat Yassin-Kassab

Tripping: falling, floating, flying. Pop culture depictions of psychedelic experiences are kaleidoscopic, glittery with the potential for mind-expansion. Puddles become waterfalls, potholes become craters, everything amplifies, and emotions intensify. Those trips sound incredible, and while they aren't completely out-of-reach, what's more likely to happen is something confusing, ridiculous, and simply funny; something akin to the below submissions by Oxford students of their trippy times...

The Human Sacrifice Incident

From my perspective, I started seeing what I could only assume at the time was extra dimensions. The only explanation was that I had reached apotheosis, and so I saw myself and the other people in the room I was in, as cosmic deities. Being gods, it seemed necessary that we had to make human sacrifices. I sourced a human body in order to perform some sacrificial ritual; I was on my knees clutching my vape in two hands as it if were a blade and (at an incredibly slow speed given how high I was), plunged it into the chest of my friend... who was just on the floor laughing and going with it. Then, I collapsed on the floor like a limp corpse.

The Great Sheep Abduction of 2020

It was August, just before uni started. At the end of the pandemic, me and my mates decided 'right we can kind of go out a bit more now'. So, we all rented a farmhouse by Brighton. And this farmhouse was pretty big, and it had quite a bit of land attached to it. The first night we get there and we all drop pills. Later on, everyone had gone to bed and I was still feeling it a bit, so I decided to go on a walk. I started walking into a field, and in this field there were loads of sheep so I was kind of running to get through it because, in my paranoid state, I didn't want to get attacked by sheep or have a farmer catch me or whatever.

I get to the end of the field and it's one of

those fences you have to hop. So, I hop over the fence and as I'm turning to come back down the side of the fence: no sheep in the field. Completely empty field. I went back the next day: completely completely empty field. But then two days later, when I pinged again, I went back to the field to see if it was just hallucinations. And it was, but this time I saw a bunch of alien ships taking the sheep away like when I wasn't looking. I turned away and I turned back again really quickly and there were a bunch of aliens there taking the sheep.

The Kaleidoscopic K-Hole

Joe and I just lie in the caravan and wait for our bodies to start moving. You eventually get flung hundreds of metres into the air and look back down at Earth, allowing your mind to give in to the experience and not be afraid of the height. Body straight, you then start to plunge down again, slowly flipping forwards as you go and you fall into the song and colours and random images from memories you don't even know you had, like that time in Croft Road where I woke up crying because I had a dream (that was all in crochet cross-stitch) of a girl stood next to a Ferris wheel crying. You then continue to zoom and flip through textures, patterns, colours, sounds, and memories before slowly being returned by your guide to the caravan. Pretty fucking cool.

The Kidnapping Survivor

So, I'm at a house party in year twelve and I eat a whole edible around 9pm. Two hours later, it still hasn't hit so I have another one. The party ends and still nothing has happened. These must be bad edibles. My friend's mum comes to pick us up and I sit in the back of the car. One second, I'm sitting in the back of my friend's car, and then the next second I'm convinced that I'm being kidnapped by her mother. I'm panicking, staring out the window trying to remember

the trees so that when I jump out I can find my way home. I don't know where she's taking me, and I don't know what she wants with me. I feel like I'm in a Taken movie. Paralysed with fear, I'm staring at my friend in the front of the car wondering why she's turned on me - why isn't she stopping her crazy mother from taking me hostage? Thirty minutes later we pull into my drive and the nightmare is over. She must have changed her mind about the whole kidnapping thing. I walk into my house with a new lease of life, and pop on the regularly watched YouTube video of 'how to make myself un-high'. A bit

“

I feel like I'm in the movie Taken...

of googling in the morning reveals to me that my dosage should only have been half an edible. Another day, another slay. I've made it out alive. I'm a survivor.

The Yonder Yogi

When I get high I always feel really in tune with my body and all I want to do is stretch. However, I'm not

exactly someone who does yoga regularly, so what ends up happening is that I instead perform these incredibly unimpressive and mediocre yoga poses, and yet I feel like I've contorted myself into a pretzel. My boyfriend tends to take a picture of whatever silly pose I've put myself in while I'm thinking that I've achieved new levels of human flexibility, then we have a good giggle about it in the morning.

