Students brand SU “completely pointless” after election turnout of just 10%, as £150,000 paid to sabbhs

Alexandra Hedström Blake, Ceci Catmur and Rebecca Powell report.

Student voter turnout in the Oxford University Student Union elections last week was just 10%, despite numerous pledges by past and present sabbatical officers to “improve SU engagement”. Similar to previous years, this figure amounts to just 2762 students out of a total student body of 26,000 at Oxford University. So what does the SU actually do for the average Oxford student, and why is there such a significant failure to engage with it?

In a series of polls set up by Cherwell to gauge SU engagement, 69% of the 122 students who responded felt that the SU’s engagement with the student body was either poor or non-existent. A mere 3% of voters said that they read SU emails occasionally, only 3% of voters said that they read SU news in detail. In addition to this, of 157 voters, 138 claim never to have been to a student council meeting.

One student who participated in the survey told Cherwell that they find the SU “completely pointless, as JCRs fulfil all the functions an SU would in a unitary university.” They raise the question: Is a student union necessary in a collegiate university?

Given Oxford’s status as one of the few collegiate universities in the UK, its college JCRs and MCRs fulfil many of the roles that the SU would in other universities.

When asked whether people found the SU important in a collegiate University, 51% voted that they didn’t, and just 15% agreed that the SU was important in a collegiate university.

Cherwell also polled college JCR presidents, receiving responses from the presidents of Balliol, Brasenose, Exeter, Jesus, Keble, Merton, Oriel, St John’s and St Peter’s. 60% of the JCR Presidents who responded to the survey felt they could “definitely” do their duties without SU input. The other 40% voted it was “likely” they could.

One JCR president said, “systemically the SU is pretty useless when it comes to fighting colleges, or pushing the central university to control the colleges more (which in my own opinion is why we have so many of the systemic issues that we have in Oxford).”

Meanwhile, another JCR President told Cherwell: “I’d love for there to be more SU engagement, there’s potential for it to be a really strong student voice, but right now it’s so detached from JCRs that I don’t know what the Student Union was, and were therefore unable to answer the question. 51% voted that they didn’t, and just 15% agreed that the SU was important in a collegiate university.

Oxford students raise funds for earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria

Anika Gupta reports.

In response to the ongoing environmental disasters caused by recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, Oxford’s student societies have sought to raise funds for aid and greater general awareness.

The “Turkey-Syria Earthquake Bake Sale”, spearheaded by the Oxford University Turkish Society and Oxford Syria Society, was an initiative with mass student participation that raised huge donations in order to help assist the relief efforts. Between the 10th and 15th of February (9 am to 5 pm), in the Radcliffe Square, over £9000 was raised by cash and card. Further funds have been raised through QR codes displayed on posters, allowing people to directly donate to the AHBAP and White Helmets charities.

Individual colleges, too, have taken independent action to support Turkey and Syria. Initiatives such as pantry fundraising by the Balliol JCR hope to be able to make a meaningful impact for those on the ground.

For those at Oxford, issues concerning the wellbeing of affected students has been recognised by the administrative body of the university. The university’s official email of support illustrated external points of contact for help and guidance, as well as offering internal welfare and counselling services.

Mina Yücelen, an member of the Oxford University Turkish Society, told Cherwell that she appreciated the email from the university and the support she was getting from tutors. Nonetheless, she wishes that more diverse, proactive and instant access to mental health professionals would be made available to all those who are adversely affected by the earthquakes.

The devastation of the earthquakes in large parts of Turkey and Syria has continued to be felt in the week following their occurrence.

The first, striking with a magnitude of at least 7.8 on the seismic magnitude scale, followed hours later by another of 7.5, are already being considered as some of the most destructive earthquakes of the modern period. The reported death toll has already far exceeded 55,000 and is expected to continue rising amid international rescue efforts.

Recent UNICEF analysis indicates that in Syria alone, the earthquake has affected more than 10.9 million people with as many as 5.3 million people displaced and totalling an estimated 23 million people directly affected.

In an official message sent out by the University of Oxford, the university offered their ‘deepest sympathy’ and the provision of support to any students affected by recent events.

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Oxford joins campaign against reopening of “cruel and harmful” Campsfield detention centre

Suzanne Antelme reports.

Following a motion passed by Student Council in its 1st Week meeting, the Oxford SU has joined the Coalition to Keep Campsfield Closed (CKCC).

The CKCC is a campaign group calling for the government to scrap plans to reopen an immigration removal centre on the site of the former Campsfield House detention facility in Kidlington, about six miles outside of Oxford.

The SU motion, proposed by Najar Zainuddin and seconded by Juliet van Gyseghem, stipulates that in addition to becoming a named member of the CKCC, the SU will facilitate educational activity for students on the issue and publicise the campaign’s various protests and petitions. The motion also says the SU must push for the campaign’s demands to be added to the agenda of the National Student Union (NUS).

Najar Zainuddin, the motion’s proposer, told Cherwell: “The attitude from student groups so far has been really positive and determined. As Oxford students, we have enormous collective power to drive change. Together, we need to tell the Government that immigration detention is not the answer until it listens.”

Anna-Tina Jashpara, SU VP for Charities and Community, has been assigned to support the campaign and will attend all of the CKCC meetings. She told Cherwell that the SU will launch its formal support for the campaign via social media. They plan to help promote an online petition set up by a previous Campsfield detainee, and to work with the CKCC on an open letter to the government that the campaign wants to disseminate in the coming weeks.

A CKCC spokesperson told Cherwell that they are “delighted to have the support of the Student Union”, as “Oxford students were part of the original 1993-2018 campaign to Close Campsfield and we are pleased and grateful that this solidarity is continuing”.

This follows an announcement from the Home Office in June that it is planning the development of a new “immigration removal centre” on the site of the old Campsfield centre. Before closing in 2018, the centre had seen a riot and several hunger strikes, one of which involved over 100 detainees. There were at least two incidents where children were accidentally detained at the centre, apparently because assessments of their age had taken too long.

The centre was also criticised by an independent monitoring body after it emerged in an annual report that detainees had arrived without their possessions 150 times throughout 2017.

Juliet Van Gyseghem, the motion’s seconder, told Cherwell: “As students, we tend to forget about the wider Oxford community that exists outside the university ‘bubble’.

It is essential for us to recognise that privilege comes with responsibility. Any student who claims to care about human rights should be appalled by the threat of reopening Campsfield.”

A final inspection of the former Campsfield House in September 2018 found that 41% of detainees felt unsafe, up from 19% in 2014, although the inspection was characterised as positive overall. The Home Office’s decision to close the centre in 2018 overlapped with broader government plans to downsize detention centre provision across the UK following a 2016 report by Stephen Shaw that highlighted the link between detention and “adverse mental health outcomes”, concluding immigrant detention “ought to be reduced”.

Layla Moran, Liberal Democrat MP for Abingdon and Oxford West, was campaigning against Campsfield before it closed in 2018 and gave a speech to Parliament in September 2022 in support of the current campaign. She told Cherwell: “Immigration detention is costly, harmful to detainees, and is not an effective tool for reducing illegal migration. Instead of re-opening Campsfield House, expanding the detention state, and continuing the inhumane practice of indefinite detention, [the Government] should be using taxpayer money to speed up the processing of asylum claims.”

Moran is “delighted to see that Oxford has joined the CKCC”, as this “demonstrates the strength of feeling across our local community” opposed to this “cruel and wasteful proposal”. She added that “[w]e fought hard for 25 years to close Campsfield House, and we are ready to fight to make sure it stays that way”.

The Oxford City Council has also issued a statement declaring that it is “unequivocally opposed to the re-opening of Campsfield House”, noting that the centre saw “hunger strikes, self-harm and even suicide before it closed”.

According to the Home Office, the new centre planned for Campsfield will combine refurbished and newly built accommodation to provide “safe, secure and fit for purpose accommodation for people in detention”. The plans are part of the Home Office’s "ongoing review of detention capacity" and are still at an early stage. The new centre might accommodate as many as 400 male detainees, higher than the 282 beds it had in 2018, and would open in late 2023 at the earliest.

A CKCC spokesperson told Cherwell that going forward they hope to "broaden and deepen support for the campaign in JCRs and MCRs". They added that "[a]ll societies are welcome to join the [CKCC] and we encourage them to do so". The campaign meets online on the first Tuesday of every month, has a booth at the Turl Street Art Fair on 18th February, and will also be hosting a panel discussion at University College at 5pm on 24th February. The petition to keep Campsfield closed can be signed at change.org/keepcampsfieldclosed.
Survey: 92% of students think lecture recordings should be for everyone

Olivia Boyle reports.

In-person lectures were one of the casualties of the Pandemic; since Oxford’s return to the live world, they have not been the same. Complaints of quality control, incomplete lecture series, and missing key parts of teaching have pushed the campaign. But, lecture recordings have always been a point of contention for students especially among disabled students, who have been campaigning on lecture recordings for many years. Currently, Student Support Plans (SSPs) for disabled students theoretically allow them to access any lecture recordings. One student, however, spoke of their undiagnosed condition where an SSP would make a significant improvement to their learning but, like many across the university, they wouldn’t qualify for one. Moreover, the SSP’s largest caveat means that lecturers can always object to recordings. A Cherwell poll clarified that 92% of respondents think lecture should be recorded for all students.

On Tuesday, the SU launched a campaign to standardise lecture recording to make sure lectures can be accessed by everyone and in the ways they are needed. Cherwell has been told by the VP Access & Academic Affairs that the campaign is for "a spread of best practice on lecture accessibility and recordings policy across as many university departments as possible."

The VP-Academic Affairs, Jade Calder, noted that "now that we know that universal lecture accessibility is possible because of the pandemic". Students at the campaign’s launch also commented on the University of Oxford’s impressive academic creation, but decried the lack of innovative action on standardisation of lecture recording. One of the launch attendees labelled the University’s lack of action “discriminatory” for those who can’t attend due to COVID-19, other illnesses, mental health conditions, and accessibility issues. To not be able to attend lectures can “end the career” of those students who frequently have no choice but to miss lectures or those who have not had access to recordings of them. This is especially problematic when degrees, STEM subjects in particular, rely on lectures to deliver the bulk of their teaching.

The campaign focuses on students but, many would be quick to think of the academic staff and lecturers. Lectures are legally the intellectual property of the academic, so to record them would risk compromising the rights of ground-breaking researchers.

Moreover, in times of mass strike action, there are concerns of lecture recordings being used to break strikes. The consideration of the data protection of students has an important role to play as well. Nevertheless, the SU launch proposed a standardised contract for students to sign to control this risk as well as training for staff to better manage recording technology. At the moment, for instance, the welfare of students and staff together has been impacted by missing parts of lecture series, poorly coordinated sound and image, and limited access to past recordings.

One Computer Science student told Cherwell that the department had removed access to its archive of lectures, a key part of the course, without prior warning. A poll carried out by Cherwell found that 60% of respondents said their welfare had been impacted by lecture access disparities.

The VP-Academic Affairs told Cherwell that a recent academic survey showed that lectures are among the top of student concerns for academic experience in Oxford. Calder was keen to emphasise the University’s response has been largely cooperative; Oxford wants to see “good practice implemented across departments and effective implementation of their Educational Recordings Policy.”

The SU’s campaign is well under way and remains in frequent contact with the relevant bodies to ensure access to lectures is equal for all. Calder told Cherwell that the most important thing for students to do is to speak to their tutors about added support for lecture recordings.

While Cherwell has found that most students prefer in-person lectures, the figure is closely followed by those who would like to choose. It is the freedom to take control of how you learn that appeals to most. But, the SU campaign will ensure that those who don’t have a choice will still have appropriate access to a satisfactory level of educational resources.

A university spokesperson told Cherwell: “While the University is not aware of significant problems regarding the quality of educational recordings, we do recognise the importance of ensuring they meet a certain standard.”

Funding woes: Next year's maintenance loans worth less

Maggie Wilcox reports.

A new report from the Department of Education estimates that the 2023-24 maintenance loan increase will not be enough to restore students’ purchasing power. The projected 2.8% increase is well below the level of inflation. In the February 2023 Equality Impact Assessment, the DoE states this will have an overall “negative impact” for undergraduate students, as the proposed loan is effectively less valuable than in previous years. A 13.7% increase in the loan would be required to maintain the value of maintenance loans and grants given in the 2020/21 academic year.

