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INDEPENDENT SINCE 1920

Hertford announces changes to bursary scheme

Jakub Trybull reports.

Hertford College has announced changes to its bursary scheme, involving a cut to those receiving the Crankstart Scholarship. A range of changes have been announced, including increases in eligibility, the form of compensation, and distinguishing between Crankstart scholars and non-scholars.

With the aim to “provide improved levels of support, in a more targeted way, to a wider range of students”, the upper limit of household income required to qualify for an automatic award will be raised from £53k to £63k, the first time it has been raised in many years.

Furthermore, the standard award will be raised from £1,000 per annum to £1,500. However, this compensation will be applied in the form of discounted rent and free meals at the College Hall, as opposed to the current, direct lump discount on battels.

This has caused some contention among the student population, with a preference for direct compensation. The College, however, have affirmed this as part of their intention to “encourage greater use of hall and communal dining in College.” Although some students have told *Cherwell* that they fear they will not have enough

evidence to support exemption requests, and that such a process might be invasive. In addition to this restriction, students have brought up concerns that those wishing to live privately will struggle with such changes.

The biggest point of contention is the halving of the award granted to Crankstart scholarships, with scholars being awarded £750 rather than the current £1,000. This reduction will only affect students who will matriculate from 2023 onwards.

Hertford College told *Cherwell*: “No student will receive less support than they do now”, adding that the College “takes into account the University’s extension of the Crankstart scheme.”

JCR Treasurer, Amrit Ark, reassured students that throughout the rent negotiation process, efforts have been made to keep the bursary scheme inclusive and to “expand its value”, without making any current students worse off.

One student at Hertford told *Cherwell*: “I support the spirit of this, as I believe there is a middle squeeze where those on the very lowest incomes get lots of support, and those with high ones get support from families, [but there is a lack of support for those in the middle].”



Cheesy “castration” causes stir

Daniel Thomas reports.

The Oxford Cheese Company has found itself in a larger-than-life controversy, criticised for “emasculating” a Dorset landmark on its packaging.

The Cerne Abbas Giant, a hill figure and scheduled monument depicting a nude, club-wielding man with an erect penis, has long been an icon of the West Country, and is used as an emblem by the company on its ‘Cerne Abbas Man’ label of vintage cheddar. But there is one key difference: the variant on the label lacks the chalk giant’s notorious anatomical correctness, instead wearing a pair of trousers.

The change has sparked consternation among locals in Dorset, with Vic Irvine, head brewer at Cerne Abbas Brewery, describing it as a “castration”, and a county councillor decrying the company for “chopping his bits off”.

But Harley Fouget, son of the company’s founder, insists the change is not a defacement or emasculation, and that the modified figure is simply “wearing trousers for modesty’s sake”.

Fouget says that the altered label was printed following a formal complaint from a member of staff at a retail outlet the company supplies, who argued that the Giant might potentially upset customers. This was deemed serious enough to remove the label from the company’s pre-packaged cheeses, but Fouget notes that the symbol is retained on the company’s larger cutting cheeses.

Supplying supermarkets is a lucrative line of business for the company, and they thus take complaints from staff members at customer outlets seriously - no matter how small the matter in question.

The altered label has now been in use for five years. Fouget is unsure why the change has come to the attention of the public now of all times, although he notes that branding and design changes by small

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Cherwell speaks to the Apollo Lodge to shine a light on the ancient order
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Do prelims really matter?
Our editors go head-to-head in the Debate Chamber.
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New multi-cancer blood test shows promising results

Alexandra Hedström-Blake reports.

A new multi-cancer blood test sponsored and facilitated by the University of Oxford has been lauded as a potential breakthrough in cancer research, according to results from an NHS trial.

Testing for over 50 different types of cancer in more than 5,000 people in England and Wales from the ages of 18 and over visiting their GP with suspected symptoms, the trial yielded a success-rate for identifying the disease as an impressive two in every three cases. Of these, the NHS trial has shown a further 85% success rate in the ability of the new multi-cancer blood test to identify the original site of the cancer.

As part of the SIMPLIFY study, it forms part of the first ever large-scale multi-cancer early detection testing (also known as MCED) in individuals presenting to their GP to follow-up on suspected cases of cancer, and has relied on the joint work of public and private sector companies in the United Kingdom and abroad.

With the University of Oxford both sponsoring the study and responsible for data collection, interpretation and analysis, efforts have received considerable funding from bodies such as the American healthcare company, GRAIL. Further support has been given by NHS England, NHS Wales, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre.

Professor Helen McShane is the Director of the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Group, and has described the study as ‘A fantastic example of how academia and

industry can work together for patient benefit’ through a shared commitment ‘to diagnosing cancers earlier, when they can be cured’.

The importance of an early cancer diagnosis to a patient’s well-being and prognosis is well-known, yet has often been challenged in part by limitations on the resources available to GPs and hospitals, as well as the heavy weight of associated costs.

According to Brian D. Nicholson, Associate Professor at Oxford’s Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, it is here, as well as within the science itself, that the blood test trialled by SIMPLIFY offers real hope.

Discussing the implications on standard GP consultations, Nicholson explained that “most patients diagnosed with cancer first see a primary care physician for the investigation of symptoms suggestive of cancer, like weight loss, anaemia, or abdominal pain, which can be complex as there are multiple potential causes.

