

"Its 99% politics and 1% law." In conversation with Stella Assange
Profiles > Page 14

Buy less, choose well: the return of the Oxford Fasion Gala
Fashion > Page 19

Top 10 films for a trouble free Trinity
Film > Page 18

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INDEPENDENT SINCE 1920

VNI: Oxford's unique and costly inflation index

Cherwell News investigates.

The Van Noorden Index, Oxford's unique inflation index which is often used to inform annual college rent increases, is consistently higher than standard national inflation indices and has recently come under fire for its lack of transparency.

When compared to the national inflation indices calculated by the Office for National Statistics such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the Consumer Price Index including housing costs (CPIH), the VNI trends consistently higher. This holds true for 2022, with the VNI standing at 12.86% versus CPI and CPIH figures of 9.10% and 7.90% respectively. This term, as JCRs negotiate rents for the next academic year, the VNI sits at 13.60%.

Concerns about the VNI have been raised in the SU that there is not enough transparency about the data underlying the VNI. One JCR president expressed their concerns with using the Van Noorden Index to determine rent increases, telling *Cherwell*: "Using the VNI to calculate rent increases is outdated. It seems to have been consistently higher than other national inflation indices and fails to consider how students will be able to afford these increases, considering student loan increases are capped at 7%, when over the past two years, the VNI has been 13.60% and 12.86% respectively."

A *Cherwell* investigation into rent increases in Michaelmas 2022 found that they ranged between 1.8-12.9%, depending on which college a student attends. The 12.9% hike was from Christ Church, who were using the 2022 VNI figure of 12.86%.

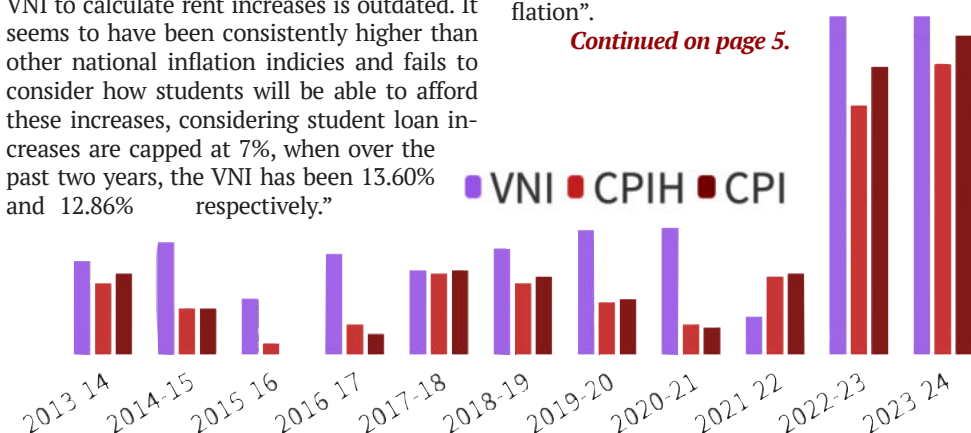
The Van Noorden Index (VNI), a system created decades ago, is named after the late Roger Van Noorden, an economist, fellow, and domestic bursar at Hertford College in the 1970s who is remembered in *The Times* as "acquiring a daunting reputation for prudence in the college and for financial expertise throughout the university". The VNI is an inflationary measure unique to Oxford, created to reflect the costs faced by Oxford colleges. It is calculated annually for all colleges by the Estates Bursar Committee, using aggregated cost information and forward forecasts. The VNI is based on the inflation rate of items like utilities, maintenance, and staffing - a narrower set of goods than is used to calculate national inflation indices. In 2020, New College described "the local 'Van Noorden Index'" as "collegiate inflation" or "in essence service-industry inflation".

Continued on page 5.



Cherwell's Official BNOC List

Pages 8-9

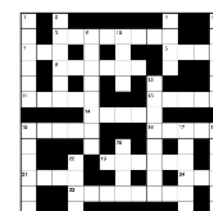


Sewage, Scum and Nasty Infections
Declining river quality plagues Oxford students
News > p6

To BNOC or not to BNOC?
Our editors go head to head in the debate chamber.
Comment > p11



Puzzles inside!
Page 13



Masthead

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A year ago, when I was nought but a Silly Fresher, I was one of the poor unfortunate souls roped into organising the BNOC list. This seemed at first like a scary task, and then remained a scary task throughout the entire process. Even as a relative ‘newbie’ to Oxford tradition, I got the sense that BNOCs were something that students really cared about, and that the list was something I had to get right. If you read last year’s list then you will know that I did, in fact, not get it right. With a surplus of Cherwell staff masquerading as popular figures, and with the remaining spaces occupied by more Union hackers than pub crawlers, this particular list turned out to be pretty unpopular. Coupled with certain ~office politics~ leading to a botched print spread and a flurry of Oxfesses espousing our misjudgement, fresher-me realised that my list was a flop.

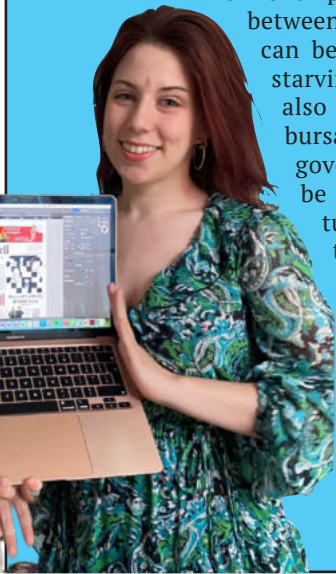
However, in a storied show of perseverance (or maybe just a narcissistic bid to place my own name on the list), the BNOCs are back again. I don’t know if this list is any better; I’m sure many will argue it’s worse. If one thing’s for sure, it’s that we haven’t learnt any lessons about not featuring our own staff members. However, our publishers have asked us to create a ‘stir’ this term to drive up revenue, and we’re hoping that all press is good press, even when we are ‘the press’. So please, dear reader, whether you rip the list to shreds or find it mildly amusing, make sure you at least talk about it.

Meg Lintern
Editor-in-Chief



Whilst the BNOC list is undoubtedly one of the biggest attractions of Trinity term, for some, Trinity is categorised by another event: rent negotiations. Sorry to get serious here, but whilst negotiations may be something that most people aren’t aware of, the cost-of-living crisis makes it difficult to ignore. Having undergone rent negotiations myself recently, I’ve come out feeling relieved that I go to a college which seems to understand the impact that rent increases have on already struggling students. However, the same can’t be said of all colleges – and whilst it’s too early to say what the outcome of rent negotiations will be, the elusive “VNI” figure, which many colleges use to determine their rent increases, stands at an astronomical 13.6%. The University estimates that Oxford accommodation costs range from £610 to £810 a month – over a 6 month period, this would be an increase of between £550-£660, and for some, this can be the difference between eating or starving. Financial support increases are also far from proportional: the Oxford bursary will be rising by 4%, and the government maintenance loan will be increasing by 2.8% next year. Stay tuned, as in the coming weeks, the *Cherwell* news team will seek to highlight the effects of rent increases across colleges, and what it might mean for you.

Izzie Alexandrou
Editor-in-Chief



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Background Artwork: Dowon Jung of The Isis

Jack Twyman *Deputy Editor*

So it’s that time of year again... no not summer, rather Cherwell’s Top 40 BNOC List of 2023. Love them or hate them BNOCs are set to remain a permeant presence within the University. However, they are most definitely an source of controversy and this years list aims to reflect this. Gone are the days when Union hacks were able to spam their way onto the list – only I was able to hack the system this time because quite frankly what could be more Bnoccy than putting your own name on the list just because you could.

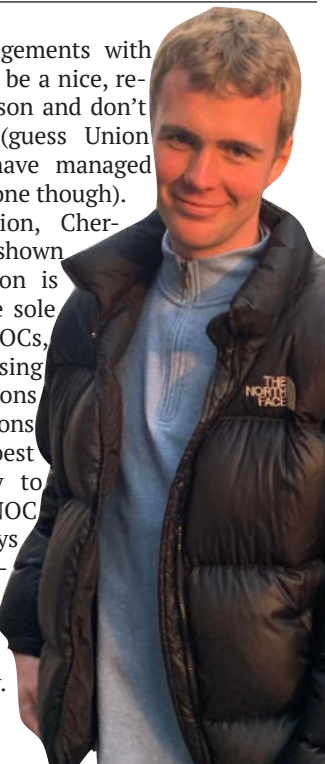
That aside, this list aims to reflect the University as a whole – with BNOCs chosen from across the extra-curricular spectrum encompassing sport, drama, activism and access. There are some unsurprising features – Danny Dipper, and Grace Oddie James place high, but we see new figures reflective of the year that’s passed, with Ukrainian Society President Yaroslava Bukhta and incoming

SU President Danial Hussein both featured for the first time. The new Diplomatic Society flourished this year, and elevated its President Rosie Wigglesworth to BNOC status. Student activist Beau Boka Batesa also features after a profile in our Week 0 print, and Lauren Webb who led Oxford women rugby team to victory at Varsity takes 17th Place. Drag Queen Brodie Brain – a success story of the OULGBTQ+ Society’s drag cuppers also debuts. All in all this BNOC list is diverse with around 65 per cent identifying as female, and around 35 per cent POC. Sorry @ Jacob Rees Mogg and @Boris Johnson your successors aren’t guaranteed BNOC fame.

To those other than Union hacks who actually care, I hope this list shows you that there is much opportunity across Oxford to explore new interests and try new things, and also gives you some memorable faces to reach out to if you want some advice. The most important factors identified to become a BNOC was to be social, build an ultra-recognisable unique brand (Dipper’s jacket for example), never sleep (ever), be proactive

in your engagements with interests, and be a nice, respectable person and don’t play games (guess Union hacks may have managed without that one though).

In conclusion, Cherwell has shown that the Union is no longer the sole creator of BNOCs, and that focusing on your passions (PM aspirations aside) is the best new pathway to fame. The BNOC list will always be a marmite issue, but hopefully it’s a bit more palatable now.



Oxford students attend London XR Protests

Jakub Trybull reports.

Oxford students joined thousands of climate protestors by gathering outside the Houses of Parliament last weekend to demand the Government cease all new fossil fuels searches immediately. The mass demonstration dubbed “The Big One” involved over 200 different groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth and has been led by Extinction Rebellion (XR).

It has been four years since the group brought the capital to a standstill by parking a pink boat in Oxford Circus and causing the UK Parliament to declare a “climate emergency”. It is also the first major demonstration since the group announced in January that it would no longer use disruption tactics in demonstrations (something it, and other climate groups, have been criticised for doing in the past).

The coalition had two demands for the government: the immediate halting of all new fossil fuel projects and the establishment of emergency citizens’ assemblies to “let the people decide how to end the fossil fuel era quickly and fairly”. The deadline for a response was set for Monday 5pm where protestors gathered in Parliament square. The failure of the government to respond led XR co-founder, Clare Farrel, to vow to step up campaigning and action across the country.

Student Rebellion Oxford, part of XR Oxford, hoped to have 100 students participate in the protest. They claim this was probably not met, especially with the demonstration coinciding with Collections weekend. Oliver Sworder, a spokesperson for Student Rebellion Oxford and biologist at Keble, told *Cherwell*: “Although we didn’t make the target, nearly 500 rebels went along from Oxfordshire and we hope mobilisation may make more students come

next time.”

He continues: “I left genuinely hopeful. Not that that government would heed the demand, but hopeful that somewhere between 20,000-50,000 people showed up—all with a common goal.

“It felt almost like a festival; children played in the streets, music was performed, volunteers gave out free food, talks about proportional representation, as well as on the state of the climate, or veganism, or people’s experiences were given, by MPs, normal people, and even celebrities such as Carice van Houten from *Game of Thrones*.”

XR Oxford organised a coach to London and XR Youth went via train. Other individuals made their own way there but coincidentally caught many of the same trains or buses. Hertford’s Environment and Ethics rep, Beatrice McWilliams, echoed sentiments of hope and how protests can help cure eco-anxiety, telling *Cherwell* that “calling out [the lack of action] with thousands of others in the heart of London was a very valuable experience.”

Other students have criticised the protestors’ decision to make their way to London rather than staging protests in local areas. Some see

this as hypocrisy as protestors will have inevitably caused emissions through fossil fuel-based transport. However, Sworder has rebutted these claims: “When we live in a society of no alternative, and when the government right now is extremely centralised, I think it is unfair in the absence of realistic alternatives that would still have the same impact.”

He notes that the protest was designed to “gather people together to foster conversation and connection, so doing so outside parliament is the best way of doing

so, although there may be plans for more localised ones in the future.”

Regarding Oxford-specific climate action, Student Rebellion Oxford welcomes the new traffic measures but argues that the University can do more, with continued acceptance of donations from dirty companies and the careers service promoting students down the career pipeline into “industries profiting off the destruction of our future”.

Image Credit: Suzanne Williams and Ines from XR Oxford



Fintech entrepreneur funds scholarships for Black British students

Rufus Hall reports.

Oxford’s Black Academic Futures programme has made two fully funded postgraduate scholarships available to Black British students.

Both course fees and living costs will be covered by the scholarship which will be available to Black British students across all subject areas. The scholarships also come with on-course mentoring provision for students. The first scholars are expected to begin their studies in the 2023/2024 academic year.

The programme is supported by the philanthropist and fintech entrepreneur Valerie Moran, who moved to London from Zimbabwe in 2004 to pursue a career in financial technology. In 2019, she was listed in the *Financial Times* as one of the most influential BAME leaders in tech.

The university has relied upon Moran’s generous philanthropic support to finance Black Academic Futures, which aims to address the under-representation of Black students at Oxford. In the postgraduate sector, the representation of UK-domiciled Black students in Oxford was 3.3% below the average for UK higher education institutions.

Moran said: “ethnic minority students need

support from people like myself to ensure that future generations are given every opportunity to apply and compete for the same job opportunities.”

The programme began in 2020 and has since grown to provide up to 30 full scholarships to Black British students annually. A 27% increase in applications from UK-domiciled Black applicants for full-time postgraduate research degrees in the year 2021/2022 followed the launch of the programme.

The University has said that “the programme builds on Oxford’s ongoing efforts to increase the number of postgraduate students from under-represented groups more broadly, and reaffirms the University’s commitment to addressing race equality, combatting discrimination and building an inclusive postgraduate community where all members feel welcome, valued and respected”.



Oxford project maps Ukrainian refugee crisis

Toby Carmichael reports.

Oxford’s researchers have released a significant report tracking the complex internal displacement of Ukraine’s population.

Published in the *Population and Development Review*, the team from the Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science estimated that 5.3 million people had been displaced between 25th February and 14th March 2022. The study has been credited alongside others for encouraging the United Nations to amend its initial figure of 1.6 million internally displaced people to 6.5 million by 16th March 2022.

Using a unique metric, researchers were able to incorporate UN data on border-crossings with their own data which tracked active Facebook usage by Ukrainians in the weeks following the Russian invasion. According to lead author Dr Douglas Leasure, these modern methods avoid the inefficiencies of traditional surveying techniques. He explains “by using social media and targeted advertising data, we were able to very quickly collect information on daily active users on Facebook in Ukraine provinces and break them down into five-year age groups and sex.”

Alongside estimates on the absolute number of persons displaced from their home prov-

ince, the study was also able to map regional displacement, especially among women and children migrating westward. Professor Melinda Miles, Director of the Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science and senior author of the report, remarked upon the metric’s humanitarian applications: “This metric is one of the only quantitative estimates of internal displacement in virtual real-time, which we are continuing to develop to help those in need during humanitarian crises.”

The researchers are hopeful that the report’s findings could be used to aid vulnerable people still within Ukraine. Prior to the publication of the study, data on displacement in Ukraine had mainly focused on those crossing borders into neighbouring countries. However, Dr Leasure noted that he and his team had become aware of the need to shed more light on the thirty-eight million Ukrainians who remained in the country: “it became really clear to us that our daily population estimates could help the United Nations and others to assess humanitarian needs and develop a targeted response strategy.”

The Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science continues to strive to provide research in the hope of reaching those Ukrainian civilians who require aid the most.

Students shoot first feature film in 40 years

Phin Hubbard reports.

Breakwater Pictures Ltd., the limited company which grew out of the student production company Nocturne Productions, finished the shoot of their namesake feature film “Breakwater” over the Easter vacation. Prior to filming “Breakwater”, the two students behind Nocturne, director Max Morgan and producer Jemima Chen, put on two plays at Oxford: Jez Butterworth’s 1995, “Mojo” in TT22 and an original, “Fétid” in MT22.

The last feature film written, directed and starred in by Oxford University students was Hugh Grant’s first flick, “Privileged” released in 1982. It was criticized by Variety magazine at its release for having “limited interest” to a wider audience but that Grant,



billed as “Hughie Grant”, gave a convincing performance. Without “Privileged”, it would be difficult to imagine the fact of “Breakwater” but with conceptual ground cleared and the advantage of acknowledging its forebear’s weaknesses, perhaps this feature will have a warmer critical reception.

The film hit its £10, 000 crowdfunding goal on Indiegogo and raised roughly £9, 000 from the proceeds of an art auction held in Oriel College Hall with donated pieces by British artist Maggi Hambling and cartoonist Steven Appleby as well as a lunch at Fortnum & Masons all selling. Chen beamed when remembering the gala, adding that profits from the sales of student artworks were split between the “Breakwater” fund and the artists themselves.

Morgan told *Cherwell*: “What has been the biggest challenge about doing this fundraising is that we basically have the same budget as an [Oxford Playhouse] show. But the support framework for that, because it is so tried and tested and happens every term is really there. The Cameron Mackintosh drama fund stopped funding films and what they give to a normal production at the Playhouse would have covered our entire film. So, we have had to go about it through other means. We’ve tried BFI grants and the Arts Council but because we’re students we’re not eligible for them.”

Notably, there have been rumblings on Oxfess regarding a motion put to Balliol

JCR requesting funding for “Breakwater” which was unsuccessful. Morgan argued that a misunderstanding of the nature of the way JCRs fund art was behind the expressions of antipathy towards the request. Lead Danny McNamee added: “You will realize that the ‘daddy’s-money’ thing is just so inappropriate to say. Most of us went to state schools. Like a few of us, I came on an access scheme. I clawed my way into acting and to say I got there easily is just, I thought, quite comical.”

The film was shot over twenty-eight days from mid-March to mid-April on the Suffolk coast and in Oxford with professional actors like Shaun Paul McGrath rubbing shoulders with amateurs making their debut like Danny who attends Exeter College for whom this was his first time in front of the camera. “The learning curve was very, very steep”, he admitted. Reflecting on the change from theatre to film: “In some ways, its much easier than when you’re on stage. You don’t have to imagine anything; it’s all just there. Like, you don’t have to imagine you’re in the sea, you’re actually in the sea. It was quite cold.”

Morgan describes the film as a “psychological drama” filmed in a naturalistic style as “what we want to do is get inside the minds of the characters.” He joked: “There’s no insane car chase set pieces of cinematography”. The camera crew themselves were young professional filmmakers based in London.

The film will not be premiered until 2025 which Morgan and Chen hope will take place outside the Oxford-sphere at international film festivals like Toronto International Film Festival and Raindance Film Festival.

Explaining the long wait, Chen said: “We’ve got a team of amazing editors. We don’t want to rush them because the deadline for festival submissions are in September which means we’ve got to go next year. Those festivals don’t show until 2025.”

On the importance of the university and the city to “Breakwater”, Morgan offered “It would be a shame to restrict it to Oxford. We want to take it beyond because we think we can go beyond this sphere. And whilst [the film] is very much made up of the people here obviously, we don’t like to think of ourselves as a student film but rather as an independent film”.

A documentary of the film’s production will be screened on 3rd June 2023 and will be followed by a Q & A with the cast and crew.

Image Credit: Jemima Chen



Medical Science lecture recordings will not be scrapped, department says

Oliver Sandall reports.

Early last week, students belonging to the medical science division (MSD) were sent a form from their student representatives polling views about lecture recordings and student well-being. Following a meeting last term, chaired by the associate head of the MSD, concerns over lecture attendance and its effect on mental health had been raised. Whilst the MSD has confirmed that lecture recordings won’t be cancelled, it is unclear what other measures are being considered.

A 14-question questionnaire from the student representatives has been spread amongst the students, intending to provide the MSD with student opinions. The form states: “This is just a preliminary polling of views. This will not necessarily be actioned. This is just to make student opinion clear to the division.”

This has led to some students worrying that lecture recordings may be stopped altogether. One Oxfess said: “To the medical science division trying to get rid of lecture recordings because NOT attending lectures is affecting mental wellbeing: are you delusional?”

Lecture recordings, brought in initially as Covid-19 measures, have been debated since the end of lockdown. Currently, medical science lectures are recorded and uploaded soon after they are given in person.

However, the University has told *Cherwell* that “[t]here is no proposal to cancel lecture recordings in the Medical Sciences Division. There is a concern that routine non-attendance at lectures can lead to last-minute binge watching of recordings in the run-up to exams, impacting on student well-being. The Division will welcome student input into ways this late engagement can be overcome.”

However, other measures such as withholding lecture recordings until the end of the term may also be an option, as the questionnaire

suggests.

One student also told *Cherwell* that this is particularly alarming for students with disabilities such as autism, attention deficit disorders, or dyslexia. They said: “finding that captions and recordings helped me more than most people was one of the main things that helped me realise I might have ADHD. [Frequent lecture recording uploads] could be a tool for figuring out what kind of accommodations you [might] need.”

Another first-year medical student told *Cherwell* that they think the MSD should look at how they can make in-person lectures more appealing, rather than forcing students to attend them. They continued: “Many lecturers speak too fast or too quietly and are thus often incomprehensible in the lecture hall. Watching them online at 0.75x and stopping and starting where appropriate is far more helpful than trying to follow along in person.”