Although the maximum loan is the highest it is has ever been, at just under £10,000 (or £11,374 for students who are “entitled to benefits”), this sum is in real terms worth £1,000 less than the loans of 2020/21. The DoE attributes this decrease in value to unforeseen record-high inflation, visible in metrics not used by the government to calculate the annual maintenance loan increase. The projected loan is determined the November before the academic year according to the Retail Price Index (RPI), not the commonly-used Consumer Purchasing Index (CPI).

Most English undergraduate students receive some level of maintenance funding, and 41% received the maximum loan last academic year. University-specific financial aid and scholarships often supplement these as well. Oxford, it is estimated that one in four undergraduate students receive some level of educational resources. But, many would be quick to think of the academic staff and lecturers. Lectures are legally the intellectual property of the academic, so to record them would risk compromising the rights of ground-breaking researchers.

Moreover, in times of mass strike action, there are concerns of lecture recordings being used to break strikes. The consideration of the data protection of students has an important role to play as well. Nevertheless, the SU launch proposed a standardised contract for students to sign to control this risk as well as training for staff to better manage recording technology. At the moment, for instance, the welfare of students and staff together has been impacted by missing parts of lecture series, poorly coordinated sound and image, and limited access to past recordings.

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Parliament supports ban on NDAs in cases of assault, harassment or misconduct

Suzanne Antelme reports.

Both houses of Parliament have now agreed to an amendment to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill which will ban the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) by universities and their constituent colleges in cases of assault, harassment or misconduct.

On 7th February the House of Commons passed the amendment after it was proposed in December by the House of Lords. This comes in the wake of a campaign encouraging universities to sign onto a pledge promising not to deploy NDAs in cases involving misconduct. The campaign was jointly launched in January 2022 by Michelle Donelan, at the time Minister for Higher Education, and the group Can’t Buy My Silence. While 80 universities have already signed the pledge, only three Oxford colleges are among them – a point that was mentioned in the Commons debate before the anti-NDA amendment was accepted.

Oxford colleges came under particular pressure to sign the anti-NDA pledge after it was revealed in April 2022 by The Times that Lady Margaret Hall (LMH) had told a student they risked expulsion if they discussed their alleged sexual assault with the media. LMH signed the Can’t Buy My Silence pledge in May 2022, followed by Keble and Linacre. It Happens Here Oxford, a student-led campaign group opposing sexual violence, played a key role in encouraging the three colleges and continues to call for more colleges to join the pledge.

It Happens Here Oxford told Cherwell: “We are overjoyed [by Parliament passing the anti-NDA amendment]. Progress like this is hard-fought and hard-won. This has been the culmination of over a year of hard work by Can’t Buy My Silence, It Happens Here and incredible MPs and student organisations across the nation. [We continue] to urge every college to sign Can’t Buy My Silence’s anti-NDA pledge, to show their dedication to supporting students and protecting the rights of survivors. We also encourage every remaining [JCR and MCR] to pass our anti-NDA motion, unifying the voices of students across the university in a powerful act of solidarity.”

While the anti-NDA amendment has now been agreed to by both houses of Parliament, other amendments to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill are still being negotiated, with the bill moving between the two houses in a back-and-forth process known as ‘ping pong’. It is unclear when this will end.
**Jack Twyman reports.**

The Oxford University Student Union announced this week that it will hold a referendum on NUS disaffiliation on Monday 27th February.

Polling will open at 8am on Monday 27th February and will close at 6pm on Wednesday 1st March. According to the Oxford SU, there will be at least one Open Meeting where both the proposition and opposition campaigns can be heard and questions addressed. The results of the binding referendum will be announced at 7pm on Wednesday 1st March.

This is the second attempt to call a referendum after the first such motion was withdrawn by the proposer Ciaron Tobin, and the second NUS delegate Mundher Ba-Shammakh, both elected NUS delegates from Oxford SU.

The first attempt was dropped in the Hilary Term 2023 Week 1 meeting after members debating the proposal reached a consensus that withdrawing the motion would allow for consultation with students likely to be affected. The 3-hour debate in Week 1 brought to the fore the lack of communication between the proposers and Jewish Society (Jsoc) representatives.

At the Hilary Term 2023 Week 3 meeting, Ciaron Tobin and Mundher Ba-Shammakh again raised the topic of a motion to hold a referendum and this time it passed, with amendments, 26 votes for, 3 against and 2 abstaining. The motion acknowledged that "the report of the independent investigation led by Behbeh Tuck KC into allegations of antisemitism in the NUS found that it had failed to sufficiently challenge antisemitism and hostility to Jewish students within its organisation." The selected campaign heads will have to identity "alternate arrangements, to the extent they exist, for the representation of students at a national level; the extent to which it is politically feasible to address the concerns above both within and without the NUS; how resources could be used within the SU after disaffiliation; and the extent to which historical problems in the report continue”.

Ba-Shammakh told Cherwell: "We will not be participating in the campaigning as he is "currently working a very demanding full time role", and feels he could not "give this task the dedication it deserves".

He noted that "if the student body vote to disaffiliate. The motion that passed also noted that "Oxford SU contributes £4,095.60 to NUS Charity and £20,478 to NUS UK, in membership fees". While debating the first motion in Week 1, some members of the council meeting spoke with frustration of limited SU budgets, especially for the Disabilities Campaign and the LGBTQ+ Campaign. However, others expressed concern that disaffiliation would dilute the SU's influence on student issues that extend beyond Oxford.

Asking what he would suggest as a new way forward for national representation of the SU, Ba-Shammakh told Cherwell: "This is a question that I feel must be asked of all students first and foremost and of the new wonderful team we have just elected to the SU. But on a personal level I feel there needs to be a greater focus paid to issues concerning financing for students, rent reductions on a more organised basis and increasing in lobbying for student support. There's too much time and effort currently dedicated to national issues concerning social campaigns and general divisive matters, which while important in their own right, they often aren't directly related to students which is what the SU ought to be concerned about."

Joe Bell, Oxford SU Returning Officer, commented on the announcement: "It is my sincere hope that all debate remains respectful at all times, and I look forward to the passionate, sensitive and reasoned discussions which will doubtlessly play out in the next few weeks."

He noted that "if the student body vote not to remain affiliated with the NUS, Oxford SU's membership would likely only cease at the end of this calendar year, for contractual reasons.

**Olivia Boyle reports.**

Local food poverty has reached new heights with an unprecedented demand for support due to severe shortages of fresh food.

Now, the OX4 Food Crew, a coalition of nine grassroots organisations that united during the pandemic to tackle food inequality in Oxford, is launching a fundraiser to support bulk food purchases for local support centres after an "explosion of requests" over the last six months.

OX4 Food Crew works by pooling resources to try to manage shortage-hammered food distribution in the area. The postcode area OX4 is home to "four of the 10-20% most deprived wards across the country" so many rely on the support of Oxford Community Action (OCA), Oxford Mutual Aid (OMA) and local food banks. The charities who use the food parcels to provide for those in need are no longer able to fully maintain elements of their services. OCA volunteer said, "We are getting fewer and fewer things that we can cook with", noting that the absence of fruit and vegetables is stark.

The impact of Brexit, the pandemic, and the current cost of living crisis has led to a substantial rise in food inequality in Oxford, with the OX4 Food Crew confirming that "over 50% of children in Rose Hill, Blackbird Leys, and Iffley are living in food poverty". Furthermore, they say it is now unmanageably costly to provide bulk parcels of fresh food. Oxford Mutual Aid stated that the "situation is far worse than it ever was at the height of the Covid crisis." One member of Oxford Community Action has had to reduce fresh food parcel distribution from 320 per week to 220 leaving many without a key source of food.

Cherwell has been told that between August 2022 and December 2022, unique beneficiaries of Oxford food banks increased by 12.5%, the demand for food parcels increased by 24.4% and there was a 38% increase in people turning to OMA for support for the first time. These figures don't include the growing number of people getting turned away by food support organisations due to the insurmountable demand. A spokesperson for OX4 Food Crew told Cherwell that the Oxford City Council has funded some bulk food purchases but the demand is so great that the Council alone cannot provide sufficient support. The spokesperson emphasised the shift towards mass community action, calling for aid from the University of Oxford. It was said that although OMA receives some aid and surplus food from certain colleges, it is not enough for bulk food distribution and the university-wide action is minimal.

Food distribution organisations are turning to community action to try to combat food shortages. A fundraiser is in full swing to call on residents of Oxford, students and academics included, to do what they can to help tackle the food shortages.
Continued from front page • think it’s representative or useful for most students.”

80% of the JCR President respondents said that the SU engagement with their JCR is ‘poor’.

One JCR president told Cherwell, “The Oxford SU clearly has a massive amount of issues... if all the SU can provide is occasional workshops for JCR Committee members, it’s hard to see how this benefits the whole Ox body, and justifies paying the students wages.”

JCR presidents, when asked what support they received from the SU, mentioned rent negotiation training, college comparisons, and the option to access more general policy and procedure advice. Yet some JCR presidents told Cherwell that even the rent negotiation workshops were poorly organized. One claimed they were given only 2 hours notice before the workshop took place, characterising this as “negligent organisation”. Some colleges missed the workshop. Another JCR President told Cherwell the rent negotiation training came “a little late” for them as they had already negotiated with college and come to an agreement just as the help had been advertised.

60% of JCR presidents who responded voted that they did not find SU services and communications efficient. The SU writes on its website that they “work closely with JCRs and MCRs across the colleges with lobbying support, training, wellbeing products, and more,” with eight student-led campaigns “fighting to improve [the] student experience and build communities along the way.” However, when asked how supported they felt by the SU, 98% of the students surveyed by Cherwell said they felt unsupported. The remaining 2% felt somewhat supported.

Despite student dissatisfaction with current SU-JCR relations, 70% of the JCR Presidents who responded to the questionnaire would still prefer to ‘support initiatives for greater SU engagement’ as opposed to the options of disaffiliating from the SU or keeping the relationship as is.

Responses among the JCR Presidents about what the SU could do to improve engagement included ideas about improving convenience of the student council; in its current form, it is “too long and feels too ineffective to motivate people to attend.”

Further thoughts focused on “making their presence better known with students,” with one President saying there needs to be “more outreach and visibility on what the SU actually is.” They suggested hosting an introduction to the SU in freshers’ week. However, they added “the SU-JCR communications channel selectively, by picking projects for which engagement is essential. This gives the SU a means of getting to students more efficiently, but only works if it is not overloaded.”

One JCR president feels the SU would benefit from having “a more unified goal each year” as, whilst they recognize that the valuable opportunities are working hard, they feel they may be doing “too many things,” so “it feels like none of them are truly meaningful.”

This “creates an environment where students are unsure of what they even do, which drives engagement down.” Another respondent said the idea of “more involvement towards common goals that are set out as a whole” to improve SU engagement, and “for them to be more proactive in fighting colleges than the central university.”

When asked for comment on how they could improve engagement, the Sabbatical Officers told Cherwell they “would encourage any student to come along and see first-hand the work that we as a team are doing.” During these student council meetings “student members can come along and ask questions, pass motions and hold sabbatical officers to account.”

Braverman meets pushback on plans to limit overseas students

Rufus Hall reports.

The education secretary, Gillian Keegan, is openly resisting the Home Office’s plans to restrict the number of international students that attend UK universities.

In an interview with the Financial Times, the education secretary described the economic contribution of international students as “hugely valuable”. She also said that the UK’s university sector is “scrolling down the feed” of overseas students and partnerships with overseas institutions, clashing with the Home Office’s plans to reduce immigration numbers by targeting international students. In a conversation with Cherwell, Sunday, 7th February, Braverman suggested that overseas students were exploiting student visas in order to bring dependants who are “not contributing to growing our economy.”

At Oxford, just over a third of students are from overseas. The university has the 13th highest proportion of international students in the Russell Group. Oxford considers international students to be an invaluable part of life at the university. One student told Cherwell that the opportunity to be part of a global community “must really broaden our perception of the world and different cultures, and I think that university is fundamentally a place where that should happen.”

Financial Times reported that Braverman and Keegan met this week, and discussion topics included Braverman’s proposed reduction of the time period over which an overseas student can stay in the UK after their degree. The current graduate visa allows international students to stay for 2 years, or for 3 years following the completion of a doctoral or equivalent qualification. It was suggested that this could be reduced to 6 months. The ministers also discussed the current possibility for students on “low-value” courses, or those with lower graduate salaries, to bring dependants to the UK.

