Mental health struggles – part of ‘the Oxford experience’?

Cherwell News reports.

A n investigation by Cherwell has found that the number of students accessing the University’s counselling service has been steadily increasing over the past decade, up by 7.4 percentage points since 2012. According to a Cherwell survey of 100 students, mental health care services are inadequate to treat the mounting mental health care issues they face. University Counselling Service data, however, suggests that students described their experiences and counsellors more positively.

Reports that mental health issues are on the rise in young people have become familiar headlines over the past several years. Between 2011 and 2022, the suicide rate has risen by 16%, with young people suffering at historically high rates. In a 2022 survey by the mental health charity Student Minds, 57% of respondents self-reported a mental health issue and 27% said they had a diagnosed mental health condition.

Oxford is not immune to the problem. Oxford’s Counselling Service Annual report stated that the percentage of students presenting with anxiety has increased from 16.7% in 2017/18 to 33.7% in 2021/22. One student responded to the Cherwell survey with: “Sometimes it feels like the Oxford system is intentionally designed to keep you stressed and under pressure – no reading week, compact terms, two essays a week, finals as eight exams over three weeks dictating your entire degree.”

Across colleges, a common narrative among students is that being at Oxford is hard on mental health – and that University mental health resources are lacking. In the Cherwell survey, nearly two thirds of respondents said that their mental health had significantly worsened or somewhat worsened since coming to Oxford. Over 95% of respondents said that the University itself played a very significant or significant role in this change.

While student mental health has recently worsened across all UK universities, Oxford and Cambridge in particular have been criticised in the media and by their student bodies for the effects of their intense academics and social lives on student mental health. 47% of Cherwell survey respondents across all colleges said either academic workload or exams was the foremost factor impacting their mental health.

Oxford UCU motion calls for third Intifada in Palestine and Israel

Rufus Hall reports.

A motion to be put before the University and College Union (UCU) calls for “intifada until victory” in the Israel-Hamas war and a “Socialist Federation of the Middle East.” A letter from the Union of Jewish Students and Oxford Jewish students has since called for its dismissal.

The motion shared with the Oxford branch of the University and College Union states that the branch believes that the war is “a direct consequence of decades of violent oppression of the Palestinian people by the Israeli state.” It further argues that “only a mass uprising on both sides of the green line and across the Middle East can free the Palestinian people”, going on to advocate that “the international movement of workers and youth support this struggle.”

The motion is due to be put before UCU members for a vote during what the Telegraph describes as an “extraordinary general meeting.”

Continued on Page 5

Oxford scraps results of botched admissions test

Ed Legard reports.

The University of Oxford has confirmed that the Geography Admission Test (GAT) and English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT), which took place on 19 October, will not be used to shortlist candidates this year. The decision comes in response to technical errors in the new online tests.

The ELAT consists of six passages of text, all of which are united by a common theme. Students report sitting in exam conditions for up to an hour waiting for the passages to load. Applicants were further confused when the test asked for the passages to be considered in relation to the theme of the previous year’s paper.

In an email to candidates, the Director of Undergraduate Admissions for the Faculty of English, David Taylor, wrote that “the clear errors in the test’s rubric... Continued on Page 3
Oxford tourism numbers rebound after the pandemic

Emily Henson reports.

In Oxford visitor numbers are now surpassing pre-pandemic levels, after having been among the most reduced in the UK during COVID. Eight and a half million visited the city over the summer, according to the council’s data. The city centre has defined the nation-wide trend, with a 14.6% increase in summer visitors compared to the UK’s average 0.3% decrease. The council has attributed these changes to the City Centre Action Plan, which was introduced last year in an attempt to strengthen the city centre. The Covered Market has had consistently improved levels of activity. To meet and help fuel increased demand, the Market introduced longer opening hours which were warmly received in the 2022 consultation. The Council’s redevelopment plan also includes refurbishment to the structure and a potential pedestrianisation of Market Street which is set to be trialled next spring.

Compared to other cities, Oxford has a drastically lower vacancy rate of 5.6%. This is less than half of the southern average and nearly a fifth of the northern. While still above pre-pandemic levels, the numbers are going down rapidly, at 32 available units from 49 this time last year.

Councillor Susan Brown is optimistic about the future of the city centre, saying: “This summer’s rise in footfall shows Oxford city centre continues to be a thriving destination, despite national trends and despite the challenges of the Botley Road Bridge closure. “It’s been wonderful to see the city’s streets and businesses busy over the summer and we have a lot of exciting projects planned - including the redevelopment of the Covered Market and the Clarendon Centre – that will help to keep the city centre vibrant.”

The City Centre Action Plan is set to be completed in 2030. Part of the plan includes diversifying activities available, making the city safer and, controversially, limiting congestion. The council has expressed its hope that Oxford will continue to grow as a tourist destination and a desirable place to live, with an aim to improve the local economy and retain talent.

Image Credit: Sridhar Bhatia via Unsplash
Oxford study discovers source of largest ever Mars quake

Anika Gupta reports.

A n Oxford led team of scientists have recently revealed the results of a unique collaborative project which looked to explore the source of the greatest recorded seismic event on Mars. The study indicated that the quake was a consequence of enormous tectonic forces within Mars’ crust and ruled out the possibility of a meteorite impact.

This seismic event (S1222a) was recorded by NASA’s InSight lander last year, on 4 May 2022. NASA recorded the marsquake’s magnitude of 4.7 which caused the planet to vibrate for at least six hours. While Mars is smaller than Earth, it still has comparable land surface area as it has no oceans. To survey this vast amount of ground, 144 million square kilometres, Oxford’s project lead, Dr Benjamin Fernando from the Department of Physics, sought contributions from different space agencies around the world.

In an unprecedented fashion, it is believed that this is the first time that all missions in orbit around Mars have worked together on a single project. This included assistance from the European Space Agency, the Chinese National Space Agency, the Indian Space Research Organisation, and the United Arab Emirates Space Agency.

On Mars, InSight (co-designed by Oxford) recorded at least eight seismic events caused by meteoroid impacts, forming craters that reached up to 150m in diameter. Eventually, after several months, scientists concluded that S122a could not have been caused by a meteoroid, as no fresh or larger crater was found. Instead, it is thought to be from interior tectonic forces, which indicate the planet is much more seismically active than previously believed.

This study, drawing on global expertise, has highlighted the potential of collaborative work on scientific discovery and knowledge. Oxford’s Dr Benjamin Fernando said: “This project represents a huge international effort to help solve the mystery of S1222a, and I am incredibly grateful to all the missions who contributed. I hope this project serves as a template for productive international collaborations in deep space.”

Image credit: Daniel Olah via Unsplash

Oxford researchers develop AI tool that can help predict viral outbreaks

Victor Cheung reports.

I n a groundbreaking study published in Nature, researchers at Oxford and Harvard have unveiled EVEscape, a state-of-the-art AI tool designed to predict the emergence of new viral variants. The study highlights the tool’s ability to anticipate variants solely from the data available at the start of an outbreak, aiding in preventative measures and vaccine design.

EVEscape combines a deep-learning model with a comprehensive collection of viral sequences. This synergy empowers the tool to forecast which viral variants are most likely to evolve, providing invaluable insights for vaccine and therapeutics developers. The study’s co-lead author and DPhil student at Oxford, Pascal Notin, emphasized the value of EVEscape in pandemic tracking and vaccine development: “Our study shows that had EVEscape been deployed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would have accurately predicted the most frequent mutations and the most concerning variants for SARS-CoV-2.”

Researchers also tested EVEscape’s versatility by feeding it data to predict mutations across various viruses. EVEscape successfully forecasted the mutations for viruses including influenza, HIV, and pandemic-potential viruses like Lassa and Nipah.

From Oxford’s Applied and Theoretical Machine Learning group, Associate Professor Yarin Gal shed light on what set EVEscape apart from its previous iterations: “We developed new AI methods that do not have to wait for relevant antibodies to arise in the population.”

The origins of EVEscape can be traced back to its predecessor, EVE (Evolutionary Model of Variant Effect). Initially designed to predict genetic mutations on non-contagious diseases such as cancer and heart diseases, EVE had already proven its mettle. However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic galvanized efforts to leverage its potential for predicting viral variants.

For now, the researchers are monitoring COVID virus strains in real-time with EVEscape, providing biweekly updates on new variants and sharing their data with global entities like the World Health Organization (WHO). The complete code for EVEscape is publicly available online.

With the potential to aid in designing resilient vaccines and treatments, EVEscape may soon play a vital role in predicting and mitigating the effects of both well-known viruses and lesser-known, yet potentially devastating ones.

Image credit: U.S. Government

Cross-Campus

Cambridge student takes over Hilary Clinton’s Instagram

A Cambridge student recently staged a takeover of Hilary Clinton’s Instagram account. Lois Ireland, a Theology and Philosophy student at Newnham, was given the chance to use the former presidential candidate’s account. The Instagram takeover marked International Day of the Girl 2023. In the takeover video posted on Clinton’s Instagram, Ireland and another student discussed championing gender equality and showing support for girls and women from different global communities.

Stanford party apps hit the scene

L ast year, student protests over the university’s alleged “War on Fun” swept campus and led to the election of a “fun-oriented” student executive. The two apps, Wristsand and Mixter, seek to address the need for “fun” on campus and become students’ go-to platform to discover events across campus. They advertise upcoming parties and meetings on their app, while allowing their users to keep track of events they have registered for.

Harvard creates Task Force for doxxing students amid backlash over Israel statement

H arvard will establish a task force to support students experiencing doxxing, harassment, and online security issues following backlash against students allegedly affiliated with a statement that held Israel “entirely responsible” for violence in the Israel-Hamas conflict. In the weeks that followed the statement, students faced doxxing attacks on websites, social media, and a billboard truck displaying group members’ names and faces and describing them as “Harvard’s Leading Antisemites.”
Oxford Council’s Local Plan acknowledges housing shortfall

Bea Keady reports.

Oxford City Council approved the first draft of the Local Plan 2040 on 18 October, acknowledging that they can’t meet the housing demand of the next 17 years. The plan aims to tackle the climate crisis, build more affordable homes, and “make Oxford’s economy work for all residents”. Following the Council’s approval, the Local Plan will go to public consultation between November and January, after which a final draft will be prepared for public inspection. The Local Plan could be adopted in the summer of 2025, making it the legal document that governs decision-making on all planning and development applications in Oxford, replacing the existing Oxford Local Plan 2036.

The Plan aims to tackle housing issues in Oxford, including allowing homes to be built on all types of employment sites for the first time and continuing to limit student accommodation to the city centre, district centres (including Cowley Road, Summertown, and Headington) and land adjacent to existing University campuses.

This decision to ask neighbouring districts to take on thousands of extra homes has been criticised by local MPs including Layla Moran, who commented: “Oxford City Council repeatedly decides to use sites in the city for retail and employment rather than housing, and then claims that it can’t deliver the housing the city so desperately needs.”

This is not the first cross-council issue over housing that arose in the drafting stage. The Plan was initially expected to accompany the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 but councils across Oxfordshire were unable to agree on how many houses would be built and where in the county. Additionally, the Local Plan 2040 only allocates 40% of developments over 10 properties as affordable housing, compared to the 50% it previously set in Local Plan 2036.

The City Council’s Website states that this is because “residential use now has a lower land value than offices and lab space … Therefore, without this change it is very likely that developers would choose not to use land for housebuilding and there would be fewer affordable homes built in the future.”

The Plan also hopes to balance these housing goals with the council’s climate goals including requiring all new homes and businesses to be Carbon Zero by 2030.

Local Plan 2040 is the result of years of investigations as well as input from the local community with 1,730 Oxford residents’ and organisations’ comments having been considered as part of this draft.

Oxford UCU motion calls for third Intifada in Palestine and Israel

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The University’s initial response to the conflict acknowledges “that the news of the recent conflict is very upset, particularly for our students and colleagues with connections to the area.”

When asked for comment, the Oxford Israel Society said that it “stands aghast at the move put forward by members of the Oxford UCU,” saying that it had never seen a “call for the violent destruction of the state of Israel, or for mass intifada, meaning a wave of murderous terror, in all of Israel and the Middle East.”

The society spokesperson equated calls for intifada to calls for “violent deaths, ethnic cleansing and genocide of seven million Jews”, adding that “to hold Israel responsible for the October 7th massacres is morally corrupt.”

“Our sense of safety has been destroyed. Already calls against Israel have led to violence against Jews all over the world, this motion fans those hateful flames”, the spokesperson said, asking why “any member of the university involved in this motion should retain their affiliation with this institution.”

“Intifada” denotes either of two uprisings of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip, which took place in the years 1987-1993, and 2000-2005 with the intention of ending the Israeli occupation of those territories. It is estimated that 5000 Palestinians and 1400 Israelis were killed over the course of both uprisings.

A spokesperson from Oxford Jewish Society (OJoC) said that they were “shocked and alarmed at the proposed motion of the Oxford UCU” highlighting the fact that Jewish students at Oxford have been intimidated, harassed, and faced antisemitic abuse since Hamas attack.

Calling for the motion’s dismissal, the OJoC spokesperson said that “it shows an utter disregard for antisemitism and the safety of Jewish students and staff at Oxford. The UCU’s actions will only exacerbate the hostile climate that Jewish students currently face.”

In conjunction with the president of the Union of Jewish Students (UK and Ireland), Oxford JooC’s president published a letter to the presidents of the Oxford Branch of the UCU on 24 October. They released the letter on Instagram, in which they called for the motion’s dismissal, urging the UCU “not to use their statements to advocate for violence, but to express their opinions through peaceful words.”

“We also call on the UCU to unequivocally condemn the targeting of Jewish communities in the UK and around the world in response to the current conflict and acknowledge that such actions are antisemitic.”

Oxford Palestine Society and Oxford UCU were approached for comment.

Speakers criticise “uncomfortable” talk at Rhodes House

Chelsea Cresswell reports.

Panelists at a talk on the legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade hosted by the Rhodes Trust described the general experience of speaking at the Trust as “difficult” and “uncomfortable”, and accused the Rhodes Trust of “celebrating its colonial history.”

The talk, held earlier this month, was one of several events marking the £58 million renovation of Rhodes House, which houses the Rhodes Trust and was built in 1929 as a “memorial to Cecil Rhodes”, the British imperialist and diamond magnate who colonised much of southeastern Africa in what is now Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Chairperson Prof Kehinde Andrews, who spoke at the event, found the newly renovated Rhodes House “uncomfortable.” Andrews also took issue with the trust’s logo, which features an image of the Zimbabwe Bird, a mediavel bird statue stolen from Zimbabwe by Cecil Rhodes in 1891. Rhodes erroneously believed the statue to be built by ancient Europeans and subsequently adopted it as an emblem of European superiority.

According to Andrews, “the logo feels like Rhodesia” and is “an example of how colonialism carries on.”

Fellow panellist Onyekachi Wambu concurred that the organisation “perpetuates[s] imperialism.”

Wambu added: “Emblems are important - one of the first things that was done when Blair and Bush went into Iraq was to pull down the statue of Saddam [ Hussein] - so we understand the importance of symbols.”

Analysis: Paradox of Rhodes House

Violet Aitchison comments.

Companies and charities around the world still struggle to properly say sorry for their anti-colonial movement and instead choose to act in a self-preserving, meaningless way.

A discussion on the removal of emblems that represent individuals who continue to celebrate despite their extremely problematic pasts is essential, and should take place across the world. What’s interesting here is the paradox that “The Rhodes Trust”, established in 1902 runs the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship programme at Oxford University where currently, twenty scholarships are awarded to postgraduate students from Africa and the first claims it is its “single largest priority”. However, the Rhodes trust continues to stand tall in Oriel despite multiple campaigns for their removal.

What’s interesting is that the charity responded to the panelist’s feelings of discomfort towards the meeting. Instead of validating and understanding why they might have felt this way, they refused to accept some blame or criticism on why this might have been the case and made passive-aggressive comments back. It seems the large corporations are still indifferent to social justice matters and movements, even if they aim to prove their “commitment to reparative action”. Wanting to make reparations is great, but only if your actions can back this up. This is still yet to be seen by the majority of institutions who claim to advocate and fight for necessary rights.
Mental health struggles – part of the Oxford experience?

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Legally, the subject is largely untested. The UK Government has published that universities “have a duty of care” to their students. But in May 2022, a court case between the parents of a student at the University of Bristol who died by suicide determined that there was “no statute or precedent” concerning a duty of care owed by a university to its students to take reasonable steps to avoid causing injury.