Whilst a study cited in the “Introduction to the Biomedical Sciences Course” lecture suggests causation between lecture attendance and higher grades, one student pointed out that this was performed on a research methods course, rather than a content-heavy course such as medical science course.

Extracurricular and social activities may also be affected by potential changes to the lecture recording policy. One medic, who attends most lectures, told *Cherwell* that the change would “if anything, penalise us for having a social life which sometimes requires going to sleep late”. They added that “[m]aking attendance to lectures mandatory in any way, shape or form will just add stress to an already famously stressful degree”.

The outcome of this form and the MSD’s decision could also influence the future of lecture recordings across different subjects.



Analysis: Lecture recordings are a necessity for today’s Oxford student

Frederick Maud comments.

As something of a Luddite in these matters, my heart instinctively rejoices at the thought of a return to ‘the old ways’. Everybody seated on time, and their eyes fixed with ardent fascination upon the enlightened scholar, bestowing upon a room of enthralled students their ephemeral, and yet timeless, gems of wisdom.

Then, I remember my head. This image is a romantic illusion. Not just post-Covid, but quite frankly in any period of history. In-person lectures do of course carry a certain quality that can never quite be re-created in virtual form, whatever dystopian substitution Mark Zuckerberg’s Meta nightmare might have in store. But online lectures, I am convinced, are not just a convenience. They are a necessity.

Rather than induce laziness in their viewers, as is so often claimed, online lectures are now an integral component of the hectic, unpredictable and invariably time-impooverished lifestyle that is the Oxford University student’s, let alone the medic’s. Crucial to mastering this lifestyle, as we all know, is flexibility. This is what the online lecture provides.

Certainly, routine plays a critical role, both

academically and for one’s own mental health. However, I am decidedly unconvinced by those who protest that online lectures rob students of a fixed routine. Such a position assumes an extraordinary lack of self-discipline on the part of students who reached and passed an Oxford interview. After all, it’s not as though I get through six history books a week because a steely lecturer is stood peering over my shoulder. To those who accuse us of sloth, have ye faith! We have brains and an ounce of concentration yet.

If we continue to strip back the fanciful dreams of lecture halls filled with choruses of eloquent rhetoricians, we find that the average student’s practical experience is dominated, more oft than not, by the desperate struggle to keep up with the pace at which some of our most esteemed academics convert the contents of their cerebra into speech. ‘If only’, I hear the medic lament, ‘I had some means of slowing this wretched thing down.’ That ‘wretched thing’, that crucial piece of medical information, might well be the difference between life and death, or - dare we conceive it - pass or fail. Once again, the online lecture holds the key.

Continued from front page.

Not all colleges still use the VNI to inform the rents they set for students, with several colleges switching away from the index in the face of high inflation and the cost of living crisis. New College abandoned the VNI as a tool for setting student rent last year when their governing body deemed the 12.86% figure was “too hefty a hike”. Hertford College also stepped away from the VNI last year in favour of the CPI, although they still “recognise the VNI as a useful reference point, and a key local measure”.

Lincoln College has not used the VNI in recent years since they undertook “an analysis of our historic costs” and found a combination of CPI and the Retail Price Index (RPI) “best reflects the inflation in our accommodation costs”. Similarly, St Catherine’s uses its own ‘Full Economic Cost Attribution model’ in discussion with students, and St Hugh’s uses the CPIH. St Hilda’s told Cherwell they do not use VNI because “other indices, such as CPI ... are considered to be more relevant”.

However, many other colleges still rely on the VNI to inform rent increases. St John’s College uses the VNI as a “reference point in annual discussions with students to in-

form the setting of rents and charges”, also taking into account “the balance between College income and expenditure” and available student funding. University College told Cherwell they do not use the VNI “assiduously”, but rather as a “broad-based figure to help guide the College’s budgetary provisioning”.

St Anne’s take a more mixed approach, where they “no longer use [the VNI] as the single formal benchmark to set rents”, and instead also incorporate the CPI and other factors like the Real Living Wage, the Oxford Living Wage, and any increases in the maintenance loan levels available to students. Mansfield College simply confirmed that they still use the VNI.

“**VNI seems to have been consistently higher than other national inflation indexes and fails to consider how students will be able to afford these increases**”

New College bursar David Palfreyman told Cherwell that because the college was not going to use the VNI again this year, it “looks likely that to be another year in which we will under-recover against a further high VNI, costing College a chunky accumulating sum in partially shielding students from the full impact of inflation”.

He argued this would be “a sum most [colleges] will struggle to absorb when they are still recovering from a major hit to revenue streams [rent and conference earnings] during the Covid disruption” and as “they face a doubling of energy costs” amidst frozen tuition fees and market volatility impacting the “prudent draw-down rate from the Endowment”.

Rent negotiations between JCRs and college administrators are ongoing. Rates are expected to be finalised in the coming weeks.

For the full interactive graph visit: <https://app.flourish.studio/visualisation/13543070/edit>

Astrophoria Foundation Year gives its first offers

Martha Smith reports.

Thirty-five students received word that they had secured a place on Oxford’s Astrophoria Foundation Year for 2023/2024 entry. The Astrophoria Foundation Year is aimed at academically promising students who have experienced considerable setbacks in their education, preventing them from meeting the demands of an undergraduate offer.

The foundation year has been in place at Lady Margaret Hall since 2016 and has been described by one student as having been “beneficial for [their] self-growth, not just as a student but also as a person”. Notable alumni include Danial Hussain, the current President-Elect of the Student Union.

In the coming year, Exeter, Jesus, Mansfield, Somerville, St Anne’s, St Hugh’s, Trinity and Wadham will all welcome their first waves of foundation year students.

The Astrophoria Foundation Year constitutes a further expansion of the university’s attempts to improve access with eligibility for the scheme depending on a number of criteria.

According to the University, students should have experienced all three of; (1.) socio-economic difficulties (e.g. having a certain post code), (2.) school-based difficulties (including attendance at a non-selective school where most students are eligible for free school meals) and (3.) difficulties of individual experience, such as experience acting as a young carer.

Students who have spent time in the care system are also eligible for the foundation year, regardless of whether they are considered to have been disadvantaged in other areas.

In 2020, Oxford launched Opportunity Oxford, a university-wide summer bridging



course designed to help disadvantaged students prepare for their first year of university studies.

When asked what distinguished Opportunity Oxford from the Astrophoria Foundation Year, the University told Cherwell: “The two programmes are aimed at different target groups of students.”

“Opportunity Oxford is suitable for students who are ready to start Oxford degrees with modest support”, while “the Astrophoria Foundation Year aims to give more substantial support to students who have experienced significant educational and/or personal disadvantage and so need a more sustained intervention”.

Fully funded by the University, Astrophoria students have the opportunity to continue on to an undergraduate degree without undergoing the same formal assessment process. To gain their places on the programme, however, all 35 offer-holders (along with approximately 500 other applicants) underwent an assessment process consisting of a questionnaire followed by

interviews taking place in March 2023.

While the majority of teaching offered during the foundation year will resemble the format of an undergraduate degree, the University has recently confirmed that the Astrophoria programme also offers additional tuition not otherwise found in the standard degree structure.

This includes the ‘Preparation for Undergraduate Studies’ course, targeted at helping with students’ personal development through confidence building and help in the development of practical academic and communication skills.

Academically, students on the foundation year are offered the choice of one of four courses, including Humanities; Chemistry, Engineering and Material Science; Philosophy, Politics and Economics; and Law, before specialising in an undergraduate degree of their choice.

In time, the programme is expected by the University to expand to all undergraduate Oxford colleges.

Image Credit: Michelle Marques

News Shorts

Sex toys found in student pidges at St Hugh’s

On Wednesday, it was revealed in an email from the Dean of St Hugh’s that students had been “leaving unsolicited items in other people’s pigeon holes.” At the end of last term, “sex toys were found distributed to a number of people who were not expecting them”, causing “offence and distress.” St Hughs has made clear that “any future incident of this kind will be considered as harassment and



subject to a disciplinary investigation which could result in a sanction up to and including suspension or expulsion.”

Global youth climate training programme to launch in May 2023

Applications opened earlier this month for the Youth Climate Training programme, a collaboration between Oxford Net Zero and the Global Youth Coalition. Training will begin on the 3rd of May and run for 13 fortnightly sessions. This training will cover key discussion areas and aims to give youth the knowledge to engage in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change system. Numerous Oxford Net researchers will be teaching on the programme. The course will delve into important topics including Climate Change, Climate Justice and Climate Finance. Registration is open to anyone under 35 engaged in the global climate movement.



Malala Yousafzai awarded honorary fellowship at Linacre

Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize winner and Oxford University alumnus, was recently awarded an honorary fellowship at Linacre College. The Programme has successfully provided scholarships for 5 students of Pakistani origin at Oxford University, as well as 6 work placements at the World Bank office in Pakistan. According to the co-founder of the Programme, Dr Talha Jamal Pirzada (Linacre), “the OPP has become a beacon of hope for thousands of Pakistani students aspiring to pursue higher education at top institutions worldwide”.



Sewage scum and “nasty infections”: Declining river quality plagues Oxford students

Daniel Thomas and Maggie Wilcox report.

From the cancellation of regattas to health advisories against swimming due to sewage dumps, the once pristine rivers of Oxford are now increasingly unsafe. While local authorities are attempting to safeguard waterways, students are having to significantly change their activities on the water.

Current conditions

Only 14% of rivers in England meet internationally recognised ecological standards. The company which presently controls sewage in and around Oxford, Thames Water, consistently records hundreds of “sewage incidents” each year. According to Government data, the company has been given an amber rating for water quality for nine out of the last eleven years, including each year since 2015. Records of water levels, going as far back as 1995, indicate that periods of severe flooding or drought are becoming more common, with periodic and extensive floods causing considerable damage and disruption.

In Oxford, Castle Mill Stream continues to display dangerous levels of bacteria - despite being the only official bathing spot on the Thames.

Since privatisation, infrastructure has been neglected, with no new reservoirs built since 1991. Estimates suggest that 20% of the system’s total water supply is lost to leakage. Howard Street was flooded for weeks in freezing conditions earlier last month, after a burst pipe went unrepaired by Thames Water from late January to February.

Student activities threatened by dangerous waters

Aside from the economic, ecological, and sanitary impact of this state of affairs, river quality has a major impact on student recreation. Oxford’s river system and the sports which make use of them have been central to student and faculty life in the University for generations, but the impact of inclement weather and unpredictable sewage discharges is increasingly felt by recreational societies

and boating clubs across the city. The sport perhaps most intimately affected is wild swimming. The founder and head of the club, Ellie Ford, told Cherwell that Oxford Wild Swimming has “experienced a massive number of cancellations due to unsafe conditions in the river”, cancelling over 80% of their group swims in Michaelmas 2022 alone. This, they argue, is due to “almost constant” sewage discharges from Cassington and Witney Sewage Treatment Works, which sit upstream from Port Meadow. The society’s representatives are critical of Thames Water’s handling of the situation, citing irregular reporting of sewage releases, and feeling as though they “can never be confident that [they] aren’t being exposed to sewage”.

Ford also emphasises that cancellations of planned group swims have a considerable impact on the mental health of students. Many rely on these activities as a form of stress relief and social connection. Group swims provide a valuable opportunity to relax, recharge, and connect with others.

James Evans, current president of the Oxford University Canoe Kayak Club, told Cherwell that “two or three sessions” were cancelled this year so far, due to sewage discharge on at least two occasions, and high water levels on another. He added: “to my knowledge we’ve never had a member get sick from the river in Oxford, but this has potentially happened at other sites.”

Likewise, O U C K C ’s Max Mughleston, believes the Isis “has deteriorated consistently over time”, attributing this to increased discharge rates from sewage stations at Stanton Harcourt, South Leigh, and the

Windsor, and recalls the club cautioning members to wash their hands after every outing. Members of St. Catherine’s and St. Hugh’s College Boat Clubs corroborate these details, citing weather patterns and increasingly frequent red-flag warnings signalling dangerous currents as particular sources of frustration. One rower at St. Hugh’s points out that, while sewage does not often directly impact session planning, it remains a potential health risk due to the possibility of “nasty infections” in exposed cuts or sores, and disrupts students’ enjoyment of their time on the water.

Changes on the horizon? Thames Water provides consumers with a storm discharge map, but acknowledges that “this doesn’t tell the full story” with regards to water quality, and has pledged to modernise and expand their supply and sanitation infrastructure. The company has “committed £1.6 billion of investment in our sewage treatment works and sewers over the next two years”, specifically dedicating £15 million to upgrades at the Witney treatment facility. They have also pledged a 50% reduction of discharges in the Thames Valley by 2030.

The precise timetable for such changes remains unclear with both public and private partners pledging action in the face of an increasingly volatile climate. The environmental and economic fallout of sewage discharges and crumbling infrastructure is reason enough to demand a change, but the fallout on student life, on the mental health of student athletes, and on Oxford residents’ recreation only serves to emphasise how central the rivers are to life in this city.

As recent demonstrations and complaints show, in Oxford itself and its environs, popular sentiment is increasingly critical of the water management status quo. In addition to petitions and public opinion, the issue has caught the attention of local government and Members of Parliament alike. On 30th January Oxford City Council unanimously called for Thames Water to be taken back into public ownership, while Oxford’s MPs have pushed for action on the question of water quality. The UK Government, under pressure from Labour opposition, has also recently put in place legally binding targets regarding sewage dumping. These will come into effect by 2050.



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Image Credits: Yuhao Wang



What makes a BNOC? Oxford’s Top 40 give *Cherwell* the inside scoop on how to become famous.

Jack Twyman discovers what it takes to earn a place on the infamous BNOC list.

B NOCs. Whether you love them or hate them, their continued presence in the University is guaranteed. From student activism and the Oxford Union to drama and sport, BNOCs come from all over the University. But how do they become so well-known? What’s the secret ingredient that elevates students to the height of University fame? How did Daniel Dipper become such a staple of the Oxford nightlife scene? How did Leah Aspden come to be seen as a future celebrity in the making?

Eleven of our chosen 40 BNOCs answered my questions on their experiences being a BNOC. Of these, only one confessed to fostering long-term designs on this dubious prize. Shermar Pryce told *Cherwell*, “it has been my ambition since I was nought but a swaddled tot. Upon entering the hallowed halls of Oxford, I unrelentingly pursued my lifelong stratagems to attain BNOC glory, replete with meticulously outlined objectives, chromatically-organised spreadsheets, and a vision board brimming with grandeur.”

For the rest of respondees, BNOC-hood was an honour that arrived unpursued, even unannounced. Farabee Pushpita told *Cherwell*, “I didn’t even know what a BNOC was when I arrived at Oxford.” For Brodie Brain “the plan was get shit done in the most authentic way possible, don’t suffer BS, and make wonderful friends along the way”. But Brodie has enjoyed rising to fame in Oxford: “I suppose being an actress relies on a certain level of public validation. But I’ll always be my own harshest critic.” Leah Aspden agrees: “I have done so much drama stuff to the detriment of my actual degree so it’s nice to feel like I’ve made it.” Most BNOCs just wanted to enjoy their time here. For Daniel Dipper realisation came “at the point when people started asking for photographs and everyone seemed to know my name, which

was quite a surprise.”

Our BNOCs’ responses vary when asked how they thought they became a BNOC. Being social was a key factor – one anonymous response told prospective BNOCs to “spend more time being involved in societies and with friends than doing your degree.” Farabee enjoys “making new friends everywhere (hanging out is great for procrastinating on my degree)!” Other BNOCs focused on their USP—for Lucy Wang their YouTube channel, for Hamish Nash his Oxfess comments tagging @ Shu Huang. Leah Aspden said, “I wanted to bring a Northern twist to Oxford, and in order to do so I had to be the loudest and most dramatic Northerner going.” For Brodie “getting involved in Drag Cuppers launched my rise to stardom so I would definitely say being queer was the biggest factor.” One anonymous response said it was “a mix of being very outspoken about racial injustice, being an actress, having a somewhat embarrassing TikTok and being very unapologetic about my personality or opinions.” Daniel focused on getting involved with activities “from DJing regularly, to being Magdalen JCR President, to being involved in the Oxford Union, as well as wishing everyone happy birthday! And we can’t forget my red jacket which people seem to recognise me by.” He added that, “some people say the way I am is almost like a cartoon character; not sure if there’s anything in that, but maybe a personality open to parody.”

Are BNOCs proud of their title? Some questioned its usefulness: “is it really going to go on my CV?” However, many think “that it’s nice to be known and recognised by people, and I’m excited for the opportunities it presents to meet cool new people as well.” Leah is “buzzing” from her elevation to this sought-after status. Brodie “will definitely use it in some drag branding.” Some were nonplussed: “I feel pretty neutral about

it really. I’m sure I divide opinion. But at least I am true to myself.” Another was sceptical “because of its associations with the Union.” Lucy is “holding firmly onto the few personality traits that I still have that aren’t studying Maths, so definitely!” But someone was keen to emphasise “it just depends what the reasons for that are! Hopefully mine are positive.” For Shermar: “it’s the chance to spread a generous dose of jollity throughout college and the wider Oxford community that truly brings self-satisfaction.” Daniel is conflicted “I don’t know if I really see it as something to be proud of, of course it’s nice people know me and hopefully respect the work I do, and its great people really enjoy my DJ sets.”

So what are the five key things you need to become a BNOC?

1. A strong brand and social media presence: As one BNOC, advised us, “make unique fashion choices, use memorable phases, and add a touch of controversial takes and actions. Transform into an idea, a concept even, rather than just a person. Develop a massive ego and over-inflated sense of importance, ensuring that people can’t help but notice you.”

2. Embrace a chronic lack of sleep to ensure you can attend ~everything~: Since most of us have just a 3- or 4-year degree, and 40 hours of each of our weeks are supposed to be spent studying, something has to go. If that something is sleep, so be it. You shall go to the ball, Cinderella! And also Port & Policy, Beer & Bickering, Parkend Wednesdays, and Miscellaneous Freud Events.

3. Understand that more is more: Make more friends. Post more posts. Serve more serves. There are only 40 spaces on the BNOC list, so you’ve got to one-up every other student you meet in social kudos, media recognition, and pure unadulterated BNOC energy. A place on this list doesn’t come easy - it takes hustle.

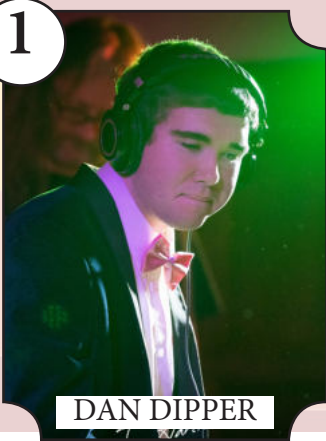
4. Make the Oxfess admins your new best friends: Oxfess has a stranglehold over the attention spans of Oxford students - just ask HN and SH on this one. The easiest way to boost your name recognition is simply to get liking, get commenting, and get yourself that ‘top fan’ badge of honour.

5. Ensure that the Cherwell editors know who you are: As much as we’d like to pretend that this list isn’t rigged, we certainly dabble with the rankings a little. Despite a whopping 600 responses on our BNOC survey, most people ranking 25 and under had 3 or fewer votes. Who calls the ties? Well, the editors of course. So, if you want those BNOC aspirations to be realised, maybe make yourself a few friends on the Senior Editorial Team...

Those five are not exclusive: for Leah, the most important factors were “to play Macbeth in Macbeth, slay your rustication and be called ‘alright’ by Russell Brand”. And also “vote for yourself on the BNOC list”, though I should add you need to be a verifiable BNOC to get away with this one. Someone advises to “be indiscreet, wear killer fits on corn market, wear killer fits in the Radcam, do everything but not necessarily everyone.”

So there you have it, the secret recipe shared from Oxford’s current A-listers to its future one. Follow these tips and you can firm the guarantee on achieving BNOC-hood by the end of the year. Look forward to the assurance of you self-worth as crowds gather to pay homage to the newest BNOC on the block - though make sure to ignore the hushed whispers that undermine your newfound glory. BNOC status can guarantee many things, though probably not happiness. So what will you be known for? The good? The bad? Or the ugly?

Artwork by Yuan Yuan Foo



DAN DIPPER

3rd Year, Magdalen

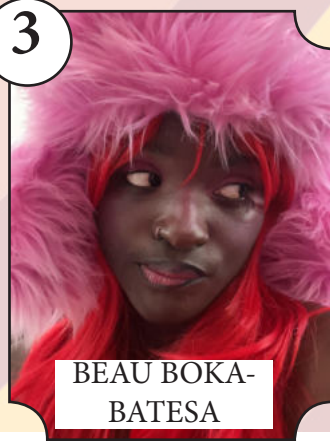
Dan is best known as a DJ and social mobility campaigner; when he's not behind the decks, he'll either be wishing people happy birthday or in the library revising for his finals.



HN and SH

Oriel, Oxford and Christ's College, Cambridge

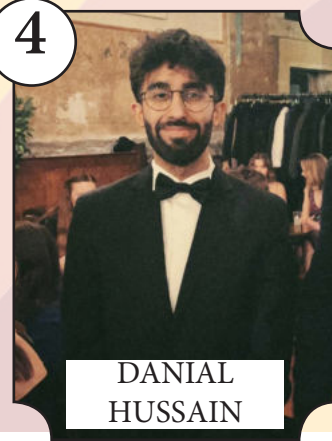
Hamish says, "I've memed my way onto this list". Shu says, "I don't even know what a BNOG is but Hamish forces me to submit this". Either way, you know who they are.