Three years ago, the government aimed to increase the number of international students enrolled at UK universities to 600,000 by 2021/22. According to the Higher Education Student Statistics for 2021/22, the figure reached was 680,000, which amounts to just under a quarter of all students at UK universities. But currently, the number of international students is falling. Part of the reason is the rise in tensions between the UK and China, whose student applications at UK universities have fallen for the first time in a decade.

Moreover, the Higher Education sector relies on the higher fees paid by international students to provide a better experience for all students. To many, including Gillian Keegan, the Home Office’s proposition is ludicrous both financially and culturally.

Street food with less street litter: vendors react to new plastic ban

Andy Wei reports.

Walking around Gloucester Green market, plastic is everywhere to be found. It’s littered across the ground, and nearly all of the twenty or so food vendors visibly distribute plastic of some form. Following a recent decision by the Oxford City Council, however, all that plastic will have to go by April.

After a year-long campaign by Green and Liberal Democrat Councillors, the licensing committee voted to ban street traders from using single-use plastics. The city will rely on monitoring officers, public reporting, and fines to enforce the new rule. At the end of 2022, a public consultation found that 79% of respondents were in favour of the ban.

At The Catchy Gypsy, a stall at Gloucester Green market, plastic seems to be made of paper. Though plastic forks are available. They told Cherwell that they “don’t mind” the new policy, as they have almost completely abandoned single-use plastics already, and they usually have wooden cutlery available.

According to Nick from The Java Laksa Co., an Indonesian & Malaysian joint at the market, this is a welcome but difficult change. The stall currently uses containers made of hard plastic, which he says are easier and cheaper to source than quality biodegradable products. Nick told Cherwell that supply shocks have caused a reduction in plastic packaging, coming from wholesalers while also increasing the prices of eco-friendly packaging by multiple times, as most of it is shipped from China. The switch would also be extra costly for Java Laksa because paper packaging for offerings such as soup would need to be thick and high quality. He does not want to be forced to pass on these increased costs to customers.

Nick says that he is “strongly against” the cheap and low-quality paper alternatives with kebab vans and many of his competitors. However, he believes that the hard plastic used by Java Laksa is easy to re-use and recycle, so it shouldn’t be considered single-use. Java Laksa has a sign encouraging customers to “please return plastic containers back to us for recycling ... or re-use them yourself.” Nick told Cherwell that he would also appreciate it if the government helped ease the transition by subsidising the cost of biodegradable packaging for street traders.

Hassan from Hassan’s kebab van on Turl Street said Cherwell, “It’s a good idea but it’s bad for me.” He currently uses compostable foam containers; he previously used eco-friendly ones but they were just too expensive.

An eco-friendly container costs around 90p, so a hundred containers is equivalent to as much as a night’s salary. The extra cost will need to be somehow compensated. Hassan is also wary about the environmental benefits of the switch, as he believes most containers will still end up in the trash anyway rather than be properly composted or recycled.

After the decision, Green Councillor Lois Muddiman said, “We know that single-use plastics have a massive environmental impact - both in their production and their contribution to problems of littering.” According to the other Green Councillor, Rosie Rawle, “Independent, small traders are the beating heart of Oxford’s economy” and accordingly “have an important role to play in addressing our city’s environmental impact.”
These pets are the cat’s meow! Cherwell Pet Show 2023

Maggie Wilcox awards the very best college pets

The pets of Oxford colleges do so much for their stressed students. A friendly tail wag, a lively game of fetch between tutes or even an unexpected rodent present at your accommodation door can bring joy or at least a distraction to our days. It’s time the best and the brightest among these loyal animals get the recognition they deserve.

So, in the great Oxford tradition of awards and rankings, Cherwell has created this college pet show to decide once and for all who comes from a college accused of tortoise fraud and who is truly the Kim Kardashian of college pets.

First up is the oldest. As with colleges, the title of ‘oldest’ is not without controversy. Toby from Trinity, officially the oldest at about 100 years old, comes from a college accused of tortoise fraud and theft. In 2004, Balliol’s tortoise, Rosa Luxemburg, disappeared one day, and rumour has it Trinity is to blame! Not only is Toby the Oldest Pet, he and his partner in crime Plum (a spritely 90 year old tortoise) also claim the title of No1 Reptile Rascals!

Other college pets influence the humanities surrounding them in different, perhaps more superficial ways. This is the case of our Biggest Influencer, Tortilla. Star of the University insta and boasting 715 followers on his own insta, the Lincoln College tortoise is truly the Kim Kardashian of college pets. Follow him @tortilla_la_tortuga!

Next up is the Most Inspiring. Fortunately, some Oxonian animals inspire emotions other than anger and over zealous college pride. Some are inspiring, full stop. None more so than St Hilda’s cat, Teabag. She turned up at Hilda’s one cold, rainy night, so small and bedraggled that she looked like a used teabag. After the diligent care of several porters, she began to thrive and has grown into a fine college cat. She reminds students and staff that in a loving community they can overcome any difficulty.

This category was nearly as tight as the Trinity-Balliol controversy. As those who were at theOXFDISTarma battle for Radcliffe Square’ have put these two archenemies in the (military) history books. So as not to upset either ferocious feline, Cherwell has jointly awarded:

**Most Vengeful**

The Trinity-Balliol controversy is not the sole pet-related college feud. As those who were at Oxford last year will remember, Walter from Exeter and Simpkin IV from Hertford began invading each other’s colleges. Prompting Oxfess outrage and a library ban, this event, dubbed ‘the Battle for Radcliffe Square’ has put these two archenemies in the (military) history books. So as not to upset either ferocious feline, Cherwell has jointly awarded:

**Worst Name**

The key to celebrity is a catchy name. Unfortunately the next pet’s name is neither catchy, nor even accurate to its species. Fox from Corpus is not a quick, red mammal, but instead a slow, green reptile. Although the name is likely an allusion to the famous theological author college founder Robert Fox, the name still leads to some confusion.

Finally, the premier award of the show. Although many pets are cute, talented, charismatic and popular, only one can truly be the Best in Show. The only pet to submit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll, Aristurtle from Peters mit a CV (and what a stacked one!) and the winner of a vast majority on our online poll. The cutest pet was voted online by hundreds of Oxford students. Although an honourable mention goes to Mansfield cat Ziggy and his adorable missing teeth, in the end the college tortoise race last year as a relative rookie of only thirteen years, has a voracious appetite for lettuce and has stood head and shoulders above the rest, even though she is just a small tortoise. She can jump “really high” for an animal of such short limbs, placed second in the college tortoise race last year as a relative rookie of only thirteen years, has a voracious appetite for lettuce and has had an intimate rendez-vous with Timothée Chalamet.

Professor Biscuit is rather aptly named, as this rotund cat from St Hugh’s has been named the Hungriest Pet. Known for eating rats, tuna, Dreamies and a whole host of other treats, Biscuit’s ravenous appetite even prompted the college disciplinary team to send out a warning email to students last Michaelmas.

Like his owner, Vice Chancellor Professor Irene Tracey, Geofffrey Biscuit, received a promotion this year. Rising from Merton college pet to the University office, this 3 year-old golden retriever is a young and lively representative of the ancient university. It should be noted that this category was nearly won by an LMH cat named Benny D after “benedic-tus benedicit”. Not only does his name allude to the Oxford tradition of formal hall graces, but he is also always sporting subfusc!

The cutest pet was voted online by hundreds of Oxford students. Although an honourable mention goes to Mansfield cat Ziggy and his adorable missing teeth, in the end the college tortoise race last year as a relative rookie of only thirteen years, has a voracious appetite for lettuce and has had an intimate rendez-vous with Timothée Chalamet.

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Wags in the Rag

Ll across Oxford, there are college pets playing important roles in student welfare day to day. Whether it is simply providing an escape from the stresses of academic work or representing their college, these pets are vital for their communities.

St Hugh's College is no exception to this. Four year old Flapjack and Biscuit, tabby and ginger cats respectively, are perhaps some of Oxford's lesser known furry friends, but they are nonetheless some of its most adored. The college had originally wanted to get a cat, staying mostly within the grounds of St Hugh's but being based within the College Office. Much like my cats at home, they often choose to ignore the many cat flaps placed around the college for them and wait for people to open the doors for them instead. They also roam up to students' rooms, a great help during a late night essay crisis, where they know they will be pampered.

Like all of Oxford's college pets, they also play an important welfare role. Many seek out the cats to pet them when feeling stressed, and they are often around the college library to help when work gets too much. College group chats are full of photos of sightings of the cats, and they significantly improve the mental health of the student body simply by being around as a non-judgmental friendly presence. Although, their welfare role is noted to be fulfilled much better than their job in deterring pests.

Not only are Professor Biscuit and Admiral Flapjack some of Oxford's most adorable college pets in my opinion, they also clearly play an important role in promoting student wellbeing, as all college pets I have covered throughout this column do. Whether it is just to remind you of your pets at home, or to help relax after a long, stressful day of essays or problem sheets, it is always helpful for our mental health to be able to spend time with furry friends whilst at university.

Sound and vision

Why does science fiction love classical music so much?

Albert Genower

When you think of sci-fi, what images are conjured in your head? Spaceships, aliens, lasers, parallel universes? Whatever you think of – it’s probably not Europe in the 19th century. But why would you? The worlds seem diametrically opposed, and in most ways they are. But tell that to the directors of 9 of the American Film Institute's (AFI) Top 10 Science Fiction Films, all of which have soundtracks of pre-existing classical music, an original, classical score, or, in the case of A Clockwork Orange, classical music on electronic instruments. Only Blade Runner has a score that truly differs from this. Why do these directors choose music that seems so unifying to soundtrack space?

Where better to start, than No. 1 on this American Film Institute list, and, undoubtedly, No. 1 on the lists of many a film aficionado worldwide - 2001: A Space Odyssey. It’s noteworthy for its inclusion of pre-existing classical pieces instead of Alex North's original, composed score, the "temp tracks" that would normally be discarded instead remaining in place.

Richard Strauss’ Also Sprach Zarathustra is used in the opening and, later, Johann Strauss II’s Blue Danube are the most famous examples of this in the film. Music theorists including F. F. Mormanni, Philip Hayward and Tanya Brown have all speculated on this choice, and they fundamentally conclude that the majesty that we associate with Western classical - with a small C - is a majesty comparable to that of intergalactic travel, in a way no other music is.

So who is classical music perceived like this? Martin Keary (known better as Tantacrul) offers a possible explanation in classical music's image problem, being seen as stuffy, antiquated and "elitist" from the outside, but also "grand", "important" and "high culture". These stereotypes are certainly perpetuated from the inside too (the Royal Academy of Music and Royal College of Music both have higher percentages of private school students) (Keary points out). But this comes in spite of the fact that most composers of classical music were far from wealthy, it's all reified into excellence, prestige and "high culture".

2001 was the exception to trends in sci-fi music in the late 1960s, with the counterculture movement seeing sci-fi merge with influences from all manner of genres (look at David Bowie, Sun Ra and early Pink Floyd for examples of this). The music of sci-fi has gone through a number of trends across the decades, for example 1927's Metropolis, the pinnacle of pre-WW2 sci-fi has a score done by an orchestral ensemble. For such a forward-looking film, it's remarkably conservative, and this continued throughout the 1950s. Despite classical music's experimentation in the 1930s (look at Erik Satie using typewriters and dynamos in his works, or the early producers of electronic music), sci-fi stayed largely 19th-century, Wagnerian and conservative.

The worlds of classical music and science fiction seem diametrically opposed

A brief look into the niche and complex world of musical semiotics takes this deeper. Arnie Cox has a theory he calls the "mimetic hypothesis", saying that our musical understanding comes from unconscious imitation of observed action; we understand sounds in comparison to sounds we ourselves have made. Even if we can't play a violin, we all know what physical action is needed to play one, something that is not so clear with the synthesised sounds of electronic music. Composer Denis Smalley has taken this further, arguing that without, sound can become "cold, difficult, even sterile". If you agree with their hypotheses, this culturally conditioned understanding of electronic music as non-human, alien music, especially in contrast to the familiar, Western classical music, electronic music is perfect for making a film more alien and classical music perfect for tethering an otherworldly film to Earth.