According to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests sent by Cherwell, at least fifteen colleges and the central University employ in-house counsellors and nurses.

“...at least fifteen colleges and the central University employ in-house counsellors and nurses.”

However, Oxford’s mental health care resources are not designed to treat serious illness. If Oxford counsellors believe a student to require more serious medical care, they are encouraged to refer them to the University’s medical consultant, a psychiatrist, who may ultimately refer them to NHS secondary resources.

Oxford's Counselling Service Annual Report stated: “It is not the role of our medical consultant to treat mental health problems of students, but to advise on the most appropriate course of action, to treat mental health problems

using University counselling services were female and just 34.3% male, in spite of equal rates of anxiety for each gender and far higher rates of male suicide. While ethnic makeup of students using University mental health services was largely proportionate to their representation in the general student population, Chinese students were far under-represented.

The issue, then, may lie in students accessing the resources available to them. The majority of students receiving college and University support have gained it through self-referral, though parents, peers, and college welfare representatives (elected, trained peers) can also refer college members to services, too.

Students report being generally aware of the services available to them. 41% of students surveyed by Cherwell reported being aware of the services available to them within the university, while another 54% were somewhat aware.

University, college, and other resources

The Cherwell FOI requests to Oxford colleges also revealed that most colleges currently employ, at a minimum, a nurse as well as at least one position partly dedicated to student welfare. At some colleges, including Christ Church, the chief welfare staff member is “employed 50 per cent as College Chaplain and 50 percent as Welfare Coordinator” – a set-up one student said should be changed so as to “not be linked in any way to the Church.”

University services, though less accessed by students, are generally well-received according to reports from the University. Once students are referred to University services, wait-times before receiving care averaged at 9.4 days in 2021/22, with 42% of students seen in less than five working days. The majority of students described their wait as “manageable.”

Once care is received, student reports are also largely positive. The 2021/22 Counselling Service Annual states that 96% of students who accessed the Service described their counsellor as good or very good at listening, understanding, and making helpful contributions. Empirically, Counselling sessions resulted in significantly lowered emotional difficulty for students. The University said: “Prior to counselling 38% of students described their level of emotional difficulty as ‘severe’, and 1% as ‘mild’. Following counselling this was reversed, with 1% of students describing their level of emotional difficulty as ‘severe’, and 41% as ‘mild’.”

“Prior to counselling 38% of students described their level of emotional difficulty as ‘severe’ and 1% as ‘mild’.”

Following counselling... 1% of students [described] their level of emotional difficulty as ‘severe’, and 41% % as ‘mild’.

Private mental health resources targeted at Oxford students can fill demand that university resources by nature cannot. A student comment said that Oxford Nightline, a phone listening service run by students in Oxford, made them feel heard “without any risk of repercussions from the university or tutors.”

A spokesperson from Oxford Nightline said that they offer a platform where students can express themselves “without fear of judgement or unwanted advice” and are open during hours when other support is not available.
The apocalypse is coming, what shall we drink to?

Phoebe Whiltlock

Edbugs, politicians, and balmy weather seem to be everywhere at the moment, stirring up trouble wherever they go. However, closer to home some new research has been discussing the future of our alcohol. The University of East Anglia published a paper last week suggesting that increasingly widespread and severe drought and heat may cause substantial decreases in barley yields worldwide. Barley is brewed to make beer, and hence academics warned of “dramatic” falls in beer consumption with steep potential rises in beer prices. So what should our college bars, pubs, and restaurants turn to instead of the golden ales?

Well, last week our very own Oxford researchers have found that warm temperatures and higher rainfall are the secret to producing good wines, a weather pattern likely to increase with climate change. The research, published in iScience, concluded that changes in climate will likely result in improved wines.

The study led by Andrew Wood, a DPhil student in the department of Biology, focused on Bordeaux. Admittedly the city of wine is not near the city of dreaming spires but given the quantity of its wine in our cellars (hundreds of thousands of pounds at the last guess) it’s safe to say there is a piece of Bordeaux right here in Oxford.

Bordeaux’s reputation for wine precedes it, and it’s safe to say that the phenological wines are matched by equally verbose wine critics: critics who will debate the subject with as much intensity as can be found in the Union on a Thursday evening. In this most recent study over 70 years’ worth of international wine critic scores were analysed against the weather conditions which made them and found that the conditions that make a good red in the south of France are also those most likely to prevail with climate change.

So where should the average drinker in Oxford turn?

Well, there is always French red wine. Red wine grapes thrive in warmer dryer climates, but Mr Wood was keen to emphasize that “we are not saying that climate change is a good thing, and there are lots of caveats to this research. But, on average, the conditions which make good wine are hot and dry summers, and cooler wetter winters. These conditions we have seen increase in frequency more recently, and so we can expect more and more better vintages. A trend we suggest will continue into the future.”

Château-Figeac, one of two “Premier Grand Cru Classe A” chateaux in the Saint-Emilion region of Bordeaux, also remarked “With climate change this type of year comes more often and therefore great vintages come more often. But this has to be balanced against the more extreme weather conditions (frost, hail, extreme drought) which are very expensive to manage.” So, we can remain cautiously optimistic about a good future claret, but it is not the only option with a warming world.

If you’d rather something more “Brexit”, there is the potential for better future English wines too. Natasha Rompante, an English wine maker is seeing the impact that changes in weather have on wines. She says that “it is clear to winemakers that climate change is having a dramatic impact on wines globally, and especially here in the UK. 2020 was a stand-out year with and we expect that reduced ripeness levels to produce red wine”. An interesting prospect and perhaps an English red would make a delightful vintage to toast the end of the world.

For those who like fizz, there is something special on the cards too. “The new harvest is exciting”, says Champagne Soret-Devaux. Who can argue with the idea of quaffing delicious boutique- connectingvinestowines on Instagram. The beer paper is available for reading online at iScience. An English red would make a delightful vintage to toast the end of the world.”

...the conditions that make a good red in the south of France are also those most likely to prevail with climate change.

The Debate Chamber

Oli and Freddie go head to head on whether podcasts are here to stay

Would you not much rather be listening to my soothing voice than simply reading this? Of course you would! Podcasts are here to stay. Just as we gradually moved from Elvis Presley on the radio to Aitch on your iPhone, podcasts are the future for talkshows and interviews. Not only do podcasts democritise the media through platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts, but they also allow otherwise text-based media to be appreciated by more people and in a more dynamic way.

Podcasts can be put on in the background whilst you cook, tidy your room or even as you exercise. Listening to content is also a lot quicker than reading – you just put your book on 1.5 speed (unless you drink a lot of Red Bull). Indeed, podcasts can condense a lot of information into a short 15-minute episode or, alternatively, can break up a very dense topic into lots of digestible episodes.

Certain podcasts also seem to be the step between ‘proper’ media and social media. They can be reliable and convenient, and yet informative and helpful. Equally, they can be funny or dramatic. Podcasts offer an extremely diverse portfolio. Indeed, podcast guests are often more genuine on the mic than they are on their weekly column or blog.

Personally, I don’t see how podcasts can die out in the coming years, especially with lots of celebrities starting their own shows, some even sponsored by big brands or endorsed by Spotify themselves. Though I’m not a massive podcast fan myself, I can certainly see their appeal, especially to those who like to have something going on in the background all the time.

So, the only real question is whether podcasts are viable media for discussion or whether they’re only background noise?

There was a time when no journey would be complete without hearing the muffled murmur of some podcast host emanating from the headphones of a passing pedestrian. In many ways, it seems as though we are still living in this age. Celebrities, newspaper editors, even law firms have seized upon the podcast as an effective means of communicating their message. But podcasts have one problem. They just don’t seem to stick.

It is undeniable that podcast listenership has spiralled. From 2017 to 2023, it rose from 9 million to 23 million. However, these numbers are deceptive. What they fail to address, or even countenance, are the reasons why some listeners are switching off their podcasts. In a 2023 survey conducted by Statista, the biggest reason for having stopped consuming podcasts in the UK, was “losing interest in the content of the podcasts”. This is surely a damning indictment of a medium intended to be both informative and accessible. It is perfectly true that this statistic reveals little about how many listened to abandoning their podcasts in the first place. Even if this number is small, however, the reason for doing so is far from auspicious, as far as the health of the podcast industry is concerned. The accusation of uninteresting content reveals the precarious foundations on which podcasts and their creators’ prosperity rest. There will surely never be an absence of content. Podcast hosts have found no shortage of matters to discuss, however inane these may have been. But the chace to remain interesting – to keep content exciting enough for listeners who require ever more high-speed stimulation to stay awake – is one which podcasts can surely never win.

The statistics may sit in favour of podcasts for now. But the fragile core around which the industry has been built should not be ignored. There is only so long before the effects will begin to sink in.

Tosin: one can only hope!

In the past month, Labour has seen 3 by-elections, with gains but the recent Tamworth win is a particularly outstanding example. While the Staffordshire constituency has been a Conservative stronghold in recent years, this week has painted Tamworth red for the first time since 2005, epitomising a change in the national tide. It would be wise for Labour party supporters not to set their hopes too high, as Britain does tend to get cold feet at the polling station, but Labour’s sudden wave of by-election wins does suggest that a decade of nationwide blues may be swapped for a scarlet variety.

Alicia: the nation is discontent with the Tories

Rishi Sunak has clumsily redirected the blame for this by-election’s result to ‘local factors’ and the common phenomenon of governing parties losing by-elections, but neither are enough to explain Labour securing a 20.5% swing in a constituency like Mid Bedfordshire, a rural area and presumably Tory ‘safe seat’ since 1931. It has become a symbol of the discontent of the most loyal Conservatives. Labour’s victory in Tamworth, a Conservative constituency but only since 2010, may suggest a Labour-leaning trend among floating voters. Counting on a Labour government may be imprudent, but this by-election foreshadows at least a significant blow to the Tories.

Adam: Labour is on track for a landslide

Labour’s by-election victories last week were a statement of intent. People are unhappy with the Conservatives. Sunak’s government’s “honesty and integrity” doesn’t seem to have turned the fortunes of the party around; possibly in part because they seem to have little more honesty or integrity than the flip-floppers they replaced. We seem on track for Labour to be the biggest party after the next general election but gaining a majority might be too great a mountain to climb in one election given the lows of 2019. Regardless, a year is a long time in politics, so it is too soon to know who will be leading the country by 2025.

...perhaps an English red would make a delightful toast to the end of the world.”

Image credit: Rawpixel Ltd. CC By 2.0 Deed
Oxford’s term structure needs to change – here’s why it won’t

Martin Connny

T

ou, reading this, are probably an Oxford undergrad. Or at least you’re an Oxford undergrad some time in the past. It might seem obvious, but Oxford students are only really Oxford students for less than half the year. We spend eight weeks at college, before the world of books and essay crises, unions hack and Najar’s dissipates again and we have to return home. Like many of us, I’ve always found the structure of Oxford terms to be profoundly disorientating; once I’ve adapted to the pressure-cooker environment of this place, the term is suddenly finished and I’ve got to adapt to the dull monotony of the vacation again.

Why on earth does Oxford University persist with this ridiculous term system? There’s a reason that Oxford is just about the only university in the world, apart from Cambridge, that uses it. If you want your students to learn as much as possible, obviously it makes sense to keep them in university for as long as possible. That’s why almost all UK universities have term lengths around 32 weeks; across the pond, Yale and Harvard – the two academic institutions most comparable to Oxbridge – keep their students for around 40 weeks of the year.

Modify term structure in a rather simplistic way just by slotting in a reading week or two, and you’d save students enormous amounts of stress, while helping prevent some of the disorientating that lurching between term and vacation causes. Worst of all is how Oxford’s unusually short terms primarily hurt underprivileged students – if the vacation gives you an opportunity to saunter off to your Swiss ski chalet, maybe you don’t see the problem, but those who suddenly go from ancient banqueting halls to council homes, from a world of privilege to a world of poverty, probably do.

One answer given for Oxford’s short terms is that the University gives the opportunity to gain work experience and pursue internships. That argument is hardly convincing. For every hour I spent adding to my CV during the last vacation, I spent many more lying in bed – and you were probably the same.

Having a structure of three eight-week terms used to be the norm in Britain – but over the course of the last century, university after university has abandoned them. Why hasn’t Oxford? There are two answers to that question, two questions that can serve as the solution to almost all UK universities have term lengths around 32 weeks...

...almost all UK universities have term lengths around 32 weeks...

most any question you might have about this place – tradition, and money.

Tradition is the more obvious answer to why Oxford’s three terms are based around the religious calendar. The Feast of St Hilary and Trinity Sunday. But I had never heard of the Feast of St Hilary before beginning this article; Hilary term immediately isn’t being modulated out of our heads, or of offending a Catholic bishop that died over a millennia ago.

Instead, one of the main reasons Oxford’s terms haven’t changed, no matter how little sense they might make for the 21st century, is because of Oxford’s bizarre system of governance. The authorities of Oxford University are set up like something from The Trial, like how Brexiteers imagine the EU to run, authority divided and subdivided between dozens of different institutions, whose authority is then divided and subdivided even more. In practice, the Vice Chancellor does most of the heavy-lifting for the central university, but the Congregation, Council, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Divisions, Departments and countless committees also play roles.

One answer given for Oxford’s unusually short terms is that it’s the only structure of its co-

As Poland steps back from the precipice, others are ready to take the leap

Oliver Smith

There were signs that a political shockwave was coming to Poland this month when opposition parties organised the “March of a Million Hearts” ahead of the election on October 15th. Despite the close results, Donald Tusk, the opposition leader who ran Poland as Prime Minister from 2007-2014 before serving as EU President from 2014-2019, looks set to lead the next governing coalition in Poland. But behind closed doors, it’s Brussels who is breathing a deep sigh of relief as Poland arrests its dizzying decline into what Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán once proudly called ‘Liberal Democracy’.

Not only has Poland enacted some of the strictest abortion and LGBTQ+ laws in Europe, but the PiS party – which has governed Poland for 8 years – has comprehensively eroded the judiciary’s independence and hijacked the state TV channel. Now they may have been free, it was certainly not fair – with Tusk being painted as a puppet of Brussels and Berlin on the state broadcaster. Leading questions surround the admission of thousands of illegal immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, in accordance with the forced relocation mechanism imposed by the EU. The US government also accompanied the ballot papers – an obvious attempt to sway the electorate. Such is the decline in standards of rule-of-law that the EU blocked Poland from receiving its €3bn share of the EU Recovery Fund, a fate only shared by Orbán’s Hungary. I spoke to a group of Poles in their early twenties from Poznań to find out how young people perceived the changing political winds in their country. All four agreed that Poland had moved in a more Eurosceptic direction, diverging from their own pro-EU stances. Zofia and Uno, both voted for the Left Coalition (which looks set to prop up Tusk’s own Civic Coalition), told me that they were “scared that if the parliament [stayed] the same, we would have to leave the EU”. Maria, another Left Coalition supporter, echoed that sentiment, fearing “that the violations of EU law […] could possibly harm our position in the EU.”

We all thought Poland’s position in the EU was stronger as a result of the election. However, they seemed sceptical that the election would herald many great social changes. Zofia admitted “[the remaining coalition in the EU] will probably not be as groundbreaking as some of us would hope”, Maria added that while she was still optimistic, her initial enthusiasm was “somewhat diminished after initial disputes within the opposition.”

In any case, Poles have denied the PiS party an unprecedented third term in power. But the EU lives to see another day and Orbán’s latest distraction seems to have cost him dearly in his fight against EU cooperation, even if Slovakia recently elected a pro-Russian leader.

“In all, it became clear that for young Poles, the election was not decided…”

Comment | 7

Should Oxford ban disposable vapes?

With disposable vapes proposed to be banned, we asked students, most likely the same demographic that uses these vapes, what they thought. They overwhelmingly supported the ban, 83% vs 17%.

Do you use ChatGPT?

We asked readers how often they use any AI to assist them with their studies. A razor-thin majority of 50.2% said they’ve never used it, but 20.5% said they used it every week or more.

Is Oxford doing enough to fight the climate crisis?

We asked our readers whether they thought the University was doing their part for the climate crisis. 78.6% thought they weren’t, while 21.4% thought they were.
As Poland steps back from the precipice, others are ready to take the leap...

continued from previous page...