The Structural Sublime

My friends and I took edibles and went on a day-long walk around Oxford on a really sunny day last Trinity. We entered Keble and, upon walking into the main quad, I experienced the sublime at its architectural beauty.

...
So, there are some magical moments amongst the weirdness and terror of tripping. Either way it's no surprise that when the sublime eventually was reached, it happened in Oxford's most impressive college...

Image credit: W.S. Luk

Review: Eastgate Brasserie — A hotel restaurant finding itself

Oliver Hall

Eastgate Brasserie, previously known under Keepers and numerous other names, is the restaurant inside the Mercure Hotel on the High Street of Oxford. From that introduction you might expect simple and boring dishes but that is far from the case here. The chef and manager serve up a diverse range of interesting dishes and some of them hit the mark fantastically. In time and with a few tweaks I’ve no doubt that this will soon become a great spot for students, families, and hotel guests alike.

We started things off from the starter menu and it was the perfect sign of things to come. The scotch egg was ok — just ok, but accompanied by a beautiful chutney and lovely pickled onions. The crab cocktail really stood out though. I had high expectations and it truly is the most indulgent thing on the menu. Full of flavour, taste, and creaminess, the only shame is that the flavour of crab that I love so much does go missing. Arancini are always a nice sharing starter and these were tasty too, but an abundance of cheese meant that they weren’t like those you might get in Sicily.

The main courses began with the Buttermilk Chicken Burger. This was a great example of a simple thing done brilliantly. The meat itself was full of flavour and given room to show it with simple salads and a tomato filling. The onion rings weren’t too heavy on batter and the coleslaw was pleasantly crunchy. The chips themselves were slightly underdone but otherwise, it was a perfect burger.

The Poussin en Cocotte is a chef’s special and certainly presents well. The meat itself

is lovely and the potato bed soaked in juices and delightful — the only drawback is the slightly inconvenient serving dish! The seabass was my standout from the evening. Served on a bed of lentils and chorizo, the flavour combinations are ideal and executed to perfection. The house salad too is a great dish but returns to the theme of slightly over-complicating things. It superbly pairs almonds, beans, and avocado but is served on a bizarre bed of humus that it could do without.

Finally on the savoury front, the pasta. It is a dish that always seems so simple but is so easy to ruin and unfortunately the cheese and creaminess here come dangerously close. The green pesto had great flavour on its own but the creamy sauce was just too much.

Image Credit: Oliver Hall



The Secret Knoopologist

Secret insights on the popular hot chocolate chain.



Image Credit: CC SY-BA 2:0 via Wikimedia

You’ve read The Secret Doctor, The Secret Lawyer, and The Secret Teacher – now it’s time for our new column to give secret behind-the-scenes insights and recommendations from Knoop’s: Oxford’s favourite hot chocolate store.

Ever been overwhelmed by the sheer number of options and possible combinations when you walk through those doors on Turl Street? Ever been too scared to go for a bold order for fear of it being all wrong? Ever wondered just how that chocolate tastes so damn good? In this column, I’m going to give you a peek behind the curtain and all the tips and tricks you need

to make that ultimate indulgence even better.

Best Chocolates

There are roughly 20 chocolates always on offer in Knoop’s, and it goes without saying that some are better than others. Although the price is often the first thing people look at, the key is found by looking deeper. As you can imagine, all of the staff have all tried every last one so asking for pairing recommendations is always a good idea if you have a personal preference but for my first piece I’ll offer you a perfect drink for whatever mood your in; white, milk, dark or extra dark.

White

35% (Colombia) – Oat milk, lime and lemon. Out of the two white options, the 35% single origin is far superior, offering a distinctive taste as opposed to its oversweet counterpart. Paired with either an oat or almond milk to balance the sweetness, lime and/or lemon are the perfect combo for an indulgent and refined drink.

Milk

43% (Venezuela) – Hazlenut milk, cinnamon and sea salt

The 43% is the highest grade milk chocolate but still easily sweet enough. The hazelnut milk balances that sweetness and the cinnamon and sea salt bring out the butterscotch notes.

Dark

64% (Peru) – Hazlenut milk, cardamon and nutmeg

This is a staff favourite. Dark but not too dark, it is always what I recommend for people who say they fancy something dark but aren’t feeling bold enough to go too far up the scale. The cardamon is the dream pairing with the nutmeg.