This mid-century experimentation, continuing in films like Destination Moon and TV shows like Doctor Who, was stopped in its tracks in 1977 when Star Wars was released. John Williams set out to create music that would put us in touch with "familiar and remembered emotions", and "all Western experiences", hence the 19th-century Wagnerian score. This makes total sense, Williams borrows from culturally ubiquitous classical music to create a familiar score, George Lucas said that Star Wars was meant to be a "simple hero's journey" and a "fantasy for young people", and the aforementioned theory of classical music tethering a film to Earth firmly applies here. Of course, there's financial aspects too, big-budget studios not wanting to take a chance on composers like the Barron's anymore, but not all science fiction conforms to this even if big-budget studios and "Greatest Sci-Fi Films" lists are peppered with 19th-century inspired scores, films like Forbidden Planet and Blade Runner feature creative and original electronic scores.
If you’d told me a couple of years ago that I’d get the chance to sit down with a comedic hero of mine, I would’ve laughed. Not quite as loudly as I do when watching Mock the Week or Have I Got News for You, but quite loud nonetheless. Yet, on a sunny Saturday afternoon, I found myself frantically rereading through my notes, considering each of the prepared questions, and anxiously tapping the side of my mug; preparing more for what was about to happen than I do for most of my tutorials. Almost simultaneously, I hear a happy, lively greeting - “Hello!” - inflected with a recognisable Yorkshire twang that puts me at ease. I’m used to seeing the face before me today on televisions and billboards, but never would I have thought that I’d get to talk to her in person. Well, as in-person as you can get on Zoom.

The first stop of our interview seems an almost inevitable starting place; that of her current tour, Buzzed. Initially starting in August 2022, the tour enjoyed such levels of sold-out success that a second leg of the tour has been added. I’m curious as to how she came up with such a name, was it an easy endeavour? “Writing the material? I’m grand. But trying to sum up the show in one title, in a way that sounds enticing but not wanky, but not so enigmatic that nobody knows what it is; that’s quite stressful. It’s the hardest part of any show sometimes.” I guess a little bit of me went for the name because of the haircut I’ve been rocking for two, almost three years. Another aspect, I don’t know if it’s a Northern thing, is that I always say that I’m buzzing—or buzzed—when I talk about being excited, and off the back of the pandemic I just was desperate to get back on tour and get back doing live stand up that I am buzzing to be back.

“I kind of craved looking ahead at that point in lockdown. I think all of us were sick of the situation, of talking about Covid. I know I, for one, was.” I’m smiling along at this stage, nodding politely, trying to not make it blatantly obvious I was frantically scribbling through line upon line of pandemic-based questions I’d prepared. As a comedian who’s spent almost half of her career battling against the curtailing of comedy by successive national lockdowns, I could understand why she might feel ambivalent towards the topic.

So, what sort of stand-up routine does one create on the back of what was, for many, some of the loneliest, most isolating times in recent memory? “I ended up writing what I thought would be a very uplifting show, very positive, very optimistic, and the whole process has been really fun. I went and did Edinburgh with it, then went on tour straight away through September and October. It was originally just 33 dates, but it went so well and so many were sold-out that we’re back for another 30! We’re doing round two!”

One of the most special elements of the show is the first act of Maisie’s performance. Alongside performing a traditional stand-up routine, Maisie tells me how she goes to great lengths to personalise the show for the place she’s performing in. “Oxford is somewhere that I think I’ve only ever gigged in perhaps two, three times since starting comedy. I’ve never played at the Old Fire Station before.

“Writing the material? I’m grand. But trying to sum up the show in one title, in a way that sounds enticing but not wanky, but not so enigmatic that nobody knows what it is; that’s quite stressful.”

Discussing touring, Twitter, and the state of UK comedy with the British comedian.

Charlotte Perry

There’s a lot of men out there that should’ve been hugged more by their dads”: In conversation with Maisie Adam
When people think about what it’s like backstage at a comedy gig, they think that it must be quite rock and roll... [but a lot of it is] having a cup of tea and watching Pointless before it’s time to head out on stage.

When I think about when I used to watch [Mock the Week] as a kid, it was all blokes; and not a variety in terms of the acts. It would just be six middle-aged blokes when I think about when I used to watch [Mock the Week] as a kid, it was all blokes; and not a variety in terms of the acts. It would just be six middle-aged blokes.

When I think about when I used to watch [Mock the Week] as a kid, it was all blokes; and not a variety in terms of the acts. It would just be six middle-aged blokes...
Hanging in there: The “Myrkl” pill that might change the way Oxford drinks

Cherwell’s editors trial miracle hangover pills so you don’t have to!

Phin Hubbard

Hangover anecdotes tend to interest their teller more than their audience. So, I’ll let you read some triumphant exceptions to the rule written by P.G. Wodehouse and Tom Wolfe while I go get a Coca Cola and wait for my fingers to stop jittering all over the keys.

This comes from The Mating Season and is brilliant for Wodehouse’s unwillingness to divulge exactly what he means when he identifies his six types of hangover: “the Broken Compass, the Sewing Machine, the Comet, the Atomic, the Cement Mixer and the Gremlin Boogie”. I can’t tell you what “the Sewing Machine” explicitly refers to, but I understood it immediately as the way I felt on New Year’s Day.

And here’s Tom Wolfe’s washed-out journalist Peter Fallow in The Bonfire of the Vanities waking up after a big one: “The telephone blasted Peter Fallow awake inside an egg with the shell peeled away and only the membranous sac holding intact. Ah! The membranous sac was his head, and the right side of his head was on the pillow, and the yolk was as heavy as mercury, and the right side of his head was on the pillow, and only the membranous with the shell peeled away from it, and roll and rupture the sac, and his brains would fall out”. Substitute the telephone for an 8:30 alarm and Wolfe has dissected a good proportion of our Friday mornings with yucky accuracy.

I have never discussed hangxiety, occult pick-me-ups and hangover horror-stories more often than since I got to Oxford. Luminous signature cocktails and cheap college wine might be to blame but every morning this town is suffering. The tell-tale sunglasses on overcast days, that odd rum-pickled-garlic-pork odour you secrete and the shaky handshakes with wild-eyed panic upon introductions in the AM say more than your stuttering description of the night does.

So, I thought it worth trialling Myrkl, a Swedish “hangover pill” at Cherwell’s expense. It is classed as a supplement and not a medicated product and so cannot (obeying MHRA regulations) explicitly describe itself as a hangover stopper.

The two clinical trials “proving” AB001™’s ability to break booze down were funded by De Faire themselves.

The two clinical trials “proving” AB001™’s ability to break booze down were funded by De Faire themselves. De Faire Medical, Johan De Faire themselves and their authority has relinquished any real claim to a scientifically unimpeachable trialling of Myrkl in the wild, asking only that my guinea pigs drink as they normally would when they want to get trolled and write a report. Here is what the first guinea pig (GP1) pinged back verbatim, “Magdelen” and all.

I took the pills about two hours before I started drinking. I had volunteered quite willingly, as I would be doing a college bar crawl that night. A pint in Univ and Pembroke was all we had managed by about 9 PM and it wasn’t looking good as most of the bars were closed. This was until we infiltrated the Magdelen “Wild West” bop.
I was in the familiar moral and spiritual wasteland, so poisoned it was as if someone had hooked me up to dialysis in the night and replaced all my blood with bin juice and battery acid.

I was at the Bridge Spirit entrance. The queue was much too short for it to have been later than 12pm when we stepped inside, but true to form, I was wandering back down Broad Street in search of drunk munchies, I found them at exactly 1 hour and 45 minutes after my first drink. After a post-party, pre-party DMC with my mates, it was lights out at 2:30am. Whilst this was an admittedly tame night, I would seek to contradict this when I woke up the next morning and feel the room swirl around me. When I leapt out of bed to see not a single black spot in my vision, I realised that these hangover pills had the potential to be a game-changer ( disclaimer: this might have also been the result of a decent night’s sleep, since I woke up at 10am). In fact, I genuinely felt like I was better the next morning, without any hangover symptoms. At one point or another, I might have even had the nerve to consider a hangover pill and bin juice as a stand in for a hangover shot.

Looking past the initial flush of relief (okay you proud sex-haver you!), the common amnesic journey from club to keeb in both guinea pig accounts points to a similar if not equivalent level of inebriation. This makes their testing conditions ‘chirp’ incredibly interesting but some details in the story perhaps tarnish its trustworthiness. Importantly, their narrative ends at 11:45am, just as GP1 and GP2 were still sipping into the icky abyss in our trials and where scientifically a hangover technically should be said to begin (when blood alcohol drops back down to zero and I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I mean, even when I feel pepped from been anywhere else, I might not have remembered my uncanny new alcohol tolerance. I had lifted the three pints of Kahlúa to my lips, glopped them down the esophagus and burped proportionately. Why was I then sitting there sober as a judge in the most injudicious space for the teetotal. From Oxford. And left and right came “I mean, maybe you should have a nap and for the rest of the day...” or “you’ll need to be fair” level chat. Situationally traumatizing in Merton’s dungeon-like bar where the jukebox only plays Come on Eileen, maybe Myrkl’s self-purifying abilities have its uses for an enterprising, reptilian undergraduate like myself. I do understand; corporate help when we need to cosplay corporate hacks ourselves so to speak.

For example, it could keep your tongue sharp whilst you are seen to be doing at a society soiree... another thinly veiled networking event and drink the drinks. Perhaps the decision to reach for a drink could no longer be justified with any appeal to the appropriateness of a scenario, instead the gesture had been simplified into signifying only that we wanted a numbing, dopamine-buffering chemical.

Around 150,000 British adults officially participated in Dry January this winter according to Alcohol Change UK, a figure swollen from the 100,000 pre-pandemic. Yet if you drink at Oxford, I doubt you could count yourself among that number. But I’m not bowweeving up from on my pious little horse, I had no intention of keeping off alcohol entirely and for the rest of the year...’

As I sat on my friend’s sofa, though I was truly embarrassed. We must have completed the wrap from Hassan’s in Balliol. From the outside, it just didn’t seem like we were in my life. It was truly embarrassing. We ended up at the enormous haven of the St Bridge, and then stumbled through the city, ending up at Balliol. From the outside, it just didn’t seem worth it and I can’t actually remember why we didn’t go in, but a sure thing is we stepped out and into the DJ wrap from Hassan’s in my friends. In this moment, I was thoroughly confusedly I woke up in my room. At some point during the night I must have completed the final round of the Odyssey, and somehow made it back to my own room. Needless to say, I remember none of it. I woke up in a terrible state of physical and mental distress. I was dizzy and struggled even to speak when greeted with a visitation from my roommates at 11 AM.

About an hour later, an editor messaged me as to the results of this experiment. All I could manage was “I don’t have a headache but I’m definitely still drunk”. Absolutely nothing had really changed. But the rest of the day was an endless barrage of hungover but deferring. All my blood with bin juice and battery acid. It’s horseradish, but did I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I believe alcohol’s mythology was ruptured for so many in the UK because of the elucidating but unuttered shame of the pandemic. I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I mean, I have a whole 45 years to do this. It’s horseradish, but did I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I believe alcohol’s mythology was ruptured for so many in the UK because of the elucidating but unuttered shame of the pandemic. It’s horseradish, but did I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I believe alcohol’s mythology was ruptured for so many in the UK because of the elucidating but unuttered shame of the pandemic. It’s horseradish, but did I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I believe alcohol’s mythology was ruptured for so many in the UK because of the elucidating but unuttered shame of the pandemic. It’s horseradish, but did I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I believe alcohol’s mythology was ruptured for so many in the UK because of the elucidating but unuttered shame of the pandemic. It’s horseradish, but did I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I believe alcohol’s mythology was ruptured for so many in the UK because of the elucidating but unuttered shame of the pandemic. It’s horseradish, but did I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I believe alcohol’s mythology was ruptured for so many in the UK because of the elucidating but unuttered shame of the pandemic. It’s horseradish, but did I actually have to get slaughtered to know? I believe alcohol’s mythology was ruptured for so many in the UK because of the elucidating but unuttered shame of the pandemic.
Aside from the release of the annual Cherwell sex survey a few weeks ago it appears that every single person affiliated with the University of Oxford is having great, satisfying sex all the time except for you. That’s right you, the reader. St. Peter’s folks came out on top of the rankings with an average of 13.5 sexual partners, a statistic which probably made you feel pretty bad considering you aren’t having any sex at all. Sorry to hear that, by the way.

After the methodical review of the sexual behavior of Oxford students, it appears every single other person has a great relationship with their bodies and their desires, and are able to pursue and receive physical intimacy on command.