Nonetheless, it would be foolish to see Poland as the bellwether of Euroscepticism. Indeed, the EU’s internal position is as vulnerable as ever. Even Germany and France, widely considered the two most influential countries in the European Union, are not safe from the rising tide of populism and support for Eurosceptic parties that are sweeping the continent.

Current polls in Germany indicate that support for the far-right AFD party has risen to a historic 22%, just behind the moderate conservative CDU/CSU party at 29%. The left-wing Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has seen his share of support plummet to 16%; his governing coalition has the backing of just 35% of the electorate. Scholz is an increasingly unpopular figure, considered by many to have failed to contain the unfolding economic crisis. Only three in ten Germans are content with his leadership. Just like across Europe, each crisis makes far-right, Eurosceptic parties, once seen as an unthinkable choice for many, seem more and more palatable.

In France, the perennial spectre of Marine Le Pen looms large, and her electoral results speak to this. EVP’s candidate in the country, Meloni has needed to placate the concerns of her Eurosceptic parties in the opposition. When the traditional left and right-wing parties have failed to contain the unfolding economic crisis, others are ready to take the plunge. It seems that barred by term limits from running for president, in the process, the centrist politician has obliterated the traditional left and right-wing parties in the country. When the second round of the French presidential election. In 2022, the far-right has found mixed success. While it is true that some countries, such as Spain, have seen their far-right parties lose support, more generally the trend has been heading in the opposite direction.

Across the continent, the far-right has found success. In 2022, the far-right has found success. Take Sweden and Finland for example: until last year, both countries were headed by staunchly pro-European Social Democrats, now the far-right Sweden Democrats and Finns Party prop up the governing conservative coalitions in their respective states. It is easy to see a future in which the far-right paralyses the EU by threatening to withdraw support from fragile coalitions.

Italy, one of the EU’s largest member states, is a prime example of what the future looks like for EU states that turn to the far-right in the face of instability. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s Brothers of Italy Party has post-fascist origins, and it is the most right-wing government in Italy since WW2. While on the domestic front, Meloni’s government has made good on its promise to enact a traditional, Catholic vision on the country, Meloni has needed to placate the concerns of her Eurosceptic parties in the opposition. For example, despite her close ties with Viktor Orbán, Meloni has followed Poland’s lead in supporting Ukraine throughout the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. However, immigration remains a red line for Meloni, as it did for Poland. The unfolding crisis on the Italian island of Lampedusa led Italy to block the EU’s migrant redistribution programme and proposals relating to human rights guarantees. Meloni is now one of the most influential European leaders on immigration, ready to hold the institution hostage to enact her vision of a Fortress Europe.

While Eurosceptics may have narrowly missed out on an unprecedented third term in Poland, the future of European unity is put into question by the rise, in some cases meteoric, of parties across Europe that are completely opposed to the vision of further European integration.

“It is easy to see a future in which the far-right paralyses the EU...”

The Rise of the Old Money Aesthetic

Liz Lane

Grab your linen shirts and Ralph Lauren loafers. Old Money is back with a vengeance. Amassing a hefty 54.3 million views on TikTok alone, the Old Money Aesthetic is dominating social media at the moment. But with some videos recommending outfits upwards of thousands of pounds, should we really be glamourising a trend that excludes so many wealth groups?

The Old Money aesthetic found its roots on TikTok in the summer of 2023. It’s a hashtag associated with “quiet luxury”, quality garments and the lifestyle to match. Popular videos see montages of champagne flutes, signet rings and – you guessed it – plenty of Oxbridge content too. The aesthetic is best embodied in an upper-class twentieth-century style found in the likes of the Kennedys, Princess Diana and even fictional characters like Blair Waldorf of Gossip Girl. Many have credited the TV show Succession with this revitalised fascination with “money and more”, but the rise of “nepo baby” influencers like Sofia Richie and Haley Bieber has also had a huge part to play.

The trend for looking quietly (but obviously) posh has found a new muse for the internet age. Sofia Richie, described by Business Insider as being the “epitome of Old Money”, is a social media influencer and daughter of singer Lionel Richie. Well known for adopting Vintage Chanel, co-branded Ralph Lauren and “clean girl” aesthetics, Richie has become an aspirational figure on Instagram and TikTok.

This natural progression of trends from one generation to the next is to be expected, but our desire to imitate someone who has inherited such enormous wealth in a society so crippled by inequality is also undeniable. With Rishi Sunak reportedly considering cutting the inheritance tax and recent studies predicting a rise in premature deaths following the cost of living crisis, it might be time for us to reconsider our casual idealisation of the wealthy online.

Amidst a torrent of content advocating lifestyles possible only to the top 1%, there are an equal number of posts recommending cheaper fashion dupes that can help you “cheat” the Old Money look. Old Money isn’t as unattainable as it was in the mid-20th century, and yet the internet is abuzz with articles dedicated to uncovering the “subtle differences” between someone from “old” and “new” money. Old money “imposters” are being simultaneously encouraged to exist and exposed online in a move so egregiously classist it’s hard to believe we won’t look back on it with horror.

In a post-pandemic world of economic instability and cost-of-living crises, we have to wonder why we’re choosing Old Money and expensive-looking clothes now. Naturally, fashion, and how much people are willing to spend on it, has always been influenced by the rise and fall of economies. Following the bedazzled OTT-ness of the early 2000s, for instance, the 2008 recession saw a spiked trend for minimalism. Such minimalism is also a clear feature of the Old Money aesthetic. But luxury items (another key Old Money staple) saw a notable downturn in popularity after the 2008 financial crisis.

Another possible reason for the popularity of Old Money is that it offers escapism at a time when many countries have been plagued by cost-of-living crises. Fashion, in some way, has always been able to offer a break from reality. Following the 1929 Wall Street Crash, a desire for fashion escapism manifested in cinema. The 1930s was a period that saw the chief wardrobe or costume consultant credited for the first time on screen. Clothes were important, expensive and exuberant, as actresses offered something most moviegoers could only dream of. Today, microtrends like #Europeore and resort fashion have provided Americans with a rest bite from the turmoil of US politics. Many people, clearly, are seeking some kind of distraction online and in what they choose to wear.

But it’s what these trends are distractive from us that proves most important of all. The Old Money aesthetic may just be playful escapism for some, a desire to forget the economic bleakness that surrounds them. But the hashtag is a powerful symbol and one with a damaging and problematic history. The Old Money lifestyle, for all its glamour, is a product of centuries of wealth inequality. It’s built on the fantasy of belonging to a certain class that has excluded those of lesser means and prospered whilst others struggled. It’s not the dressing up to look expensive that’s the problem here but the mindset behind it: one that, intentionally or not, romanticises classist and elitist ideals and perpetuates the notion that inherited money is somehow worthy of our adoration.
**The Conservative Path to Victory in 2024**

**Cindy Yu**

I have a recurring nightmare where I’m being stalked by a doppleganger. She looks better, dresses better than me, and makes jokes that make people laugh so hard that milk shoots out their noses. In one dream, she walks in with a new top that’s exactly my style, and when I ask her where she bought it, she responds, “Actually, my dead grandmother passed it down to me—sorry!” Cut to me — wearing a shameful brown and tawny putter-mangy jeans combination for the next General Election on the horizon (betting markets currently place the best odds on somewhere between October and December 2024), the attention of the media and much of the politically minded public has turned to the question: how do the Conservatives intend to fight a campaign that will fix any of the problems the country is facing? The point being that the hills on which the government seem intent on dying on may not be as fertile ground as they had hoped.

So, what might be a better campaign strategy?

First, one has to accept that there is no policy the government can propose that will fix any of the problems the country is facing. On that assumption, on January 4th, the Prime Minister set out his five priorities for 2023 and asked the public to judge him on them. What was more about them was that, with the exception of the fifth (stop the boats — a policy which is not necessarily opposed to immigration in the same way that the government seems to believe), they were all factors which were likely to improve regardless of government action — to halve inflation (at the time this stood at about 9%, just over 10% excluding housing), grow the economy, reduce debt, and cut NHS waiting lists. In the case of debt reduction and NHS waiting lists, both are likely to continue to improve as the country recovered from the effects of the pandemic, without the influence of the government (and public understanding of national debt is notoriously bad, meaning measures such as the debt-to-GDP ratio, and the current deficit rather than nominal debt were likely to distort this even further).

The beauty of this message however, lay in its last two points — to grow the economy, and to halve inflation, both being macroeconomic factors almost entirely beyond the influence of the government, and both of which are almost guaranteed to improve the global over. As the world recovers from the dual inflationary shocks of the Russo-Ukrainian war (and its effects on food and energy prices), and the supply chaos of China in 2022, so too is the inflation rate virtually guaranteed to reach more manageable levels (with the 12-month rate already down to 6.7% CPI). Similarly, “growing the economy” — ie having a GDP growth rate of more than 0%, or literally not being in recession — is not a particularly high bar to set. In short, by setting laughingly achievable economic goals and hoping that the public (whose main electoral concern at the moment remains the health of the economy) would lack the economic know-how to understand the complete lack of agency the Conservative government had in these positive trends, was a remarkably sound electoral strategy, or at least one which gave them the best chance at winning a tough battle. Besides having the added benefit of not tying the government to policies that inflation should break 5% by the end of this year, and return to its 2% target in the first half of 2024, whilst the BCC estimated growth for 2023 to finish at 0.3% and 2024 at 0.4% (the OECD estimates are slightly higher), which is slow but importantly meets the target of growing.

And this economic chicanery can be applied elsewhere too. At the Liberal Democrat conference, Ed Davey scorned the Conservatives for sending interest rates soaring — of course interest rates are beyond the control of the Conservatives but this speaks to my point as a whole — a point on which it is laughably easy for the Conservatives to retro-fit something to help saving savers. Over the last year, the FTSE 100 is up only 1.46% and 4.72% over five years whilst the FTSE 250 is down in both measures. This ultimately means that rising interest rates, whilst obviously punishing borrowers, means that traditional savings accounts are competitive investments for the first time in over a decade.

Overall the party this year appeared to spend much of its conference working its current strategy with more hard-line of the party claiming that multiculturalism has failed in Britain, and some even courting Nigel Farage as a possible member. That being said, I know which campaign I’d rather hitch my bandwagon to. 

*Image credit: Andrew Parsons/ CC BY 2.0 / Deed via Flickr*
“We must vicerally disrupt our comfort zones to create opportunities for evolution”

Sophie Magalhaes speaks with Philippa White, founder and CEO of TIE, about her global background and her mission to connect disparate people.

Philippa White’s mission is to help companies create “people-centred leaders” by introducing talented employees to different cultures and challenges, helping them better understand their own unique qualities and potential. Over a Zoom call I greet Philippa, who is all exuberance. An enthusiast and open-minded conversationalist, she tells me of her myriad cultural influences growing up. We bond over identifying as ‘global citizen’. Born in South Africa but raised in Canada, it is the creative job you’d hoped for? She replies, “It was an innovative and creative work environment.” Yet there was still something missing. “It was often the same conversations. (...) A middle class bubble. People who saw the world in similar ways.”

Early experiences hosted employees from the communications world for 30 days, working in various environmental and educational social initiatives, developing professional leadership competencies. An early project included an awareness raising initiative for an HIV and AIDS organisation. As the business progressed, programmes became widespread. When I ask about a favourite TIE experience, White tells me of a designer from New York who spent 30 days in Malawi, using his communications background to bring fuel efficient clay stoves into the hands of Malawians. Through his work, the new stoves not only lessened high rates of infections caused by smoke inhalation, but decreased deforestation in the region. Before the private sector made it to Malawi, only 500 stoves were sold in two years. However, 30 days after the TIE programme, 10,000 clay stoves were sold. Such impactful change transcends our communities. “It provides a necessary global perspective and opens the minds of those within the corporate world.” By developing more human focused leaders from the private sector, TIE programmes humanise the corporate world, making it more competitive. The experience immerses professionals in real global challenges, demonstrating how the world works beyond their bubbles. She says, “through this you not only impact people but you yourself become more interesting and more valuable to businesses and their clients.”

White describes the Covid-19 pandemic as an “atomic bomb”. For a business model which depended on international borders being open, the TIE model had to be completely rethought. Staying authentic to TIE’s values, White had to bring worlds together virtually. TIE transferred briefly to a business - consumer model, pulling together ten cohorts of professionals globally to develop professional skills and expand horizons. Throughout our conversation White repeats “necessity is the mother of invention.” A phrase that has always been the basis of all TIE programmes, but also became the TIE motto when having to re-think their business model. The constraints of the pandemic paved the way for revolutionary development solutions. Since the pandemic, White has returned to the original business focus. Now TIE has a host of options available for companies, both in person and virtual, as well as a scaled programme that involves up to 500 people around a business and is executed once a month throughout the year.

TIE has also expanded into a podcast and, most recently, a book: Return on Humanity: Leadership lessons from all borders of the world here: https://mybook.to/ReturnOnHumanity TIE Unearthed Podcast is available to listen to on Spotify. To find out more about TIE, visit their new website: https://tieleadership.com/

Images courtesy of Philippa White

“White is adamant that we must disrupt comfortable ways of living if we are to see the world differently.”

You can pre-order Return on Humanity: Leadership lessons from all corners of the world here: https://mybook.to/ReturnOnHumanity TIE Unearthed Podcast is available to listen to on Spotify. To find out more about TIE, visit their new website: https://tieleadership.com/

Images courtesy of Philippa White

“"It was often the same conversations. (...) A middle class bubble. People who saw the world in similar ways.”

Vol. 299
Quickfire questions with Martha Lane Fox

Freddie Evans interviews Martha Lane Fox about her diverse and impactful career, her involvement in public service, business, and charities, and her advocacy for important causes.

Martha Lane Fox studied at Magdalen College. She co-founded lastminute.com with Brent Hoberman in 1998, offering late holiday deals online, and was a pioneer of the dotcom industry. Now she has a very broad portfolio, including Chair of Lucky Voice Group and We Transfer, and Director of Chanel.

She is a leading advocate for human rights, women's rights and social justice, founder and patron of a number of charities including Reprieve (which campaigns for justice, defending marginalized people facing human rights abuses, often by powerful governments), Just for Kids Law (providing legal advice and representation to young people in contact with the criminal justice system to ensure their legal rights are respected and promoted, and their voices heard and valued) and the Tessa Jowell Foundation (inspiring ambitious, long-term change to improve quality of life and longer-term outcomes for brain cancer patients).

You studied Ancient and Modern History at Magdalen, what impact did this have?
M: History taught me to ask questions.
How would you characterise your career trajectory thus far?
M: Diversity, sustainability and responsibility. I have had incredible opportunities but always been tilting to entrepreneurship from lastMinute.com to GOV.UK to Lucky Voice. I want to lend my small voice to things that matter. Could you talk about the charities and causes you support, and what they do. What are the toughest challenges?
M: I am very lucky to have worked in the public, private and charitable sector. I have supported criminal justice causes such as Reprieve and Just for Kids Law and big institutions like the Open University.

What is it like to be a Member of the House of Lords?
M: Complex!
Can being a Member of the Lords make a difference?
M: Yes, it is an incredible legislative and public platform.

What are your main policy interests?
M: I am a Crossbench peer and so independent and try to get involved in topics I work on - digital, education, business, What do you see as the future of the Lords?
M: Complex!
What would you like to change?
M: How people get there – I applied and had an interview and everyone should do this.

What would you like to see in terms of the UK’s relationship with the EU?
M: Re-engagement.
Are Horizon and Copernicus pointers to future engagement?
M: Fingers crossed.
Has the public mood in the UK shifted?
M: Marginally - I think we should be a Member of the EU but I think that most of the country is tired of the debate.

What does being Chancellor of the Open University involve?
M: Being a symbol and an ambassador and doing the amazing degree ceremonies

How would you single out the OU from other universities in the UK and worldwide?
M: Access to anybody to study as flexibly as they want. You have been a great business pioneer and advocate. What started your interest in and passion for business?
M: I’m not sure I’m very good at business but I love thinking about how to solve problems.

I’m not sure I’m very good at business but I love thinking about how to solve problems.

Could you talk about the charities and causes you support, and what they do. What are the toughest challenges?
M: I am very lucky to have worked in the public, private and charitable sector. I have supported criminal justice causes such as Reprieve.