BEAU BOKA-BATESA

2nd year, Lincoln

Beau is a poet, environmentalist, and occasional baller. When Beau isn't doing their degree, they're either online, banging out Plush on a Tuesgay or taking advantage of £3,50 cocktails in a bar.



DANIAL HUSSAIN

2nd year, LMH

Danial is a PPEist at LMH and is also President-elect of the Oxford University Student Union. Having been interviewed by national newspapers, his face is one you should definitely recognise.



GRACIE ODDIE-JAMES

3rd year, Christ Church

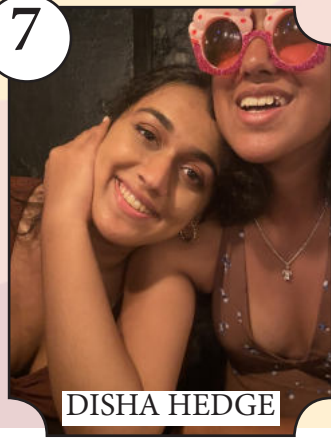
You may know Gracie from one of her many performances in Oxford and beyond. Where can you find her next? She says she's signed an NDA, but after a vodka lime soda at the KA, she may be inclined to tell you...



CHLOE POMFRET

1st year, St Catz

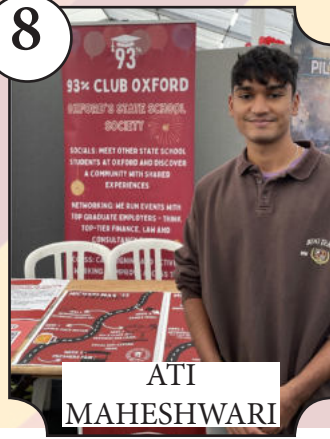
Chloe has been the OULC social sec, hosting their infamous Beer&Bickering, but she may be better known for her viral TikToks and study-Instagram. She's also the estranged rep for Class Act.



DISHA HEDGE

2nd year, St John's

Disha (left) is President-elect of the Union. Last year she was co-chair of the Women's campaign. In her own words, she also "posts constant (and admittedly cringe) fit checks on my instagram story".



ATI MAHESHWARI

2nd year, St Hilda's

Ati was the 22'-23' President of the 93% Club at Oxford. His side achievements include being removed from the role of freshers' rep and being the 'failed' Oxford M2 badminton captain.



HANNAH EDWARDS

2nd year, Lincoln

In typical PPE fashion, this term Hannah is the Union's librarian. When she's not using her free time to argue with people ("competitive debating") she loves college netball and, most importantly of all, Swiftsoc.



HANNAH PORTER

2nd year, Trinity

According to Hannah, "when I'm not busy wibbling, entzing bops which bankrupt the JCR, working on The Isis, or planning VT23, you can find me in parkend keeping up my 100% attendance."



MATTHEW DICK

2nd year, Magdalen

In Matthew's own words, his personality only consists of 3 things: "1. Having the last name 'Dick'. 2. Only drinking water and hot chocolate. 3. Being Union president"



YAROSLAVA BUKHTA

Msc, St John's

Yaroslava has worked in media and NGO spheres in Ukraine for a couple of years. She is now doing her MSc in Social Anthropology and is the current head of the Oxford University Ukrainian Society.



LEAH ASPDEN

3rd year, St Anne's

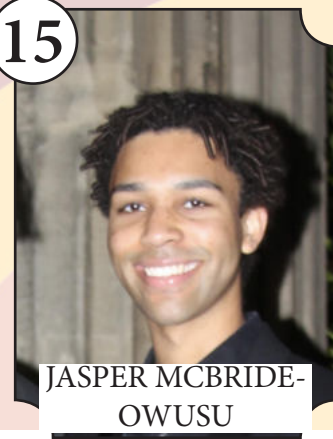
Leah is the newly elected President of the Drama Society. A self-described "Northern icon", she is determined to leave Oxford with the world record for asking the most people if they want a brew.



SHERMAR PRYCE

2nd year, Univ

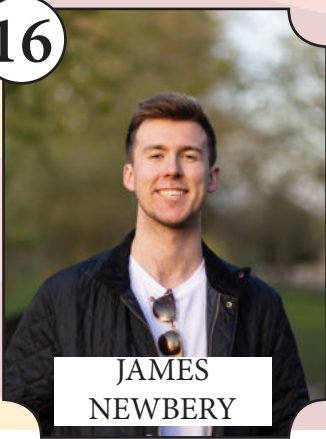
Shermar describes himself as "a benevolent and (arguably) enlightened despot, steering Oxford's oldest college through a seemingly endless array of crises". The most famous of these crises was Univ's Shitgate.



JASPER MCBRIDE-OWUSU

2nd year, Christ Church

Jasper was President of the Oxford Finance Society, but you might also know him from "gasping for breath on a college football pitch, tearing up Torpids or losing at pool in Balliol bar".



JAMES NEWBERY

3rd year, Teddy Hall

James was President of the Drama Society for the last year. When he's not doing drama-related activities, you'll probably find him in Plush, losing his mind to Beyoncé's Renaissance.



LAUREN WEBB

2nd year, Corpus Christi

This season, Lauren was the youngest ever Rugby Union Blues Captain, and led the Blues to their first Varsity win since 2016.



IMAAN SAEED

2nd year, Teddy Hall

Imaan is the TT23 president of Oxford's Law Society. She urges all readers of this list to get themselves a membership.



ROSIE WRIGGLESWORTH

2nd year, Keble

This year, Rosie is President of Oxford's Diplomatic Society, co-ordinating embassy visits, ambassador talks, and evening events.



JULIA MARANHÃO-WONG

1st year, St Anne's

Julia is a Canadian-American from Boston. So far, her Oxford highlights include "being Cinderella at the Union Ball", where she is an elected member of the Standing Committee.

21



FIONA ZEKA

2nd year, Hertford

Fiona is a proud Kosovan and author who also works with organisations like the UNHCR, Magic Breakfast, Zero Gravity and Care4Calais to help raise funding and awareness.

22



LUCY WANG

2nd year, Christ Church

Lucy is studying maths, although she says that no one ever guesses it when they meet her. You might know her from her Youtube and Tiktok accounts, where she has over 100k subscribers combined.

23

FINLEY
ARMSTRONG

2nd year, Regent's Park

Finley, a.k.a. Hummus Man, is known for founding Oxford's infamous hummus society. Regarding the society, he has ominously warned our readers to "watch this space".

24

FARABEE
PUSHPITA

2nd year, St Anne's

Farabee is an English student and writer. She loves posting incessantly on insta about art exhibits, pretty sights, and her friends.

25



JEMIMA CHEN

2nd year, Balliol

When she's not getting slated on Oxfess, Jemima produces theatre and film. Her feature film with Max Morgan, "Breakwater", is currently in post production.

26



LUKE NIXON

2nd year, Queen's

Luke tells us that when he's not pretending to do his Spanish and Portuguese degree, you'll probably catch him doing too much theatre or aggressively social media-ing to get you to buy tickets for said theatre.

27

DYLAN
WORSLEY

2nd year, St John's

Dylan is an ancient historian at John's who has, in his own words, "hosted some decent seshes in my time, only one of which ending with a formal apology to Brasenose..."

28

MIRANDA
CONN

2nd year, Somerville

Miranda was OUCD Blues Dance President for the first Oxford win in Varsity history, and is "known for treating this like it was Olympic Gold". She's also repping the Maths & Computer Scientists.

29



ASHLEY CHEE

3rd year, St Catz

Ashley is the current Women's Vice President of Oxford University Football Club. On the side, she dabbles in a Chemistry degree.

30



MIA WU

2nd year, St John's

Mia has previously served as EiC of The Isis in Hilary, and as Secretary of Asia-Pacific Society. This term, she's hoping to serve at her English degree.

31

BELLA
SIMPSON

2nd year, Oriel

Previous OULC co-chair, campaigns officer and TSHA President, Bella is dedicated to delivering social justice. Outside of politics Bella is involved in Oxford's arts scene, managing marketing teams and directing plays.

32

MEG AND
IZZIE

2nd year, St Catz, and 2nd year, Balliol
If you looked at Page 2 of our print edition, you would recognise Meg and Izzie as *Cherwell's* Editors in Chief.

[Editor's Note: Meg and Izzie wouldn't let us publish this list unless we put them in it]

33

GUY
ZILBERMAN

2nd year, Jesus

As the co-President of Oxford Climate Society, you can usually find Guy doing something climate-related. However, if you're lucky, you might also catch him "getting sturdy in Bridge".

34

CLEMMIE
READ

2nd year, Magdalen

Clemmie is EiC of The Isis this term, was President of Media Soc last term, and can otherwise usually be found hanging out with the Magdalen deer.

35



FREYA JONES

2nd year, Oriel

The Hacks fear her, the Journos revere her - Freya has broken many stories both in *Cherwell* and in nationals. She spends a lot of time having coffee with student politicians (and occasionally real ones).

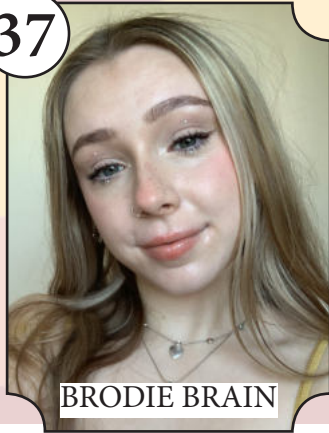
36

MANON
HAMMOND

2nd year, Lincoln

Manon is chaotically balancing Welsh soc, The Isis, her History degree and "whatever other random thing I decide to take up that term". She was once described as "a pain in the arse" by Lincoln porters.

37



BRODIE BRAIN

2nd year, St Catz

Brodie is self-described "full-time law student, part-time drag queen stranded at Catz". You can also find her (hip) hopping around Oxford balls with Equinox Dance crew.

38

PHILIP
GENTLES

3rd year, Queen's

Philip takes active roles in hockey, hockey, and the charity campaign "what's a pound". Seemingly confused as to his presence here, he "represents that you all too can make the list".

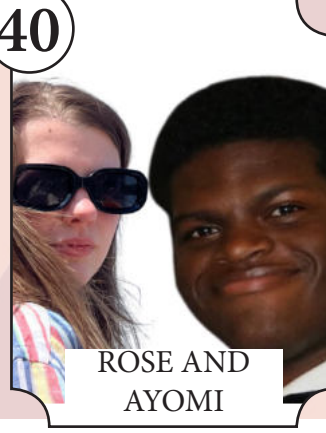
39

JACK
TWYMAN

2nd year, Regent's Park

When he's not writing the BNOC list, Jack's busy with writing the rest of *Cherwell*, doing Diplo Soc, and living his best life wherever, whenever. He ran Tuesgays last Trinity but is best know for just being tall.

40

ROSE AND
AYOMI

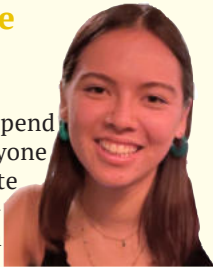
Both 2nd year, Worcester

In traditionally salty form, we will be concluding this list with the Editors-in-Chief of The Oxford Student.

Trinity: overrated or overhated?

Term of goodbyes
Georgie Cutmore

If you happen to spend time with anyone about to graduate this Trinity, prepare to be hearing a lot of bizarre, melodramatic statements along the following lines: “This is the last time we’ll ever have hall dinner in 4th week ever again”. We’re all in one big toxic relationship with Oxford. Despite drowning us in work and giving us questionable standards of what is a normal, healthy lifestyle, Oxford terms are unique, exciting and full of adrenaline. I don’t know if Trinity is the best term, but it’s certainly the saddest - full of goodbyes, ‘last times’, and the realisation that you might just miss the place.



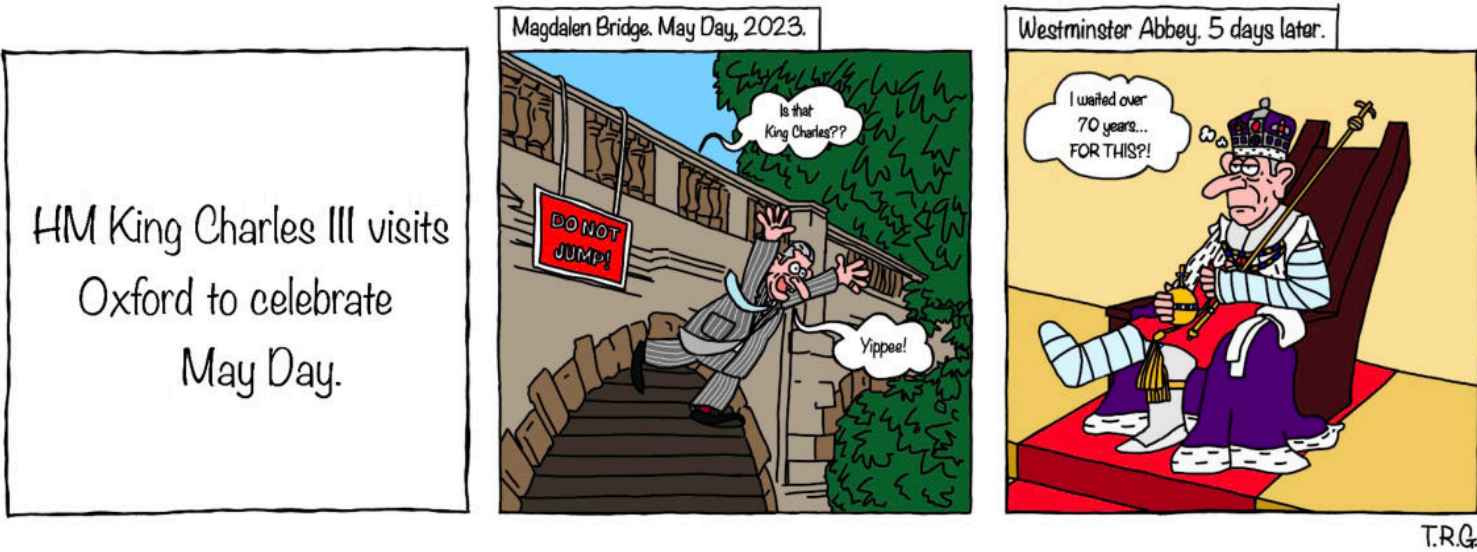
I love it!
Ailish Gaughan

Yes, unequivocally. Whilst the Gilmore Girls obsessive in me loves the autumnal vibes of Michaelmas, Trinity remains unbeatable. What would we do without sunny afternoons punting, swimming or sunbathing at Port Meadow, probably getting skin damage? Or all-day Pimm’s day-drinking at Summer Eights to procrastinate? Nothing makes revising for those pesky exams as bearable as sunny windows on the top floor of the Old Bod. Maybe we all have Seasonal Affective Disorder, but if you took away Trinity, I honestly think most of us would have rusticated by now.



Great for a fresher
Oli Sandall

Overpriced balls, day-drinking in sunny beer gardens, and cramming for exams - that’s kind of what I expected from Oxford, actually. After many weeks of grey skies and wet shoes, I look forward to slightly less grey skies and slightly drier feet. As a fresher, returning to Oxford in Trinity and once again seeing the (hopefully beautiful) college that you’ve learned (or have been forced) to love over the past two terms certainly makes you feel like you’ve settled in.



Artwork by Tom Godfrey

Why an AI Pause Would Be Detrimental To Humanity

Alexander Elliot

Imagine you had a pet parrot. One day, you heard it say “kill all humans”. Obviously, it doesn’t actually want to kill all humans; it can’t even understand what the phrase means. It’s just regurgitating what has been heard from elsewhere, perhaps from a TV programme in the background.

An AI saying it wants to “kill all humans” is the same thing, albeit on a grander scale. It takes what has been fed into it, identifies the patterns and words, and spits out what is asked of it by humans. I would posit that AI poses as much threat to human life as a parrot (perhaps even less, given it doesn’t have a beak).

Nonetheless, countless reasons have been given for halting AI development, culminating in the recent petition to “pause” development for six months. Predictably, it views ever-evolving human ingenuity as a fundamentally bad thing. The irony of the petitioners saying AI “could represent a profound change in the history of life on Earth” on the internet (which, to my knowledge, is not a naturally occurring phenomenon) is not lost on me.

Yes, “profound change” to history included such tragedies as world wars, famines, diseases, and nuclear weapons. But it also included the internet, penicillin, vaccines, modern agricultural methods, and countless other excellent inventions. Why can’t AI join the gallery of human progress? The petition argues that we cannot “understand, predict, or reliably control” AI. Firstly, how is pausing AI development going to help with this? Typically, understanding something requires more testing, not less. Secondly, if we limited ourselves to what we could predict, humanity would have gone nowhere. Alexander Fleming could never have predicted that leaving a petri dish out would lead to penicillin. Orville and Wilbur Wright could not have predicted their invention would have led to cross-Atlantic flights.

Should we have paused Jonas Salk’s research until we were sure that “[its] effects [would] be positive and [its] risks [would] be manageable”?

Moving on to the claim about jobs. I am always sceptical when technology is decried on the grounds of “taking away jobs”. Of course, I could pay hundreds of people to comb through encyclopaedias until I find what I’m looking for; or I could use Google. I could pay someone on the street to go down to Greenwich and adjust my clock based on theirs; or I could use a more accurate wristwatch. The economic process of creative destruction has made us richer and happier, and indeed helped the environment. I’m sure no one reading this article yearns for the days before the lightbulb where whaling for lamp oil was necessary. The question “should we automate away all the jobs, including the fulfilling ones” ignores the huge number of industries which have gone bust because better alternatives were found. I, for one, am glad that I don’t have to use horse riders to deliver mail to my parents, even if it did employ more people than the current postal system. Perhaps AI will cause a similar adjustment to employment; that’s no reason to pause development. Quite the opposite, actually – why should consumers be forced to pay for a more inefficient way of doing things? New industries can and do pop up when old ones fall; whalers were replaced by lightbulb manufacturers, horse riders by telegraph operators. Consider how fast industries related to computing have sprung up. Are we really to believe that no new jobs whatsoever will be created thanks to AI?

The petition also claims that AI will lead to “propaganda and untruth” flooding social media. Firstly, AI will only have as much power as we choose to give it. ChatGPT cannot access sites like Twitter and Facebook without its creators giving it access to a vast network of accounts. Therefore, the only threat of AI comes from nefarious actors willing to give their AI a platform on social media. This brings me to my second point, which is that any pause to AI will not be heeded by bad actors. States like North Korea and Russia, intent on spreading discord

within enemy states, are not going to listen to any pause. As Margaret Thatcher pointed out with nuclear weapons, what has been invented cannot be disinvented (of course, with the caveat that an ideal world would not contain nuclear weapons, a claim which does not hold with AI). No matter what, now that AI has been invented, it is in the hands of those who wish to do harm with it. Rather than slow down, the only logical course of action is to speed up, using AI for such actions as detecting this nefarious content. A pause will not benefit anyone but bad actors in this regard.

On a final note, Business Insider reported that Latitude, a much more basic AI model, pays \$100,000 a month to run its servers. Given that the new Russian minimum wage is 19,242 roubles per month, Russia could afford to hire a troll farm of 423 people for the price of running an AI disinformation programme, not including development costs.

Predictably, the petition decries the “out-of-control” race to develop new AI. This completely ignores how products that we use today were created. The mobile phone was famously a competition between two companies; the first call was made to inform competitors that they had lost the race. Smartphone builders did not collaborate with each other to create the first touchscreen phones. It is only through competition that products improve. It’s ironic that the signatories of the petition include Elon Musk, a man who owes his entire career to competition in a free market economy.

The Future of Life Institute is not improving the future of life with this petition; quite the opposite. It scaremongers about “losing control of civilisation”, as if anyone has seriously suggested giving AI the right to vote or run for office. Even if you still disagree that AI will be good for humanity, the fact is that the cat is out of the bag. No number of pauses, regulations, and bans will stop bad actors from using the technology. Unilaterally disarming ourselves is irrational. I don’t claim to know how AI will progress over the years any more than Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot could predict how cars would progress. Let’s allow it to develop to its potential, rather than shutting ourselves off from a better tomorrow.

“AI poses as much threat to human life as a parrot”

The Debate Chamber

To BNOC or not to BNOC? Nyat and Adam go head to head

Ah, BNOCs! Whether you hate them or love them, there's just something about BNOCs that brings out the best in Oxford.

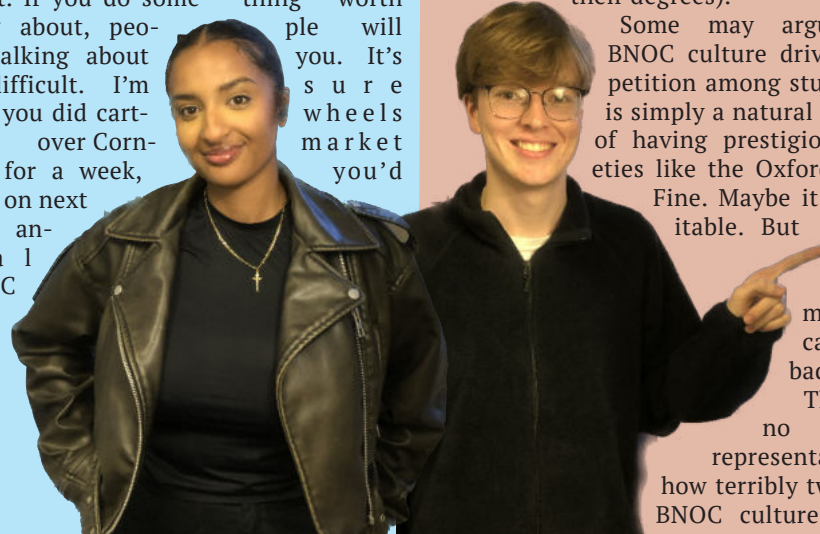
"Big Name on Campus". It sounds like an honorary title but really BNOCs are just glorified class clowns. And who doesn't love a class clown? Yes, they are annoying but that's the point! They break up the monotony of academic life. Without them, we would be lost in a sea of books and lectures.