Extra Dark

80% (Uganda) – Coconut milk, sea salt, chilli

The 80% actually isn’t as overpowering as some of the lower percentage extra darks such as the 75% or 73% but has a truly distinctive flavour and nuttiness to it. Coconut milk balances the bitterness perfectly and sea salt and chilli help bring out the flavour of the chocolate itself

Feeling extra bold?

Go for a 100%. Just once, take the leap. Some love it some hate it so be prepared or maybe get it with a friend to share. It is

sensational paired with soya milk for extra thickness and with some sea salt to enhance the truly magical flavour notes. For a truly perfect experience get a marshmallow on the side, peel off bits of it at a time, leave to melt in the drink and sip through the marshmallow itself – this way you get the beautiful flavour of the 100% balanced by the indulgent sugary sweetness of the sugary vanilla.

Buy of the week

Every week Oli chooses his supermarket pickup of the week – drop him an email at oliver.hall@magd.ox.ac.uk

Pan di Stelle Spread

If you’ve ever visited Italy then you will no doubt have the same fond memories of the iconic Pan di Stelle chocolate biscuits that grace the shelves of every supermarket and shop in the land. That evergrowing brand has even branched out into spreads and with it brought the only chocolate option to rival Nutella. Instensely dark but punctuated by sugary chunks of those famous biscuits, it really is the perfect combination. The spread is available on Amazon but also in Oxford favourite Italiamo for a slightly higher price.

This is(n’t) a surface level issue

Zoe Abereoje

If watching footballers slide about a pitch for a couple of minutes floats your boat, then you would have loved the spectacle that was Chelsea vs Liverpool in the Women’s Super League. If you missed “Dancing on Ice” on Saturday night, not to worry because BBC2 had your fix with this on Sunday. After 6 minutes the game was rightly called off. The ground was frozen solid, as it was at 9:30 am when the pitch inspectors of the then-frozen ground deemed it acceptable.

The pitch situation felt amateur, in a game with seasoned professionals trying to give their all sliding about comically probably wasn’t their plan. To give credit to the players, in the midst of the horrible conditions, the first couple minutes in which Liverpool managed a break at attack was entertaining.

What makes the frozen pitch story so bad is that the women were made to play in conditions they never should have. Protocol was not followed. Match cancellations aren’t foreign, the WSL games weren’t the only ones eventually called off. Plenty of games across the EFL and National League also found themselves postponed because, as it happens, most football teams in the country had their state-of-the-art grass-heater-3000’s just squeezed by the budget list. What separates the WSL from the rest is that they however did not find themselves the centre

of quite an embarrassing story for the WSL.

There is no denying that the game wants to be taken far more seriously. A sentiment that the FA has echoed and has been reflected in the high attendance in many of the matches so far. Arsenal, for example, sold 40,000 tickets for its team’s London derby against Chelsea at the Emirates. But a lack of protocol and proper procedure was missed in the build-up to the game. The issue is that these kinds of mistakes stand to undermine a sport which deserves respect in its own right. This is the top flight of women’s football, one of the best leagues in the world, and it sends its players skidding across the pitch.

The greater the league grows, the further from the belief that the WSL is in any way like a Sunday league match needs to be. Cancellations are huge, and a ridiculous lack of planning makes the league look farcical. Poor Liverpool fans who had made such an effort to see the women play headed back to Merseyside disappointed. The idea that last-minute postponement is within the realms of possibility needs to become less and less realistic. If the league is going to be taken seriously, starting games with the highest probability that it likely cannot last

the full 90 minutes is not the way to do it. To cultivate growth, you need fans, and you can’t have fans if they have nothing to get behind.

This situation isn’t a blame game. There isn’t someone at the moment to point the finger at, no menacing villain twirling his moustache behind the scenes. Unless there’s incognito salty Gooner Elsa in the stands hoping to see a Chelsea player take a tumble after their own win was snatched away from them at the Emirates, incidents of frozen pitches are entirely up to nature. What feels to blame here is the institutional factors that mean that there is greater carelessness in decisions, meaning the women have to play until it is physically impossible to keep going on, with no system in place to respond to these conditions.