What advice do you have for students and young professionals who aspire to make a positive impact on society?
M: I’ll quote Martin Luther King “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”

“I’m not sure I’m very good at business but I love thinking about how to solve problems.”
Everyone loses focus in tutorials occasionally (or often). It isn’t that difficult to drift off, especially when you have your laptop open and can change tabs to scroll Facebook or messages unbeknownst to your tutor. This is precisely what I was doing during one of my tutes. My tutor was in the midst of one of his usual tangents, and he seemed deeply engrossed by his own musings, so I clicked open Facebook and started to look through the invites of an upcoming event. All was well and good, and I was pretty certain that my loss of focus was not apparent. I then vaguely heard my name - my tutor had asked me a question, which I had mostly missed. In my moment of panic, I quickly said ‘yes’. Turns out the question was whether I agreed with the denial of climate change.

The expansion of the course with additional subjects

Oxford University has announced the expansion of its PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics) course to include more subjects. The expansion will be staggered over a number of years. From next year, the course will add Psychology to become PPPE. The following year it will add Physical Education to become PPPEEP, and by 2026 will have added Physics, Photography, Ethics, practical environmentalism, Entomology, Personality, Esquematism, Esperanto, Egg, Euthanasia, Evilness, and Purpose, to become PPPEEPPEPEEP.

According to the University, the expanded course is designed to ‘allow PPE students to explore a wider range of different skills, enabling them broader opportunities in the workforce. However, insiders report that an ulterior motive is to expand the course with additional subjects. The expansion will be staggered over a number of years. From next year, the course will add Psychology to become PPPE. The following year it will add Physical Education to become PPPEEP, and by 2026 will have added Physics, Photography, Ethics, practical environmentalism, Entomology, Personality, Esquematism, Esperanto, Egg, Euthanasia, Evilness, and Purpose, to become PPPEEPPEPEEP.

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Music has been an integral part of my life for as long as I can remember. It's always been a core part of my family's dynamic. From poring over my Dad's extensive record collection built up since I was a kid, to my Mum's carefully curated holiday playlists which aimed to appease the tastes of both my sister and I on long car journeys (usually the compromise was we listen to Mum's music). From Dad's pride in his booming sound system in the living room, to listening to tales of the glory days of his university radio show ('The Long-haired Lancastrian Lager Lout show' - what a name by the way). Our family revolves around music.

I suppose, given all this, it should be no surprise that one of my greatest hobbies is listening to music, and more specifically making playlists. There is no greater joy than having a playlist to turn to regardless of one's mood, the time of year, or favourite artist of the moment. One of my favourite playlists I've ever made is an 'influences' playlist-a nostalgia filled rebot of all the songs my parents love, and which have sculpted the world I grew up in.

One of my favourite things about music is the way that certain styles of music fit certain times of year so perfectly. Slow chill songs as the sun sets on a warm summer evening. Sad songs on a cold (or wet) walk in the depths of winter. (The Weeknd works best for this purpose). Fast paced music to combat the boredom of being stuck inside on a wet summer's day. The beauty of music lies in the fact that there's so much of it, and in our digital era almost none of it is off-limits. One really could spend days, weeks, or years making playlists and shouldn't they?

So, if you ever need a playlist for your current mood- don't fail to ask me. I'll either have one ready to go or will be more than willing to oblige in making you one.
Like millions of other people, my first football match is an important memory. West Ham lost 0-1 to Stoke in the 13/14 season, but I still remember seeing the pitch for the first time and being unable to comprehend the size of the stadium and the amount of people in it. If it sounds like something of a religious experience, you’re not mistaken. In many ways, supporting a team is like subscribing to a religion, with all of the heightened emotions and admiration of a few exalted figures. But like religion, historically the privileges are given to those who can afford them.

In general terms; where there is sport, there is money. Clubs need to be established, equipment bought, staff paid, home turf hired/purchased and players need to be signed. Football is no different in this respect, and perhaps presents the most clear example of all sports. Vast amounts of money have nearly always been involved, from Giuseppe Savoldi’s transfer to Napoli in 1975 (the first over £1 million), to Manchester United paying £80 million for Harry Maguire in 2019. Despite the recent astronomical inflation of the transfer market, these huge amounts are far easier to manage for the top clubs, who are backed by enormously wealthy individuals (and sometimes entire countries). But a football club is as much a business as a passion project, and when people invest their money they logically expect a return.

Clubs can profit in many ways, from lucrative broadcasting revenue, sponsors and transfers. But, aside from Todd Boehly, fans are perhaps the most willing spenders of all, and they alone represent a huge potential for profit. In 2021, Barcelona took £110,900,000 on the matchday experience (tickets, food, drink etc.) and Tottenham were not far behind with £94,500,000. Whilst these may seem like huge figures, for top clubs the money made from fans actually accounts for a small portion of the overall revenue. Thus the question arises; if fan revenue is far less consequential for clubs than other streams, why is it seemingly so expensive for supporters?

An immediate answer could be as simple as, ‘Clubs are businesses, they can charge what they like’. But this does nothing to address the issue that, for many people, football just is expensive. The most obvious place to start is with tickets. Many would claim that you’re not a true fan if you’ve never seen your team play. There is something truly unique about being in a massive stadium of people with a shared passion. But for West Ham fans it will cost a minimum of £50, and that’s likely for a seat as far away from the pitch as possible. Factor into this the travel to and from the stadium for supporters from all around the country, matchday food and drink, and the cost of attending a Premier League match skyrocketing. Of course West Ham cannot be representative of the whole league, and according to goal.com tickets can be bought for as little as £9 at Liverpool and £16 at Burnley. But this in itself is not representative, as there’s very few of these tickets available and the view from your seat will be greatly affected.

The reality is that attending a Premier League game is expensive. For Manchester City’s upcoming league game against Bournemouth, the tickets range from £58-75. Not exactly a casual day out. European cup games usually mean a more modest price, and West Ham are offering a 3-match ticket to adults for £60, decent value for three home games. There is, however, one major condition, aside from the fact that these will almost certainly be for the worst seats in the stadium; this deal is only available to season ticket holders. An adult season ticket for the current season which...
guarantees semi-decent seats starts at £630. The offer is there, but only if you're willing to fork out £100s in advance. For many people, attending a game, arguably the essential aspect of supporting a team, is unaffordable. Consider further the fact that Premier League teams will play 38 games in a season, and the idea of semi-regularly watching your team play becomes a mere fantasy. Fans create the matchday experience and are the backbone of any football club, but so long as game day becomes more expensive, fewer and fewer genuine fans will be able to participate.

But attending a game is not the only way to signify your support. The football shirt is famous and iconic, and the appeal is obvious. You can clearly display your support for your team, sometimes amongst thousands of others at matchday, and have the chance to wear what the players themselves wear. It is an intrinsic aspect of one's identity as a football fan, almost like a uniform which can distinguish the wearer from fans of other teams. Some would call football deeply tribal, and I would probably agree. Seeing a random person wearing your team's shirt is almost reassuring about this. They don't own the rights to and selling counterfeit goods in their thousands. Further questions can also be raised over the ethics of large-scale factor production in China concerning the environmental damage and well-being of those who are actually making these shirts. On one hand, you can purchase a decent quality shirt for a very low price, but on the other hand you must consider what sort of illegal activities you're contributing to. On top of all this is the fan's consideration as to whether they're undermining their own club. False shirts are not the perfect solution they seem to be.

But fake shirts is not the only illegal practice that many fans decide to indulge in. For as long as I can remember, illegal streaming sites have existed, promising an unattainable connection to football is an epidemic to broadcast. But even watching football at home is becoming increasingly difficult. Sky Sports Premier League starts at £20 per month, admitted that as a football fan this was an enormous rise of streaming companies in the last decade, people are watching less TV. The problem, probably due to this, is that more football matches are being taken off the main channels and stuck behind something of a paywall. Despite my fear of sounding like some grumpy old man, I fully believe that when I was younger there was much more football available on the TV. For fans who live far from their teams, crowding around the TV to watch a match with friends or family can be an important moment. But with the rise of costly streaming, football matches are being made more exclusive and, it seems, inaccessible.

This has been a pretty pessimistic article so far, so I'd like to say that I genuinely believe there is hope for football fans. Football is, on the whole, a very accessible sport. Football is relatively inexpensive, you can kick a ball around nearly anywhere, and when you factor in illegal streaming it's technically very easy to watch. The lower down the leagues you go, the generally cheaper it becomes. Non-league football is brilliant, provides a much more intimate experience than the Premier League and is far cheaper. Non-league games might not be as flashy and pristine, but there is something almost reassuring about this. They embody the raw spirit of football, that moment of being left behind.

Google reviews are hilarious). The connection to football is minimal, and the intention is clear. It's difficult not to view this collaboration as anything more than a cash grab. As I hope is clear, it shouldn't be like this. Fans want to show their support for their team, but the price of a shirt is starting to become prohibitive.

One solution is the enormous and rapidly growing market of fake shirts that are produced in China. On sites such as dhgate.com, the same aforementioned Real Madrid replica shirt is available for around £13, an offer which seems too good to be true. But reading the reviews of these fake shirts, the customers seem to be quite happy with the quality of them. Many even mention that they've bought one for their children, who are themselves happy with the shirt. For people who, understandably, can't afford exorbitant shirt prices, these fake shirts seem to provide a viable and satisfying alternative. But there is a huge elephant in the room: is it yet to be addressed; this is a completely illegal practice. People are mass producing designs which they don't own the rights to and then selling counterfeit goods in their thousands. Further questions can also be raised over the ethics of large-scale factor production in China concerning the environmental damage and well-being of those who are actually making these shirts. On one hand, you can purchase a decent quality shirt for a very low price, but on the other hand you must consider what sort of illegal activities you're contributing to. On top of all this is the fan's consideration as to whether they're undermining their own club. False shirts are not the perfect solution they seem to be.

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Marking 50 Years since Chile’s Coup

Toby Carmichael reflects on the impact of the country’s 1973 military overthrow on the Chile of today

It’s been a good year for rugby, despite how much it hurts to admit it as an Irish rugby fan. Supporters have been absolutely spoiled. This isn’t just owing to the massive, heavyweight match-ups but also comes from a blurring (an exploding, in some cases) of that boundary of supposed ‘tier-one nations’ versus lesser-known ‘tier-two nations’. But of all the upsets (Portugal-Fiji) and matches going either way (France-Namibia), I think there was only one eighty-minute game which managed to steal my attention from start to finish. On the 30th of September, Nantes hosted the Chile and their enough. It wasn’t international to prove their place on the same: just as then, Argentina was also against Argentina.

Playing the South American derby, Chile’s Nacional set the pitch for every inch. Today, some of these acts were, the values of internationalism they espoused did not easily track vertically. In what could have extended the effort of solidarity from the factory floor to the highest courts, the UK arrested the elderly Pinochet in 1998 citing human rights violations brought forth by Spain’s highest criminal court. In response, Thatch-er came up with another painful irony. The investigations into Pinochet were “circumstances that would do credit to a police state”, she said while giving credit to a pol- lice state. The entire affair ended up setting major precedent not only for British law but general legal theory on state immunity and national-universal judicial boundaries. This was the first major arrest of a former head of state, in a foreign court, for international crimes.

Britain could have secured the best example since Nuremberg; a former despots tried on the basis of universal human dignity, rather than laws protecting a specific nation’s citizens. After three separate rulings, the Supreme Court finally ruled that Pinochet was not immune from state prosecution as accusations against him were so heinous. He nonetheless could not be tried for acts taking place before 1988.

In March of 2000, the Home Secretary set the ageing dictator free from house arrest. Upon his arrival at Santiago de Chile airport, having been released on the basis of ‘ill health’, Pinochet miraculously stood up from his wheelchair to the elation of his supporters.

The internal struggle going on in Chile, a struggle to unearth and over- come its history, can be interpreted as a fight to preserve certain values and oppressors. The events which occurred were never outside the purview of the UK and its own values: this struggle extended internationally. The old and modern fight for certain values in Chile was never just isolated. It always reverberated through to Britain. That old metaphor of Donne’s applies similarly to values as it does to ‘men’: no value is an island, entire of itself - they always inform a larger conversation, a struggle which implicates us all.

The upshot of all this is an obliteration of sorts. A participant in this history, there is so much the UK can both contribute to and learn from this anniversary of reflection. Chile reveals to us how the UK was changing as a country, what different people aspired for it to become, and now allows its inhabitants to reflect on how the country was in fact changed. Archives and collections about the UK’s response, such as those exhibited this year by the People’s History Museum and London School of Economics, are crucial in this process. By no means are the lessons purely theoretical; there is a practical, prescriptive bent to these matters. For example, I can picture how many activists campaigning for similarly abused and displaced peoples in modern conflicts may take inspiration from the example of the Chilean Solidarity Campaign, in particular from their independence and third-way persuasion against the influence of invasive political forces.

The path of Chile’s democratic reconstruction has come from the painful but thorough re-examination of its own recent history. There has been a refusal to bury past crimes, instead pursuing them on the basis of the values of democracy and free expression. Chile is a model for mature self-examination. We could all learn from Chile’s critical time of reflection and re-evaluation.
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How to forge a successful career in the legal world

Rebecca Chalkey

Rebecca Chalkey is a barrister at Red Lion Chambers specialising in all areas of Business Crime & Fraud and Financial Services Regulation. She studied Experimental Psychology at St Hilda’s College, graduating in 1997 and got her Graduate Diploma in Law at City University, London. She then completed a pupillage at 6KBW and has been at the bar at Red Lion Chambers since 2000. She was awarded “Lawyer of the Week” by The Times Newspaper last April for the prosecution of German tennis player Boris Becker, found guilty under the Insolvency Act relating to his bankrupt- cy.

What inspired to go into the legal profession?

It’s something I’ve always wanted to do. It’s one of those questions I don’t actually know the answer to, I just found, for as long as I can remember, that I wanted to be a barrister. I liked the idea of getting into court and doing trials in front of a jury, and cross examin- ing and trying to make a difference - giving people that needed proper representation, well, proper rep- resentation.

What advice would you give to students hoping to pursue a career in law?

You’ve got to want to do it - it’s not a career you can just sort of do because “why not, there’s nothing else to do”, because it really does become an enormous part of your life. There’s a lot of sacrifices – the work, places you have to go to, certainly at the beginning, and in the early days for not necessarily much financial reward so you really have to be passionate about it.

It’s taken as a given that you’re going to have a good degree at a good university so it’s the extracur- ricular stuff that’s going to make you look special and different from the next person - you have to do something that makes you stand out from the crowd; make that work experience based, volunteer- ing, doing pro bono work - but don’t just assume because you’ve got a first in law from Oxbridge that you’re going to be a shoe in, because you’re not. Advice I was given early on; never say no to anything because you don’t know where it will lead you.

What, to you, makes someone a great lawyer?

It’s one of those professions where you can learn an awful lot from pupillages watching oth- er people, what you read in law books and textbooks, but when it comes down to it, an awful lot of it, especially at the bar, is listening to your gut. It’s an instinctual thing, especially with the sort of stuff that I do. There’s quite a lot of strate- gy and tactics as well as using the law - you have to have a feeling for it. That’s the sort of thing you can’t learn, it just happens with experi- ence.

When have you been most proud to do your job?

It [the Boris Becker case] was a very difficult case; there was so much publicity and so much press interest - the pressure was more in- tense than any other case I’ve ever done, so when we got the convic- tions on that, after we’d all pulled together so much as a team as well, it felt good. You don’t get any pleas- ure in someone getting convicted but you do get satisfaction in get- ting a case home. Other moments you’re as proud in a different way are when you’ve made a difference to somebody, defending somebody who’s got some sort of disadvan- tage and you do a good case and get a good result for them, and you know that it was because you did your job properly. And it might not make the papers and it might not be on BBC news that night, but you have made a real difference to that individual. That is as reward- ing, as satisfying as being lawyer of the week in The Times, because, ultimately, that’s the stuff that’s most worthwhile. You go into this job hoping to make a difference and sometimes, rarely you do. I’m as proud of those as I am the big glossy moments.

George Greenwood

George Greenwood is an inves- tigations reporter at The Times. He has pre- viously worked as a data journalist for The Times & Sunday Times and as an investigations pro- ducer for the BBC. He studied PPE at Oxford and is a Cherwell alumnus!

Firstly, just get stuck in. Be- ing a journalist is all about talk- ing to people, and in the age of WhatsApp, many a seasoned re- porter moans about young jour- nalists afraid to pick up the phone. Get on the blower and out for coffees with people that interest you. Don’t just email, these are so easy to ignore.