As an outbreak of gonorrhoea cases are reported across the university, an infection of a different kind has been reported at the Union, with Legohead an increasingly prevalent presence needing restraining at speaker events (what is it with weird men only ever wearing one type of jacket?) Separately, with Valentine’s Day just behind us, it is surely only a matter of time before scarf-wearing becomes a trend, and not just the distinctive mark of our most recent ex-seccie.

Last week, the Belt and Road initiative reached the chamber, with the Indian Representative temporarily disabled and her seat of power replaced by China’s nobility. A battle of the balls followed after the debate, with both the chair (#verb) and Mr Gregg being certified ball lovers. The opposition, desperate to prevent his own electoral castration, demanded a poll. However, the Illiterate appears also to be Innumerate, after #verb x exero (who are exactly as neeky as they sound) deemed his requisition was invalid because he cannot count to 150. Such wonderful “signature” skills will serve him well at the bar.

Someone less sure of his intent to serve is the Gym Bro (not finance bro, as has been repeatedly pointed out by the Pedantic Economist) who reportedly told members of staff that he was no longer running. Why they would be remotely interested in this information, JE has no idea. Apparently this extends to running his own socials too, with the Master Debater covering the wine & cheese event after he made himself as scarce as the members at any event involving a YouTuber (or singers with one hit from 10 years ago). The man really does fall upwards. Indeed, the Master Debater has developed a far stronger work ethic as of late - given she was open to attending an Emergency Meeting of Finance Committee on Valentine’s Day. She certainly shows long term thinking in the electoral sense, recently being notably softer to the first elected seccie in encouraging an independent run rather than aiming to flip her. It is almost as if she wishes to slate her as an officer next term (pending election, naturally).

Back to finance, one shudders to think how much renting out Freud must have cost Regretting Flipping. Who knew he had so many friends? It couldn’t possibly be his entire hack list. No self-respecting candidate would publish their target electorate so publicly...oh, wait. As for the Scouse Shark, it has been noted by several that he has perhaps a little too much self-respect. Maybe he is keeping all the pride that (technically) ought to be awkwardly hanging out of the Gladstone window this month. He’s certainly not hoarding things of substance, like seccies. Reportedly, his entire slate has managed to muster 2 thus far. That’s less seccies than half of committee’s body counts. For shame. Go to Bridge more often.
Editorial

Love is in the air. As I’m writing this, it is Valentine’s Day. What are my plans? Don’t ask, it’s an extremely long story and I’m not ready to share. I’ve been a “pick me” right, left and centre but have finally found love where it matters the most: myself. Don’t mind me, I’ll be spending today looking in the mirror, admiring my beauty and telling myself sweet nothings.

But getting back to the heart of it all, love is in the air in Oxford. This week’s Life section is filled with love and the sex column is filled with passion… against love, but passion nonetheless. I’m not going to start sharing my thoughts on Valentine’s because everything I think has already been said and I don’t think that appreciating love is difficult but so necessary. I just think that this shouldn’t necessarily be romantic love all the time. I’ve realised that people who love their degree, or love creating music, or even love going on some amazing projects - I have to exist as a perfectly valid human being without always having to be answering questions about how much of the desire to become SU president is driven by a genuine desire to help students rather than a cynical exercise in image-making.

Another Hilary, another Student Union president elected, and, unsurprisingly now, another ex-Union hack representing all 26,000 Oxford students. The last three SU presidents – Anvee Bhutani, Michael Akolade-Ayodeji, and now Daniel Hussain – have all had some role in the Union at one point. Hacks are notoriously image-conscious, and one might be led to question how much of the desire to become SU president is driven by a genuine desire to help students rather than a cynical exercise in image-making.

Ciaron Tobin, the recently ousted JCR president of Magdalen, has been involved with the Union, OULC, the OxStu, and Cherwell, and was most recently elected an NUS delegate, following a flirtation with a run for SU presidency. While here, Bhutani has been involved with the Union, the SU, OULC, The Tab Oxford (???), both of Oxford’s major student news outlets, and even, embarrassing the Oxford Blue.

This incessant flitting between different student societies could be termed “BNOC syndrome”, or maybe “Linkedin experience addiction”. I’m not saying that these people genuinely have no passions for the causes or groups that they work in, but it’s telling that some have been sighted at both OUCA and OULC events. In fact, its well known that there’s a large crossover between the Union, OULC and OUCA, as would-hacks use the political societies to desperately hustle for a few more Seccies Committee votes.

This incessant need to go between middle-management roles in a variety of Oxford’s student societies is at best, highly embarrassing to watch in its shamelessness, and at worst, actively harmful to the experiences of people who genuinely want to take part in societies. This is particularly malignant when that society is the SU, which, in theory, is supposed to represent the best interests of the student body at large, rather than a select group of hacks who exist between the Union bar and the various coffee shops of Oxford. Perhaps if it weren’t for such people’s dominancy in SU elections, people would feel more invested in its role, rather than the current sorry levels of engagement we see at the moment (see front page).

Leader: Perfectionism and figuring out how to break that cycle

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A day in the life of a mafia boss’ daughter
Veronica Corielli

On the 16th of January 2023, Messina Denaro – widely regarded as the boss of all bosses within the Italian Mafia – was arrested. This prompted worldwide media interest, with articles from overseas newspapers detailing Messina Denaro’s lifestyle and crimes. This was not my father. The title is clickbait, but it does provide an example of how easy it is for the romanticisation of the Mafia (like the daily routine of a Mafia first daughter) to be eye-catching and interesting. More appealing, perhaps, than articles describing the terrible reality of organised crime. This phenomenon is incredibly widespread, and incredibly dangerous.

Mafia bosses – especially Italian and often Russian – with sleek black hair and deep, entrancing, dark eyes are romanticised on virtual platforms. In 2020 the movie “565 days”, in which the main love interest is brooding Mafia boss Massimo, made headlines. Admittedly, not because its plot dealt with organised crime but because of its sex scenes. However, the fact that crime can so easily be romanticised as a “dangerous, dark and mysterious” trope is scary to say the least. The hashtag “Mafia love” on Wattpad, a website that allows users to post their own stories/fanfics, has more than 1.2k adherents. Some of the most common hashtags associated with this are “Mafia princess”, “bad boy” and “gangs”. When searching “Mafia” on Google, the first suggestions are Mafia game, Mafia movie, and Mafia boss. It has even been discovered that Messina Denaro himself had The Godfather posters in his apartment. Messina Denaro romanticised his own criminal involvement. Clearly, this is a widespread phenomenon. However, why is it so dangerous?

According to James Finckenauer, professor at Rutgers University and author of Mafia and organised crime: a beginner’s guide, the phenomenon began in the 20s in the US due to Prohibition. Small criminal groups controlled underground alcohol sales and became wide-scale international organisations. In his book La increíble hazaña de ser mexicano, author Heriberto Yépez wrote that the key to the making of a criminal was an authoritarian environment, repression and constant criticism from a young age. Lack of areas to excel in due to this upbringing encourage one to seek respect and excellence in criminal activity. For the US working class the mafiosi became a sort of role model for success in an environment that otherwise repressed them. Books like Mario Puzo’s The Godfather, first published in 1969, fed this fascination until the glamorous image of the Mafia became embedded in pop culture. But in reality, mafioso profit from human trafficking, murder, extortion, fraud, and other terrible crimes. Glamorisation creates numbness to the harsh reality of these crimes.

Read the full article at cherwell.org.

Our planet is in crisis, can we save it?
Jack Twyman

As I am writing this I am sitting by a window looking out over a garden of mown grass. A parakeet hangs off a birdfeeder while it eats, and a grey squirrel scurries up a tree behind. The stream in my garden, once flowing and clear, lays stagnant in a concrete-lined pond. Extend this up to a planetary level, and with emissions already changing climatic zones, invasive species running riot, and the attack on biodiversity occurring at an industrial level, it is clear to see why some say the world cannot be seen as natural anymore. The future is looking evermore uncertain.

In the past decade, an estimated 21.6 million people annually are displaced by climate-related hazards worldwide, with this number only projected to grow. According to the British Geological Survey, humans move about 24 times more material around the surface of the planet than rivers move sediment to the oceans - 316 billion metric tons. The age-old European fetish of humans overcoming mother nature has in some sense, with ghastly consequences. It is therefore a significant characterisation of the proposed new epoch of geological time – the Anthropocene: a definitive characterisation of human dominance of the global system.

We are at a crossroads for humanity. We can overcome emissions, some argue, but removing them from the Earth and living in a sterilised planet free of wildlife. Or we could fundamentally change the way we love, making room for nature, and adapting to the new reality of a human-nature planet and safeguarding biodiversity before it disappears altogether. Some call this determinist, and it is clear to see why. However, the current system we can see puts some people above the planet.

So why does it matter for us in the West? Surely we’re far removed from the negative impacts of climate change - one report by UKRI suggested “production in cool, wet and temperate upland areas may benefit from warmer and drier conditions” with longer growing seasons. Don’t most people have more present worries like the cost of living? But even here there will be consequences - 40°C temperatures this summer has devastating effects on life - and obliterated any thought that the climate crisis is a future not present issue. The globalisation of the current era has enabled us Brits to enjoy exotic foods from all across the world - and our reliance on them is only getting stronger. Demand for food is rising globally and production needs to double by 2050 to keep up with demand. This chronic pressure means the food system is increasingly vulnerable to acute shocks. For evidence of this see the global impacts of the Russian-occupation of Ukraine. Monoculture of staple crops leave them vulnerable to pests and diseases - more prevalent in warmer temperatures. And growing water scarcity will mean that 2/3 of the World’s population under water stress conditions by 2025. For the UK, in summer 40% of food comes from dryland and subtropical regions. In winter that is 80% - based of FAQs 4 tenets of food security, it makes us highly vulnerable. UK agriculture may be decimated by the hypothesised shutdown of thermohaline ocean circulation, which enables the Gulf Stream, which keeps the UK relatively warmer - Edinburgh has the same latitude as Moscow. Harsher winters would be critical.

The UK has a historical impetus to act because as part of the “developed” world, it is our problem to fix. Past emissions highlight European and North American roles in the present climate change. 23 rich, developed countries are responsible for half of all historical CO2 emissions, despite making up 12% of the population. More than 150 countries are responsible for the other half.

Western attitudes towards nature are also part of the problem. The cultural symbolism of the UK’s patchwork quilt has ingrained ecological destruction into the national psyche. In the former settler colonies of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand the marginalisation and attempted extermination of Indigenous cultures is perhaps one of the starkest examples of the Western assault on nature. The West sees nature as a resource, one to be exploited for economic value, and of little use otherwise. This negates the ecosystem services, climate regulation and those who live on a subsistence of the land. From wildfires in California worsened by excess fuel that is accumulating because of loss of indigenous land management to loss of species knowledge, the current policy is not working. Western schemes to “carbon offset” and “conserve” nature have removed people from their lands and actually worsened carbon drawdown productivity. The dichotomy of the “wilderness” and “civilisation” cannot and should not be applied to many regions.

Humans can live in harmony with nature

Contrary to Western belief that Saharan civilisation accelerated the decline of the “Green Sahara” according to new research led by UCL they may have held back the onset of the Sahara desert by around 500 years. This is a classic relationship in many cases following the arrival of Europeans to South America, the ensuing disease killed off half of the Amazon’s population, with the average temperature dropping by 0.15°C in the late 1500s and early 1600s. This “Little Ice Age”, a time when the River Thames in London would regularly freeze over, snowstorms were common in Portugal and disrupted agriculture caused famines in several European countries. Even the current geological epoch - the interglacial Holocene - has been attributed to the advent of agriculture, or the extinction of the megafaunal species.

So what are the solutions and what is the best way forward? My Cherwell article with Cangi Li interviewing the Vice-Chancellor showed that there is an appetite to work with fossil fuel companies to solve the problem. And removing emissions may have to be the bandaid to keep the lid on the crisis in the short term. But this cannot be the only way. The oil industry and its assemblage have disproportionate impacts on the poorest and most climate-vulnerable countries, while the benefits are reserved for the Richer West.

We don’t need any awareness raising - the time for that has been and gone. All the talk of buying and consuming “green” with “green growth” and “sustainable growth” harbour shocking contradictions. There are those that believe that a whole transformation of the economic system is needed - a new alternative to present “capitalism” or “neoliberalism”, however, this is unlikely given the entrenched and contemporary power of those deemed winners in the current system.

Read the full article at cherwell.org.

Image credit: Krzysztof Golik/ CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.
ChatGPT: the future of journalism?