BNOCs are providing a valuable service. Let's be real, we've all shared stories with our friends about the antics of our beloved campus celebrities. After all, how else can you explain to your friends back home the sheer madness that comes with being a student in Oxford? If anything, we should be thanking them rather than wishing they didn't exist.

They bring people together. Picture the spark that is formed when you discover that your new friend shares the same level of dislike towards a particular big shot as you do. A life-long friendship can be made! Talking about friendships, being

friends with a BNOC is an adventure. You enter a whole new world of meeting new people, hearing wild stories, and accessing different opportunities. These guys are the rockstars of our era.

I can't understand why someone would dislike BNOC culture. It's just a part of life. Some people are popular, and some are not. If you do something worth talking about, people will start talking about you. It's not difficult. I'm sure that if you did cartwheels over Corn Street for a week, you'd end up on next year's annual BNOC list.



BNOCs. Those who never sleep. Some of them quite literally appear to be everywhere. The range of extracurricular opportunities available at Oxford seems to turn some people into absolute machines, with little regard for the widely accepted human necessities of eating and sleeping (and actually doing their degrees).

Some may argue that BNOC culture drives competition among students or is simply a natural outcome of having prestigious societies like the Oxford Union.

Fine. Maybe it is inevitable. But that

doesn't mean it can't be bad.

There is no greater representative of how terribly two-faced BNOC culture can be

than hacking. Of course, when you are friends with someone you are willing to do things like step foot in the union (shiver) to help them get their silly little role "playing politics", but when someone you've conversed with twice all year suddenly turns round and starts begging for your vote it is hard to maintain a straight face. To be quite honest, that aspect of BNOC culture makes me despise student politics and makes me fearful of the people who will be running our country in the years to come. After all, if the current record is anything to go by, there is a relatively high chance that someone who is high up in one of the many student societies will be our prime minister someday.

Don't get me wrong, they're not all bad. Take for example those who are "social mobility campaigners" and use the platform they have cultivated to make a positive difference to real issues and the lives of future students. That is the positive impact that BNOC culture can have. Unfortunately, the vast majority are just looking for something to fill that empty space on their CV, or in their soul.

Let Down?

Kelsey Monteith

Apparently, as a finalist, I should expect to leave Oxford with either a Blue, a spouse, or a First, and yet I won't even be leaving having experienced the full three years of my degree. I have Covid to thank for that.

I came to Oxford with few expectations, not thinking that I would go to university at all, but there is something about coming back for the final term of my degree, and talking to second and first years about their radically different experiences, that makes me realise how different my time at Oxford has been.

I'll start at the beginning. Freshers week – a chance for people to socialise, meet new people, and have fun. But this is harder than it seems when the only way that you can talk to people is at a "speed dating" event with masks, two-meter social distancing, and the voices of twenty other people drowning you out. Or when you're sat outside in October separated into neat, socially distanced, household bubbles by colourful bunting. Instead of being able to make friends, lose them, and create my own social circle, I found myself assigned to a household bubble of four of my course mates. Throughout first year, attending societies, bars, and clubs was impossible, and even lunch breaks and shopping trips were complicated – a sharp contrast to the buzz of social activity on the streets of Oxford today. Now don't get me wrong – I loved my flatmates, and I still do, but there were many times when I felt isolated and disconnected, and I often reflect on how different my university experience would have been if I was allowed to meet people outside of my subject and college. And

“

This social legacy has continued to haunt me

although Covid may have been forgotten, or banished to the past, this social legacy has continued to haunt me. I not only felt the traditional imposter syndrome that so many of us at this university do, but a social imposter syndrome, where the Covid friendship groups formed in first year seemed impossible to break.

My academic experience has also suffered. The intimate and personal teaching environment of Oxford is something that makes this university distinct, and yet there is something about watching pre-recorded lectures in your room, and not having an in-person tute until second year that really flattens these experiences. First and second years often take these personal academic interactions for granted, or even dread them, but Covid made me realise how hard it is to care about your degree when you can mute yourself, turn off your camera, or have "internet problems" and go on your phone in tutorials. I was also denied the opportunity to en-

gage with my lecturers and tutors, some of the most world-renowned experts in topics which interested me, and I often feel as though this led me to often resent, and not appreciate and love my course.

Despite this, I'm going to end on a positive note. I may not have a Blue, or a spouse, and I'm doubtful about getting a First, and I may be slightly bitter about the fun, socially packed lives that I have watched first and second years live. But that doesn't mean that I haven't enjoyed my time here. I have made lifelong friends, joined a society, explored the city, and attended academic events. I believe that it is important not to dwell on what could have been, but to look back and appreciate the happy moments that have happened. It's the small things that make your university experience what it is, and I wouldn't give up those moments for the world.

Love Island's Token Black Girl

Nyat Aron-Yohannes

Winter Love Island has come to a close, and as we draw closer to the summer season of Love Island, many black viewers are filled with dread, waiting to see who will be the next token black woman on our screens. It's fair to say that black female contestants have not had the best time on the dating show.

Year after year, the black woman faces an intolerable amount of rejection. Every season's first episode starts with the contestants picking who they would like to couple up with based on appearance. Samira, the first black female contestant, was picked last. A year later, Yewande was also picked last, followed by Leanne. Then Kaz was picked last, and this year's Love Island saw the same trend continue. When Tanya made her debut as the newest token black girl, only one male contestant stepped forward to couple up with her – Shaq, the only male black contestant. The others not stepping forward promoted a narrative that the show has been promoting for years; black women are not desirable, and if they are desired, it's only by black men.

We watched Samira get rejected by every guy she was interested in for the first four weeks. Then, when she finally coupled up with Frankie, we thought she found her match. Later episodes revealed that he preferred her white castmate, Megan, more. Indiyah seemed like the first black woman not to struggle to couple up in the villa. There was Ikenna, Dami, Deji, and Samuel, but this just displays the other side of the conversation. If the black woman is wanted, it is only by black men. Not once did the likes of Jacques

or Luka show interest in Indiyah, and let us not forget that Davide referred to her as a "downgrade". These episodes of implicit and explicit discrimination mirror dating life for black women. A study conducted on dating preferences on the dating site 'OKCupid' found that black women and Asian men have the hardest time matching on dating apps.

It's painful to watch, especially when there is half a decade's worth of televised mistreatment towards people who look like you.

Diversity is different from inclusion. Diversity involves having people from various backgrounds, whilst inclusion ensures that everyone feels welcomed and valued no matter their differences. Love Island may have a diverse set of contestants, but they fail to ensure that all the contestants will be able to find actual suitors. This encapsulates the entire issue with tokenism. To put it simply, tokenism is when the conversation starts and ends with "we need more BLANK people here". It is a step in the right direction to acknowledge that there is a diversity issue, but the conversation must be extended further. It is not enough to meet a quota; we need to discuss how to accommodate the entrance of people from different backgrounds.

Love Island is not the first to practice tokenism, with other institutions like our university being culprits of the same practice. Have you ever seen a university post where the ethnic minority takes center stage? It can appear disingenuous. Ultimately, it causes adverse effects for the token individual, like the feeling of isolation and being forced to deal with immense pressure. As we are edging towards our 10th season of Love Island, I hope this time will be different. And to my black women, we love you.

CHERBADLY

Oxford announces Trinity Term 2023 will be its last

After 927 continuous years, The University of Oxford has announced that Trinity Term 2023 will be its last term ever. “We think it’s time,” said Vice Chancellor Irene Tracey. “It’s important to know when one has overstayed one’s welcome, and so we will be packing up this operation once and for all after the end of exams.”

Classes have been convened in the area that is now University of Oxford since around the year 1096. Over hundreds of years the University grew into one of the most prestigious on Earth. “But nothing lasts forever,” said Tracey.

According to sources, the costs of keeping Oxford running had gone well over budget. While several donors offered to bail out Oxford, the University instead has decided to sell itself to a venture capital firm that intends to liquidate the University in order to pursue more profitable, efficient education enterprises.

Oxford has confirmed, however, that several spin-off universities are in the works now. The plans for these sub-franchises will be unveiled over the next several months, but rumor has it that Magdalen College and the Blavatnik School of Government may become their own brands within the next ten years. It is yet to be seen whether any of these spin-offs will be as successful as the classic Oxford tribute University, the University Cambridge.

Messages of sadness came from all corners of the world after Oxford made the announcement, with many world leaders current and former expressing their disappointment. “We’ll be sad to see it end, best night I ever had was at Oxford” said former PM David Cameron. “I am devastated but it is difficult to remain reliable and faithful for so long and never falter,” said Bill Clinton, a one-time Rhodes Scholar. “Thems the brakes,” said Boris Johnson.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Cherwell, Trinity Term 1992 - Mansfield proposes rent increase of 17.5%

CHERWELL

The Oxford University Student Newspaper since 192022 May 199220p where sold

Mansfield JCR protests against 17.5% rent increases next year

Fair Rents - Fair Deal

Mansfield College JCR has opened negotiations with the SCR over SCR proposals for substantial rent increases next year. The Bursar, Duncan Forbes, initially indicated a 25% increase in rents alone with the possibility of later increases in food prices and other charges. However in a meeting with the JCR Negotiation Committee on Wednesday morning, he proposed a reduction in the rent increases to 17.5% and a formal freezing of food prices.

The initial SCR justification for this substantial increase was that Mansfield had to compare more favourably with the mean charges at other colleges. Mansfield students are currently paying £50.00 a year less than other colleges. The JCR President Jason Edwards argued, “We have no way with us to enter into a bare knuckle fight with the Governing Body, but they must accept that we will not sit back and have such an unjust settlement imposed on us. Negotiations must go hand-in-hand with protest at the present time.” The Bursar has stated that if the JCR can prove that current prices are comparable with other colleges he will reduce the planned rent increase still further.

The JCR Committee are confident that they can negotiate a lower rent increase. At an emergency JCR meeting last Thursday night, Mansfield JCR voted not to negotiate on the basis of the comparability argument. In a circular letter to the Governing Body, the JCR Committee said, “We feel that the comparability argument will lead to ‘leap-frogging’ that is as each college tries to maintain its position in the rents and charges table, students will be hit by artificially high rents. A move by Mansfield up the table this year may well see copy-cat actions next year amongst those Colleges overtaken.”

The JCR pointed out, that while it does have one of the lowest room rates in Oxford, “if the Notional Aggregate Charge of all colleges is considered, that is room rents, food costs, heating and lighting charges, laundry and kitchen charges, Mansfield does indeed occupy a mid-table position.” It was also keen to stress that, “Mansfield students do not enjoy the same benefits and facilities as at other larger colleges.” There are only two computers for over 100 graduates and undergraduates, and apart from the JCR itself no rooms set aside for JCR use alone.

At a JCR meeting on Sunday, an Alternative Action Committee was set up and a Rent Fund Constitution adopted. On Oxford whilst simultaneously having the poorest facilities,” Steven Elliot, a Mansfield finalist said, “It is like charging the rates of a four star hotel for bed and breakfast.”

Mansfield College is expected to be £128,000 in debt at the end of this year, and the SCR are looking for an enforced JCR contribution to this. One Mansfield student said, “The increase in costs to the College is not due to accommodation for students, it is the SCR’s higher salaries. Now that the Government is not Mansfield has been squeezed by the Government too. “We are both victims of the decrease in real terms of the amount of money in Higher Education, and we are both to some extent at the mercy of outside events.”

In a letter to the Governing Body the JCR Committee wrote, “The JCR is prepared to look into ways of helping the college gain financial security in the future through increased activity, for example, in fund raising activities...we simply cannot accept an increase in rents of 25%, for one very simple reason, we cannot afford it.”

The JCR finance survey compiled recently demonstrates that most students at Mansfield are living on an income of less than £3,000 per year. To reduce the college debt, the JCR has suggested targeting those areas in which the deficit has arisen, notably conference income and the high maintenance costs incurred on Thursday, with food being provided by the JCR.

If the SCR refuses to bring the percentage increase into single figures by the middle of sixth week, the JCR will embark on a second level of action. This will involve press releases to the national press and letters to next terms freshmen to inform them of the situation.

The final third level of protest is the rent strike, but the JCR is hoping this will not be necessary. The purpose of JCR alternative action is not to vindictively disrupt college, but to show that the JCR is united and resolute on the issue of rent increases.

Mansfield JCR argues, “Mansfield has in the past had a commendable record in its efforts to attract people from the state sector into University education. By making Mansfield one of the most expensive colleges in Oxford, that record will be in tatters. This college prides itself on egalitarian principles, it would be shameful to drop those now and let Mansfield become just another bastion of Oxford elitism.”

Gill Kirk, Mansfield’s “What has become all too apparent is the frightening anomaly between Mansfield’s allegiance to encouraging state-school applicants and their obstinate assertion that JCR members are well able to afford the initial 25% proposition.”

The Bursar was tentative about whether a significant rent increase would deter state school applicants. He doubts that there is any real correlation between levels of student poverty and the school background of the student. He said, “Obviously we don’t want Mansfield to be very much more expensive than other colleges, as that would be a disincentive to applicants, but we are not anywhere near that position yet.”

Jason Edwards maintains that the reduction from 25% to 17.5% has been the result of fast action by the students rather than the mechanisms of the negotiation process. He is confident that planned rent increases will be brought down into single figures.

Ian West, OUSU Vice-President (Finance), said, “OUSU totally backs Mansfield JCR’s campaign. If they are as united as they seem to be they have every chance of winning.”



Mansfield’s Bursar (centre front) poses for a JCR Photo, oblivious to protesters behind

Monday morning, the Bursar met with a JCR Negotiation Committee and admitted that their is little basis for the comparability argument. Katie Bowles, JCR Vice-President said, “By using the comparability argument the Governing Body have managed to shoot themselves in their collective foot. In effect they are asking us to have one of the highest levels of rents and charges in the country while they are paying that any more they want us to pay through battles.”

However, the Bursar maintained “we are not trying to burden the JCR with a £128,000 debt, but we are looking at all sources of income within reason. Charges to students are part of this, and we have to make the most of it.”

He said that the Governing Body was sympathetic to student poverty, but argues that

People: Priestly Passions p4 Comment: Everyone Goes Crackers p5
Arts: Dodgy Records p6 LimeLight: Peacocks, Eggs & artificial grass p7
Listings: Bard’s Bonanza p8 Evelyn: Resigned to his fate p9 Features:

John Evelyn

With Limp Dick and the week 1 debate absent, JE feared there would be a lack of content this week. But, dear readers, you can never underestimate the inhabitants of Frewin Court.

New drinking game: take a shot for every Oxfess about the Union in the last few days. Regina George kept noticeably quiet during Limp Dick’s grilling by a hack of days gone by regarding a certain controversial speaker. Yet her facial expressions were easy enough to read as she endured the complaints of her one-time opponent. In true Trinity president style, Limp Dick faced questioning and an enthralling three hour not-Sitting meeting. Do watch out the next time you step into the library, as he successfully dug himself into several holes. These people clearly have even less to do with their lives than The Taoiseach with his 25 minute long presentation, or academics who spend their energy policing gender!

JE hears this was not the only time an ex-hack was seen lingering around the premises this week. Macaulay Culkin’s doppelgänger was far from Home and certainly not Alone as he spent 0th week schmoozing in the bar. With SBS in Spirit to hand, it looks like he may have another trick up his sleeve. Perhaps he’s looking to call checkmate on The Grandmaster in round two of the Battle of the Blondes (posh bloke edition). Time, and Freud event invitations, will tell.

Even though the termcard lacks any speakers that might make you bother going to the

Union, the potential for political gain draws us all back in the end. JE even hears that a certain hack turned appointee might be looking to make a comeback to the elected side and claim more vacation days than any officer in a potential run this term. Winter is coming, and the Snow Queen is #REALLY causing a stir.

And, in the Union’s hour of need, The Grandfather vanished. Clocking in a greater library fine than his vac day total, his time was up. It seems like Jevelyn’s suggestion he may die of old age was prophetic, though it may constitute a human rights violation to prevent him from his favourite activity of spending the day drinking in the bar. We’ll see if he makes his return to the ranks of Appointed next week, or if the SW1 Sneak succeeds in his coup d’etat.

Intrigue, drama, resignations, this week has really had it all. And it’s only week one!

Always more to come.

Yours,

Johnny E xo



Word Slide by Lewis Callister

There’s a first for everything (and everyone!) so this first-week issue has a word-slide themed around humanity’s firsts. Slide each letter round the edge of the grid into an empty box, within the same column or row, to reveal first-themed answers. Remember, if you find yourself without a letter available, one of the boxes has been filled out incorrectly.

If you get stuck, clues have been provided flipped alongside.

T A G B I N A

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R
G
C

1							
					2		
2							3
3							
		4					

H
Y

G E B A E I O

1. Matthew, first to swim the English Channel without artificial aid

2. First man to complete a flight in outer space

3. Paired with 4a, one of the first beverages enjoyed by mankind, popular in Britain

4. Paired with 3a, the land from which this beverage hails

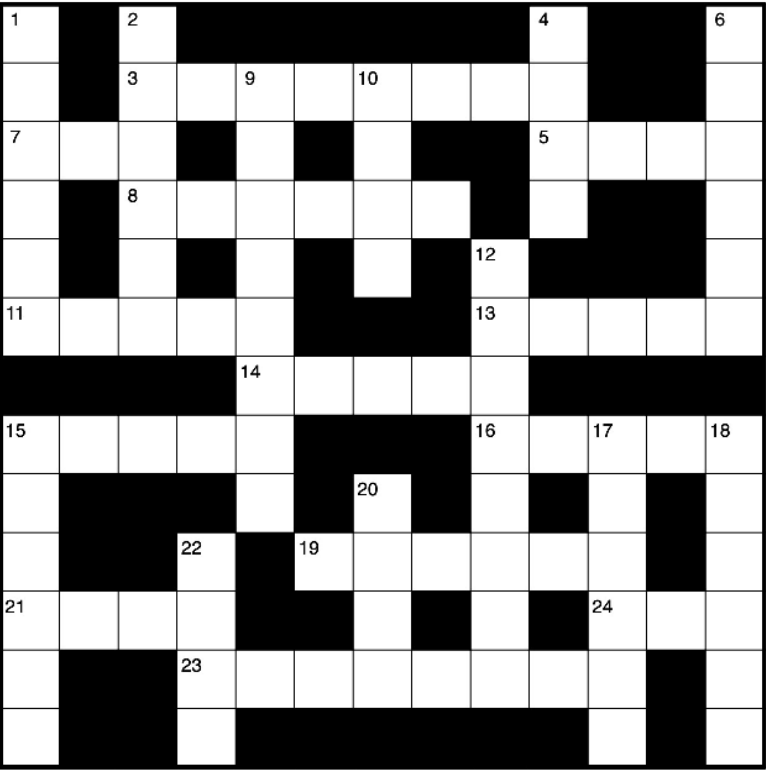
Down

1. Name shared by the brothers credited with the invention of the motor aeroplane

2. First female Nobel prize winner in 1903

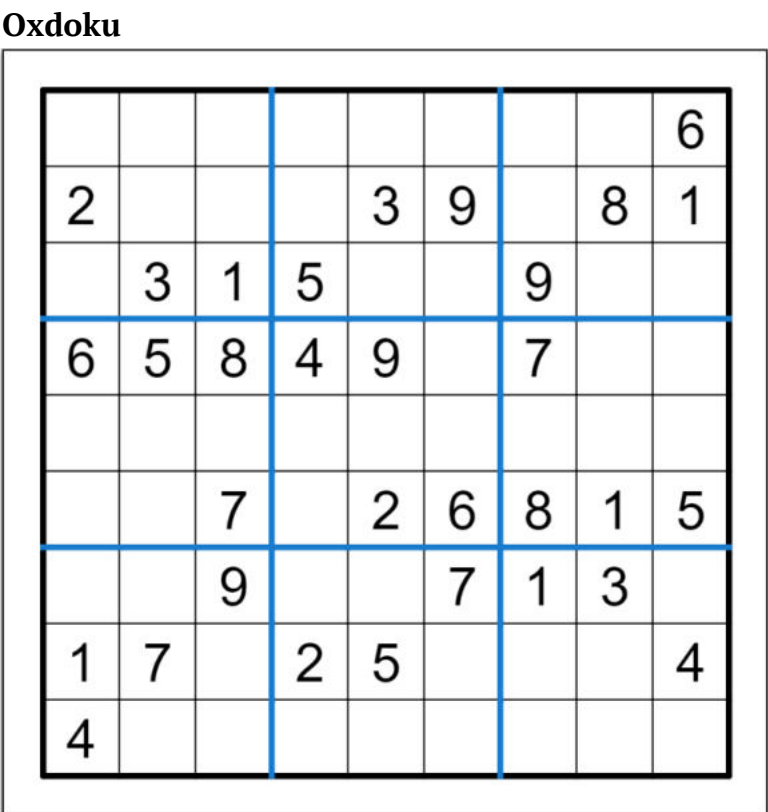
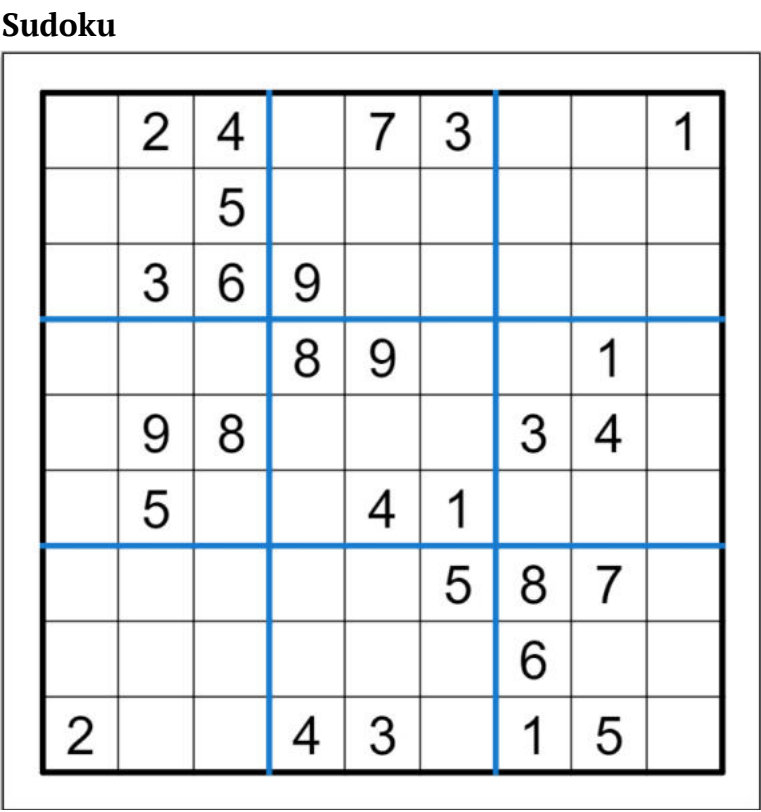
3. Partner to Hillary, one of the two first recorded people to reach Everest's summit