Find people doing something that interests you and talk to them, even if there isn’t an obvious story there and then. You’ll pick up ideas which might help you with stories that you write ten years’ time.

Be persistent without being ag- gressive.

Start writing for the student pa- per.

But don’t just write bullshit re- gurgitated PPE essay crisis style pieces on the politics of countries about which your only experience is a hasty scan of a Wikipedia page. These take no effort and are a waste of your precious time.

Write something that will help you develop a skill, not just stroke your ego. That could be improving your interviewing skills by talking to someone famed for something.

Review a university sports match, write a theatre review, or write a feature based on calling a load of people, even if this isn’t something you’ve done before.

These are all hard skills which will improve your confidence and help you be a better journalist ear- lier in your career, whatever you specifically end up doing. This is something that sitting in your room scrolling Google just won’t help you with.

Try to get into newsrooms on work experience, be it print, ra- dio, or TV news or documenta- ries, as long as you will be doing something useful. Try and bring something to pitch every time you go somewhere, the most valuable currency in a newsroom is a good story.

Leverage the university alumni network for industry contacts which development offices and the university careers office can help with.

Even look up who went to your college and now works at your dream publication. Nostalgia is a powerful tool of getting people to talk to you, both for general net- working and for specific stories.

In terms of training, a journal- ism masters on a good course are a reasonable bet, but can be pricey. NCTJ training courses and simi- lar programmes are worth looking at too, especially if you’ve already spent a decent amount of time in newsrooms.

If you want to be a news reporter in particular, FOI the hell out Ox- ford and its colleges.

You have the right to get hold of information these institutions don’t routinely publish about loads of issues that affect students, such as how they handle mental health issues, deal with sexual harassment on campus, or take donations from dictatorships. Exercise those rights liberally.

If you get a good story about Ox- ford from this that makes the stu- dent paper, go back and ask all UK universities the same thing. While it takes a bit of effort, this sort of education reporting is the kind of thing that a national pa- per might pay you for and get your foot in the door there for more work.

You don’t need extensive contacts to find and write a good FOI story. But most of all, have fun with it. Use student journal- ism to find the things you genu- inely like writing about. Journal- ism should be a vocation and not just a job. If you’re not having fun with it, you might as well go off and earn your six figure graduate salaries filling in spreadsheets for fourteen hours a day as an investment bank- er or consultant.

JOURNALISM Career advice for young journalists
BIOTECH

A look into a career in Biotech

Orion Tong

Orion Tong is an Australian Oxford graduate, obtaining a Dphil in Oncology. He is now the Computational Lead/Chief of Staff at Infinitics, an Oxford-based biotech spun-out from the University. Led by Cancer Research UK, Infinitics aims to develop immunomodics medicines to fight cancer and enhance patient survival.

To start, could you describe your current role and what a typical day looks like?

I’m working at a start-up biotech called Infinitics! I’m currently the Computational Lead for our discovery platform where we look for cancer targets your immune system can recognise. I’m mainly using computational biology skills for this, although having immunology and molecular bio-experience certainly helps too for working with our pre-clinical and wet lab teams. My role also has commercial strategy and operations elements too since 1 monthnight as a Chief of Staff, and I’m enjoying that variety a lot.

Truly as the saying goes, every day is completely different but I can give you a flavour of my last week: developing some new code as part of a computational pipeline, planning out experiments for our discovery platform, co-ordinating with our wonderful technical team and advisors, working on some investor committee documents for our CEO, and keeping on top of some recruitment processes. It’s a wild ride.

What motivated you to pursue a career in the biotechnical field?

As generic as it sounds – to help people and contribute to medicine. I started out wanting to do something related to medicinal chemistry but quickly found my passion for immunology, and particularly immunotherapies. Ever since then, I’ve wanted to get closer and closer to translational medicine, my previous research work was looking at clinical samples from patient samples, and now I’m in the super lucky position to be directing working on new drugs that are going to be put into a clinical trial next year. There’s also so much innovation going on in biotechnology and it’s super interesting to be in a field that’s going to be driving lots of social change and improvement. The 21st century reality is shaping up to be the century of biology, so the world is your oyster.

What advice would you give to students looking to get into biology, technology and related fields?

I would say it’s really helpful to find a mentor that can give you career advice – simply because biology, pharma, tech, data science are all super broad fields and it can often be difficult to understand all of the different roads and routes that you can take. There’s also lots of differences between these in terms of flexibility, structure, stability, work-life, innovation, cross-functional working, teams, and having exposure to these can be hard at the beginning.

I might be a bit biased, but there’s also a lot of demand for coding skills as biology turns to big data, multi-omics, bio-ML etc. So if there’s a way you can get experience through like coding courses (lots of free ones online on Coursera from UCSID, Harvard Chan Bioinformatics Core) and learning how to write development-ready code, that certainly can set you apart.

Are there any particular experiences you had whilst still a student (ie extracurricular, research, internships) that got you interested in this field and helped you secure your role?

Definitely doing some research projects (as part of my course and internships) to gain experience and also figure out what I liked, or more importantly, maybe didn’t like, was great. Whether this be with academic research groups, biotech start-ups or industry pharma – biotech is one of those industries where experience counts.

I’d also say that participating in other non-research opportunities was really helpful – for example, my experience with the Oxford Strategy Group, University’s micro-internship and strategy programs was really helpful for thinking big picture and in a different way to the normal way we’re trained in science. I also enjoyed these a lot as a different experience to research too.

Although I didn’t do them, Nucleate and other entrepreneurial programs are also great for building exposure to biotech and commercial awareness, especially if you’re interested in start-up.

What do you think is the biggest misconception about biotech?

That biotech is only for ‘biology’ people – it’s most definitely the confluence of many fields including all areas of STEM: finance and business, operations, management etc. Biotech also doesn’t have to funnel you further into research and R&D since there’s so many additional areas and ways you can grow.

What have you found most surprising about your career so far?

A tricky question! I would say speaking frankly, that I’ve ended up where I am now – in a great start-up doing some cool kick-ass science (if I’m allowed to say so). Actually, I was almost going to try and transition into a non-research career (surprise #1) because I felt that being a technical expert or academic wasn’t for me, especially with so many other passionate and more knowledgeable people out there. I’m sure lots of people with technical degrees or backgrounds can relate, but breaking out of your niche feels like you might have to start from scratch which is a somewhat disheartening thought.

But I’m surprised that lots of opportunities, and increasingly so, exist at an intersection of biology, tech, business, strategy and people, and having both technical and generalist skills can be super valuable. So I’m glad that I didn’t completely give up on the science part (surprise #2).

More generally, it really has been people that’ve shaped my career decisions more than anything else – so it’s always worth trying to broaden your horizons, roll with the punches, and try and find something you enjoy, with mentors and a team that you love being around!

From subsfuce to apostolink, the filmmaking career of an English graduate

Marco Alessi

I’ve just got back from Italy,” Marco Alessi drops lightly into our conversation. The filmmaker, writer and director has indeed gone a long way since studying English at Oxford. They have spread their creative wings but I can never underestimate the power of a university friendship. It’s a beautiful and eye call it a flexible. “You’ve got to love way, and being picked up and being picked up and being dragged as well.” You’ve got to love people.

In a group of bright young things, Marco’s Oxford friends have kept in touch and now pursue artistic careers: Emma D’arcy (actress), Georgia Bruce (musician), Tom Bailey (theatre). Likewise, Marco met their current producer at Oxford. She was the executive producer for the first short film Marco filmed. It seems you can never underestimate the power of a university friendship. It’s through these “decade long working friendships” and learning to “collaborate with as many people as you can” that Marco has propelled their career.

These qualities will hold you in good stead in the filmmaking world. “Essentially, it is an industry that is made up entirely of connections and friendships and people you meet and how you network. People are very receptive to others reaching out.”

Marco’s got a technical term for this: “coffeeing the fuck out of people”. Of course, coffee culture at Oxford will help as “coffees never change”. Artists are forever plotting change”.

The Oxford skillset, then, has proved invaluable for Marco. They said, “when I have meetings with development executives on a script I’ve written, it’s essentially a tutorial.” Coming up with ideas in meetings, “being able to think on the spot” plays a big role in making your artistic voice heard. Like in editorial meetings, “being challenged in tutorials, learning to accept that challenge and not take it personally. Understanding that there’s a legitimate criticism, and absorbing it on the spot and building on it” keeps you creatively flexible.

And, Marco is under no illusion that there haven’t been challenges along the way. They call it a “slow path” to stability. “It just doesn’t pay for a very long time. And that’s just the truth of it. I’m just getting properly paid now. Like, what 10 years later?”

For a long time, “I was living as a lifesaver and Oxford definitely makes that a lot easier to do because you can jump straight in at very nice rates.

“But the realistic thing is you will have to do second jobs for a while before it becomes a proper career.”

It’s hard. But, when I asked about a memorable moment in his career so far, Marco seemed to relax as a smile spread across their face. Filming the short, The Bower, I had a real sense of something beautiful happening, that you managed to kind of realise out of thin air. It was a beautiful and sustaining moment.”

To get to this point of artistic realisation, Marco naturally worked hard. They advised: “It’s really, really fucking hard to get a film made. And one of the biggest things you can do to help yourself is use your time at university to do as much as you can.”

They stressed that it doesn’t have to be perfect. It’s a matter of: “the materials, the equipment, the people you have available to you at university to make that short film because it will be fundamental to you getting future films made when you’ve left university and suddenly things become very expensive.”

You will thank yourselves later on. Alessi explained that “to apply for public funding, you have to have work that you can show. I didn’t make a short film when I was at Oxford, and it just meant making that first short film was really hard.”

But, before all that begins, experience Oxford fully. I got the sense that Oxford was a vital time of idea-genesis for the writer and director. Marco said that “Oxford is a rare moment where you get to think about an extremely broad range of things. You’re introducing new ideas and new people at such a rate and with such breadth.”

“So many of those little moments, ideas, things, still come up in my brain, like sparks of inspiration a decade later. It’s going to keep coming back and feeding creativity years and years later.” You never quite know which choir practice, coffee catch-up, set book, friend might be standing behind you when you’re directing your first feature film in ten years time.

Filmmaking
A journey into broadcasting

Tatjana Schulze

Tatjana Schulze is an economist in the Research Department of the International Monetary Fund. She joined the IMF after obtaining her PhD in Financial Economics from the University of Oxford in 2022.

I still often get a little kick when navigating my way through the main entrance, past the big screen that would occasionally read “Welcome to Head of State…”, meeting with IMF staff”, up the elevator to the floor of the Research Department. Trite as it sounds, it was a dream of many years come true when I got selected into the Economist Program of the IMF in Washington DC at the end of an intense application cycle with various central banks and international organizations (IOs) in the final year of my DPhil in Financial Economics at Oxford.

Work at an IO is rewarding and can be surreal at times. You get to meet and engage with important decision makers, including finance ministers. You get to work on topics that are preoccupying policy makers around the world, from global inflation to concerns about a China slowdown to the climate transition to fragmentation in global trade driven by geo-economic interests. You get to dive into many analytical challenges as you rotate across different teams over the years.

Every day brings an opportunity to learn from your colleagues who have worked on economic and financial crises in countries like Sri Lanka, Argentina, Greece, Ghana, Ukraine, and many others.

The way I describe part of the job to my family: we are “global fire-fighters” who come to assist governments when the home is in flames (they need to borrow money but cannot get it from private markets), but we also incentivize them to carry out their duties in mitigating risks (for example through prudent fiscal budgeting). We travel on missions to meet country authorities, either for “surveillance” purposes to provide advice or for “programs” to get the books back in shape.

We work with 190 member countries, from Belize to Kiribati, from Japan to São Tomé and Príncipe. My way to an IO was well planned and path dependent. My three cents of advice: do relevant coursework and research, do internships, and get curious by following global developments in the media. It was an internship at the German central bank after undergrad that got me hooked on the idea of pursuing a PhD. A PhD in economics or finance is not a must to get a job at an IO, but it will help a lot with tackling analytical challenges in your job and with career progression. Internships are important too. They help getting a foot in the door at central banks and IOs, and getting exposed to the trade-offs that policy makers are grappling with day to day.

I transitioned from the MSc in Financial Economics to the DPhil and applied for internships every year. I ended up doing summer internships at the Mexican central bank, the Bank for International Settlements, and the European Central Bank. I felt that each individual experience helped shaping my expertise to qualify for the next one. What sounds like a linear path though came with many unsuccessful internship applications, including three times (!) at the IMF. Hence my final advice, keep trying, get on your path, but remember there is more than one path.

How to get into publishing

Reeta Chakrabarti

Reeta Chakrabarti is a broadcast journalist for the BBC. After graduating from Exeter College, Oxford, she began her career at the BBC. She now works as a newsreader for BBC News.

By the time I graduated from Oxford, I didn’t have a great deal of journalism experience. I had been an editor of my school magazine but shied away from student journalism at university after attending a couple of Cherwell meetings and being rather intimidated by how much everyone else seemed to know. Having finished my degree, I had no connections in the industry, so I went back to my hometown of Birmingham and wrote to a local producer, the local BBC station, and an Asian magazine programme asking for work experience. All three accepted, and it soon became apparent to me that I was interested in radio.

It was leading on from that work experience that I managed to get onto the BBC training scheme, which was an eighteen-month long process where they taught us about editorial standards, media law, and other crucial subjects. The scheme also seconded us to various programmes, which was a valuable experience. By the time I had finished, I was ready to apply for jobs, and got my first job as a producer on Radio 5 Live, which was at that time a very new station. From working behind the scenes as a producer, I went into reporting, and then finally into television. I was a correspondent for over twenty years, and am now a broadcaster for BBC News.

The journalism industry has changed a lot since I started out: in those days, print reigned supreme, and the internet was non-existent. Now, of course, we have seen an explosion in digital media, which has presented a world of opportunities. The other big change is the much-heralded death of TV news, although we’re not quite there yet. In many ways, however, the industry hasn’t changed at all. Journalism is still the place for people who are, above all, curious and able to take an interest in anything: a sort of inquisitiveness which borders on nosiness. Journalists need to have an energy and thirst for facts, and an aptitude for distinguishing them from opinion. Most important, in a world which might seem to be full of big personalities, is the ability to be a team player, it takes around 20 people to create a TV news bulletin.

Getting into journalism requires tenacity. I got onto the BBC training scheme on my third attempt, reapplying is welcomed, and the industry does not by any means penalise candidates for that. What matters is that you get feedback and work on it. Having said that, training schemes are by no means the be all and end all, there are opportunities available everywhere. Of course, any experience is welcomed – be proactive; write a blog, get involved with student journalism, write to your local newspaper or hospital radio station. Most importantly, don’t be blinded by the clear idea you may have of what you want for your future, be broad-minded.

I went into journalism with an English & French degree and an interest in print, I ended up in television.

Mariam Quraishi

Mariam Quraishi is the International Rights assistant at Peters Fraser and Dunlop. After graduating from the University of Essex she completed her Masters in Post-Colonial Studies at SOAS, University of London. She joined Peters, Fraser and Dunlop in 2022, and currently handles rights in Thailand and Vietnam. After working in a few roles after my undergraduate degree, I spent a year applying to roles in the publishing industry while also finishing my MA. Eventually I landed a three-month internship at Peters Fraser and Dunlop, a literary agency based in London. My internship was extended and then I got my job as an International Rights assistant after interview. The industry can be quite competitive, and it can take a long time to get your foot in the door, but it is worth it to work in such a fantastic industry – full of people who love books.

In my role, I support a team of three rights agents who sell the rights to books to international publishers who will then translate the books and get them out into the world. I help organise schedules for exciting trips (that I hope to one day go on!), and provide general admin support, for example, creating the catalogue of rights and handle rights in Thailand and Vietnam. I am still quite early on in my career, but, in terms of the future of the industry, it seems that publishing has a long way to go in terms of diversity, that includes writers and people working in the industry. This is something that I hope to see in the future.

For people who would like to get into the industry, I think that organisational and communication skills are essential in many entry level publishing roles and office experience is always useful! It is also crucial across publishing to be engaged with current trends in book sales. If you would like to learn more, I would recommend attending events run by The Society of Young Publishers.

In terms of employers, the five big names in publishing are Harper Collins, Bonnier, Penguin, Hachette, and Simon & Schuster.