Is the artificial intelligence chatbot really all it’s cracked up to be?

Oliver Hall

It’s fair to say that software company OpenAI’s latest public beta, ChatGPT, has taken the world by storm since its release in late November last year. It has provoked debate on countless levels from crisis to the future of work. As a young and aspiring student journalist I have found myself told repeatedly in the last two months that this is the worst possible time to be looking to enter the industry but I have confidence—confidence in human judgement and appreciation of detail.

First and foremost, journalism is about credibility and accuracy. While ChatGPT can generate information that is factually correct, it inherently lacks the necessary human judgment to verify the credibility of the information. A human journalist takes into account sources, biases, and other factors when reporting a story, but ChatGPT simply outputs information based on its training data. This raises the risk of spreading false information or misleading stories, which would damage the credibility of journalism as a whole.

On the other hand, can bring a unique perspective to a story and context that a human journalist can adapt its styles is remarkable. The impact on the business world is potentially huge too. In an economic environment of mass tech layoffs, the newsroom and its employees are safe for now.

Microsoft has bet big. Their $10 billion investment in ChatGPT is remarkable. It opened its doors in late November last year. It has taken the world by storm since its release. The impact on the business world is potentially huge too.

Impersonation in the extreme? Perhaps, but the ability of the model to learn and impersonate is remarkable. The impact on the business world is potentially huge too. In an economic environment of mass tech layoffs, the newsroom and its employees are safe for now. It would be interesting to see the reaction of the business world to this development.

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Read the full article online at cherwell.org

Disaster Relief in Turkey & Syria

Oliver Hall

This week, I was lucky enough to speak to Barney Mayhew, an expert in international crises and the logistics of foreign aid delivery across the globe (profiles piece to come!). He has worked in crises across the world for decades and it was fascinating to hear his take on the relief delivery in Turkey. One thing that has certainly jumped out to me is the media’s inevitable focus on Turkey as a result of the fact that they can’t get access to much of Syria. Barney insisted though that the structures already in place would mean that organizers were prepared to deliver the aid that they do require. Having said that, a week on the first international aid had only just arrived in rebel held areas—a worrying sign to say the least.

Jakub Trybull

The delivery of foreign aid has previous tension points - between Turkey and Greece, Armenia, and the first European aid from Italy arriving in Syria. We have also witnessed a remarkable moment of cooperation between the West and Russia, both delivering aid to areas in need. This sentiment of human unity falls short, however, with political lines remaining to be drawn regarding attitudes by the Al Assad regime with limited help reaching affected areas controlled by opposition forces. It seems, as it always does, that “everything” is political, even the value of human lives.

Adam Saxon

The issue of how to get effective, targeted aid to war-torn countries like Syria is difficult. Attempting to provide assistance to opposition held areas is near-impossible, and there is a serious risk of whole areas being forgotten about. It may, tragically, be too late to save many of these areas. It is crucial that we ensure that all possible aid is delivered to those in need.

Read the full article online at cherwell.org
in the stagnant silence between sips of gin,  
stunted syllables sit on our lips like  
battery acid and dissolve our skin.

so instead we’ll pour our thoughts into that which can’t reply,  
into the night sky curling back against the rising sun,  
arcing her spine as the day unfurls its soul.

we’ll listen to the drag of the ocean,  
seduced by a masked moon,  
and wonder if waves could wash our words  
avay into one clean hum.

we’ll let the unsaid float  
on ripples of light,  
on the echo of a gull’s cry,  
on the clouds dipped in violet dye

and then stand by as  
one  
by  
one  
those sentences sink.

i’ve resolved to speak to her in unsent messages.  
strings of sound that refuse formation  
and hover on hold.

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BY NICOLE GIBBONS

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O N L Y  W E  R E M E M B E R

only we remember  
I think about the fall  
of split-sky obelisks,  
serapeum sultry with incense  
boats sun-drowned and lotus-heavy  
shards of the earthen pastoral,  
the ruins of the mundane where  
the child clutches his bird-amulet and  
the women sing in the reeds

the past is a foreign country  
remembered only in cipher,  
set in rosetta  
it’s indigenous ghosts linger  
one-present and twice-lost

I think about what will be left  
of us, remembered in  
moon-bellied sunsets and  
goosefeather on the lake  
sharp-slick cities and  
forever folded in frogspawn  
loved in poetry, not in prose  
I cannot conjure your smile, but  
you smile anyway

now  
god-kings lie silent in the valley  
the sundial tells no time  
the age of civilisation fades  
and only we remember  
so I think about the fall  
the gentle frenzyed fall  
in love.

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BY CHARLOTTE LAI

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“Originality is overrated, but we do it anyway”

A look at the different ways in which fans can get creative while cosplaying their favourite characters.

Abigail Stevens

If random communities are harshly judged for their supposed disregard of the fabled concept of “originality”. Some people argue that fanfiction authors are inferior writers because they use other people’s characters and stories rather than devising anything of their own. Cosplay, while not as inherently controversial as fanfiction, raises a similar question: is replicating another’s creation as good as coming up with a “new” idea? Setting aside the argument that all forms of media are ultimately derived and reconstructed from the media the creator has seen, what exactly is the artistic process behind cosplay?

Like fanfiction writers, cosplayers are unbound. There is something freeing in making art which has no commercial value; you don’t have to worry about what will please an editor, producer, corporation, or potential customer, and its only purpose is to bring you joy. Cosplay is also a way to hone your skills; artists often start by copying other works to practice their technique before trying to break new ground. But don’t underestimate the creative process of recreation, especially in the case of cosplay. Even the ones that are exact replicas from a film, television show, video game, theatrical performance, or another medium, require creative thinking.

While watching the series finale of Game of Thrones, my friend and I eagerly discussed what we would have to do to cosplay Sansa’s gorgeous coronation dress. NB: a few cosplayers on Instagram are working on this very costume, and it is taking them years to complete it. It is an intense and laborious process, especially since due to the obvious copyright problem most people don’t do this for a living and must work a paying job. It involves scouring the internet and bookstores for decent tutorials, digging through bargain bins, and getting inventive with old clothes and accessories.

First and foremost, cosplayers face the challenge of having to recreate something with resources that will never match those of a Hollywood costume shop. Figuring out how they did it isn’t really the point. They probably did it using professional equipment far outside your budget. The question is, how can you, an amateur costume designer with limited funds and tools, do it at home? Can you get some materials from a charity shop? Buy fabric on sale? And if there isn’t a pattern available resembling what you want to make, can you freehand it yourself? Or assemble pieces from different patterns?

With every new project, a new skill is learned, such as careful hand embroidery to fashion a Stark direwolf or moulding foam into armour and weapons. Photoshoots and editing images are a beast in themselves, some pros specialise in cosplay photography, but many cosplayers who want to share their creations with the world will resort to scouting nearby locations, assembling mini sets, co-opting family and friends as photographers, and building up their photoshop skills over time. When they finally complete a project, even if it looks exactly like it did in the show, who will dare say that they didn’t think creatively to get there, or that it is not art?

However, there are those who still think that “copying” someone else’s work shouldn’t be considered “creative”. What qualifies as creativity? The process or the final product? How different does it have to be? I find that when cosplayers reassemble old clothing into something that looks enough like what the character wore to convey who they are supposed to be, they still end up with something distinct. And while I will always celebrate cosplayers for bringing a character to life, I would argue that they would feel very confined by that.

Some cosplayers will borrow a concept or aesthetic to get started, such as the colours and images associated with a specific character or piece of media. If you have a look at @starbitcreation’s Rapunzel dress, you can see how it was inspired by Disney’s film but is still her own. There are a plethora of additional ways to put a personal spin on costumes seen on screen. Mashups are so much fun, such as Merida wearing Hawkeye’s gear (@armoredheartcosplay), Rey’s Jakku garments layered with Hamilton’s military uniform, or Loki wielding a lightsaber (@silhouetecosplay).

Some people will transport a medieval princess to the modern era or gender swap a superhero or anime protagonist. The only limit to what you can do with a character is your imagination.
Planet Lam by Paradise Bangkok Molam International Band

Flora Bigham

Bangkok, the mid-2000s: sifting through crates of cheap second-hand vinyls in Chinatown record shops, Chris Menist and Nattapon “Nat” Siangsukon, aka DJ Maft Sai, came across the traditional Thai folk genres of Molam and Luk Thung. Enraptured by them, the two formed The Paradise Bangkok Molam International Band. The experimental band began to explore influences from traditional folk music to psychedelic rock to Afrobeat grooves, exemplified in their 2016 album Planet Lam.

Siangsukon and Menist embarked on the phin, Phusana. Forming the band in 2012, records which the collaborators first focused on the electric phin, Phusana. Lyrically characterised by the khaen, Laotian and Cambodian borders in the 17th century. They are characterised by the phin, Phusana. Their music brought with them American popular music. Musicians began incorporating this warm, all-encompassing sound, underneath a bamboo mouth organ, which provides a century. They are characterised by the khaen, Laotian and Cambodian borders in the 17th century. They are characterised by the phin, Phusana.

The album proceeds with the upbeat rock-like cut, “India Chia Muay - Thai Boxing Re-FX”, commencing with a phin solo. Influenced by “the urgency and drive” of The Stooges, the cyclical phin weaving around the infectious drum beats, with tempo changes coming midway through, captivating the listener. The Stooges influence can again be heard on the fast-paced “Adventures of Sinsai”. If you find yourself running late to a lecture, I recommend listening on repeat, and unleashing your subconsciously speed-walking along to the track (albeit with some perplexed stares from those you pass).

More experimental, electronically focused tracks can be found in “Exit Planet Lam” and “Exit Dubh.” Combining dub reggae and ambient classical influences, the sparse arrangements showcase producer Nick Manassah’s stamp on the work.

“No Longer Human

Laura Brink

My first encounter with Anne Shirley-Cuthbert took place more than a decade ago, as far away from the wintry charm of her native Canada as possible. We were also removed by more than a century since the writer Lucy Maud Montgomery first published her novel Anne of Green Gables in 1908. On the day of my encounter, it was a sunny afternoon and my mother and I were passing time in the car, trapped inside with the thickening two o’clock South African heat, waiting for my sister to come out of school. As always, my mother reached for a book to read to me.

I like to indulge in the idea that the day my mother first cracked the spine of Anne of Green Gables marked the first step in my journey to studying literature at Oxford. The book enchanted me, awakening me to the power that fiction has to make readers feel seen. In the novel, Anne becomes embroiled in “scrapes” so often that the plot is practically structured around them. I was one of those who had the thought that just because he can think, he must not be a real human being. Dazai thinks the opposite, he insists on spelling her name ‘Anne’ instead of ‘Ann’, which she argues “makes such a difference” aesthetically. The series illustrates its precocious protagonist’s imagination through beautiful visuals, and updates the original text to include a surprising degree of representation and nuance, because a series set in a community where the biggest cultural divide is between Methodists and Presbyterians just isn’t going to appeal in 2023.

The book’s poetic language will, however, always be what draws me to Anne’s story. Her habit of excitedly reciting poetic ramblings and her shameless indulgence in fantasy justified my own childhood participation in them. Even now, when I open the curtains of my room in Oxford and see the majestic tree of Hayward Quad, Keble College, I think of Anne talking to the tree outside her bedroom window at Green Gables. I remember that so many people – 19th-century writers, fictional characters, even my mother back in South Africa – understand life the same way I do. Anne had ambitions of being a teacher when she grew up: I’m sure she would be delighted to know that I return to how she pictured Green Gables whenever I need a little help reminding why my literature degree matters.

Content warning: suicide mention

No Longer Human is a short novel by Japanese writer Dazai. The book is semi-autobiographical, following the life of a young man named Yoko who struggles to show his true self to everyone. Believing himself to be a fraud and a fake, he ‘disillusions’ himself from being human.

In a lot of senses this reminded me a lot of Descartes, who had the thought that just because he can think, he must be real. Dazai thinks the opposite, he thinks that because he thinks, just not in the same way as everyone else, he must not be a real human being.

On nights out I don the name ‘Toni’ and tell people that I study Law at Warwick (My name is Deborah and I study Classics). This act of living a double life is one that I relate to quite strongly with Yoko. But how long can you keep up the charade of acting ‘normal’ before the guilt begins to consume you?

Shorty after writing this novel, Dazai himself committed suicide. And in a sense this novel may have been his will.