Cryptic Crossword by Sarah Beard

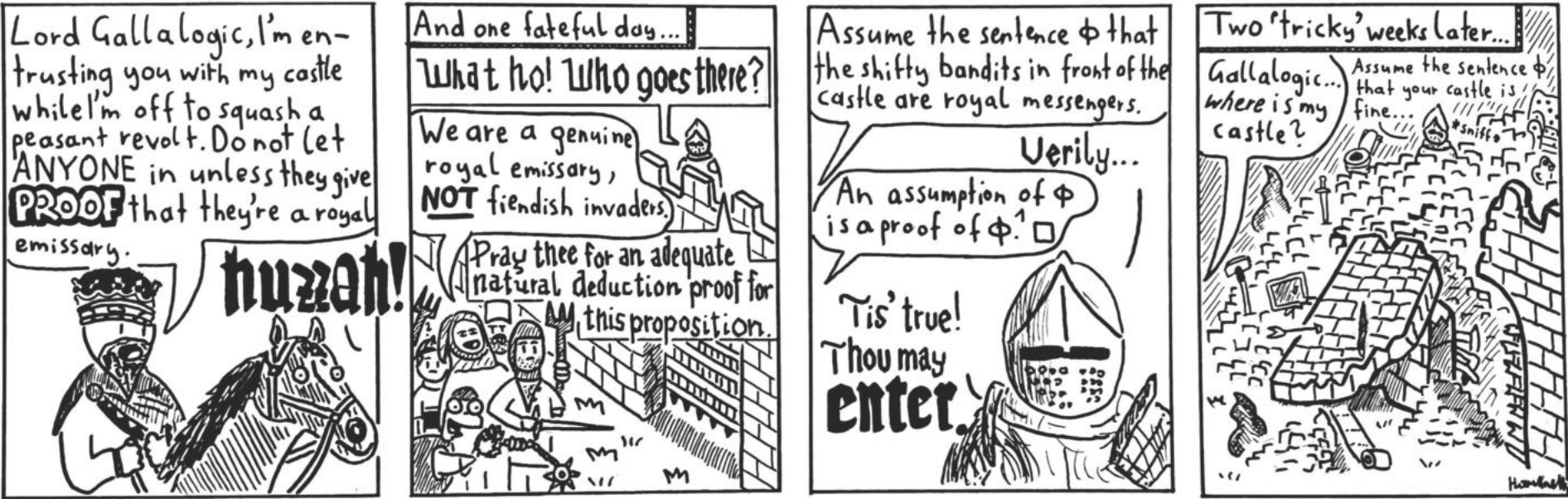


- ACROSS
3. Queen’s inferior desperately trying to take flight (8)
5. Volcano overturns what used to be neat (4)
7. First rest easy for umpire (3)
8. 5 in 1 dip - coming soon! (6)
11. Richard follows common adverbial suffix - text (5)
13. Germanic settler in a corner (5)
14. Improvising on the way to the Rad Cam (5)
15. Could help bond? (5)
16. Wild prize (5)
19. Shocking dessert (6)
21. Friends lost in the mountains (4)
23. Doppelgänger confuses large toe (5,3)
24. Breathtaking addition to any outfit (3)
- DOWN
1. Ariel’s in a messy state (6)
2. Scandalous carnival (6)
4. Sierra at the front of the line creates bias (4)
6. Bill involved in current events (6)
9. Defender of Satan perhaps? (8)
10. A sandy time of year (4)
12. A cyborg infiltrates wise man for advantageous destruction (8)
15. Basic couples talk alike (6)
17. Pasta, for example, is some source of energy (6)
18. There’s a market for a surgery to restore cat’s balance (6)
20. Dull pain between cardiac hesitations (4)
22. Leader amongst rats (4)

Sudokus
by Lewis Callister



Kevin and Timmy present: The Adventures of Lord Gallalogic by Sean Hartnett



¹ The Logic Manual, (Oxford: OUP, 2010), p.117

“It’s 99% politics and 1% law”: In conversation with Stella Assange

Interviewing Stella Assange about ‘Ithaka’, the new documentary about Julian Assange, the campaign to stop Assange’s extradition, and the implications for press freedom and democracy.

Freddie Evans

The battle to free one of the most wanted men in the world, Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks, has a passionate, dedicated champion in Stella Assange. With the threat of Julian’s extradition to the United States and the possibility of 175 years in prison, Stella fights tirelessly for her partner’s cause, facing down the U.S. government. David against Goliath. Her eyes show the scars of ceaseless war. I see pain, immense suffering and a desperate plea to be understood.

While we meet on Zoom, sipping lattes, Julian is incarcerated in Belmarsh Prison, the most hellish maximum-security prison in the UK.

Turn the clock back. On 22 October 2010, WikiLeaks released more than 750,000 classified U.S. military documents, including nearly 400,000 U.S. Army-filed reports, called the Iraqi War Logs, which detailed 66,000 civilian deaths out of 109,000 recorded deaths during the Iraq War.

In 2012, Julian sought refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. There he remained until 2019. However, after WikiLeaks reported on corruption allegations against the then Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno, on 11 April 2019 the Ecuadorian government invited the Met Police into their embassy and Julian was immediately arrested. On the same day in the U.S., a pre-prepared sealed indictment was opened and Julian was charged with conspiracy to hack into a government computer with a maximum five-year sentence.

In the UK Julian was quickly found guilty of breaching the UK Bail Act and sentenced to 50 weeks imprisonment. He has been locked up in Belmarsh Prison ever since while the U.S. sought to extradite him. On 23 May 2019, Julian was indicted on 17 charges relating to the U.S. Espionage Act carrying a maximum sentence of 170 years. There have been multiple UK court hearings and appeals since then. Julian, Stella and their legal team have tried every which way to fight the U.S. government’s relentless attempts to extradite Julian.

On 17 June 2022, then UK Home Secretary Priti Patel approved Julian’s extradition.

On 22 August 2022, Julian’s lawyers appealed to the UK High Court with new evidence. The result of that appeal is awaited.

I asked Stella what outcome she saw for her partner’s Sisyphean struggle against extradition. Will he succeed?

“I’m hopeful. If public opinion properly understands the case, the case is completely intolerable, and the courts would never credibly go along with it. It’s 99% politics and 1% law. You couldn’t get a more political case than this – from the content of the publications, which were about U.S. conduct during the Iraq and Afghan wars, including torture, the U.S. leaning on governments in Europe to get certain outcomes and then the way that the U.S. government has conducted itself. I think there is a lot more that is known now than before. It used to be a grassroots movement of people who follow Julian and WikiLeaks very closely but it’s grown, and in the meantime, there have been high-quality books that have come out by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture. I think there’s a lot of people now that are quite educated on the stakes. I don’t expect the general public to know 13 years of detail like I have it in my head because I have lived it, but there are some general issues that people are getting. And then there’s Julian being in Belmarsh Prison for four years without serving a sentence. There are people who were convicted to say eight years in prison. They’re out after 50% of their time for violent crimes and Julian’s in there because he published evidence of government wrongdoing and he’s not even convicted. For the regular bystander, they look at the situation and they can see immediately, instinctively that it’s wrong.”

Stella is completely determined to spread Julian’s message to the world. Julian’s father,

John Shipton, a 76-year-old retired builder, has also been a hugely vocal campaigner for his son throughout the many years of legal proceedings. The recently released documentary ‘Ithaka’ follows the hard journeys Stella and John have travelled, shedding light on the brutal challenges Julian has faced and the broader implications for press freedom and democratic rights. I asked Stella what she wants viewers to take away from the documentary.

“I think a better understanding of not only what has happened to Julian but also the bigger implications of Julian’s case for freedom of the press, for the public’s right to know and for our basic democratic rights. Also to give them – the viewers – an alternate narrative to the way in which the story has been told for many years. The way we could do that was by letting people into our lives for them to witness what was happening in our lives and what was happening to Julian through our eyes.”

Before the interview I was fortunate to have exclusive access to ‘Ithaka’. Something said by John resonated. People seem above all else to be interested in a narrative about Julian – in Hollywood fashion rather than understanding who Julian might be as a human being. I raised this with Stella, asking about the media’s portrayal of Julian.

“When we started making the documentary, the narrative being pushed was extremely misleading and dangerously ignorant. If you read the newspaper, for years you would just not understand what was happening – there were claims that he was completely paranoid, that the U.S. didn’t want him, that the U.S. would never prosecute him for publishing information. That started to change the day Julian was arrested because the U.S. revealed that it had a sealed indictment. It should have triggered a reflection on the part of the media – that Julian was right, but it didn’t happen – perhaps because the media isn’t very good at criticising itself.”

Stella has seen what can happen when journalists cannot or will not report on issues which demand a truly objective analysis of how their governments exercise power. If journalists cannot freely report and communicate information the public cannot make proper judgments about those in authority. I was eager to ask what Julian’s case means for transparency and freedom to communicate.

“This case is the single greatest threat to press freedom worldwide. The legal theory that the U.S. is advancing is that its domestic secrecy laws have extraterritorial effect and affects every single person on the planet. The people who owe a duty of secrecy to the

United States are not just its civil servants and its military personnel, but every single human being on the planet. It’s an assault on the public’s right to know and it makes journalism impossible because journalists are only allowed to publish what the U.S. deems that the press should publish and that means that the press is an amplifier of what the government wants the public to know. What it means is that there’s a global reduction of standards of protection for journalists. We’re seeing this right now. For instance, I see the arrest of Evan Gershkovich in Russia as a direct effect of the U.S. using espionage laws against Julian. Russia had not done this since the Cold War. What they had done in the past to journalists was to expel them, but they now have taken a policy change and it (the arrest of journalists) has become normalised. The U.S. normalised it with Julian and as a result, being a journalist, especially in situations that are dangerous or politically hairy is becoming more dangerous and their life and liberty are at greater risk.”

I asked Stella exactly what she believes the pursuit of Julian reveals about U.S. democracy.

“It tells us two things about the U.S. The first is that its freedom of speech

protections are in crisis. The U.S. has very strong constitutional protections, and the most significant is the First Amendment. The First Amendment puts the constraint on the executive, that they cannot abridge people’s ability to speak. The case is unconstitutional. The problem is that the U.S. is in quite a reactionary phase and with the composition of the U.S. Supreme Court, the outcome is extremely uncertain. They’ve said things like, Julian is not a

U.S. citizen, therefore, the First Amendment doesn’t apply to him, which is crazy. It’s a principle that they’ve extended from, for example, the Drug Enforcement Agency raids in Colombia or Mexico. The people who they arrest in Mexico and bring to the U.S. then try to say – ‘this arrest violates my constitutional rights’, they say – ‘well, you’re not American so it doesn’t apply for you’. They’re doing that for speech. That brings me to the second thing – how the U.S. is wielding its power through the judiciary onto other jurisdictions. This is where the UK has a responsibility to stop a foreign power from abridging freedom of speech here or impinging on protections that should be robust. It’s not foreign laws that should apply here, it’s UK laws, and journalists should be able to publish without having to know secrecy laws in Turkey or Benin or the United States.”

My final question was about Stella’s views on the treatment of Julian by the UK government and its courts. What does this reveal?



“
This case is the single greatest threat to press freedom worldwide.

“One of the interesting points that this case concerns is whether the UK has a ban on extraditing people for political offences or not. The U.S.-UK extradition treaty says it does, but the courts say that they can extradite because the Extradition Act did not include that ban. There are also credible reports that at the highest levels of the United States,

there were discussions about assassinating Julian. There is evidence that his legal meetings were being deliberately recorded, and a whole range of criminal activity on the part of the extraditing state, and the British courts cannot credibly be seen to be acting fairly or impartially if they go along with it. Their credibility is under scrutiny, not just

just domestically, but also internationally. The fact that Julian has been in Belmarsh Prison of all places, that he’s been there for four years that the UK courts have had ever every opportunity until now to stop this, makes the UK court and political system look extremely compromised. The UK is advertising itself as a place where other countries can outsource

repressive actions against dissidents. This is a country where dissidents, political opponents and intellectuals used to come because it was a place that was open-minded and safe, but now is giving off completely opposite signals.”

Full article available online at Cherwell.org

“It’s about having the courage to say what you mean”: In conversation with Gwyneth Lewis

Discussing her experiences in Oxford, her views on poetry and relationship with language

Natascha Norton

Gwyneth Lewis is the former National Poet of Wales, the first writer to be given the Welsh laureateship and was recently appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2022 Birthday Honours for her services to literature. Her poetry has been proudly reproduced in six-foot-high letters on the Wales Millennium Centre’s façade in Cardiff Bay.

N: You’ve been hosting poetry reading classes here during Hilary term as Balliol College’s writer in residence. What made you want to come back to Balliol and how have you found it now that you’re back?

G: I was here as a graduate student doing my doctorate and it’s been very sweet to come back older, and not having to write a doctorate. It’s been just a delight. I’ve been given the opportunity to have serious talks with people who are serious writers here and it’s been a huge privilege to think through some of the issues with people who are committed to their writing. I’ve been, I shouldn’t have been but I am, surprised and delighted by the passion that people feel about their own writing. I mean, we, as students used to do it. I was active in the Poetry Society, and I knew a lot of writers, but to actually have the college provide the opportunity is a completely other thing. It’s very enlightened, I think, particularly because I don’t see the skills of good academic writing as all that different from good creative writing. In fact, I think they’re indistinguishable. It’s about clear thinking. It’s about having the courage to say what you mean, not what you think other people want you to say, that’s really key.

N: Would you be willing to speak a bit about what you’ve been working on whilst in residence here at Balliol College?

G: I’ve not worked on it as much as I would have liked but I have got a critical book in process about how to approach poetry without fear. I think, as a genre, it’s considered very inaccessible by a lot of people. People have been put off, I think, by feeling as if poetry was talking in language that you don’t understand and that you’re excluded from it. Well, that’s not good

poetry! I feel very strongly about that. So, I’m writing a critical book about that and how to really approach it with confidence and how not to be daunted by both writing and reading, which are very similar processes, because you can’t do the one without the other.

N: I was looking at some of the work that you’ve done in the past and it’s not all just poetic works. You’ve worked in various genres, forms and mediums. Is there a specific medium that you felt was strongest out of all of the ones that you’ve tried? Or do you feel that they all have their own advantages?

G: Well, my first love is poetry. I was writing before I knew really what it was - since the age of seven or so. It’s the closest to my brain wiring. But then I also liked writing television scripts, because of the discipline of having to push on the story visually rather than using words. I found writing plays very difficult. I have massive respect for playwrights. In an odd way, no matter what the form is, I find I have similar preoccupations in all of them. So, it’s great to be able to bring out different aspects in, let’s say, a novella or non-fiction book. I enjoy the variety because I get easily bored. I don’t like doing the same thing over and over again.

N: I find it really interesting that you’ve written poetry in both Welsh and English. I was reading a Guardian piece that you wrote about your relationship with poetry in the past, and your Welsh identity. Do you feel that you can express yourself better in one language than in the other?

G: Well, yes. I mean, I was bilingual from an early age, Welsh being the first language. I think there’s a way in which the first language you speak is more intimately wired into your brain so I noticed I write more quickly and well [in Welsh]. But because I have that split second [to think], in English, I can do things in my second language that I can’t do in Welsh. I do speak other languages too although I don’t write in them. I think it’s like having a camera with a different focal distance, or a different lens in it for every language. What fascinates me is that when I tried to translate a book of Welsh poems

into English, I found I had to change more or less everything, to give a cultural equivalent because your audience is different in both languages, politically different, historically different in their experiences.

N: Your piece of poetry on the Wales Millennium Centre is said to be one of the biggest reproductions of the poetic word in the world. How was it seeing something that you conceptualised being reflected in the real world on such a grand scale?

G: Amazing. Yeah, I mean, really amazing. And fortunately, I still like the words. You know, because if imagine if you thought, “Oh, that’s a weak bit of it”, that would irritate me enormously. But there was something about the spirit of that building, and what the aspirations were when it went up, that helped to write the poem. It was a very thrilling experience. Although I had an irrational fear when I first saw it, that there would be a spelling mistake. But there isn’t.

N: How long did you spend working on that project?

G: Well, the way you phrased it is interesting, because the wrote the words in a weekend. But I had been thinking about the building for a long time, because I applied for a job in it so I knew what the building was about very well. But I didn’t try to write any words until the very last minute, until the deadline was nearly up, so I just got lucky.

N: What I also found really interesting was that you’d studied at Cambridge and then went to Harvard, to then come to Oxford to do your post-graduate in 18th century forgeries. How did you find studying in America and what made you want to come back to study that specific specialty here at Oxford?

G: Well, I went to America because I was a bit stuck as to which language to write in. At the time when I was an undergraduate, English poetry was very much looking down on the Welsh language and culture and yet English poetry wasn’t terribly interesting. I mean, there were interesting poets, but as whole scene wasn’t that exciting. I thought there was more interesting work going on in America. It gave me a chance to take time to assess politically what I felt comfortable with and that’s when I made the switch to writing in English. Then I discovered, “Oh! I don’t have to stop writing in Welsh either. Why can’t I do both?” It seems obvious now looking back at it, but it was an agony at the time. The reason I

wanted to do the forgery is because one of the foundational scholars of Welsh language culture was a forger himself, and he had a vast

archive of writing in Welsh that hadn’t been explored when I came here. So, I put him in the context of other forgeries that were going on, which weren’t really forgeries. They were just politically contentious pieces of literature. I wanted to look at the politics of that.

N: So, when you do get the chance to write your poetic works, or any kind of works, do you have a favourite writing spot or a favourite location? Or is it just where and when it grabs you?

G: The main thing is to have a door that you can shut or a nest that you can build like a corner of a sofa. I make nests everywhere and I write a lot in bed because it’s unofficial time. You can be more daring.

N: Do you have a favourite spot in Oxford that you just go to for inspiration?

G: No, but I’m always on the lookout. Although, I went into the Bodleian for the first time in a long time and the air was thick with hysteria, in the same way as it was when I was a student, it was exactly the same.

N: That’s the perfect way to describe it. Just to close off the interview, I was wondering if you had a favourite memory of your time here in Oxford?

G: There’s plenty that I remember with shame. I can’t isolate one. I must say that handing in the doctorate and the degree ceremony for getting the doctorate was wonderful, really very dramatic. You file in in a black gown, and you go out in a scarlet and blue doctoral gown. I enjoyed it a lot simply because it was great to have it finished and to know that I never ever have to write another one.

N: Yet you’re back in the same town.

G: Yes. It is it is wonderful to have been allowed back in to see other people at the beginning of that period when I know what they’re going through because it isn’t an easy place Oxford. It has many, many wonders to it but it can be a tricky place to maintain your morale so it’s nice to be able to pass some things on to people that I thought helped, you know, and to say, just enjoy it as much as you can.

Full article available online at Cherwell.org



aging offers no warnings


my childhood bed is five sizes too small
and home feels rotten with the stale air of youth.
there was no road sign on the way
alerting me that i was 20 km from adulthood

just a stiff mattress when i got here
and the reminder that what once was
will never be again.

when was the last day i sat in my high chair?
we didn't throw a party.
when was the last time my mom helped me in the shower so
i didn't get soap in my eyes?
what day did i learn to do it for myself?
was it a tuesday?
was it cloudy?
did it rain?

when i babysit, sometimes the kids have nightmares
and they call for me.
when did i stop doing that?
when did i decide i could handle the scary things on my own,
without crawling into my parents' bed and watching daylight
creep through the gap between my dad's arms?

it doesn't matter now, i suppose
because i've been speeding without getting pulled over
and i've hastily reached the destination
without trying to get there at all.
- grace weinberg



THE SOURCE: CHANGE

Image credit: Cameron Kirby/ CC0 1.0

Art

Caravaggio: His mercurial life and works

Thomas Bristow

According to the art historian Andrew Graham-Dixon, Caravaggio lived ‘a life sacred and profane’. Born Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio in 1571 in Milan, the family moved east to the town from which he was to take his name in order to escape the plague. Caravaggio was raised in poverty and by 1584 had lost both of his parents. However, that same year he began a four year apprenticeship with the painter Simone Peterzano. In 1592 he moved to Rome, having quarrelled with and injured a policeman. It was this tendency for violence which was to follow him for the rest of his life. Rome was where he flourished, fulfilling commissions for churches and patrons, but once again his temper got the better of him, and he fled to Naples with a death sentence for murder. Throughout his life he was notorious for fighting and was an extremely disagreeable man by all accounts. In 1607 Caravaggio travelled to Malta and then to Sicily, before returning to Naples in 1609 and being involved in yet another violent altercation. In 1610, in the coastal town of Porto Ercole, Caravaggio died in uncertain circumstances. Theories range from syphilis, lead poisoning and murder, but what was certain was that death had finally caught up with him.