When looking for jobs, I’d recommend looking for openings on The Bookseller or Book Brunch or Creative access. I would also recommend reaching out to literary agencies and following them on Twitter to see any internship or work experience openings. I also make a point of saying: do not feel disheartened. Publishing is a notoriously hard industry to get into and it can feel like there is an issue with you or your application, but that most likely is not the case, it is just very competitive!
Lillian Trickey

I live in a square of yellow stone, as old as Time herself.
I dance in halls with ghosts tied to home—melancholy hundreds
In the complementary cobbles that huddle like wefts
Of brocade fabric, lining the yellow brick road to the Wonders

Of the world. On my morning walk I pass that old library
With books stamped with the authority of scholars and celebs,
Prolific poltergeists’ Hollywood Boulevard, and it’s all fairly
Weird and great, but less so from the perspective of your web.

I find myself thinking how the slope of your nose rivals the beauty of spires—
Your eyes a kaleidoscope of emotions, more tragic and poignant than stained
glass,
Your hands so perfect—fingernails the ideal cathedral arch. You cast blooming
fires
Where I didn’t know they could survive, kindled by the warmth of your laugh.

I think you must be related to an ancient weaver, my mighty spider—
I can’t get out of your grasp, and I’m helpless to you, afraid and impressed—
Because I’m not someone to be caught—incessant, passionate, fighter—
But you reduce me to a know-it-all who has no idea what happens next.

Am I to be stuck here now, forever? In a place I never wanted to be?
Am I to die, starved here, together? As you approach, clinically rip off my wings,
My legs, so I can’t leave, severed. Am I to repent for all I loved before you:
Art, film, books, stories, all banal in comparison to the silhouette of your kiss?

I resent you for what you have done to me— the greatest betrayal to bring an end
To Grimm, Dickens, Hans Christian Anderson, Shakespeare—all the best put to bed
With a twitch of your smile or a glint of your teeth. The way you stand is poetry,
Your breath is music, your voice is song. Again and again, I am reduced to idolatry.

All I ask of you is that in the churning ocean of the days, weeks, months—spent
In books, tripping over spaces between words, after the other, which never relent
As they crash against me again and again: just exist—and like a river reed, I bend:
I can roll with the punches if you keep me cocooned, pent.

Madame Yevonde: The woman who revolutionised colour photography

Rachael Cummings-Naylor

I walked into the Yevonde: Life and Colour exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery
wondering what to expect. I felt ignorant ever having heard of her before when it seemed
her work was all anyone could talk about. I wanted to understand the hype so I took my morning break
and headed to the exhibition room.

I was met with black and white monochrome photographs plastered over the walls. My first
drive was to walk right out. I appreciated photography but it is by
no means an interesting medium to me. I quickly glanced over these
before focusing on the information on the wall next to the portraits.

Madame Yevonde (1893-1975) was the first British photographer to exhibit colour portraits. She was
born and lived in London, where she became wrapped up in the suffragette movement as a member of the
WSPU, later going on to serve in the WSPU, later going on to serve in the Women’s Land Army.

This revelation suddenly breathed life into her photos, as I began to notice the number of
soldiers featured in her portraits alongside an impressive range of celebrities from A. A. Milne
to Paul Robeson. As it turns out, Yevonde began taking photos of celebrity ‘workers in war-time’ which were reproduced in The Sketch and was responsible for helping families identify their
loved ones who were lost during wartime through portraits she had taken of them.

There was a sharp transition in the exhibition from her early work to her work following the war.

Yevonde became interested in colour photography in the aftermath of World War I; despite it being
an expensive and complex undertaking, she remained undeterred. Her work reflected a renewed optimism in the
wake of destruction and devastation, its bright colours, quirky costumes and creative settings.

The most striking image which comes to mind is Joan Maude (1932) with her fiery hair posed in red monochrome. However, I would argue her later series, ‘A Galaxy of Goddesses’ (1935), triumphs
over everything else. She was inspired by the costumed guests at an Olympian-themed charity
ball she attended that same year. Yevonde asked twenty-three women she knew within her social
network to pose as mythical characters. ‘Lady Dorothy Warren as Ceres’ and ‘Olga Burnett (née Herard) as Persephone
stood out to me for their use of composition and colour, but perhaps it was just the ancient history student in me which drew my eye.

“Portrait photography without women would be a sorry business.”
(Yevonde Middleton, 1921)

Tragedy struck with World War II, but Yevonde continued to work throughout the war. Business was slow to recover: she set up a brief partnership with Maurice Broomfield (1916-2010), whose work focused on the rapid transition from the industrial revolution towards new technologies. They eventually went their separate ways.

The landscape of colour photography changed during these years as colour printers were forced to shut down. Yevonde’s portraits reverted to black and white monochrome during this period. It was not until the late 1950s and 1960s that she began experimenting with Solarisisation to produce distinct portraits which fell between a positive and a negative print. I was slightly underwhelmed by the end of the exhibition given the build-up of all her work, but it kept true to the fluctuations of Yevonde’s work over her life which I appreciated.

This exhibition is worth a visit if you are interested in photography or are willing to learn more about it. It is even better if you are fortunate enough to see the Colour Revolution: Victorian Art, Fashion & Design exhibition at the Ashmolean; Yevonde’s work serves as a nice continuation from its brief section on the rise of colour photography. I learnt a lot about photography and even have a newfound liking for it, which is something I never expected.

Illustration by Rachael Cummings-Naylor
**Introduction to Oxford Drama: how to get involved**

**Flora Symington**

The drama scene at Oxford is vibrant and thriving - in fact, the Oxford University Introductory Drama Society (or OUDS as everyone calls it) is the biggest university drama society in the country. However, because of its size and the variety of productions it puts on, it can be a little tricky to navigate at first, so we’ve put together this easy to follow guide which explains how to put on a show in Oxford. If you came to our OUDS introductory meeting in fresher’s week this may sound a little familiar, but for those who couldn’t make it I hope it’s of some use!

**How to get involved with OUDS:**

Get on the OUDS portal on Facebook! This is where all upcoming auditions and crew calls are posted by individual productions companies within the drama society. Along with these there will always be a link to a Googledrive with all the information you will need to apply. For a crew position (ie anything other than acting!) this will usually just be filling in a google form with your personal details, any experience you have and why you want to join the show. Crew positions can be anything from lighting design to assistant stage manager, and there are lots of assistant roles available for which you don’t need any experience - just an interest in theatre and lots of enthusiasm. If you want to learn a particular skill or just how a show in Oxford works, you can also sign up for one of the shadowing opportunities also advertised on the facebook page. Once you have obtained these access you can simply sign up using the form on the facebook, and you will be able to attend rehearsal and production meetings to get a sense of how Oxford theatre works.

For auditions, there will also be extracts or monologues for you to have a look at. You will then either need to send in a self tape or attend an in-person audition slot. There should also be links to additional advice on preparing for an audition and filming a self tape.

**How to put on a show:**

If you’re keen to put on a show yourself as a director or producer, we’d recommend you join a show this term in an assistant or shadowing position first.

Once you’ve got an idea of how a show in Oxford works, you’ll want to find another person to start a production company. This can be a little tricky as a new production company means you’ll be able to put on a show in Oxford within the drama society. This involves setting up a bank account and registering on the OUDS website. If you have questions about this you can reach out to any of the OUDS committee members, or your college drama rep. You will then put out your first crew call on the OUDS website and try to get your core crew members. This includes: a marketing manager, a lighting, sound, and set designer, and a welfare rep.

Once you have your crew and have chosen a show (and secured the rights if it’s not out of copyright - reach out to the committee if you’re unsure on how to check this!), you then need to go through a process called ‘bidding’ for one of the venues in Oxford. For a first production, both the BT studio and the Pilch theatre are really good options as they aren’t too expensive or big to fill. Theatres will advertise their bid application dates later in term, usually around 4th or 5th week, and you will need to submit an application with a budget, created using the OUDS budget template, and include statements from heads of department.

You will then have an interview with the venue, who will tell you whether or not you have secured a slot.

After that, it’s pretty self-explanatory! You will need to hold auditions by putting a casting call on OUDS, and maybe another crew call if you need additional crew members like assistants. You will also need to secure funding for your production, which most shows get from OUDS and a variety of other funding bodies whose details you can find on the OUDS website. You will need to send them your budget and sometimes have an interview about what you’re going to do with the funding.

Some shows, especially if they are in the first half of term, will cast actors the term before, but lots of shows also leave it to the term of the performance. It is generally worth putting a bit more to do, as well as changing the text has stayed the same. But in the text, it can be difficult to tackle, that the director and actors need to bring it can be difficult to tackle, and I’m thinking about how the modern world is related to the current royal family, the power of the spotlight in the way that Hamlet was brought to the modern world: an interview with the director and cast

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**Hamlet in the modern world: an interview with the director and cast**

**Kiaya Phillips**

Shakespeare is making a return and it’s a big one, Hamlet is back and fresher than ever.

When I heard there was a new production of Hamlet in town my ears immediately perked, as an avid Shakespeare fan, and a more avid Hamlet lover, I was excited to see what this was all about. I always find any Shakespeare play that it can be difficult to tackle, that the director and actors need to bring something new to the table to be able to gain traction. Therefore, my first question upon meeting the cast and director at Mansfield college last week, just ahead of their regular first week and we’re going to do with the funding.

Kiaya: Was it important in your casting to have people from different acting backgrounds?

Carys: I was keen to have people like Nick, who haven’t done Shakespeare, or even people that have not acted in OUDS drama before, put in roles that perhaps they have not been considered for before and maybe they’re doing a role that they’ve never done before. It’s also my first time running a show, so it was important for me to have a team that I could rely on.

Kiaya: Is it? Wow that’s interesting, you really went hard with Hamlet!

Carys: Yeah I chose a big one. I have only been doing drama for a year, I never did GCSE or A level. But the drama I have done over the last year has been amazing. So, I thought why not just do something that I’ve never done before and just have people who are just as passionate as me do it. It’s been really fun. The rehearsal room has been ecstatic. We are having a blast! It’s hard to believe it’s been so long since we’ve been rehearsing! And when is the performance?

Om Muthukumar (Laertes): We are performing from the 25th to 28th. We did a lot of zoom rehearsals because the play was so early. I think our first rehearsal was last Wednesday, so we have really hit the ground running. Obviously there’s that pressure, but we have still been having fun and getting to know each other, it’s been great. Nic: It was really nice over the summer that by the time we came back to Oxford we already had done a run through of the whole play on zoom. We knew everything that was happening, who everyone was, who they were playing, and what people wanted to do with their characters. We discussed with Carys quite a lot before we started about characterisation and relationships between characters. It’s important to make sure that now we are actually together it’s pretty easy. Carys: We started rehearsing in August, which feels like ages ago. We did a month of nothing with the script. I would just pick pairs and trios of characters and we would all sit and talk about how these characters relationships worked and then we would put what we’d done in August into the script in September. And then we did the final run through in first week and we started in repayment this week. The first thing everyone met for was the poster shoot and everyone was in costume! It was a bit weird but it was the nature of the show.

Kiaya: What are some unique directing, tech and set ideas you are implementing? Carys: Libby, our lighting designer, is going crazy! They did the lighting for midsummer night’s dream last term and Magdalen, and they used UV lights and it looked amazing. We aren’t using UV but we are going really heavy on depictions of smoke and mist through in the spotlight in the way that Hamlet and Ophelia are, and I thought that tracks quite nicely. I think I can make that relevant, entertaining, new, and a bit fresh, which is always what you want to do with Shakespeare. That was the impetus and from there it exploded outwards with interest. The crew had set it in their own with the press angle, including paperarazi and social media and thinking about how the modern world could affect these characters if they lived today.

Kiaya: Are you actively taking a more modern approach? Are you keeping the original text? How are you altering it to fit this more modern vision?

Carys: We are keeping the original text, but merging the folio version with the quarto version. The quarto version gives the women a bit more to do, as well as changing where ‘to be or not to be’ comes, meaning there is more precedence it inspired of more action before it. So I’ve modernised it in that way but the text has stayed the same. But in terms of modernising the context, it could happen today. If something that was happening in the story is happening in weeks of people that’s relevant to it, I’m going to find a way to reference it in the play.

Kiaya: Tell me about yourself, what your interest in drama is, and why you wanted to do this play in particular?

Josh Sneddon (Hamlet): My main interest for getting involved was the fact that I also did Hamlet at school and really enjoyed it. After the first audition, speaking to Carys and seeing where she was taking it was really interesting and I felt really interested by the whole of the news. I also really like the Andrew Scott version, so that was another reason for me doing it.

Carys: Yeah! It was a huge inspiration for this production, the Andrew Scott version, as well as the David Tenant version. Taking set and design inspiration from those ones, and then making it our own chemically.

Nic Rackow (Claudius): I have never acted in a Shakespeare play before, but I vaguely knew Hamlet. When the crew had called me, I thought the role of Claudius in particular was quite an interesting one. He is obviously a villain but I think he is often played quite straightforwardly, as a ‘ Parkinson villain’, which I think is quite boring. I think, as Carys said, there’s lots of relevance to the current royal family, the power and thinking about how the modern world is related to the current royal family, the power...

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**Hamlet will run at the Keble O’Reilly from the 25th-28th October.**

Read the full article on cherwell.org! Image courtesy of Freddie Houlahan and Evie Holloway.
Fallen Angels? Investigating Victoria’s Secret’s redemption arc

Ellen Rowlands

Simultaneously iconic for its glorious displays and notorious for the impossible beauty standards it perpetuates, the Victoria Secret Fashion show was a cultural staple of the fashion world. From the Weeknd and Bella Hadid’s tense mid-runway reconciliation in 2016 to Gisele Bundchen in a $15 million jewel encrusted bra, it seemed as though the show was inextricably linked to the sex appeal of Victoria’s Secret. But it held no limits. The first live streaming of the show in 2001 garnered over 1.5 million viewers and crashed the website. And at the centre of it all were the brands’ “Angels”, a heavenly set of models: all, of course, tall, tanned and toned— flaunting the latest designs and topped off with a set of wings.

However, facing a global closure of 250 stores and a 33% decrease in sales in recent years, the lingerie house has since been forced to undergo a major rebrand, cancelling their runway show and shifting their marketing to focus on promoting inclusivity and diversity. The crumbling of one of the once megalithic pillars of both fashion and pop culture begs the question: why did the Angels suddenly fall from grace? Originally founded in 1977, Victoria’s Secret began as an outlet for men to purchase lingerie in a more ‘comfortably masculine’ environment. From the 1990s onwards, however, the pivoted from its boudoir-esque roots toward captivating an audience of young women with its annual fashion show. The hook of Victoria’s Secret lay not in their affordable, trendy lingerie, but in the myth building and these products. The glitter, glamour and association with A-list faces that encircled the brand’s models continued to draw in a younger audience. And even though it was no longer men doing the fantasising, the heavenly image had not changed. The illusion that by buying into the brand would somehow map critically transform into an Angel propelled the brand to stardom. To millions, the Victoria’s Secret Angel epomized an impossibly level of sensual, feminine beauty. And even as other lingerie brands seemingly left behind Y2K’s body standards to reflect their audience’s growing desire for inclusivity—Fenty x Savage, for example, saw queer, transf and non-binary models grace its first catwalk—Victoria’s Secret still seemed reluctant to expand its tightly curated image. In a 2018 Vogue interview, Chief Marketing Officer Ed Razek justified his aversion to body diversity by describing the show’s raison d’être as a “fantasy... a 42-minute entertainment special.”

Now, after 5-year hiatus, the Victoria Secret fashion show has returned to our screens— in a manner of speaking. Self-described as ‘part documentary, part fashion fantasy’, the new show premiered on Prime video earlier this month under the name “The Tour 23”. In the pro cess of carving out a slimmer, more Gen-Z adjacent brand, elements needed to be shaken off: there is a clear feeling that the essence of the original show has been recoded into a hazy, hyperfeminine dream. Instead of spotlighting the newest designs, Gigi Hadid hosts a spotlight focusing on global independent designers creating looks about what it means to be a woman in an ‘imperfect body’. Not only was the traditional format dropped, but the title “Angels” has been swapped out for “VS Collective”. Self-consciously bridging the gap between old and new, original Angel Naomi Campbell walked alongside Winnie Harlow, drag superstar Honey Dijon and all-American soccer icon Megan Rapinoe. And while the show might not have graced the runway in wings, the show retained some of its previous luxe allure with A-list faces on the carpet and a performance from Rapper Doechii. This balancing act between retention and evolution makes it clear Victoria’s Secret is being built anew— at least at surface level. Clearly, marketing has realised the need to keep up with the “unbridled inclusivity” that Business Insider described as Savage x Fenty’s USP. But it’s difficult to shake off a controversial past, particularly when any success remains in part indebted to the lingering shadow of its high-kitsch beginnings. And, during this rebranding saga, another more problematic question: if the brand’s original allure was premised on an unattainable vision, what marks it out from the competition now? If the show now offers us a reality over fantasy, will the audience be willing to buy in? Only time will tell if their revamping successfully walks the tightrope between maintaining its allure whilst also moving towards inclusivity. Image via Rawpixel

WHAT’S ON!