Maybe the charade of being who others want you to be is a burden that just isn’t worth it.
A review of Better Yesterday

Cathy Scoon

Opening on a convincingly-era-respecting late ’70s set, Better Yesterday begins with the troubled couple Sylvia & Harold, walking back into their minimalist multi-functioning front-room following their evening show of Macbeth. The lighting is minimal and mellow, just like the set, but this brings across an ambience and intimacy suitable for such a play. Prop usage is impressive—especially the rifle which features later in the play—the viewer really gets a sense of the stereotypically idyllic home-setting for the era. But the first element that undoubtedly strikes the viewer beyond set, as the characters walk in, is their strangely ambiguous clothing. Whilst generally conforming to the garb of the times; something about Sylvia’s (Katie Peachey’s) shoes is peculiarly jarring.

However, costumes and mildly dissonant footwear aside, the chemistry between the actors is undeniable—most especially during the few intimate scenes which take place. Whilst, perhaps, Murray Whitaker’s performance at times lacks the realistic depth one would imagine his character demands, his performance is generally convincing. Still, it has to be observed that there is something peculiarly wooden (or excessively performative) about his portrayal of Harold, in parts—or perhaps this is intended (part performative) about his portrayal of Harold, and Harold. Credit ultimately has to be given to the actors, and to Stephen, for creating and animating such a nuanced play and sustaining the plot despite its having only two characters.

The most important takeaway of Better Yesterday, though, is ultimately the idea of the damage the voyeuristic public eye can do to a relationship. It is a tale of how such an intense spark can tighten like a vice, transforming into a suffocating hold, before unrelenting into a decent of disorderly chaos and heartbreak.

The two plays seem to run on a dynamic parallel, wherein the viewer can make subtle links between the Lady Macbeth-esque characterisation of Sylvia; and the ultimately vulnerable, though outwardly hard-faced and standoffish characterisation of Harold as a Macbeth parallel. The brilliant dynamic is just subtle enough not to be too brash and obnoxious. The face of Better Yesterday—this asset which is never very easily attained in a play covering such intense subject-matter. The Macbeth dynamic also brings to mind a Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier-style complex (who ironically both starred in an unfinished version of Macbeth) which does come through a lot in the characters of Sylvia and Harold. Credit ultimately has to be given to the actors, and to Stephen, for creating and animating such a nuanced play and sustaining the plot despite its having only two characters.

The viewer must assent that the director and playwright, Anna Stephen, does a fantastic job of blending various sensitive issues such as domestic violence, suicide, abortion, infidelity, & drug-use alongside the jarringly jovial, light-hearted tone vaguely reminiscent of Victoria Wood. The play really does deserve the cute moniker ‘tragicallyome’, for this reason. Alongside this, Stephen must be praised for the clever way in which she uses Macbeth as a focal reference for the couple. The two plays seem to run on a dynamic parallel, wherein the viewer can make subtle links between the Lady Macbeth-esque characterisation of Sylvia; and the ultimately vulnerable, though outwardly hard-faced and standoffish characterisation of Harold as a Macbeth parallel. The brilliant dynamic is just subtle enough not to be too brash and obnoxious. The face of Better Yesterday—this asset which is never very easily attained in a play covering such intense subject-matter. The Macbeth dynamic also brings to mind a Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier-style complex (who ironically both starred in an unfinished version of Macbeth) which does come through a lot in the characters of Sylvia and Harold. Credit ultimately has to be given to the actors, and to Stephen, for creating and animating such a nuanced play and sustaining the plot despite its having only two characters.

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Get your scream on: the best horror films of 2022

Rahul Jakati

It is not only at Halloween that we can enjoy a night in with ghouls and demons; 2022 was full of great horror films all year round. From homicidal robotic dolls to surreal nightmare dreamscapes, frights abound in last year’s output. Whether it is to share some scares with friends or simply corral a creep by yourself, here are six of the best horrors from 2022, ordered from comedic to truly bone-chilling.

Bodies Bodies Bodies is hilarious. Everything about it screams Gen Z. A group of lovably insufferable teenagers get together to party during a hurricane. Someone dies, fingers are pointed, and all hell breaks loose. This movie is a product of its time, and it knows it. The dialogue is razor sharp, teetering ever so carefully between wry and camp, and the actors tick every box on the ‘angsty rich screenager’ bingo board. There’s also a feature song written for it by Charlie XCX that absolutely slaps. What’s not to like?

The Menu is a biting satire on elitism of all kinds: from the ivory tower of wealth to the snobbery of gourmets, nobody is spared. We follow the psychological breakdown of a here an haute chef who invites a smorgasbord of clientele from all walks of opulence to a dinner they’ll never forget. Anya Taylor Joy is a delight as the straight man in a movie that gradually becomes more and more insane. It is light on scares, and heavy on (black) comedy, but make no mistake—The Menu isn’t afraid to get bloody.

Prey is historical horror done right. It’s a film about a humanoid alien hunter killing French trappers and Comanche warriors in the early 18th century, but—believe it or not—there is still a remarkable adherence to what he dislikes about his wife. For native American culture, an exploration of gender roles and colonizer relations, along with a swathe of destruction and mayhem makes this a more than worthy creature feature.

Black Phone has heart. A kid gets abducted by a slyly named “Grubby,” and must use the titular device to talk to the ghosts of previous victims to help him escape. Throw in a psychic sister and you’ve got a bing-esque romp which is equal parts coming-of-age and horror thriller. There’s one scene involving the abuse of the main character’s sister that is especially disquieting. The film is no downer, however—it is certainly a “feel-good” horror.

Smile is like a tongue-in-cheek take on technology gone wrong. If you’ve ever watch a homicidal doll do TikTok dances before killing someone, SMiNG’s got you covered.

X is a loving homage to the age of ‘slashers’. A group of young adults go to a secluded farmhouse in Texas to film a porn, which is of course occupied by a couple of geriatric serial killers.

Mad God creates the kind of surreal dreamscapes that occupy your darkest nightmares, all in the form of a stop-motion technical masterpiece.

Coming Up...

THE TEMPEST
22-25 February, Oxford Playhouse

When Prospera is forced to flee her home, a remote island provides refuge to raise her young child. But when the opportunity for vindication finally presents itself, Prospera must decide whether to choose forgiveness or revenge. Meanwhile, deep within the island, an ancient force is stirring.

PUNK
21-25 February, Burton-Taylor Studio

In under three days, Emory will turn irreversibly into a machine. Wanting to leave something of value behind, he tries to get his story told. With the clock ticking, a curious stranger approaches Emory with a proposition: to film his transformation and become the star of his very own snuff film. In this dark comedy, Emory takes to the mic to retell the events of one insane weekend.

DEUTERONOMY
21-25 February, Burton-Taylor Studio

Atop a lonely rock, by the side of a dirt road, in an indeterminate expanse, sits a beggar. Along the very same road comes a man, a bag of apples slung around his neck, dragging behind him a tremendously heavy coffin. Neither of them seem to know who it’s for. Neither are in a rush to find out; they know that they both will. There’s supper to be had in the meantime.

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== Image Credit: Felix Moonerram via Unsplash ==
The magic of friendship

Platonic love might form the most fulfilling relationships of your life.

Phoebe Walls

 Falling in love focuses on romantic relationships. We chase the magical moment of a first kiss, the thrill of the first time they take your hand. The ‘L bomb’ lingers on the tip of your tongue, and you’re silently, wistfully waiting for them to feel the same. But what about platonic love? The happiness that can spread through your every cell when a close friend is nearby. Conversations that effortlessly flow for three hours. Many neglect their friendships when they get into a relationship; that special someone can become the only face they see in a crowded room. Oxford is a university with a notorious workload, and many students swearing off relationships to focus on being hopelessly devoted to their love of learning, so time for a relationship of any kind can feel limited. Some of the greatest love stories of your life will be friendships. That first friend you made on the first day of school on a scratchy carpet will always hold a place in your heart. You think of her often, how you bonded over Jaqueline Wilson and Big Maths Beat That. You think of her often, how you bonded over your mutual love for Aries 21 March - 19 April
(Strip?) Poker. Raise the stakes. Indulge your competitive side. Remind yourself of what being hungry for success feels like.

Soul Food. You, your favourite outfit, your nearest and dearest, an authentic Italian pizzeria on the Cowley Road. Nuff said.

Paint by Numbers. But choose a painting you’re passionate about, maybe one that makes a political statement.

Pisces 19 Feb. - 20 March
Classic Movie Night. KFC bucket or Tesco’s own brand sweets. Watch a controversial and critically acclaimed movie then argue about it with your friends.

Taurus 20 Apr. - 20 May
Nap. Like a long one. Please just go to sleep, you do too much and think too much.

Leo 23 July - 22 Aug.
Ramen. Go on a lunch date with your hottest friend. Umami broth and eye candy is all you need to perk you back up.

Cancer 21 June - 22 July
Scented Candles. Preferably 2 or 3. Bask in the flickering sweet-smelling glow of your room and reminisce.

Holiday Planning. You’re all caught up in work, but look to the future for motivation. Sandy beaches and sun-kissed selfies await.

Scorpio 23 Oct. - 21 Nov.
Stargazing. You’re wild but you’re spiritual. Go look at the stars and let a tear slip down your cheek while ‘White Ferrari’ plays through your headphones.

Photo Dump. You know you love them. Romanticise every 5th week granola bowl/sunset/welfare walk/library session and post it to the gram to feel something.

Sagittarius 22 Nov. - 21 Dec.
Gym Sesh. Get into that sigma grindset and go hit some PRs. Old school Rihanna will be your workout playlist. Then flex in the mirror for good measure.
**Life**

**CHERPSE!**

**SOPHIA**

*First Impressions?*  
He was really cute, really friendly, and I liked that we had a lil hug the first time we met!

*Did it meet your expectations?*  
I was nervous, but the conversation kept flowing pretty easily and any awkward moment was just laughed off.

*What was the highlight?*  
We both lived in the same area as kids and bonded about how kind of crappy a place it was, retrospectively.

*What was the most embarrassing moment?*  
My eyes always leak when it’s a bit windy, so I hope he didn’t think I was crying on our first date.

*Describe the date in 3 words:*  
Crying on our first date.

*First Impressions?*  
LOREN

*Did you have a romance filled, lovey-dovey Valentine’s, then good for you. If you’re delusional enough to actually look forward to the made-up holiday every year, then I hope you enjoyed your 24 hours in fairyland. I’m not a cupid, but I’ve never seen anyone who is willing by now, at just about the same pace as those flowers you were gifted. The day itself is like the Olympics of Love— the race to get the reddest roses, slipping strawberries in chocolate in record time and managing to secure your personal best in public displays of affection per minute.*

*Roses are red, violets are blue... Valentine’s is dead and romance too.*

*I like to consider myself an activist and so I’ve joined a very worthwhile campaign— banning Valentine’s Day. The chocolates, the flowers, the losely avoidable— the goal is to stop all forms of love on February fourteenth each year. I’ll continue to work on this valuable mission for as long as I single.*

*It’s come and gone, the annual anti-single day, which has been around for another year. And what a shame! What’s not to love about a day devoted to making those who aren’t in a relationship feel as if they are the world’s biggest loser, and the bank accounts of those who are romantically involved, suffer unnecessarily? As an annual day, it’s a day which fuels capitalism, keeping Cadbury’s in business and providing every Florist’s biggest pay-day.*

*First Impressions?*  
**Jessica Mason**

*I was nervous, but the conversation kept flowing pretty easily and any awkward moment was just laughed off.*

*What was the highlight?*  
I wasn’t going to sit at home sipping vino with my gal pals, kidding myself into thinking that I wasn’t going to sit at home sipping vino with my gal pals, kidding myself into thinking that*

*What was the most embarrassing moment?*  
I wasn’t going to sit at home sipping vino with my gal pals, kidding myself into thinking that*

*Describe the date in 3 words:*  
Sweet, unexpected, chill.

*Is there a second date on the cards?*  
Yes, probably – maybe a pub trip later this week.

*Looking for love?*

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

Though Valentine’s Day has just passed, whether you have another important occasion to celebrate with that special someone, or you’re celebrating your single, thriving status, here are some of the best food Oxford has to offer. On top of the date night restaurants introduced in my previous column, these fancy restaurants will almost certainly break the bank, hence why they have been sadly relegated to the ‘once-a-year’ list.