What then of the works produced during this turbulent life? Simply put they're

nothing short of spectacular. In his early life, Caravaggio was probably influenced by the regional Lombard style which emphasised simple but naturalistic detail, providing a departure from the tense and grandiose compositions of Mannerism. His earliest known painting Boy Peeling Fruit (1592-93) is an excellent example of this. It is a calm scene, in which a curiously pensive young man peels an unidentified fruit, but the trademark use of chiaroscuro makes it none the less striking. Indeed it is this chiaroscuro (light-dark) for which Caravaggio was to become most famous. He developed and employed the technique with great skill, illuminating whole figures in bright light against dark backgrounds, creating a heightened sense of drama in wholly naturalistic depictions.

But it wasn't always like this. In another earlier composition, The Musicians (c.1595), the use of light is far more subtle. The two central figures catch the viewer with their strange doll-like faces, and the composition itself feels crowded and uncomfortable. Similarly, in The Cardsharps (c.1594) the chiaroscuro is much less prominent. The painting depicts a young man who is being cheated at cards by another young man and his older master. From our view, the cheat reaches for

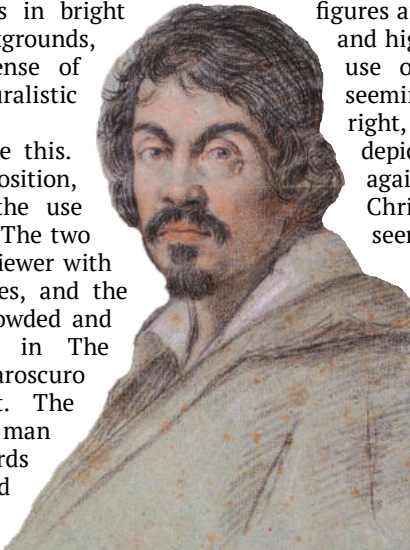
the hidden cards, and their use against the naïve youth is imminent. The bold difference in colour of the three figures' clothing provides a strong contrast and the immediacy of the scene is brilliant. This work caught the eye of Cardinal Francesco Del Monte, who bought the painting and became Caravaggio's first big patron.

In 1599, Caravaggio was commissioned to produce three pieces for the Contarelli Chapel in the church of San Luigi dei Francesci. The painting to the left of the altar, The Calling of Saint Matthew, is one of his most famous works, and rightly so. Having seen this in person, I can attest to its impact. The figures are rendered in vivid detail, and highlighted by the masterful use of chiaroscuro. The light seemingly floods in from the right, but almost only on the men depicted, rendering them clear against a plain background. Christ stands in the shadows, seemingly directing the light towards one of two men sat at the table (the identity of Matthew is debated). The strong use of light against a gloomy room captures perfectly a moment of great spiritual awakening and conversion. It is a perfect example of the dramatic style for which

Caravaggio was thenceforth famous.

Caravaggio continued to paint biblical scenes for the rest of his time in Rome, refining the use of light and darkness to produce such works as the violent and shocking Judith Beheading Holofernes (c.1602), and one of my favourites, Saint Jerome Writing (c.1605). Here Saint Jerome reads intently, his outstretched hand holds a quill and morbidly placed upon the desk is a skull. Caravaggio continued his religious work in Naples, producing the altarpiece The Seven Works of Mercy (c.1607), and in Malta was inducted as a Knight of Malta. Before being expelled from the order in 1608 for violent quarrelling again, he painted his largest work, The Beheading of St John the Baptist (1608). It is 370 by 520 centimetres, and considered by some to be ‘one of the most important works in Western painting’. This was also the only painting that he signed, perhaps fittingly in the blood which gushes onto the floor.

The legacy of Caravaggio cannot be overstated. Influencing subsequent masters from Gentileschi to Rubens, his commanding use of fundamental elements such as colour, light and darkness combined to create a unique style filled with the drama and violence that his subjects required. When considering his tumultuous life, I think we can see much of Caravaggio in his works, self- portraits aside of course. Despite only signing one painting, he is present in all of them. Whether in the mysterious, psychological complexity of his figures, or the plain violence that we know him for today.



Ready for takeoff: My Little Airport and the Hong Kong indie scene

An exploration into why ‘My Little Airport’ is accessible to both indie fans and Cantopop listeners alike.

Charlotte Lai

Lyrics Translated by Charlotte Lai.

The Hong Kong music scene hasn’t quite taken off like its Korean or Japanese equivalent in recent years. With the irresistible dance-pop swagger of K-pop dominating the global music scene, the glory days of Cantopop seem long behind us, relegated to above-40 karaoke bars, late-night radio stations, and my dad’s record collection. Remember when Bruce Lee, kung fu films, and city pop were the hottest things on the market? Neither do I, but in its heyday between the ‘70s and ‘90s, Hong Kong – alongside Japan – were Asia’s pop culture leaders. Cantopop is an integral part of Hong Kong’s cultural identity – whilst still under British colonial rule in the mid-1970s, pop music sung in Cantonese resonated with an entire generation and gave rise to the stratospheric takeoff of pop stars such as Hui Koon-kit and Leslie Cheung. In the ‘90s the baton was passed onto the ‘Four Heavenly Kings’ of Cantopop: Jacky Cheung, Andy Lau, Leon Lai and Aaron Kwok, each dominating award shows, radio, and body pillow sales alike. Harry Styles, eat your heart out.

But Cantopop seems to have been left behind, whilst K-pop has continued its stratospheric rise. Cantopop album sales have plummeted from HK\$2.5 billion in 1989 to just HK\$200 million in 2022. Once Cantopop giants, former firebrands like Andy Lau sell concert tickets by riding off a wave of ‘80s nostalgia. From a sputtering city that hasn’t produced a real pop star since the 2000s, the genre limps on with nods from the Crazy Rich Asians soundtrack and Pinterest edits of Chungking Express. We’ve somehow poached the Arctic Monkeys to headline Clockenflap.

But this isn’t about the sorry state of Cantopop. Nor is it an insufferable, ‘have-you-seen-my Spotify Wrapped?’ rumination on ‘real’ local indie. Instead, I want to introduce one of my favourites from the modern Hong Kong music scene – My Little Airport.

With all the melancholia of Portishead and the dreamy introspection of Cigarettes After Sex, the two-piece, comprised of Nicole Au and Lam Pang (also known as Ah P), are staples of Hong Kong’s small indie music scene. Sung mostly in Cantonese, their repertoire is bursting with wit, shining through in song titles like ‘Leo, Are You Still Jumping

Out Of Windows In Expensive Clothes?’ and ‘I Don’t Know How to Download Good AV Like Iris Does’, a whimsical ditty about watching Japanese porn on the Internet. Bet you’ve never heard that sentence before.

They recorded their first album in 2004, entitled 在動物園散步才是經事 (The OK Thing to Do on Sunday Afternoon Is to Toddle in the Zoo), with nothing more than an electric violin, guitar, and vocals, and subsequently established Harbour Records alongside four other indie bands from Hong Kong. In 2009 they started writing politically charged songs, such as ‘Divvying Up Stephen Lam’s \$300,000 Salary’ and ‘Donald Tsang, please die’. Nothing if not a succinct response to Tsang’s suggestion that the 1989 Tianamen Square Massacre was insignificant compared to China’s current economic prosperity. Hong Kong music has always been shaped by our complicated (to say the least) political scene, and My Little Airport is no exception.

With 11 albums now under their belt, My Little Airport has stayed true to their dream-pop roots with their recent release of 跟你開玩笑 (Just Kidding). Drenched in a drowsy Rickenbacker guitar wash, their release departs from their earlier whimsy and focuses instead on abandonment and wistfulness. Understated and hazy, yes, but with just enough slick pop sensibility to keep your attention the whole way through.

Fans of Beach House’s Depression Cherry or Julien Baker’s Sprained Ankle will find I’m Just Kidding With You to be a fine complement. My Little Airport maintains their characteristic stripped-back production – Lam’s electric guitar is ethereal, with a touch of fuzzy dissonance, whereas Au’s ghostly, half-spoken vocals fit seamlessly with the sedate production, perfectly capturing the soundtrack to a drowsy 3am car ride. Minor details to the production – an ever-so-slightly dissonant chord, the imperfect drone of a keyboard patch – result in a sound that departs significantly from the bombastic power-balladry of their Cantopop predecessors, resembling instead an intimate, one-take live performance. My Little Airport has traded theatricality for an LP that transports you to the midnight sleaze of Mongkok and the smell of greasepaint and fish balls at a wet market.

The album kicks off with ‘細胞’ (Cell), a juxtaposition between glittering, once-strummed guitar chords and Au’s plaintive vocals. It sets the scene for the rest of the album with its in-your-face melancholy, featuring lines like ‘I had everything / But met ghosts at the same time’ and ‘I love my every cell / I’m just sorry I never told you it would get better’.

This less-than-cheery opener leads into the wandering beauty of ‘循環的夜’ (Repeating Nights), its upbeat (I promise!) drums and moody violin arrangement is held together by a muted bassline. Au’s vocals are mixed just a few inches closer, whisper-singing the wistful ‘You’re sea-blown and insincere / I kind of want to approach you / It could just be curiosity’. Lam’s marching-band snare drum interlude, overlaid by a melancholy synth solo, gives the tune dynamic contrast.

Circulating Nights is followed by two of my personal favourites – ‘LUNCH’ and ‘德州之戀’ (Texas Romance). ‘LUNCH’ is sung as a duet between Lam and Au, with lyrics that read like pages from a diary. The song is a sweet, heartfelt ditty, with Au’s guitar weaving a silvery thread through the performance and its hazy, reverb-drenched production reminiscent of two lovers backlit by the city glare. ‘The Romance of Germany’ is almost James Bond-esque with its haunting, suspended, tremolo-heavy guitar chords. Telling the story of a long-distance lover who has emigrated to Germany, the track itches with promise and glitters with longing.

The album finishes with ‘我不適合聚會’ (No Gathering for Me) and ‘不要把冬天衫放回衣櫃’ (Don’t Put the Winter Clothes in the Closet). The first is laden with lounge-music melancholy, climaxing with a rare guitar solo from Au. The strings arrangement is the highlight of the track. The interplay between Lam’s guitar reverb and the haunting violin provides a soundtrack to a gathering, draped in velvet, that Au sings at the fringes of. Winter Clothes ends off the album with uptempo indie rock, its catchy melody and upbeat drums resembling the glitzy Cantopop appeal. After spending most of the album with an introspective melancholy that makes the music linger, the last track is a welcome reprieve.

Au’s wordplay carries a sophistication that – despite my best efforts – does not translate into English, but I’ll be damned if I don’t give it my best shot anyways. ‘LUNCH’ references the oft-quoted phrase by T. S. Eliot, ‘April is the cruelest month’ (which conveniently rhymes in Cantonese). This is followed with the wistful ‘every joke carries some truth / I am trapped in between layers of clouds / surrounded by mist’. With lyrics that read like pages from a diary, Au’s vocal delivery is characteristically understated, whose subtleties are understandable by non-Cantonese speakers. With that being said, My Little Airport’s foray into melancholia can feel a little oversaturated. From the acid wash of Lam’s guitar to Au’s

dreamy vocals, the fingerprints of indie-pop dozziness are all over the album, turning the seasoned two-piece into – almost – a parody of indie sad-boy edginess. There’s a reason why the most popular indie acts – the likes of Cigarettes After Sex, Beach House and, alt-J – are often lampooned for being pretentious, floppy-hair shoegazers that make music to watch paint dry to. In the context of the global indie scene, My Little Airport only just escapes the fuzz-heavy monotony, offering up a ten-track LP that shines in its lyrical originality and minimalist innovation.

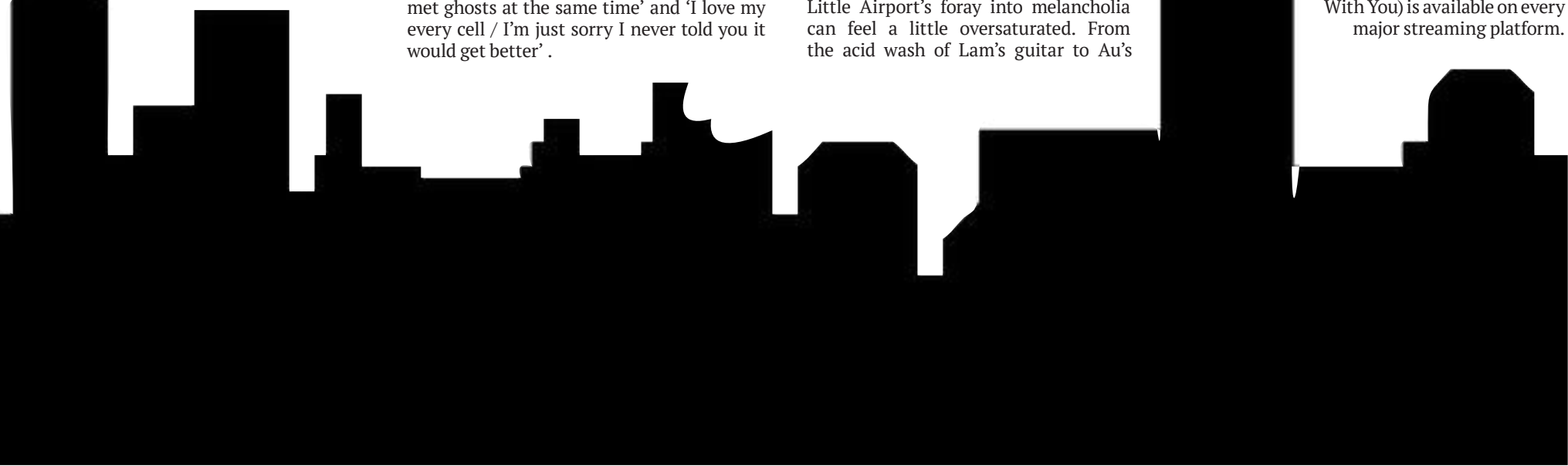
Writing a review of the Hong Kong music scene may expose me as being a bit of a hypocrite – I’ll be the first to admit that I haven’t delved much into the Hong Kong music scene. I sit quietly when my friends sing along to Cantopop classics during karaoke. My mom offered to take me to the Eason Chan concert, to which I responded ‘who?’ This article owes a lot of thanks to Google Translate and Wikipedia. Music has never been something that I had in common with my parents, who often respond with ‘why don’t you do something more useful?’ when I tell them about a new song I’ve written, or about a performance I’ve done with a band.

I, like many other Hong Kongers, have often felt like ‘a people without a country’, caught between a colonial heritage and the Chinese handover. Hong Kong’s dwindling cultural clout has left me grasping for artists who I can relate to in the present day. While my parents were brought up with the likes of Leslie Cheung and Faye Wong, I was raised on a ready-for-radio mix of Maroon 5 and Taylor Swift. Like the city itself, I struggle with my cultural identity, often caught at a crossroads between my Cantonese roots and a British education – almost-but-not-

quite Hong Kong, yet decidedly far from being British. My Little Airport bridges the gap between my self-professed love for all things indie and my cultural heritage. They are true to their roots, earnest, and tender enough to appeal to audiences everywhere – My Little Airport punches above their weight.

Witty, innovative, and, unabashedly Hong Kong in character, My Little Airport has only just begun to take off. Hong Kong indie, like the city, has plenty of gas left in the tank.

跟你開玩笑 (I’m Just Kidding With You) is available on every major streaming platform.



Top 10 films for a Trouble-Free Trinity

Ten films for you to romanticise the summer term with.

Hetta Johnson

For many, Trinity term brings about deadlines, exams and proves to be one of the more stressful terms of the academic year. But, for every bit of stress, there's a summer day, an approaching sense of closure and a long sprawling summer to keep us going. With those days in mind, here's a list of my top ten films for a trouble-free trinity.

1. Ferris Bueller's Day Off. In this 1986 comedy caper, high school wise-guy, Ferris, has refined the art of skipping school and getting away with it. Ahead of his graduation, he is determined to enjoy one more day off with his girlfriend and best friend despite his principal's mission to catch him. In the words of whip-smart Ferris: 'Life moves pretty fast; if you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it!'. If that isn't a welcome reminder for Trinity, I don't know what is.

2. Everything, Everywhere All at Once. The film that swept this year's Oscars is every bit deserving of the critical acclaim it's been receiving. The absurdist adventure follows Chinese immigrant, Evelyn, who alone must save the world from an inter-dimensional rupture. There are sausage fingers, googly eyes, unfinished taxes and a massive heart at the core of the film that spotlights the highs and lows of the so-called American Dream. If you want a slice of summer escapism, look

no further.

3. Black Panther is the film that marked a new chapter for the MCU. With a hugely successful commercial release and critical acclaim, the film demonstrated to Hollywood and its audiences the beauty and importance of African-American narratives. The film has a stellar cast and is a stunning superhero adventure to immerse yourself in.

4. Stand by Me. Four friends decide to sneak away from their homes and hike to find the corpse of a local teenager killed by a passing train. It's not the typical set up for a coming-of-age story and yet it works. As Gordie, Chris (young River Phoenix is a particular stand out performance), Teddy and Vern pick their way across train tracks and woodlands, they all go through learning curves that will resonate with audiences as much now as the film did when it was released in 1986.

5. The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent. Nicolas Cage plays a version of himself in this bonkers comedy that sees himself, a struggling actor, accept a payment of \$1 million dollars to be the guest of honour at the mysterious Javi Gutierrez's Mallorca birthday bash. The film is hilarious, wild and the perfect way to spend a



couple of hours destressing this term.

6. Pride and Prejudice (2005). It's hard to get more romantic than Mr. Darcy's hand flex after helping Lizzie into her carriage and, for that scene and more swoon-worthy romance, Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* is the one to watch. With its dewy cinematography, longing stares and familial charm, this take on Jane Austen's classic is the ultimate comfort watch.

7. Good Luck to You, Leo Grande. Emma Thompson's English teacher hires sex worker, Leo, in hopes of fulfilling everything she's missed out on in three decades of marriage with her late husband. Daryl McCormack and Emma Thompson make an electric pair on screen and, with a minimal set and Emma Thompson's final, empowering nude scene, *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* is an absolute feel-good delight.

8. Top Gun. 1986 was a great film for cinema and *Top Gun* is a large reason why. A classic for a reason, Tom Cruise stars as Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell who, alongside his best friend, Goose, are training at the Navy's prestigious fighter weapons school. Exhilarating action sequences, an

iconic soundtrack and heartfelt relationships has ensured that this aviation adventure has stood the test of time and makes for the perfect summer watch.

9. The Breakfast Club. Another iconic film from the 80s, *The Breakfast Club* sees a band of teenagers from different high school cliques thrown together for another after-school detention. Overcoming their preconceived notions of each other, the film resounded with my teenage self when I first watched it, over thirty years after its release, and remains timeless.

10. Coco. Young Miguel has a passion for music despite his family's ancestral ban on it in their household. Journeying into the Land of the Dead, Miguel finds adventure, music, magic and learns more about himself and his family than he had ever hoped for. Teenage me was impervious to the hype of this film, firmly believing myself to be 'too old' for animated movies. But, having finally sat down to watch it with my family, I was proven entirely wrong. *Coco* is an absolute treasure of a movie – bright, heartfelt, funny and utterly charming, it's a joy of a film to ensure a trouble-free trinity.

Trinity term can, notoriously, be a stressful time for students who struggle to give themselves a break in the face of mounting academic pressure and deadlines. Hopefully, this selection of films will provide momentary reprieve for any who may need it. Happy watching!

Books

She's glad her mom died, and I understand why.

Nina Naidu

Having been one of those strange children that didn't grow up with iCarly – I was more of a Victorious fan – I was surprised at my attraction to a book written by an actress best known for wielding a sock full of butter. Perhaps it was the title that drew me in. Well, of course it was. But why did I care so much? Even I wasn't prepared for the raw emotional intensity this book would deliver.

Released in August 2022, *I'm Glad My Mom Died* is a candid memoir delving into actress Jennette McCurdy's childhood as a former child actor, her struggles with eating disorders, addiction, and most prominently, a brutal reflection of her co-dependent relationship with her mother, Debra. We follow Jennette from her young days as a (somewhat) aspiring actress up until after her mother's death from cancer. Through her visceral writing, we experience the innocent naïveté that would permeate the first pages of her life. She reluctantly agrees to an acting career, launched at age 6, in the hopes of winning her mother's approval. Whilst many would view a career as a child actor as a dream come true, for young Jennette it was anything but. At the expense of her freedom and happiness, she believes that this sacrifice will grant her unconditional love from her mother.

Obviously, it doesn't. But it's heartbreaking to see how long it takes to realise this herself.

She confesses that she had been emotionally and sexually abused well into her teenage years, being given routine breast exams and not even being allowed to wash her own hair. Her mother does nothing to stop the development of her eating disorder. In fact, she encourages unhealthy dietary restrictions and enables her subsequent abuse from "The Creator" at Nickelodeon, as she so affectionately names him. We all know she's talking about Dan Schneider, but by maintaining his anonymity, we are reminded of the ongoing reality for victims of child sexual abuse. And is it really Nickelodeon without the threat of hush money? Although, frankly, I'm more surprised she was allowed to write about that at all.