It comes back to the siation: the progress is almost there, so close yet so far. Perhaps this incident is just one for the bank, a lesson learned. Maybe on another day this story wouldn’t be a WSL one, but rather a story for the National League North. Yet it still starkly shows how far the game has got to go. What’s the point of putting Sam Kerr on the box of Fifa 23 if she’s just going to backflip on cold concrete?

“One of the best leagues in the world, and it still sends its players skidding across the pitch

The “Mankad” and the complex question of sporting

Oliver Thomas

Culture wars are fought over social issues, where polarized groups compete for the acceptance of their respective belief systems. Debates over the idiosyncrasies of cricket don’t often fit this definition. Yet, the U19s Women’s Cricket World Cup fixture between Pakistan and Rwanda has seemingly done it.

On the 15th January, the Pakistan bowler Zaib-un-Nisa dismissed the Rwandan batter Shakila Niyomuhoza by a run out at the non-striker’s end, commonly known as a ‘Mankad’.

According to the game’s lawmakers, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the run out was legal: “If the non-striker is out of his/her ground at any time from the moment the ball comes into play until the instant when the bowler would normally have been expected to release the ball, the non-striker is liable to be run out.”

The rule is in place to ensure that non-striking batters don’t receive an unfair advantage by leaving their crease before the ball has been bowled. However, what followed has been a polarized social media examination into the sporting merits of Zaib-un-Nisa’s decision to enact this form of dismissal.

So, if the dismissal is legal, why all the controversy?

Historically, the sport has followed a

form of ‘etiquette’, coined by the London-based MCC, as the ‘Spirit of Cricket’. This is the expectation that players will follow certain traditions and forms of behaviour when playing cricket. The ‘etiquette’ for the ‘Mankad’ is for the bowler to hold the ball over the stumps, warning the non-striking batter of their intention to enact the dismissal the next time around. Still, even with this warning, many consider it to be an ‘ugly’ dismissal.

Stuart Broad, fast bowler for the England men’s test team, has stated how he believes the ‘Mankad’ to be ‘unfair’ and that it ‘requires zero skill.’ While England’s One-Day International captain, Jos Butler, says that he would ‘call the batsman back’ if a teammate used the ‘Mankad’, as ‘no one wants to see it’ in the game.

Yet, with all the eccentric rules that cricket has (watch the 2019 Men’s Cricket World Cup final to learn a few), who decides which are ‘sporting’? Who judges whether something is skillful or not? And who polices this ‘Spirit of Cricket’?

While the level of skill required is up for debate, it doesn’t explain the centrality of ‘sportsmanship’ in this conversation. Harsha Bhogle, Indian cricket commentator and journalist, believes that there are colonial undertones in the cricketing world’s moral reflections on the ‘Mankad’: “The English thought it was wrong to do so (the Mankad)

“Who judges whether something is skillful or not?”

and because they ruled over a large part of the cricket world, they told everyone it was wrong. The colonial domination was so powerful that few questioned it.”

This suggests a continuation of an imperial mindset, where the ex-colonisers still have the moral authority to decide the values and beliefs in the global cricketing community. An argument particularly pertinent when considering how cricket was used as part of the British empire’s ‘civilising mission’.

Anthony Bateman, an honorary visiting research fellow at the De Montfort University, wrote in his book Cricket, Literature and Culture: “Not only was cricket coming to represent what were believed to be the ‘higher’, ‘civilised’ values of the coloniser over the colonised, but its discourses endowed it with the ability to transform the colonised into English

gentlemen.”

Intriguingly, the first ‘Mankad’ was enacted by Indian cricketer Mulvantrai Himmatlal Mankad in a test match against Australia, only a few months after the Partition of India in 1947. It’s difficult to argue with certainty that Mankad’s use of this dismissal was consciously part of a wider rejection of British ‘civil’ values from Indian life. Or, to an even greater degree of uncertainty, that the use of the ‘Mankad’ today is an act of agency against lingering colonial power structures in cricket.

However, the polarity in conversations over something as mundane as a cricketing dismissal should force some reflections on the origins of these ‘sporting morals’ and whether they are still applicable today.

Image credit: CC2:0//David Munden via. Getty Images



Sport in Oxford and beyond!