STAGE

Angels in America: Millennium Approaches
1st–4th November, @Oxford Playhouse
“History is about to crack wide open.”

Prior Walter is a gay man with AIDS, experiencing visions from the heavens as he lies in his hospital bed. Harper Pitt is a neurotic Mormon housewife who is suffering from hallucinations. Their increasing disconnection from reality brings their confused partners, Louis and Joe, closer together. Tension builds, secrets abound, and sexuality is questioned in the pressure cooker that is an increasingly conservative and intolerant America.

MUSIC

Pixie Polite
28th October, @The Jolly Farmers
Watch the Hallowe’en special featuring Pixie Polite, of Drag Race UK fame, this weekend at The Jolly Farmers!

Shostakovich’s 11th Symphony with Ravel and Grant Still
10th November, @Sheldonion Theatre
Performed by Oxford University Orchestra and conducted by Toby Purser.

BOOKS

Early printed books from Ukraine: Treasures from the Bodleian
30th October, @ Weston Library
This presentation reflects both on their significance as specimens of printing from Eastern Europe and as part of one of the oldest and most extensive English collections.
Falling at the First Hurdle

Kezia McCarthy

"Yeah, I liked it, I just wasn’t expecting it to be so political" declared my (female) friend as we discussed Greta Gerwig’s record-breaking comedy. This was over text, but I like to imagine that silence, or perhaps a retort, would have followed this comment if it had been a conversation between us all in real time.

Because seriously? Even the many Barbie-related TikToks I have seen highlight that yes, the film does touch on the existence of the patriarchy, on the impossible standards women must face every day, and on the complexities involved in resolving these issues, while ensuring all feel seen and benefited from feminism. But, it could easily have been far more radical. The very fact that one of my friends thought Barbie did so much, when it effectively just conceded that sexism exists, is shocking. This is not to say that Barbie should have attempted to deal with more than it did, though. In fact, Gerwig did an incredible job in dealing with a very difficult task, and the film should instead act as a stepping stone towards real change — change that so badly needs to occur.

Barbie’s image as a fun, pink toy for girls is also one that many have seen as anti-feminist in her male gaze-conforming, stereotypically beautiful construction. But this actually makes dismantling this iconic doll an excellent place to start: the world she occupies, and Barbie herself, appear as perfect and effortless, partly because she is beautiful and knows it. Yet, Barbie’s journey to the real world is in fact a path to painful discovery of the patriarchy while she had believed sexism was solved. The point is that she immediately runs up against walls while men cathcally assault her in the street. As a woman, she feels uncomfortable in her skin. She is not perfect, the world does not treat her better for looking the way she does, and the same would go for the other Barbies, because sexism is everywhere. Taking a doll formerly seen as unrealistically perfect (and thus anti-feminist) and using her to underline reality is an impactful decision, and it works so well. It shocks people, and that is what we need.

And still, the film remains fun and humorous while dealing with the hardships of womanhood, of motherhood, and of raising awareness of, and attempting to solve, these issues while giving voice and space and opportunity to everyone. By the end of the film, there is acknowledgement that sexism does in fact exist and there are optimistic steps to be taken.

Perhaps making the film more radical would have been too mean a feat, and instead Barbie serves as a realisation that more needs to be done. There are gaps to be filled; I have read complaints about a lack of intersectionality, ignorance of rape and sexual assault, and too much comedy (the obsession with ‘I’m Just Ken’ distract from the message and instead draw attention to the men). But this film cannot do everything. I would have appreciated a jarring, painful watch — statistics and the shocking revelations we all need to acknowledge. The fact that Barbie, in merely drawing attention to sexism, has sparked controversy amongst critics — many of whom are men — is painful, claiming they can’t deal with the ‘misandry’. What misandry? The facts? What if Helen Mirren informed us that one in thirty women are raped every year? That 99% of rape cases in the UK go uninvestigated? What if, God forbid, black feminists spoke of the misogyny they face? Admitting that real issues do exist seems too much to so many people, so they hide from it. It is an understandable response: flight. But it should no longer be allowed as an option.

Image Credits: (L) CC 1.0 via. RawPixel, (R) CC 1.0 via. Store Norske Leksikon

BOOKS What books can say that we can’t

Ananya Parakh

As people, we love to talk to other people, to ourselves, to the mirror (don’t lie, everyone does it!) We all have opinions and that’s fun. We can leave comments and choose to like and dislike things for the world to see, with emojis to help. We can smile, shed a tear, gift a flower, hug someone dear. But I believe that despite our self proclaimed greatness as a human race, there are some things a book can say or do that we simply cannot.

A blanket draped over my bunk bed, in the darkness with a torch in her hand, my mum would read fairy tales to me. Hansel and Gretel and the gingerbread house, Red Riding Hood and her wicker basket, all from the same book passed down thirty years from my father’s childhood. Through the eyes of Austen and Woolf to feeling accepted in the world of Walker and Camus, books took me through a journey through time and the lives of people I wouldn’t have met otherwise. Being gifted All the light you cannot see by Anthony Doerr let me experience the world of a blind girl through descriptions of tactility and olfactory perception; I was with her as she found joy in a city struck by bombs during World War Two, and met a boy that liked birds more than bullets when he wasn’t supposed to. In turn,gifting one of my favorite books, The Color Purple by Alice Walker, allowed me to share my love for the freedom and happiness found by an African-American girl in circumstances that weren’t aligned for her joy.

The scene of running through a meadow, perhaps a meadow of hope, filled me with an appreciation for friendship that I have now passed on to my friend. Feeling the angst of Orwell and Plath and the audacity of Nabokov and Miller was transformative and challenging, leaving me brimming with enough questions to make me rethink my own rationality and beliefs.

I embraced the idea that there are things more important than money, love or fame. Things of interest beyond what we see, so fundamentally human yet perplexing and comprehensible, some that made me smile and others that caused confusion. And yet, while I’ve got books, I’ll never see the world the same.

A game of numbers and sleuths, I devoured Agatha Christie’s books as a race to the suspect before the pages would dwindle to an end. Raymond Chandler and Sam Spade showed me who was cool and what was real, and that a book of great one-liners was enough to make a good book great. Under a tree on a windy day, on a picnic by the river engulfed by stress for a collection we didn’t study for, sharing Before the coffee gets cold with my best friend taught me love when you’ve got no time or reason.

With a book, a line of poetry or even a word that perfectly encapsulates how you feel, you are alive, understood, and have discovered something that only exists here.

Image Credits: (L) CC 1.0 via. RawPixel; (R) Cover Illustration from 1921 edn., Public Domain.
Pedal to the metal
Grace Barnett-Cox

Oxford is a city ruled by the bicycle. In this Cyclist’s paradise, pedestrians often find themselves swept up in the whirlwind of cyclists and tourists, particularly in the notoriety of the semi-pedestrianised section of Broad Street. This raises a fascinating question: What feels this love of cycling in Oxford? And what happens when you switch from being a pedestrian to a cyclist? I believe that transitioning from walking to cycling is a transformative experience; it alters the way you’re in Jericho, the choice to join them isn’t burdened by a 40-minute walk. Cycling opens new pathways of possibilities and serves as an escape from awkward encounters. Encountering an ex on foot, and there’s no avoiding the situation. On a bike? Just pedal away, leaving your past behind for it to adapt.

Cycling around Oxford also invites you into a new relationship with the city, one that enables a deeper connection through participating in the city’s rich cycling culture. You become part of the larger narrative that surrounds the city, the university, and all those that share a love of cycling. You shift from being a mere witness to an integral part of the city’s foundations and society, adding to the long lineage of cyclists inspired by the whispering spires and cobbled streets - from the literary greats, scientific pioneers, and political visionaries (or Hugh Grant and Nigella Lawson). In this way, you bridge the gap between past and present, leaving your unique mark on the city’s history and preserving the cycling culture for generations to come.

There are, of course, downsides to cycling. Bike theft in Oxford is on the rise. I had my bike stolen last year. For a long time, I had such anxiety around losing my bike that I would never push every time I went to go and pick it up. Over time, my anxiety started to dissipate, as I learned to trust in the shared responsibility of the cycling community. We continue to embrace the joy and community of cycling, even in the face of such challenges.

Cycling in Oxford isn’t just a mode of transport, it’s a means of freedom, excitement, and adventure. It transforms the mundane into something fun and connects you more deeply with the city’s culture. There’s a love story between Oxford and its cycling, and when you make the leap from walker to cyclist, your life takes on new meaning and new possibilities.

A care leaver’s note on Oxford’s whacky traditions
Matt Taylor

This week is National Care Leavers Week. The act of dedicating a week to care leavers is a tradition in itself, a way to mark their experiences while advocating for their needs. I believe this is a PR strategy as old as this problem - a body of water, lush and green, a pasture. Points deducted if students can’t walk on the grass.

The Tier List
Green spaces in Oxford

Port Meadow
Truly a hidden gem in north Oxford. Walk for 10 minutes out of Jericho, and you are in what feels like the middle of countryside. Unruly and untamed - just watch out for the horses.

Magdalen deer park
What is even crazier than the mere fact that Magdalen has a deer park is the sheer size of it. You can walk around it for hours, reaching the Fellow’s Garden and realising that the thing is endless.

Christchurch Meadows
As a green space, the meadows tick all the boxes - a body of water, luscious trees, a pasture. The experience can be slightly dampened by how busy it can get, especially during the summer.

The college quad
This depends on the given quad of a given college, but the college quad is a pleasant nugget of greenery right outside your window. Points deducted if students can’t walk on the grass.

Some say the Oxford traditions go against everything we have learned about being progressive, productive, creative, and innovative, and they are just not inclusive. But is that really the case?

Traditions form a collective identity. They touch us, connect us, expand us. As much as I hated being paraded down the street in a silly hat, gown, and white bow tie, for once, I felt included.

The moment when the Sheldonian Theatre was filled with black and white TV static was unique. For that moment, all the differences in background, area of study, interests, or personalities no longer mattered. At that moment, as the static froze and the Latin was spoken, we were all the same. We were unified in the collective experience of officially becoming students at the University of Oxford. Finally, I felt part of something.

Are traditions important? I come from a world where traditions didn’t happen, leaving my life as unstable as a Mentos in a Coke bottle. But as Oxford opens up to more people from diverse and low-income backgrounds, they will be touchstones that make us feel part of the university. They give us permission to be part of something.

Looking for love?
Email lifestylecherwell@gmail.com or message one of our editors.
The Not So Secret History: The Party

Flora Symington

reflects on the chaos accompanying her recent Cowley houseparty in the latest instalment of her column.

I'm beginning to think a fortnightly column simply isn't enough to cover everything that goes on in this house of mine. To give you a brief summary, in the last two weeks we've hosted a party, had a long-awaited near miss with the infamous sewage hole, unexpectedly put up an overnight guest, and bailed out our downstairs corridor after a flood. So buckle up, readers, it's going to be a wild ride.

Let's start with what we might call the main event: the post-collective/housewarming/belated birthday party at the end of a nought week. After much discussion of exactly which cups we were going to allow people to drink from and how much light we wanted in the dancing room, we had the house and ourselves party-ready rather earlier than we were expecting. With an unforeseen half hour to spare, we responded in the only way that was reasonable, and decided elaborate drinks were in order. The spirits we had hidden moments before miraculously reappeared, and espresso martinis all round seemed like an appropriate choice. By the time we had succeeded in making them - a process which involved a lot of pouring of coffee from one receptacle to another, not to mention the shaking of brown sticky liquid in a container with a very precarious lid - we had successfully undone all our hard work cleaning the kitchen, and the guests were arriving. At least we had started as we meant to go on...

The party was an all-round success as far as I was concerned: a respectably high proportion of those who clicked 'Going' on the Facebook event actually came, and a respectably low proportion of these disgraced themselves. I don't want to go into too many graphic details (readers of this column have heard more than enough about our plumbing system and what goes into it for the time being), but suffice it to say that the plastic bowl we served punch from at the start of the night was serving a different purpose by the end. The garden was (almost) fixed, so I spent most of the night but there, chatting and keeping half an eye on the box of gravel we'd put over the final exposed portion of the sewage pit.

I'm going to take a risk here and tell a story which, if the relevant person ever reads this column, might cause some upset - but given the amount of alcohol consumed by the time...

The night was rounded off at a suitably ungodly hour, and only one party guest was left tucked up on the sofa in an unfit state in which to walk home. It's a shame my brief doesn't allow me to include pictures, or I would be regaling you all with a visual rundown of the night too, for there was - as one partygoer exquisitely put it on the Facebook the next day - 'a scrumptious number of digi cams on the loose'.

Coming down into the kitchen the next morning with the mysterious clarity that sometimes comes with the very first stage of a hangover, however, I found said guest had vanished. The plastic bowl we'd left him nursing lay washed up on the side, the blanket was folded neatly back onto the sofa. When later I quizzed about his mythical departure, a mist seemed to descend over his eyes, as he explained that he'd been awoken by the rising sun, and began his journey home across the city in the dawn. It's the most poetic way I've ever heard anyone describe a walk of shame, but oddly enough, I sympathised; I've rarely seen the dreaming spires look more beautiful than in the first light of a Sunday morning.

Since that weekend we've all settled into a rather quieter routine, with lots of nights in drinking tea and cultivating a sourdough starter. The biggest drama of last week was the day of the horrific rain storm, which saw the Cook stealing the Classicist's towel to mop up the water cascading in from under our back door. The subsequent email to the letting agent provoked a response which included the exceedingly gratifying phrase 'I'm so sorry to hear there's been yet another issue at the property'. Yet another issue? Never in the history of student tenancies has such an admission of guilt been made by the owner to the tenant, and, sure enough, a drain was put in outside our back door the very next day. Perhaps the Poet has a point - it seems guilt is a potent force.

“'I've rarely seen the dreaming spires look more beautiful than in the first light of a Sunday morning.'”
Bittersweet friendship break-ups

Deborah Ogunnoiki

My earliest memories from school are of walking to lunch with my best friends, Feyi and Elizabeth. We had been friends since we were in nursery and by Year Five we were still as tight as ever, despite being in different classes. Walking to lunch arm in arm, we attempted to match our steps. We wanted to be perfectly in sync - essentially the same person. And, for a while, we were. Everyone referred to us as the 'skipping girls,' the girls who skipped rope at break and lunch, the girls who were inseparable. Seeing each other at school five days a week wasn't enough so we saw each other on the weekends. To my nine-year-old mind, we were the same people. When we fell out in Year Six, it was devastating. I no longer had my support group when I started getting bullied in my class, and it was lonely. Worst of all, I felt like I had lost a large part of myself. For much of my life up to that point, my identity had been shaped by my friendships, so when I no longer had those friendships, I felt like I no longer knew who I was. I tried playing a new instrument, finding new hobbies, and making new friends, but the scars of that friendship break-up lasted forever.

I write this now as a 21-year-old - no longer a sniveling ten-year-old girl hobbling to her mum's rescue because her friends don't want to play with her anymore - but still fresh from a friendship break-up. Though 11 years have passed since my first friendship break-up the sting of severance still hurts. It's taking my brain a while to catch up with the fact that the person who sang me happy birthday, who went on holidays with me, who I saw almost every week and talked to almost every day was suddenly gone. It's not like death, where the person can't speak to you anymore; it's a more empty feeling, living with the fact that the person who was once your friend has made a choice to let go. Sometimes it's your fault, sometimes it's theirs, and sometimes there's no one to blame but circumstance. But still, the ten-year-old girl in me can't help but feel sad because her friends don't want to try and fix things.

There is a real perceived permanency to friendship on TV and media. Carrie Bradshaw had her girls with her in the city and even when they fell out they were back together by the end of the episode. In popular culture, such as 'Friends,' 'How I Met Your Mother,' and 'The Big Bang Theory,' we're bombarded with the permanency of friendship: forever friends. Everyone craves these groups of love, in which the people you're friends with never stop loving you. But that's not reality, at least not in full. Of course, your friends may never stop loving you, but that love, like life, will change. People get new jobs and move away, they get partners who get more of their attention, and they experience grief, love, heartbreak, and romance; all these things change them as people, and, when you change as a person, the love you give changes too.