As I read her memoir, I couldn't help but wonder when McCurdy's iCarly co-star, Miranda Cosgrove, would make an appearance. While her appearance is brief, McCurdy fondly recounts their relationship, offering a glimpse of hope amidst the painful experiences she shares. She also touches on her jealousy towards Ariana Grande, who

“You can love someone deeply and still acknowledge the happiness you've felt since they've been gone.”

co-starred with her on the iCarly spin-off show, Sam and Cat. McCurdy's sincerity and vulnerability throughout the memoir is welcomed, offering a rare insight into the intrusive thoughts that many of us have but rarely share.

Despite the harsh title, McCurdy questions why we tend to romanticise the dead. McCurdy asks her mother this at her grave but ultimately admits to wanting to glorify her legacy like everybody else. But when the dead are not here to defend themselves, we are left only with the past. "Maybe she would have apologised", she wonders, but she knows this just won't do. You can love someone deeply and still acknowledge the happiness you've felt since they've been gone.

In a sea of celebrity memoirs, *I'm Glad My Mom Died* stands out as one of the most poignant releases of 2022. McCurdy's refreshing honesty provides readers with a taste of what it's like to read a book actually written by the author themselves. Though she was discouraged from writing as a girl, this memoir is a testament to what could have been for Jennette McCurdy. She's glad her mom died. And I understand why.

Top 3... dark academia reads

1. If We Were Villains

Think *The Secret History* meets the entire Works of Shakespeare. If you're a fan of the renowned playwright, you'll love the characters who almost exclusively quote him in their everyday dialogue.

2. The Atlas Six

Olivie Blake's debut novel spins the question we've all wondered: 'What if the Library of Alexandria had suffered a different fate?' Enter six magicians with a thirst for knowledge, prestige and power, competing to the death to be initiated into the world's greatest secret society.

3. The Picture of Dorian Gray

Oscar Wilde's only novel handles a young man selling his soul to the devil in exchange for youth and beauty, and the grapple with vanity and immorality that ensues. As one goodreads review puts it simply: this is a book about being hot and evil.

Macbeth at the Pilch, an ensemble of tragedies

Anuj Mishra

Anuj Mishra in conversation with the Alice Chakraborty (producer), Andrew Raynes (director), and Juliette Imbert (Lady Macbeth), from Happier Year Productions' staging of Macbeth in 2nd Week on tragedy, why we defend Lady Macbeth, and reimagining Shakespeare...

This is, of course, one of Shakespeare's most well-known tragedies, and has, according to the Cherwell archives, been performed in Oxford theatres five times in the last ten years. What drew you to putting on this production and facing the mammoth challenge of playing Shakespeare?

Andrew: What really draws me to Macbeth, and has done for years, is the strength of the other characters, and their relationships. For me, for example, that Macduff's marriage is falling apart is just as important as the marriage between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth.

Alice: When we were deciding what play we wanted to put on in Trinity, we knew we wanted to go for something more 'classical'. In choosing Macbeth, we wanted to focus on those peripheral characters and relationships rather than just making it a very plain tragedy about one guy. It's because of that that we have a larger cast than is strictly necessary: we wanted to make people and their characters distinctive.

Your description of the play says that this production "reimagines Macbeth for audiences of today": what's new here that audiences can expect from Macbeth?

Alice: Shakespeare gives us so much space to sort of deal with psychological problems, which aren't always necessarily textual, but really come through in rehearsals and give the

performance a higher level of connection with the audience.

Andrew: Along those lines of psychological exploration, we're reimagining the witches in terms of how we can best represent the supernatural as it would have been for 17th Century audiences. This society was obsessed with and had precise notions of the supernatural, whereas today our collective anxieties are far more distant. We're trying to carry out a sort of 'temporal translation' in representing the witches as a manifestation of these.



I'd usually ask for a brief outline of the play at this point, but I imagine most of our readers are familiar with the plot. Instead, what are the cast-favourite moments in the play?

Juliette: I'm looking forward to the porter coming and doing his speech: it's such a nice bit of comedic relief in the middle of the play. A lot of productions of Macbeth just take it out, and there's a view that it's inappropriate to have comedy at this point, but I feel like it's very important in tragedies to break it

up, otherwise it's just intense the whole way through. Also, the scene where Macbeth starts chickening out and says he's not going to kill Duncan and I (as Lady Macbeth) have to sway him. In rehearsal we talked about the psychology of what's going on there, and we're doing our best to not have Lady Macbeth being manipulative the whole way through just for the sake of it.

We've talked quite a bit about Lady Macbeth, and there has certainly been a turn recently in popular debate and in productions towards humanising her and examining in more detail her motivations. Let's have a go at describing her in three words:

Juliette: Insecure, desperate, clever.

Alice: Powerful but scared.

Andrew: Loyal, well-intentioned, caring. (Andrew's words are met with vigorous nods around the room)

What visuals, in terms of set design and staging, can audiences expect as we settle down to Macbeth in the Pilch?

Alice: Realism is not necessarily a priority. The Pilch is, at the end of the day, a black-box theatre, and we're never going to be able to recreate a medieval castle, even if we wanted to. Luckily, we don't want to.

Andrew: As it is, we are planning on having a very bare stage. It's going to be atmosphere to the roof (literally). We're trying to create space with lighting and sound. When you're working with such a small theatre and a play with such a range of settings, I think going with non-traditional staging is the most efficient and interesting way of doing things.

Any final thoughts?

Andrew: Macbeth won't be a lengthy, three-hour tragedy (Happier Year's version is closer to an hour-and-a-half), what better way to spend your bank holiday weekend?

Macbeth will run at the Michael Pilch Theatre from the 3rd until the 6th of May.

What's on...

SISYPHUS HOUSE

2-6 May, Burton-Taylor Studio

It's the year 1590, but it's also the year 2023. Set in one country house, over two time periods, Sisyphus House follows the unlikely events and love stories born out of two disputes, centuries apart, over the same estate. The play is a rom-com: think 'Horrible Histories' meets every YA novel you've ever read. What's the craziest thing that has ever happened between these walls? Who will fall in love with who? And can a House ever truly be owned...?

MACBETH

3-6 May, Michael Pilch Studio

Shakespeare's greatest tragedy, reimagined for audiences of today. Ambition and loyalty clash as the Macbeths' growing power begins to threaten Scotland. Friends become foes, and the lines between what is real and what is not begin to blur. Who can end Macbeth's tyrannical rule, and what will be left once he is gone?

IMMACULATE

9-13 May, Michael Pilch Studio

Immaculate by Oliver Lansley is a comedic play following the life of Mia after she wakes up pregnant after not having had any sex for the last 11 months. Mia grapples to make sense of it all which is not helped by the fact that the Angel Gabriel shows up at her door claiming parentage of her child.

Fashion

"Buy less, choose well": The return of the Oxford Fashion Gala

Anya Biletsky

When, last year, I discovered that Oxford was to hold a fashion gala, I, with many fellow lovers of all things sartorial, was thrilled at the chance to see a real catwalk take place in Oxford. This Trinity, the Fashion Gala is back, for a reprise on an evening of patchwork, glamour and campiness, all within walking distance of the RadCam.

The second week event is set to feature a dazzling parade of carefully-stitched fabrics and colours, designed by Oxford student creatives and worn by student models. Fashionistas and those with only a moderate interest in the garb alike will be able to come together in Oxford's glitziest venue - Freud - for an evening of appreciation of fashion in all its forms. The choice of the chapel-turned-nightclub as a venue is certainly apt for its central walkway, which is set to become a sparkly runway for the night.

I spoke with this year's co-Creative Directors, Shaan Sidhu and Harvey Morris, on their vision for 2023's Gala and the process behind bringing it to Oxford students in Trinity term.

The theme for the gala is a quote: "buy less, choose well". The memorable advice comes from the late designer and fashion legend

Vivienne Westwood, who passed away in December last year. Shaan and Harvey are striving to connect the ethos of the gala to the intent of Westwood's iconic quote; as Shaan states, she and Harvey are keen to "encourage people to use what they already have" when compiling their outfit for the gala.

This is partly to prompt the sustainable use of items of clothing, especially given the amount of waste that has been produced by the fast fashion industry in recent years. As Shaan explains, it is about "being mindful about what you choose and how much you buy". Equally, the theme is intended to allow guests to flaunt their personal styles of dress, and make the gala "a creative experience for everyone involved", Harvey says.

The Fashion Gala team has been working with a group of student designers, who number almost twenty. Some of the designers are working closely with their models, while others are modelling for themselves. Guests of the gala can safely expect a tantalising assortment of designs.

As for the evening itself, Shaan and Harvey emphasise the importance of the event being open and welcoming to all. Indeed, Harvey explains that the event does not

have a specific dress code, being neither "necessarily formal" nor "necessarily casual". He expresses that "fashion can feel very serious and constrained sometimes, and we want it to feel fun and inviting to everyone".

Shaan indicates the evening's intention to be a "spectacle", and a "showcase of designers and the creativity of people in Oxford" - of which there is certainly plenty. It will be "celebratory and joyous", Harvey adds.

As well as the main catwalk event, there will also be a live music act

and DJs. Shaan is aware that the gala is the day after May Day - but she assures that it will be a very different sort of event. "Please do both", she jokingly encourages. I know I will be.

The Oxford Fashion Gala will take place on Tuesday the 2nd of May at Freud.

Image Credit: Coco Cottam



THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF LIVING OUT

1 The House is the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before the House
Living out is the Holy Way. Now you must let everyone know exactly why and how you are better than them for having a House.

2 Thou shalt not make unto thy House any humdrum image
Do not deface your House with mediocrity. Deck your kitchen window out with seasonal garlands, or bring back souvenirs from your vac adventures! Anything to make it yours.

3 Thou shalt not take the Landlord’s name in vain
Hopefully, your Landlord is not a vengeful Lord. If you’re lucky, he’ll take you out for lunch and a pint once in a while and won’t ask about the concupiscent nature of your kitchen decorations.

4 Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. AKA Bin collections!
You have a House. You can come and go as you please, oblivious to college move-in dates. If you so choose, use your 0th week as an extra bit of vac and come back knowing everything is just as you left it.

5 Honour thy father and thy mother
If you’re lucky enough to have rent that comes from Mommy and Daddy’s pockets, make sure to call them at least once a term to prove that y=ou remember they exist.

6 Thou shalt not kill thy housemates
Tensions may run high sometimes, but that’s no reason to put out a hit on someone. Even an accidental one. If your housemates struggle with weak genetics, make sure not to put whatever will kill them into dinner.

7 Thou shalt not commit housecest
Some say that one of life’s hard truths is that it’s not a porno.

8 Thou shalt not steal from thy housemate
To avoid drama, start a Splitwise! It’s quite a useful tool that tracks who owes who and how much.

9 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy housemate
Keep things civil. If you’ve got a problem with someone or the way they go about living, be honest and straightforward with them! If you operate from a place of mutual respect and understanding, nothing can ever go truly wrong.

10 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, or anything of thy neighbour
If your neighbors are uni students, befriend them! One of the great joys of living out is the incredible autonomy (and partying) that comes with it.

TOP 5 Ways to Spend May Day

5 Have a Ball
Is it ethical for us to encourage readers to sneak into a ball? We’ll leave it to you to decide what to do, duh! This option is only here for those who’ll risk spending their May Day getting chased down and manhandled by security.

4 Club Night, All Night
This option would be higher if it weren’t for Oxford’s lackluster club scene. The most typical way to May Day and worth its salt if you plan it well. Make sure you have something to keep you up all night, like lots of Jägerbombs!

3 Midnight Picnic
Inspired by one of our editors, have a chill overnight picnic with your friends as your May Day celebration! Find a spot where you can see the stars, crack out the champagne, and crank on the tunes until morning comes.

2 Time for Techno
Oxford may not be Berlin, but that doesn’t mean you can’t have the techno night of your dreams! Organise a rave in some old building, or find one if you know where it’s at. If you’re dedicated enough, no one can stop you.

1 Dionysian Orgy
Find somewhere remote in the woods. Start a fire, bring out the masks, and dance unrestrained by torchlight! That’s what an actual “orgion” is supposed to look like, anyways, though we DO NOT condone animal sacrifices.

Aries 21 March - 19 April

Projects or submissions due? They’ll get done. Stay up all night and celebrate May Day – everything else can wait.

Capricorn 22 Dec. - 19 Jan.

You’re a known overachiever, but remember to have fun and be silly with your friends.

Aquarius 20 Jan. - 18 Feb.

They’re probably not smarter than you, Aquarius. Know your worth this week, and be confident.

Pisces 19 Feb. - 20 March

Don’t let Mercury’s retrograde kill your creativity for the next week – but maybe find different ways to express it.

Taurus 20 April - 20 May

Happy Birth-month Taurus. This month is about YOU... enjoy the highs and don’t be afraid to let loose and have fun!

Leo 23 July - 22 Aug.

May Day is a chance to let your side that loves the limelight out, but don’t go too hard! The rest of the week is yet to come...

Cancer 21 June - 22 July

Things will go your way this week! Prioritise your me-time but don’t be afraid to say yes when opportunities arise.

Libra 23 Sept. - 22 Oct.

You want balance in your life but if you can’t find it this this week, that’s okay. You can blame Mercury being in retrograde.

Scorpio 23 Oct. - 21 Nov.

The sun moved into Taurus on Thursday, so look towards your close relationships for the quality time you need.

Sagittarius 22 Nov. - 21 Dec.

The Leo moon energises you and presents exciting opportunities. Be ready for them!

Horoscopes

What should each sign expect before May Day?

Gemini 21 May- 20 June

You’re known for your communication skills, but know when to speak up and when to stay quiet...

Virgo 23 Aug. - 22 Sept.

Look inwards and deal with anything that has been weighing on you. You’ll feel lighter by the end of the week.

Cherpsé

JANE

First Impressions?

I found Austin to be good looking but unfortunately he had cut himself shaving and was bleeding profusely throughout the date.

Did it meet your expectations?

Austin seemed either like he was in a rush or that he simply didn't want to be there.

What was the highlight?

The coffee was good.

What was the most embarrassing moment?

When I watched his blood from his jaw drip into his coffee.

Describe the date in three words

Friendly, calm, dissapointing.

Is there a second date on the cards?

Probably not!

“

Chill, interesting, platonic

”

AUSTEN

First Impressions?

Jane seemed lovely but was slighly underdressed for the date considering the effort I put in...

Did it meet your expectations?

Maybe a little less scary than I thought it might be meeting someone new, but was more of a friend vibe.

What wast the highlight?

She bought the coffee.

What was the most embarassing moment?

The awkward hug at the end.

Describe the date in 3 words

Chill, interesting, platonic.

Is there a second date on the cards?

Not sure.

Looking for love?

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

Tales from the trip

PCP, also commonly known as “angel dust”, is a dissociative anaesthetic that can have hallucinogenic effects, but it’s more likely to distort your sensory perception. Some feel euphoric, others feel panicky and anxious, and one feeling might descend into the other. 3-Fluoro-PCP is a PCP analogue that generally has glowing reviews, based on some quick Reddit scans, but also has a reputation for being changeable.

An unusual and, on the whole, tragic way to begin Monday of week one is by sniffing lines and listening to Radio 4’s ‘Ancient Trees’ in your student accommodation. The drug is so potent that I had to spend £50 on an accurate scale to make sure I didn’t administer too powerful a dose, so I was expecting big things. In the drug’s defence, I messed it up from the get-go by staying in my room for the whole experience, but by the time I had done the first line, I was already too high to venture into the outside world.

My vision was the first to go. It didn’t exactly deteriorate; it was just as if my peripheral vision clocked out and all optic forces were focused on what was directly ahead of me. 3-F-PCP has a lot in common with ketamine, if you’ve ever taken it. As dissociatives, they both make you spaced out and distant. But ketamine is a warm, fuzzy teddy bear in comparison – this stuff is clinical and cold. It makes your mouth dry, your

face hot, and your palms sweaty. The whole thing was kind of sad. When I initially pitched this column, I promised that I’d “have their bad trips for them”, and this was one of those times. People talk about “set and setting” a lot when it comes to psychedelics: the mindset you begin with and the environment you’re in greatly impact the overall experience. On this particular day, I was heavily pre-menstrual, and it was raining and cold. That sets the scene well.

The two main things that struck me about 3-F-PCP is its functionality and its inconsistency. It was as though I could click in and out of the high on demand, and I’d taken enough to really feel it. At one point I was splayed out on my back on the floor, staring unflinchingly at spatters of yellow highlighter on the ceiling that I’d only just noticed, trying to figure out if they were real or not. Seconds later I had to conduct a ten-minute phone conversation with my grandmother in my weaker language and, despite my panic, it went fine. The inconsistency was not fun. I went from blinking at my reflection in the mirror to lying down from sudden total exhaustion. I was obviously way too wired to sleep, though, and instead transitioned to dancing around my room while listening to John Coltrane play the sax. There were moments of almost-mania, hinting at euphoria but never quite getting there. When doing a drug for the

first time, you often need a strong dose to push you into trippy territory, and then you revert to normal doses in the future. Constantly on the verge of something intense, it felt unsatisfying in the most irritating way. Everything was more or less the same, but I suddenly became very intolerant to sound. I opened my window for some fresh air and the cacophony of wind and birdsong and distant revving engines that floated in from the (empty) street was too overwhelming. The biggest noticeable change was time perception. Only a few minutes at my desk felt like an hour, yet what turned out to be three or four hours felt like half of one. I did relatively little, but was never bored.

Everyone has different reactions to the same drug, and those reactions differ from experience to experience. Minor things can switch the current – anything from how much you’ve had to eat to which song your shuffle lands on. From just one trip, sitting in my room on a Monday morning, it’s difficult and probably unfair to judge. I can imagine that 3-Fluoro-PCP would be fun as a party drug, or at least fun to do with a few friends. Perhaps under my watchful journalistic eye, the drug was over-scrutinised, but it’s way too changeable to score high on my trip list.

A Beginner’s Guide to Being Single

When my relationship ended over a year ago, I was so good at the breakup. I did everything right. I cried (a lot). I thought about texting him (but didn’t). I watched some awful rom-coms (young Matthew McConaughey, anyone?). I did face masks with my friends and ate ice cream, and for a long time, I really thought my heart would never recover. Of course, as it turns out, this is just how everyone feels after a breakup: I wasn’t the first person to feel like that, and I won’t be the last.

Time passed. I dedicated my newfound time to my friendships, my hobbies (all cards on the table, I row), and my degree. I now look back on what could have been one of my worst times as one filled with memories made with my greatest friends. The novelty of singleness led to a hot(ish) girl summer (although falling short of the Lily-James-as-young-Donna vac of my dreams). I went on dates. I met new people. But as

quickly as it came, the novelty wore off and the reality set in: the dating scene at Oxford is awful.

It didn’t help that I have no idea how to date. My last relationship all but happened to me during sixth form when a guy I got on with like a house on fire and eventually fell in love with came along to begin our on-and-sometimes-off relationship. Sure – there are worse problems to have, but I’m convinced that I’m not the whole problem here. I’m not too proud to tell you I’ve tried dating apps, and they’re a waste of time at best. And yet, meeting someone in person seems like a romantic notion now confined to late-noughties rom-coms. Most people who have tried dating here have had similar experiences. Like them, in the process of exploring the dating scene Oxford has to offer, I have become disillusioned with the great parts about being

single; I became one of those people who is far too often talking about how they miss being in a relationship. But I’m a better feminist than that – I’m sure of it.

If you’re wondering why this has been on my mind so much recently, it comes back to a conversation I had at a formal a while ago with the boyfriend of a close friend of mine.

“I was really intimidated by you when I first met you, you know,” he told me.

This surprised me. I didn’t think I was intimidating.

He continued enthusias-

tically, “Yeah! You’re really intimidating! Like, you seem to have your shit together, and you call me out if I do something wrong – you can be a bit scary sometimes.”

He then proceeded to ask all of our guy friends who sat around the table, who confirmed that I was actually very intimidating before they knew me, and that I would therefore never ever date again.

The feminist part of me was going, *maybe you should be intimidating*. After all, aren’t all the things he listed good things? But a not insignificant part of me – the part which was told I was ‘bossy’ instead of ‘confident’ growing up – felt overwhelmingly frustrated that I couldn’t just be a bit together and self-assured and not intimidate guys I know with it.

So this is the real issue: I might miss some parts of being in a relationship, but I do not want to change myself, to become

less good at what I’m doing, to unapologetically enjoy the things I like less, to take up less space, just to date again. I do not want to lower my standards either, or to expect less of any romantic interests. But from what I can tell, if a relationship was really what I wanted, then I would have to settle or change some of these things. And given that I have no intention of doing that (nor, I think, do I want a relationship that badly), I’m going to remind myself of all of the reasons that I am lucky to not be in a relationship at this point in my life.

And there is so much to love – it’s just about finding it. I can’t be the only one who’s not great at being single yet. But I’ll get there.

“

I’m going to remind myself of all of the reasons that I am lucky to not be in a relationship at this point in my life.

”

DOUBLE TAKE:

Most of my friends are graduating this year and are really stressed about their finals, but I still have one year left and want to enjoy my Trinity! What should I do?



you have the opportunity to support them. I remember having prelims last Trinity, but my best friend had already done her exams the term before. It was the most comforting thing when she decided to make me brownies while I was studying, and it helped to have someone do little lovely things for me while I was stressed out. I like to think I'd do the same for my friends (shout out to second-year engineers and medics at the moment!). It doesn't have to be as much commitment as using your extra time for baking for your friends. It can be as simple as luring your EXTREMELY loud housemate away from your shared study because his exams have finished. I'm sure anything that you do to support them will be much appreciated, and will make trashing them at the end of their finals all the more special!