**Parsonage Grill, Oxford**

Offering “modern British dishes with a light touch” using locally sourced ingredients whenever possible, Parsonage Grill serves some of the most delectable (and expensive) food in Oxford, ranging from “twice-baked goat’s cheese & thyme soufflé” to “confit duck leg, roasted celeriac & juniper berry sauce”. The restaurant is lavishly decorated with plush velvet chairs and sleek navy walls, and its gorgeous terrace is simply delightful in the daytime — though chattering in the freezing cold at night is probably less romantic.

**The Alice**

A British brasserie at the “heart of historic Oxford”, The Alice is a jaw-droppingly stunning restaurant — pink sofas, velvet cushions, crystal chandeliers, patterned wallpaper, and high ceilings make this restaurant a feast for the eyes. Its wide-ranging a la carte selection includes warm smoked eel with pork cracking, citrus cured salmon, 35-day dry aged flat iron steak, and duck with grilled clementine and onion puree. Enjoy it with an innovative, creative and succulent dessert menu. Come for an exquisite meal, then grab an Alice in Wonderland-themed cocktail in their gorgeous bar.

**Table d’Alix**

Located in central Oxford and boasting a “sophisticated ambiance”, No. 1 Ship Street voted as Oxfordshire’s Best Restaurant in 2022 and 2020 for good reason. Serving “sophisticated ambiance”, No. 1 Ship Street is just one thing you need to know: here in Great Haseley, there is still a cheese trolley. It’s one of those things that you make it) are ridiculously indulgent, as my favourite dishes of the year so far. It was a whole Dover Sole served on the bone (just how I love it, as you may be aware by now!), with a rich caper butter. The sheer amount of fish is incredible and easily enough to share between two — the plethora of capers makes for a perfect countertop to the indulgent butter. Get it served with the Petit Pois a la Française for the dream combo. These are to die for, cooked in butter and pancetta to leave you wanting more and more— something I rarely say about peas! And then cheese. I was struggling to figure out where to start with this, but on a basic level, there is just one thing you need to know: here in Great Haseley, there is still a cheese trolley. There is no skipping by taking the options anywhere near a fridge to ruin the flavour, and the diverse selection is perfect. For me, the standout was a delightfully punchy goat’s cheese from Corsica. Desserts (if you make it to the deliciously indulgent, as you might expect. The Surprise du Chef au Chocolat is made with crisp honeycomb biscuits, and hazelnuts balance the intensely dark chocolate. Save some red wine from your cheese course for this perfect combination! And I haven’t even mentioned the wine! Our Ricard, Port, and Guy Saget Chardonnay were all lovely but I cannot finish without writing about one of the best value wines I’ve tasted in a long time. The Chateau du Haut-Plateau Saint-Emilion is a 2015 vintage and available by the glass and the bottle for just £52. Its earthiness was genuinely a standout for the price, and the nose an absolute dream. It’s one of those reds that goes with pretty much anything and you could genuinely keep drinking all night long. Table d’Alix really is one of the most unique and special restaurants I have ever visited. Still a fairly well-kept secret, I just can’t see it staying that way for long. The new head chef has previously spent 6 years at Le Manoir Quatre Saisons, and regular visits from Raymond Blanc, his guests, and his staff, only point to just how remarkable the food is. Homely, reasonably priced, and above all delicious, there is really something for everyone here. Come from Oxford or much further afield and set up shop for the afternoon or evening—there really is not a more worthwhile way to spend your time.

**Cherwell Boathouse**

Following the previous theme of dining on the river, Cherwell Boathouse provides an “understated but upscale” European dining experience with an innovative menu including pressed wild mushroom lasagna with walnut purée; truffle and dashi; caramelised plaice with celeriac and capers, and smoked duck toastie with confit egg yolk, onion relish and mushroom ketchup. Despite its dreaded OX2 postcode, the food is slightly less expensive than the others on this list, and its relatively remote location on the river means if you’re worried about an awkward encounter with your ex.

Another week has passed and no doubt for too many hot chocolates have been consumed. My advice? — treat it as a form of self-care! I always tell regulars, a chocolate (or two) a day keeps the doctor away.

Knoops is obviously famed for its hot chocolates and that’s certainly the thing that makes people keep on coming back but there is one item on the menu that sometimes goes under the radar: the mocha. I think this is for a few reasons. For a start, most people don’t realise that it’s on offer, drawn in simply by the standard chocolates. After that though, even more are unaware that you can personalise it to your heart’s content, just like a chocolate. And this is where you enter a world of possibilities...

The mochas are made much like the hot chocolates and by merely adding a powder like many cafes. The chocolate is still melted in whatever milk you have chosen to achieve that perfect frothiness (the essence of the chocolate as Jens himself might say) and then the espresso is added afterwards, allowing it to flow through the whole drink.

The standard mocha is offered at 54% but if you ask me, you are best going for a much darker option. The 80% Uganda is my preferred to give that smoky touch to the coffee. Otherwise, the 64% brings a fruity element into play and the 72% from Peru has a distinct bitterness that works superbly.

Elsewhere, the mocha milkshake can serve as the ultimate indulgence. The 96% and the 80% both bring an intensity balanced out by the ice cream to make a dream combination. Feeling out of the box? Go for the 28%. Usually, the white chocolate is far too sweet with the soft-serve milkshake but the coffee can bring in that perfect balance whilst still having the sweet vanilla notes.

That’s it from me this week — check back soon for more advice and tips on how to make the most of that Turl Street indulgence...

### Special Occasions in Oxford: $$$ Edition

Table d’Alix has inserted itself into the local community with the kind of ease that many owners across the country dream of. The moules themselves were perfect, of course. Having taken slightly longer to come into season this year, they are now well-sized and served alongside traditionally crispy fries. The other main course we had was a true showstopper, and undoubtedly one of

Table d’Alix: toujours parfait

Oliver Hall

A lot has changed over the year since I last reviewed Table d’Alix in Great Haseley. Even so, I was relieved to see that things were reassuringly similar. A new star chef and new dishes, yes, but the restaurant still has a warm, inviting atmosphere in which to enjoy the kind of authentic French experience almost impossible to find elsewhere in Oxford. We were welcomed with a firm handshake at the door by Antoine, as always. The owner and Maître D’ leads the team with friendliness, passion, and knowledge. Seated in the corner, I was able to survey the scene and remind myself of what a (rare) non-day dining room Table d’Alix has. Light pours through the whole drink.

The other main course we had was a surf & turf for two with whole lobsters, the food is eye-wateringly expensive, but mouth-wateringly good. The decor is cosy and perhaps less extravagant than you would expect, but its incredibly central location puts it above many others on this list, especially if you have other Valentine’s Day plans at the movies, the rink or a cheeky Blackwell’s trip.
Naval warfare: Oxford water polo

Duncan Pinchen

It was Oxford “B” Vs Cambridge “B” in men’s water polo. The Oxford squad huddle as Hertford spectators converge on the poolside. Cambridge? Absent... but soon the mint shorts emerge. Loss will put Oxford bottom of the league. A win: third. Unsurprisingly, coach Tom deals tectics with his fingers nervously retracted up his sleeves. This Varsity match counts and there is extra attention when fingerswag are measured – contact is expected.

20:00. The teams charge out of the whistle. Oxford win possession and elicit a save from Alex H, the Cambridge keeper, controlling for 2-and-a-half minutes. That’s until Warren Handley can score from distance for Oxford. 1-0. The poolside tension is broken by grins and cheers. Cambridge surge to draw 1-1.

Oxford rise to third. Cambridge, fourth. This Varsity match counts and there is extra attention when fingerswag are measured.

This Varsity match counts and there is extra attention when fingerswag are measured.

Tom Farmer

A couple of weeks ago, I boarded the train from Oxford to Manchester Piccadilly with a blue and white scarf draped around my neck and full of a misguided sense of optimism. It was the FA Cup Third Round and Reading FC (a team I have long-since endured the infrequent successes and frequent failures of) had been drawn against Manchester United.

The famous Man United! 20 league titles, 12 FA Cup titles and a team full of superstars! George Best, Cristiano Ronaldo, Harry Maguire! The list of mind-blowingly talented players that have donned the famous red shirt is endless. What do Reading have? Andy Carroll, an agedstriker who even in his prime was just a tiny bit better than average, as well as a handful of players who often gave the impression of occasionally being half-decent at football. A 4-0 defeat for Reading against Stoke City the weekend before (a team composed of players worth over £200 million less than Manchester United’s) had not buoyed my optimism.

We were going to go to Old Trafford and not only do ourselves proud, but secure one of the biggest upsets in recent FA Cup history.

As the train weaved its way through Oxfordshire and into the Midlands, brief vignettes of cities and towns flying past the window, my mind oscillated between the realistic and the sentimental, the two stock emotions for football fans across the globe. My stomach lurching with every bite of chicken caesar wrap, I couldn’t help but imagine the scenes of euphoria that would erupt as the ball bounced off a Reading player’s toe and flew past World Cup-winning goalkeeper David De Gea, hugging strangers like they were life-long friends and knowing that I had “I was there” moment that no-one could strip me of. That, perhaps in an overly-simplified way, is the mentality of the football fan: hope over reason, potential over the inevitable.

Arriving at the ground, a few things were different from my usual trips to watch “The Royals”. Old Trafford holds over 60,000 people, whilst Reading’s Select Car Leasing stadium holds 24,000 but realistically only has the pleasure of hosting around 10,000 fans a game. The presence of “safe standing” over the last 8 years. It is in place. The shot is saved and play settles before the Reading fans fly forward when the intervention of VAR to correct the referee’s decision-making, it was 0-0 at the half-time whistle.

0-0! Against the famous Man United! 12 FA Cup titles, Alex Ferguson, Harry Maguire! Not one Reading fan dared to ask about which pub (real ale or otherwise) they would frequent after the game; the hope had well and truly manifested itself into the Blue Army.

Unfortunately, from 16 years as a Reading fan, I can truly vouch for the cliche “it’s the hope that kills you”. Reading FC did not go on and beat the famous Manchester United. A red card from Andy Carroll, combined with sheer brilliance from Brazilian superstar Casemiro, sealed United’s spot in the Fourth Round. When but the referee blew the whistle to end the game, you would have not thought that was the case. A content grumble from the Reading United fans was superseded by a booming ‘UUURRRZZZ:’ from the Reading fans- who had sacrificed at least £70 quid, their Saturday and inevitably their cardiac health- who occupied the corner.

We might not have pulled off the shock many of us dreamt of, but we had certainly done ourselves proud as a club. As well as winding up some glory-hunters.
Puzzles
Cryptic Crossword
by Ian Rogers

Across:
1. Closet with department cloak (8)
5. Central part inside fabric or elastic (4)
9. Oxford comedian is a little evil? (3)
10. NASA tutor incorrect about space traveller (9)
11. Vessel for mother’s ruin (7)
13. Keen for a lifetime in hesitation (5)
14. Airspace tests goes wrong for evaders? (6, 7)
19. Hold up booth (5)
20. Landlocked country hidden in Finland … or Radcliffe Camera (7)
23. GI maniacs can be tricky people? (9)
25. Computers and stuff? 100 in it (3)
26. Agrees and dozes off (4)
27. One who approves clumsy red noser (8)

Down:
1. Card game with the French causing play to stop (7)
2. Exotic pure ecstasy used as currency (5)
3. Authentic model leading kingdom (5)
4. One from Cambridge up with a blow (3)
6. Leo rang escort secreting source of vitamin C (7)
7. Chemical compound caused by erroneous reset (5)
8. Sincere entertainer accommodating half of demands (6)
12. Beginners originally direct emotional poem of praise (3)
15. Formally accused and debited (7)
16. Article taken in setting fit for a king (6)
17. Direct a sprint (5)
18. Wiser about streetcars going back (7)
19. Oddly spin my own name (5)
21. Retiring forensics team in party nightclub (5)
22. Tracks, supports and complains (5)
24. Initially a normal name (3)

View last issue’s answers on the Cherwell website...

Kevin and Timmy and Emptiness
by Sean Hartnett

Had been working all week, now I’m all weak and that’s led me to think I’m lonely and nobody’s friend.

It comes out of nowhere, when you’re slouched on a chair, when was the last time you talked to your friends? Tuesday? And now—now look at you, feeling empty and blue which distracts you from that essay you’ve got to do.

Rahs! I’ve crashed into a bout of emptiness again.

Gosh Kevin, this is quite the depressing poem you’ve written… couldn’t you add another stanza?

No energy, no action, nothing. To feel, to speak, to write, to be happy about.

Stuck in this snowstorm of white emptiness—boring.

Besides opening Word is there any way out?