Football

There’s lots of local football across Oxford in the next couple of weeks. Oxford United face Shrewsbury in League One at the Kassam Stadium. Sitting in mid-table mediocrity, the city’s biggest football side look to build together a string of results to push for promotion. Visits to the Kassam at student prices are remarkably cheap and it can be a great way to catch some high-quality live sport.

Next weekend, Oxford City (playing in the sixth tier of English football and offering free entry to students) face Walling. They are hoping to protect their position in 4th. With an atmospheric small ground, cheap food and drink and (hopefully) some entertaining football, all being a short walk away from North Oxford, the city’s smaller team should be on the bucket list for any football fan.

Puzzles

Sudoku

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

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

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.

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

Cryptic Crossword

by Ifan Rogers

1		2		3		4		5			6
										7	
8						9					
10				11							
									12		
13				14		15					16
	17		18				19		20		
21			22			23		24			
			25								

Across:

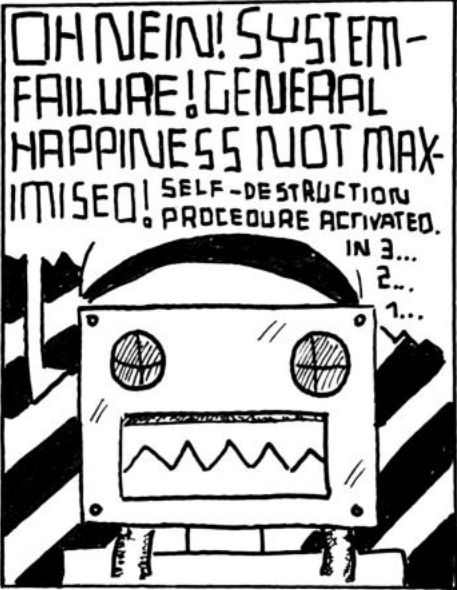
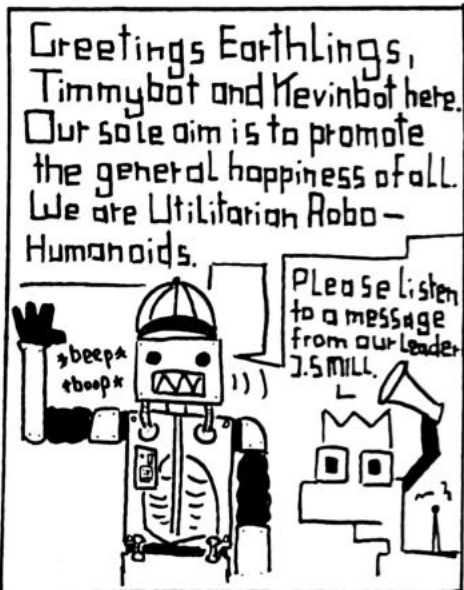
- 1. Poem haters disrupted ambiance (10)
- 8. Oxford’s transport, a recurring sequence (5)
- 9. Denied communist concealing circuit breaker (7)
- 10. Hear otherwise for rowing need (3)
- 11. Large snake helps you up? (6)
- 13. Rodent swathes run wild for brief but pleasant duration (5, 3, 5)
- 18. 99 surrounding backing number is renowned (6)
- 20. Half of comic book character is elemental? (3)
- 21. Remove tea and add ecstasy to physical wellbeing for delicate skill (7)
- 24. One from France charge for group of workers (5)
- 25. Idiot rants about conventions (10)

Down:

- 1. Crash on funny presenters (7)
- 2. Satellite restrains a vehicle – sweet! (8)
- 3. Under a hex for a short period (5)
- 4. Cash I redacted partly put to work (5)
- 5. Reviewers receive failing grade for ship travelers (7)
- 6. Going back: redo containing right sequence (5)
- 7. Greek character in capsized boat (3)
- 12. Erratically ruin note about very light particle (8)
- 14. Marks units of time? (5)
- 15. Hear nothing from sister (3)
- 16. 10 workers pay flat rates? (7)
- 17. Counter evil omens with fruit (5)
- 19. Conservative corrosion is a part of the pie! (5)
- 22. Article about alien snack (3)
- 23. Editor covers one celebrating end of Ramadan (3)

View last week’s answers on the *Cherwell* website...

Kevinbot and Timmybot



This comic was written by Chat GPT

by Sean Hartnett