Now, you can't expect yourself to just take care of your friends for the whole term – you

He l l o cherub! This is a tough one h o n e y... The first thing to face would be the fact that you would be the only one of your friends who is not taking exams, and I'm sure they would really appreciate that

need to enjoy your Trinity as well! There are many ways to do this, and the key thing to keep in mind is that it won't just let you enjoy your Trinity, it will make sure that you don't feel too lonely in Michaelmas.

Do not take this as a sign to isolate yourself socially. This is a really good opportunity to make some friends in different year groups. You can join college or society events and you might meet a few people who are in the year below who are actually cool and fun to hang out with. One of my best friends is in the year above and we will graduate at the same time because he's doing Chemistry. I've always appreciated and admired his willingness to interact with me and the people in my year group even when those in his year were calling us "silly frosh", and it also means he now has friends when other people in his year will have graduated. You can also try and reach out to people in your own year and course. They'll all be stressing out just the same as you next year, and can relate to the difficulty of having many friends keeping busy in Trinity and graduating this year. You'll have the best time spending this Trinity getting to know each other and using your free time to go to events that you've been dying to go to, but haven't – until now – had anyone to go with. Not only will you have someone to spend Trinity with, you'll have people to spend finals with next year as well.

Good luck for Trinity and, remember to make the most of the calm before the storm!

Lots of love,
Aunty Alice x

What in the hell are you worrying about? This is the best time to fuck around. Want to go to the club? Go for it, you've not got an important exam this week. Want to go to a cute cafe for the aesthetic? What are you waiting for?

I'm not sure if you know, but I am a chronic extrovert and a people pleaser. Life feels like a constant, never-ending tea party. Yet, whilst I thrive off of the company, it can get tiring constantly having to listen to people's awful jokes or weird private school anecdotes. I take full advantage of having busy friends because I also love spending time with myself. I'm fantastic and I have the best taste. Even now, as my friends are all doing their collections whilst my tutor has decided to put ours in 4th week (don't ask why), I take advantage of the fact that I have a bit of independence by going to any library, coffee shop, or kilo sale whenever I want, without having to wait around for anyone to sort their shit out before we leave. Oh! And the house is so quiet! I can sit in the kitchen and have a cup of coffee and watch Friends through my headphones without worrying that someone is going to walk in on my precious screen-time. If you do actually leave your room, then that's a great way to make friends who aren't prioritising study time over spending time with you.

You're in the rabbit hole before you've reached the bottom, so you have time to notice the things around you. There's nothing to feel guilty about because you don't have any exams and you can spend some time taking care of yourself and experiencing Oxford on

your own. Whether it's going on solo walks or staying in your room all day because you can, just do it. I know you're still going to have work since, let's face it, you *are* at Oxford, but if there's ever a time not to give a crap, it's now.

Now, what to do about the kill-joys? I suppose you could do the nice thing and make them tea. However, I'd just take every opportunity to let them know that you don't have exams: stomp in through the front door after every night out, have loud parties in the shared space. This might sound like something 'annoying' because you're making a lot of noise in their space, but here's how you've got to explain it to them. You're only showing them the fun that they're missing out on. This will motivate them to work harder so that once they get through exams, they can have as much fun and make as much noise as you are right now. It will just make them look forward to reaching the end. Also, gloating makes everything way better. Let me know when you're planning one of these nights out, because I'm basically going through the same thing.

- Mad Hatter x



To: [My Supervisor] Katie

From: Aaliyah Khan

Subject: So sorry for the delay

Send

Dear Katie,

I am staring at the spreadsheet of degree classifications awarded in recent years / My head is spinning / My legs have turned purple and I am vibrating like a tuning fork / And I am really trying to plan / And to be on time / But it is like when W.S Merwin wrote 'To Being Late' / 'Again again you are / the right time after all / not according to / however we planned it.' / I am trying to plan / Nothing is going accordingly / I was reading 1960s critical theory and / I based an entire dissertation draft on 1960s literary critical theory! / But I have found my way out and now

I am writing sentences like 'Colonialism erodes diversity and attempts to control the permissions for cultural and institutional expression. It enforces punitive hegemony, acts upon supremacist validation, and rejects the legitimisation of worldviews counteracting the prescriptive bigotry-as-enlightenment it is founded upon.' / On this, R. F Kuang wrote '[y]ou have such a great fear of freedom, brother. It's shackling you. You've identified so hard with the colonizer, you think any threat to them is a threat to you. When are you going to realize you can't be one of them?' / Katie, I don't think I'm ever going to recover from this. / June Jordan writes a proclamation in line, with 'I am become a Palestinian / against the relentless laughter of evil / there is less and less living room / and where are my loved ones? / It is time to make our way home.' / Blood from my eyes, Katie, I'm so sorry, / I'm still not done.

Aaliyah

(Flying) Squirrel Bisected by St Barnabas' Campanile (21/4/23)

Flynn Hallman



I was going to take some photos of St Barnabas' campanile from the canal in Jericho, but I ended up watching this squirrel for around fifteen minutes instead. It would climb up a tree and scurry along the bridge railing and onto the guttering of the residential block (bottom left) before leaping onto the balcony of the garden nearest to the bridge. After briefly dipping out of sight, it would then perch on the edge of the balcony and begin adapting its newest nuciferous asset for mouth-bearing mobility. I managed to get this shot of it as it came bounding back across the bridge, mid-Byzantine-obscuring flight.

Seafood Egg-Fried Rice

This is one of my own recipes and and became an absolute go-to for me when I was living on my own in Málaga. Admittedly, the absence of a seafood market is a bit of a downer here, but Sainsbury's stocks a great frozen seafood mix to achieve a similar effect! Be sure to send your student recipes in to me at oliver.hall@magd.ox.ac.uk for a chance to be featured too!

INGREDIENTS
Serves 2

- 200g cooked rice (or more if you prefer)
- 2 eggs (lightly-beaten)
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 300g mixed seafood (pick up a mixed frozen bag from any supermarket for a super cheap and varied selection)
- 2 tbsp teriyaki sauce
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 3 tbsp groundnut oil (any other oils will work)
- 5 chopped spring onions
- 100g sugar snap peas

Feel free to mix up any of these ingredients to ones that you prefer, just make sure that you keep the rough quantities and methods the same.

METHOD

1. Make sure your rice is cooked and seafood defrosted before getting started. (If not, either use a rice cooker or simply boil for 15 minutes.)
2. Heat oil in a large pan over high heat and fry the mixed seafood for three minutes in total, adding the teriyaki and soy sauce as you go.
3. Add the sugar snap peas and spring onions and fry for one minute.
4. Add rice to the pan and mix ingredients, frying for two minutes.
5. Move all the ingredients to one side of the pan and pour in beaten eggs, then stir to mix and scramble.
6. Season with salt and ground pepper and serve with soy sauce.



San Francisco: More than start-ups and juice bars

Oliver Hall

This week I am writing from an altogether different location that feels a long way away from Oxford and university because, well, it is. This past week I've been attending the National Congress of Student Journalism in San Francisco as a keynote speaker and an advisor and it's been a truly brilliant experience. The conference itself was an absolute pleasure to attend and it was quite remarkable to see the level of student journalism at play at the High School level in the US that simply doesn't exist here.

The best part though? As you might expect it has to be the food. The food scene in California is incredibly diverse, more so than I had ever really understood, and this is true nowhere more so than in San Francisco itself. Make no mistake, the superfood stores and the juice bars are here a plenty, just as advertised by every stereotype under the sun. But really, the culinary culture runs far far deeper. Chefs and business owners alike told me how the Napa valley offers a richness of fresh ingredients genuinely unrivalled around the world and how that enables them to do so much more than you might expect. This might be best demonstrated by the fact that on Saturday I bumped into no fewer than four farmer's markets in different parts of the city – suffice to say I've never had so many free samples of fresh oranges and ethically produced hot sauces!



Starting at the high end, you find chefs like Mark Dommen. This is a man who has been on a serious culinary journey. Growing up on his family's winery in Napa, he got his first jobs on the line in towns and cities around San Francisco. Then, after culinary school and a degree he made the big leap that so many aspiring chefs do, finding his way to New York. Here, working some of the most well renowned chefs in the business, Dommen honed his craft, moving from star restaurant to star restaurant, absorbing knowledge as he went. And where did he take that knowledge? Right back to the West Coast of course. Firstly, at a restaurant set on a farm/winery in the valley itself before moving into a head chef/partnership role at the world-renowned One Market restaurant. This is where I sat down and spoke to him about his journey, and his ethos. Seasonality and balance are everything to Mark and this was never more apparent than when I was watching him craft one dish in particular. This was grilled octopus served atop smoked carrot and a black garlic reduction before being topped with basil and sliced carrot. This is the epitome of a complete dish, the interplay of the

textures from the octopus to the crunch of the carrot shavings and the diversity of flavours between the smokiness of the black garlic and the freshness of the basil came together for a true complete bite.

The next obvious stop on a San Francisco food-tour is seafood, and oh what seafood this city has to offer. A trip down to Fisherman's Wharf has you instantly taken in by the plethora of seaside restaurants. Better than that though are the stalls and boats. Here, you can buy crab cocktails and shellfish straight off the boats themselves and of course indulge in that long-honoured tradition of clam chowder served in giant sourdough bowl.

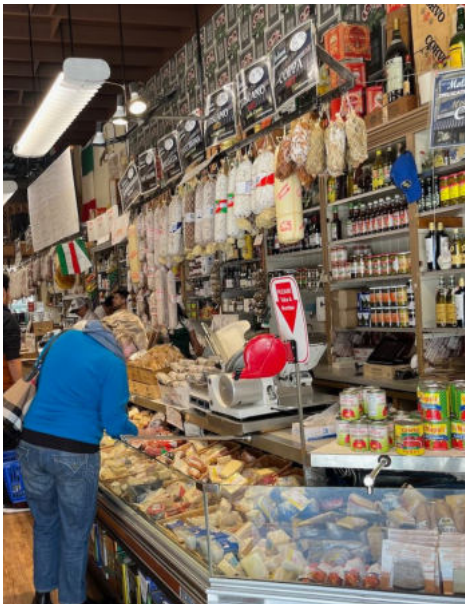
The seafood does, of course, have a high-end too. Foreign Cinema is one of the most fascinating restaurants I have visited in a long time. In the Mission district and on the so-called 'Theatre Mile', it has set-up shop since 1999 in an old cinema, occupying both a stunning courtyard and suitably decorated inside dining room. The menu changes service to service and in that courtyard every evening a film plays, projected beautifully onto the sidewall. It might be an all-time classic such as *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard), or it might be something a whole lot more modern like *Date Night*.

Those films are accompanied by one of the most extensive shellfish selections I have ever seen. The oyster menu stretches well into the double digits as well as different offerings of caviar, clams, lobster, and crab. The platter is a sight to behold but not just a spectacle. These oysters are far smaller than those you might get from Jersey or Whistable but carry vastly more unique flavours. The prawns are juicy and meaty and I found myself very much rejoicing making it into town for the end of crab season – the freshness of flavour in the claws was by far the best I have ever tasted (believe you me this is high praise coming from a Jersey native). That seafood is paired elsewhere on the menu with the freshness of vegetables and produce from the valley to curate a truly complete menu.

Passing from Mission, up through China and Japan town, there is a whole different world of food to be found. The streets are lined with dim sum restaurant followed by tea house followed by fortune cookie bakery. Almost all offer their own distinct regional specialities and is next to a supermarket selling the most incredible array of dried seafood, meats, and spices.

Up from here (quite literally up, those San Francisco hills are no joke), is the legendary North Beach. This is where the city's Italian community have put down their roots and boy oh boy does it make for some special streets. Row after row of cafes freshly piping their own cannoli is punctuated by legendary delis such as Molinari selling fresh meats, pastas, and focaccia lunchtime sandwiches. In between those is of course authentic gelateria after authentic gelateria.

One such ice cream stop is Gio



Gelati, owned and run by Patrizia Pasqualetti. A true child of the world, her family is originally from Milan and it is from here than she has taken her greatest inspirations. Patrizia explains to me her pure excitement at the seasonality of produce the valley has to offer, "at home I can get fresh strawberries for a month, two months tops. Here, everything goes on for nearly six!" This means that Gio's is home to a plethora of flavours from kiwi to fig, to orange as well as all-time Italian classics such as hazelnut and ricotta. It is the epitome of a neighbourhood Italian gelateria.

My final stop on North Beach was the legendary Original Joes. This is the local Italian stop. Right on the corner of Washington Square Gardens is this stalwart of an institution, in place since 1937. There's a terrace for the Californian sunny weather, an old-time dining room with an open kitchen and beautiful black booths, and a bar with every sport under the sun on the big screen. The latter was where I retreated with my wine after my desert and is a whole community in itself with regulars popping their heads round the door, seeing the score, and taking a seat at the bar to snack on a pasta and meet like-minded people.

The food on offer is everything you would expect. The menu is terrifyingly and perhaps problematically long with all the classics from parmigiana to cioppino. I went for a Crab Louie salad starter to make the most of the end of the season and again was just blown away by the freshness and flavours. Admittedly, I slipped up on the main and chose sauteed sweetbreads, a particularly fatty cut of veal that I wanted to try but instantly regretted ordering (let's just say there's a lot of fat and not much veal). The day was saved though by the all-time Italian-American classics of ravioli in a meatball sauce and, of course, Brussel sprouts. Every time I come to the States, I am left lamenting the British attitude to this vegetable. We seem incapable of using them in any way other than overboiling them once a year at Christmas. Here, they are lightly grilled and dusted with parmesan for flavourful vegetable perfection. Choosing desserts is even more of a challenge so I did the only sensible thing and went for two. One of them was the pound cake and that would have been enough for two people, ridiculously indulgent and drizzled in a rich chocolate sauce.

So, San Francisco – it isn't just start-up bros and juice bars. If you are a food lover there are few better cities I can think of for their variety of authentic cuisines and locality of fresh produce. It surpassed my expectations in every way and is beyond worth the trip for every foodie.

Scrapping for survival

Declan Ryder

The scrap for survival in the Premier League is always a thrilling spectacle from the neutral’s perspective, but one with potentially devastating consequences for those involved. Last season, Burnley, Watford and Norwich City were relegated. While Burnley have already been promoted from the Championship to ensure an instant return to the top-flight, both Watford and Norwich are struggling to even make it into the play-off positions.

This season, the battle looks to be more thrillingly tense than ever, with just 10 points separating Wolves in 13th position (34 points) from Southampton at the foot of the league (24 points).

The two teams at the bottom of the league, Nottingham Forest and Southampton, have both hit a poor run of form at the wrong time of the season. Southampton, however, did produce a wonderful 3-3 result away to league leaders Arsenal at the weekend but their game management can perhaps still be questioned. Still such a performance must provide great encouragement. They have 6 games remaining to try and recover the 6-point deficit that separates them from the drop, but this includes daunting away days to Newcastle and more - I don’t see them picking up enough points to make up the ground.

Nottingham Forest may stand more of a chance at surviving, as despite only picking up a single point in their last 6 league games, they showed great threat in the 3-2 loss away at Liverpool at the weekend and were perhaps unlucky to leave Anfield without a point, with Brennan Johnson striking the crossbar late in the game. Their fixtures are relatively tough on paper, with 3 of their remaining 6 games against teams in the top half, as well a tricky away game against a resurgent Crystal Palace under Roy Hodgson.

The three teams I see battling it out to avoid the final relegation spot, therefore, are Everton, Leicester City, and Leeds United. All three teams have just 6 games left to play, with both Everton and Leicester on 28 and Leeds just a point ahead on 29. All the teams are in similarly unspectacular form of late, and even though Leeds have the most points of the three in their last six games (6), but their recent form is a concerning trend. Leeds crucially face Leicester in their next game which could prove decisive come the end of the season.

Leicester’s run is perhaps slightly more favourable, facing Newcastle, too, as well as Liverpool, but also with home games against Everton and West Ham on the final day. The fact that Leicester is set to face both Everton and Leeds in the run in could be enough to determine the fate of the three teams.

When Everton appointed Sean Dyche on the 4th February, many believed he was the perfect man to steer the club steadily away from the threat of relegation. This has not exactly been the case, however, with the club averaging 1.08 points a game since his appointment compared to 0.83 before. There has, therefore, been improvement in results, but not a highly significant one. So, will the Toffees be able to pick up enough points to ensure their status as one of just 6 clubs that has never been relegated from the Premier League?

My verdict is yes, just. Everton and Leicester should just about scrape over the line at Leeds expense. Fortunately for Leeds, Nottingham Forest and Southampton fans is the sheer unpredictability of the Premier League. Each matchday is accompanied by various surprise results and will continue to occur until the end of the season.

How to join the 1%

Chloe Glynn

Last year’s Marathon raised £58.4 million for charity changing thousands of lives around the world. Last weekend’s marathon saw Kiptum and Sifan defy expectations, setting a new course record and beating injury respectively. Some who race, dream of simply raising money dressed as an elephant, while others seek the challenge. Regardless, for most, the last Sunday was likely one of the toughest yet most rewarding days of their lives. Is it possible for Oxford students to join the 1% club? The short answer is yes, with the right mindset and training.

So what are the beginner basics for student’s success in running?

1. *Time:* The most costly resource in an Oxford student’s life. Depending on your starting point and goals, it can take from 6 to 3 months to properly train for a marathon, preventing injury. Within this time frame, you will most likely find yourself running 4 times a week, and with one strength training session in the gym. There’s no one size fits all.
2. *Finances:* Finding a good pair of running shoes is essential. Different types of trainers exist for different types of feet, terrains and gaits. Up&Running in Headington has great gait analysis to figure out which shoe is best for you. Running socks are also essential as they help prevent blisters. Particularly because, blisters often are caused by the wrong socks, not shoes,

3. *Nutrition:*.. Anyone who has lived with me will have seen my 1.2kg plate of



Spaghetti Bolognese at 11 pm. Any exercise will cause you to eat more. Try to buy cheaper sources of protein, everything in bulk, and, if you want meat just freeze whatever you don’t think you can eat that week. Food is fuel, and while it may cost more than usual, enjoy it!

4. *Routes:* Once your body is fueled and you’ve scheduled time to train, you have to figure out where to run. Oxford is notoriously flat, making it amazing for new runners to reach goals and increase their pace. My favourite places to go in Oxford include University

Parks, Port Meadow, and Christ Church Meadow. If you are looking for a hill to train on, try Headington Hill.

If you’re looking to take part in a race try the Oxford Town and Gown 10km race in May, or the famously fast Oxford Half-Marathon in October. Whether you want to be on TV raising money for charity in the marathon next year or simply enjoying the summer months, everyone can run!



CAPTAINS CORNER



This week, we spoke to Jessica Cullen and Finlay Ryan-Phillips, Captains of OUAFC Blues teams.

When did you start playing football?
J: When I was six years old in Australia. I started playing football when the women’s game was nowhere near as prominent or even acknowledged, and now look at it. We have such a great community here at Oxford

F: I think fairly similar to me, five or six, just playing my local team originally. As I got older, progressed to sort of more serious standards. The people here are what sets it apart from other sports.

How did this season go for your teams?
F: Unfortunately, we got relegated. It’s not a true reflection of the squad that we’ve got this year - we’ve struggled a lot with injuries and therefore consistency with the playing squads. But we’ve had some really good results and we’ll be building for next season to make sure that we bounce straight back up.

J: This season we had a very new team as we lost a lot of players graduating last year, but we’ve had lot of success. We finished second in our BUCS League, only narrowly missing out on promotion and got to the semi-finals of the Cup. The girls have really gelled, which is promising for the next few years to come.

How did the varsity game cancellation affect you personally?
J: It was a massive shock. An enormous thank you needs go to our President and Vice Presidents for working so hard to sort it out. It was a hard line to navigate when you’re a captain and also a player experiencing quite

a difficult and disappointing situation. It did ignite a fire in the team will produce a good game!

F: It was obviously really frustrating. It’s something myself and the whole squad had been working towards for so long and it is disheartening when something that has been built up so much comes crumbling down at like the last minute. But it was one of those things. We just had to get on with it.

Both the women’s and men’s teams won six of their last seven varsity games. Do you find that record intimidating or encouraging, or both, going into the game?
F: It’s nice to look back at the record, particularly from the last few years. The men’s side have kept quite a core nucleus of the squad. We know what it takes to win in a varsity match and what’s required in the future.

J: I think it is slightly intimidating, especially given a Varsity game has never had to be rescheduled before. If anything, I think having it in Oxford will be a great plus. No matter how our season goes, Varsity is its own event that you prepare for in a certain way and play the best way that you can.

What would you say is your best sporting moment so far?
J: I think our Brooke’s Varsity this year was pretty special. Despite the game actually turning out quite dirty we put in an amazing performance, scored some impressive goals,

and played some of the best team football we have all season.

F: I think it just has to be the varsity wins. Winning in my first year was special because it was the year Mickey Lewis sadly passed away. They are always a really great event. This last Brooke’s Varsity was quite the game – with two of our players red-carded we still managed to pull out a win.

What’s the best thing about being captain?
J: I think being able to be so involved in the process of the club and having such a strong group of girls around you. I’m very proud to be captain of the blues this year. All the girls are so talented, clever and hardworking.

F: Same I’m just really proud to be part of such a good group of boys. We’ve got such a good team off the field this season, no matter what happens on the field and its such a tight, knit group.

Where can our readers watch you play?
At the Varsity game, 1st of May at Oxford City Stadium. 2pm kick off for the women’s and the men’s kicks off at 5pm. Use it as a May Day hangover cure as there will be delicious food, and some fantastic football to watch. We are really hoping for a big turnout from the Oxford supporters that puts Cambridge’s to shame. We can promise you some entertaining football.