The fact that love changes is a fact that I and others who experience friendship break-ups struggle to wrap our heads around. A lot of the time it's because we hardly notice the changes in ourselves. It comes as a surprise when we realize we are just not the same person we were at the beginning of that friendship. The person I was when I was three years old and had just met Feyi and Elizabeth was a completely different and much less mature person than me at ten when our friendship fell apart. My priorities, interests and tolerances had changed, and this is true to this day. The sting of the break-up hurts, but I can look back and be happy that we're going in different directions. While I had hoped that we would walk down our separate paths together, it's okay for my former friend to decide otherwise. The love hasn't disappeared, but I can recognize the other sources of love in my life - and, you know what, I love them too.

DOUBLE TAKE:

Dear Cherwell... all my friends have job offers and I don’t even know what I want to do with my life! Please help!

We ask our resident agony aunts for their advice on your problems.

Remember it’s okay for you to choose a different path

That sounds like a scary position to be in. It can be quite daunting to know that all your friends know where they’re going and what they’ll be doing next year, and you still have no idea. Let us reassure you: it will be okay. People can take longer than others to find their calling, and there is no correct timeframe to do it.

First of all, take a deep breath and pause. If you graduate without a job next year, what is the worst that will happen? Remember that you do not have to go straight into your dream career - you can always take some time working in a less prestigious and fast-paced role for a few years while you figure out what it is you want to do.

However, if this is stressing you out, we recommend that you take some time to have a think about what you might like to do. Take a couple of hours a week (maybe treat yourself to a nice coffee whilst you do it) and research your options. I’m sure that once you take the time to look into it more, you will find that your dream career might jump out at you.

But remember, it’s okay for you to choose a different path to your friends. Everyone might seem like they are applying to Law, Consultancy, or Banking, but there are lots of other options available to you -- and many that you will fall in love with if you give them a chance. Open yourself up to the possibility of taking an unconventional route.

Remember, it’s worth taking time to make a big career decision, as it can impact your whole life. It will all work out with time.

You are only at university once

You’ve heard of Wall Street, but have you considered Park End Street? This is your final year of university - now is not the time to be stressed about jobs. You have this time to enjoy with your friends, in Oxford, which you might never get again. Everyone will move away to different places in a year to start their new lives… so make the most of being together while you can.

Go as much as you can, take advantage of drinking on weeknights and the flexibility that comes with not having a 9 to 5. There will be lots of time to find a job later, but you only get university once, not to mention that you’ll be working for the next 40 years of your life. So, working, but not in the wrong job.

Consider, even, taking some time out after uni, rather than starting a stuffy, boring job in the City. Go travelling, get a job in a café, and take the time to just be 21. A career will come along eventually, as long as you keep looking out for it. Who knows, maybe travel writer is your true vocation!

You probably don’t want to be a consultant, anyway. What could you even consult on? Nobody grows up dreaming of the stark white walls and desk cubicles of KPMG, and if your friends tell you that, they are lying. Taking time to find your dream job, instead of just doing what everyone else is doing will pay off in the end.
A taste of Tuscany

Georgie Allan writes about trying wines in Tuscany...

My travels through Italy took me to the small Tuscan town of San Gimignano, an undeniably tourist trap, but beautiful and worth it all the same. The Main Street, which traces its origins to the days of the Roman Empire and runs north to south along the length of the village, consisted of 3 types of shop; leather, cheese and wine. Fortunately for me, the latter offered tastings at either a low or no cost, and were more than happy to indulge my curiosity about the minutiae of wine produced in the region.

Region wide was a common theme throughout discussions with the sommeliers I met, who insisted that Tuscan wine, olive oil and really all produce was by far the best the required to be found elsewhere. The ceramic, clay-like qualities of the soil, allowed for watering reten- tion and produced grapes of great quality. I was repeatedly told that Tuscan wine has much more body than its French counterpart, with more tannins and acidity, though wines produced on the coast did bear some greater similarity to the French style. One sommelier informed me that the most similar wines to those I tried in San Gimignano were produced in Ukraine before the war due to similarities in soil quality.

My inquiries also led to some insight on food in the region. My favourite dish throughout my time in Italy was the Pappardelle Cinghiale (wild boar) that I ate in San Gimignano, which was reminiscent of a bolognese but lighter, fresher and with melt-in-the-mouth meat. For drinking it was an intimate element of social life, held in reverence completely alien to British drinking culture. Compete-

style, the differentiation was not as marked. The same sommelier explained this was a much heavier wine to be drunk in half glasses and certainly not in large quantities.

Il Luoghi Rosso, 2022, Cabernet Sauvignon - made on the coast of Tuscany, with a fruity but intense raisin smell this wine was incredibly flavourful. Aged for a year it had mellowed giving it a mature taste.

Grabbing lunch out without going bankrupt

Kobi Mohan explores lunch on a budget...

There is a world in which I am the person who casually cracks out their carefully crafted packed lunch in hall - a symbol of im-
peccable organisation and compet-
ency, the envy of all around me. Unfortunately, that world is not the one I occupy – on more days than I care to admit, I wander about town, lunch box em-
pty and growing, in search of lunch out. However, without a keen eye on prices, this lifestyle can easily get one into the best of one’s financ-
es. With this in mind, I’ve tried to string together a list of lunch options that have kept my finances in the green whilst also meeting my basic nu-
tritional needs. Rozana’s hummus falafel salad wrap £4. After a long morning of sitting and staring at the ceiling of the Rad Cam or people watching in the bod/road cam/Exeter marquee/newly opening Exeter college library (!), I feel I need to treat myself to a warm and nourishing meal. Rozana’s hummus falafel salad wrap (with both garlic and chil-
lime sauce) is that meal. No com-
plaints from me, it’s just good. Who doesn’t love hummus and falafels?

Sainsbury’s meal deal £3.50- Yes, I am not like other girls, I love Sainsbury’s meal deal. I feel like the options for sand-
wiches and snacks are just better, and if you mix Magdalen Street and hit up one of the other slightly further flung branches (eg. St. Aldates Sainsbury’s) of this undervalued meal deal provid-
er, you will, as I do most days, be able to get your hands on some real lunch gems - salmon cream cheese sand-
wiches, star-
bucks chocolate fraps, yoghurt and granola pots, chocolate twists and more.

Alternative Tuck Shop £5.10- This is more of a special lunch for me- it either serves as a ther-
apy lunch after a morning of un-
interpretable lectures and failed attempts at essay-writing, or as the nice lunch I have with a friend to convince them I do not have Greggs for lunch most days of the week. Their avocado and cheese sandwiches with lemon pepper dressing on olive focaccia in particular are pretty damn good. Juicy, filling, nutritious (I think?)- they’re just what you’ll need to prepare for an af-
temtomato-y alternative to the meal deal hordum. Greggs’ pastry bakes £1.80- To be honest, I have had my fair share of Greggs’ lunches. When you’re cold to the bone after weeks of refus-
ing to turn on the heating at home and feeling a bit downtrodden, Cheese and Onion bakes do, in fact, hit the spot. Warm, cheesy, flaky goodness, maybe with an orange juice and a snack added on the side – it’s re-
ally not that bad! And if you’re a truly committed fan and have the Greggs loyalty app then prepare to make some killer savings (Buy 9 pastries and get the 10th one free! Bargain alert!).
Changing the meaning of a World Cup

Jessica Cullen discusses.

FIFA recently announced the winners of the 2030 World Cup Bid, and Morocco, Egypt, and Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina. In a shock move FIFA has set the tournament to be played in three continents by six teams qualifying automatically.

The initial bid was unconventional from its inception - the World Cup has never been played on more than one continent let alone more than one country, and although the next stage is set to be the US and Canada, there is no way to determine if stage is set to be the US and Canada - one continent let alone more than one has never been played on more than one from its inception - the World Cup automatically.

So, if the crime occurred in Uruguay during the World Cup in a country that the offender is not from. In order for this to be prosecute in the offender’s home country the act must be criminal where it was committed. So, if the crime occurred in Uruguay but was committed by a French person it would have to be prosecuteable in both countries in order to go to trial in France. FIFA regulations would then have to be consulted as they craft their response, and each jurisdiction would have to consider their own laws if they were to support....... It makes for a much more difficult case.

All in all it reads as a money grab from FIFA, able to exploit World Cup fever in 6 different countries all at once. It fits their track record, as Qatar’s carbon dumping proves, but questions the integrity of football’s greatest competition. Essentially ensuring a Saudi World Cup in 2034, it will change the World Cup as we know it.

Adam Saxon eulogises Sir Bobby Charlton.

On Saturday afternoon, amidst the regular chaos of a 3 pm kick-offs, the news of the death of one of football’s all-time greats spread from crowd to crowd. The news of the death of Sir Bobby Charlton is a sad moment for all football fans. He was one of the last remaining representatives of a different, gentlemanly era of football that has long since passed. No more so was his gentlemanship persona better represented than in his response to winning a BBC Life-time Achievement Award in 2008. Charlton would always downplay his achievements and say it was a dream to have played for a football league club and to have played for England.

The World Cup was arguably one of the most successful players of his generation; Charlton’s journey was not an easy one. He was one of the Manchester United players present on the plane in the Munich air disaster of 1958, a tragedy which killed 23 people, including eight United players. The disaster struck with United through their darkest days and became a legend for both club and country. He was loyal, and that loyalty paid dividends with Charlton getting the honour of captaining the team that won the European Cup for United in 1968.

We celebrate the heroes of today for what they can do with a football, but the likes of Messé and Ronaldo are rightfully praised for the monstreous records they have set in their careers that have spanned twenty years. However, it is often forgotten the extent to which the technology has changed since the likes of Charlton were playing. To score the screamers that Charlton scored with a ball that has a similar resemblance to a modern bowling ball than football is a near-unfathomable achievement. The legacy of such players must live on, and it will, because of the way in which they wrote themselves into the history books. Charlton’s goalscoring records for Manchester United and England stood for over forty years before being beaten by Wayne Rooney, again demonstrating the level of company that Charlton should be mentioned alongside.

Jessica Cullen

This week Cherwell spoke to the current women's Blues captain at OUHC-Megan Cottey.

When did you start playing hockey?

When I was in year four, at 11. Did you try any other sports?

What was it that drew you to hockey specifically, and what made you keep playing?

I started out doing a lot of individual sports when I was little, so swimming, running, tennis, things like that. My sports teacher introduced hockey to the school and to me. I just stuck with it. And still do it now.

Are you a returning blue?

This would have been my third year as a blue, but unfortunately my injury may change my personal season.

How did last season go for the Women’s Blues?

Last year we were plagued by ACLs and injuries. The Captain at the start of this season was Rachel Diggin, and she tore her ACL in the first game. I took over from her, so it has been quite a complicated start. Last year, we got relegated from the Premier Division in BUCS where we played against the best teams in the country. That league basically divided into two, and you’re either in the top six, or you fight to stay up every year against the bottom three. We went down unfortunately, but it means that this year, it’s a bit more exciting because we can actually win games and our whole aim is to get promoted back up. On Saturday we play in the National League, and we had a pretty mid-season, finishing middle of the table. We’re hoping to finish a little bit higher, but staying up in that league is not an easy thing to do.

Do you fine hockey turnover, intrinsic to a University squad, a difficult thing to deal with? Losing and gaining players each year.

I think this year has been particularly interesting. In my first year I was part of a pretty new squad - I didn’t know that because I was a fresher, but it had very little remaining Blues. In second year, the squad grew and stayed the same which I think is quite rare. That was really nice, and we were actually able to build without restarting things but even then, we had a new coach, so everything was different in terms of tactics and training. This year we lost essentially our entire squad and I think there are three or four of us who played in the 2015-16 Varsity. It has definitely impacted the squad but at the same time it’s just the nature of university sport and I think that the start of our season is normal, as we always have to pick it up later in Michaelmas. I think it has its pros and cons.

Reflections on last year’s Varsity, held in 2015-16.

What has been your best win with the Blues?

Obviously winning Varsity in my first year is an experience you can’t replicate anywhere else.

But my most memorable game is probably when we played Loughborough. We actually lost 1-0, but Loughborough essentially pay their players to go and play hockey there and have the entire GB squad in their team. We held them to 0-0 until the last minute but that for us was a huge achievement. We had been going to Exeter and losing 10-0. So that was probably my favorite game of them played even though we lost.

What would you say is the worst defeat?

I mean, a 10-0 score line was pretty tough, and we had a severely depleted squad with concussion, broken fingers and toes, and then ACLs like mine. It’s definitely the worst loss I think I’ll ever have in life.

Will you stay captain now or will the mantle be passed on to another player?

When Rachel Diggin got injured, she wanted to stay so she basically did all the admin. I was Captain on the pitch, but I think I’m going to take a step back and probably take up a coaching role. I’ll pass the baton onto the two vice captains who are both very capable people, so they’ll probably co-Captain together for the rest of the season, Alice Jackson and Lotti Knights.

What is the best thing about being a Captain?

I’d say the relationships you form with people. In hockey we have a 4-week preseason, so I’ve been with the girls for a while now. This year I really like I’ve rarely been fully at the end. You really get what you put in, and it’s interesting to manage people and care for them a lot more closely than you might if you don’t have as much responsibility.

Any key players to watch on the team or rising stars?

All three of the freshers that have come in have been very good, such as Izzy Dowling. Holly Smith has been our solid Centre back for a long time, and she has improved every season. Alice and Lottie are also both great players, which is why they are my vice captains.

Where can our readers watch you play?

Iffley Road Sports Club, every Wednesday and Saturday.
Cryptic Crossword by Sarah Beard

ACROSS
1. French novel for gladiator, for example (5)
3. Leap once a year (6)
7. Alcohol starch tastes sweet (9)
8. Vision necessity finishes with affirmative (4)
9. Stop hotel alternative (4)
10. 1000 is the difference between a long and a short pause (5)
11. The conclusion is partly battered (4)
12. Kind characters (4)
15. Inventory of a hybrid Spanish-Filipino language (7)
16. Viewed sharp (3)
17. Prepared in bread yeast (5)
18. And the rest hidden in secret cases (3)
19. Delayed after squirt causing fatigue (9)
20. Thus, intricate fabric creates comfort (6)
21. Energy measurement sounds precious (5)

DOWN
1. Drums again mean serious consequences (13)
2. The world revolves on the sound of choppers (4)
3. Leave Slovenian town for a lot of breakfast (9, 3)
4. Dick with money (4)
5. Obtain the portrait, understand? (3, 3, 7)
6. Unexpectedly out of 5th week (3, 2, 3, 4)
7. Heavy guide (4)
12. High-speed train’s initial tracks get vandalised (3)
13. Amidst nausea symptoms, there’s nothing to worry about (4)
14. Starting with a cooler serve (3)
22. A generation in a matriarch (4)
23. Reject spoiled vote (4)

Sarah Beard’s Cryptic
1ST WEEK | MT 23

ACROSS: 2) rule of thumb; 6) Saturn; 7) dilemma; 9) chapter; 11) wonky; 13) oasis, 15) barista; 18) trailer; 19) static; 21) catastrophe

DOWN: 1) meadow; 2) real; 3) loom; 4) tiara; 5) market; 8) acrobat; 10) pita; 12) Kiwi; 14) Mantta; 16) suits; 17) streak; 20) ASAP; 22) lace

Devini de Mel's Cryptic
1ST WEEK | MT 23

ACROSS: 1) DEAD IN THE WATER; 8) AS I MOV; 9) RHETORIC; 10) TWILIGHT; 11) LEGEND; 12) COGENT; 14) CRAFTED; 16) CO-TERIE; 18) SAPHIO; 21) SAW RED; 23) PRELOVED; 24) STRANGER; 25) DETOUR; 26) CANDY FROM A BABY

DOWN: 2)ABIDING; 3) NAVIGA- TOR; 4) HERETIC; 5) WHEEL; 6) THOUGHT UP; 7) REIGNED; 13) ENTERTAIN; 15) AMSTERDAM; 16) CHAOTIC; 17) EMPEROR; 19) PAV- LOVA; 20) ORDERLY; 22) DAGGY

Sudoku & Oxdoku by Lewis Callister