New tools that can both expedite cancer diagnosis and potentially avoid invasive and costly investigations are needed to more accurately triage patients who present with non-specific cancer symptoms”

Alongside ‘the high overall specificity, positive predictive value, and accuracy of the cancer signal detected and cancer signal origin prediction that was reported across cancer types in the SYMPLIFY study indicate that a positive MCED test could be used to confirm that symptomatic patients should be evaluated for cancer before pursuing other diagnoses.’

These potential advances in optimising the process of cancer diagnosis is hoped to be a step in the right direction not only to limiting the need for the harsher and frequently invasive treatments for cancers caught in their later stages, but also to curbing the fatality rate of the disease through early diagnosis while optimising NHS resources and cutting waiting times.



Fundraising failures cancel Oxfordshire’s biggest public free event

Becky Powell reports.

The Oxford Cowley Road Carnival was anticipated to return for the first time since Covid. However, failing to raise the £20,000 required to go ahead, it has been cancelled.

It was hoped that with Covid restrictions lifted, the event would return with the theme of “Our Nature Our Future” on Sunday 9th July. But even after Cowley Road Works’s Just Giving appeal raised £2,329, the organisers announced “with deep regret” that they would cancel the carnival due to “several significant challenges”.

In their statement, Cowley Road Carnival organisers point to unforeseen financial obstacles, with quotes for certain “crucial Carnival services” having increased by 177% this year.

They also cite time constraints, infrastructure costs, a reduced grant from Oxford City Council of £7000 which they claim is a reduction from the usual £25,000 as well as an unsuccessful application for £29,000 from the Arts Council.

The carnival, which normally takes place on Cowley Road, usually included live music

and DJ performances as well as processions, Eco Floats and House Floats. Known to bring in 50,000 spectators, the event has been Oxfordshire’s biggest public free event.

The organisers, Cowley Road Works, say “the Carnival is inclusive: it brings together all ages, and all ethnic, social and economic groups and is the culmination for our cultural outreach programme.”

The Carnival had planned to include 1,000 artists and 700 procession participants. Its overall estimated cost was £130,000.

Carnival Trustee Sarah Connor explained, “we understand the immense disappointment this announcement may bring to our community, stakeholders, and supporters who have eagerly awaited the return of this cherished event.

Hope remains as two pubs, James Street Tavern and Black Swan, have announced that they are planning “mini festivals” in lieu. Cowley Road Carnival says that “we are already planning for an amazing Carnival in 2024.”



News Shorts

Paterson Joseph becomes new Brookes chancellor

The actor Paterson Joseph has starred in Peep Show, Noughts And Crosses, Grantchester, Green Wing, Vigil, and Doctor Who. His next lead role is at Oxford Brookes University.

Although Joseph never attended university, he sees education as a force for good and is dedicated to expanding access. At his inauguration ceremony, he said: “My main aim as Chancellor will be to highlight the inclusivity and openness of Oxford Brookes University.”



Jericho Arts Fair comes to Oxford this week

The annual Jericho Arts Fair will begin on Friday 9th of June and run until the end of the weekend.

Ranging from live music performances to a street fair and a final Festival Mass to round off the weekend, Jericho Arts Fair is set to be an eclectic mix of activities for students, families and individuals alike.

Run Jericho will also be making a return at the fair. With distances between 10k, 5k or a 1-mile children’s fun run, participants will be given the opportunity to raise funds for St Barnabas School, Oxford, with the hope of expanding student resources. Events are likely to involve temporary road closures within the area.



Oxford Union elections starved of choice

Of the four Union officer positions, three will have a sole candidate in the coming election season.

Finley Armstrong and Leo Buckley are competing for Treasurer. Meanwhile, Hannah Edwards is the only candidate for President, Ebrahim Mowafy is the only candidate for Librarian, and Julia Maranhao-Wong is the only candidate for Secretary.

However, it does not mean that these candidates will be uncontested. According to Rule 35 of the Union’s policy, “Re-Open Nominations shall appear on the ballot paper in any Election for President-Elect, Librarian-Elect, Treasurer-Elect, and Secretary... In the event that Re-Open Nominations is Elected to Office, a Second Election shall be held for that Office.”



Thirst Bar reopens the Jam Factory

Phin Hubbard reports.

Having shut last September, The Jam Factory will reopen with Thirst Bar as the new license holders. The former tenants who ran a restaurant, bar, and gallery in the space which hosted live music every Friday independently were forced to close the doors of the former marmalade factory when they could not come to an agreement with the property’s landlords, Nuffield College.

The new license granted to Thirst permits them to host live gigs and film screenings at the site. This venue would become the cocktail bar chain’s third across the UK and



second in Oxford. Thirst is typically less popular with undergraduates than Atik or Bridge, styling itself toward a target market of young professionals with deeper pockets.

This comes after Brasenose College reversed their decision last week from a staunchly opposed position to the licensing of the venue where a spokesperson maintained that the application be ‘refused entirely’. The college expressed concern that the late closing times applied for by Spirit Ltd. on behalf of Thirst: 1am on Thursday and 2am on Friday and Saturday, would intrude upon their ‘peaceful place in which to sleep and study’. But the college’s position softened, and it then withdrew objections to the license after a new, uniform closing time of 12am was agreed upon.

The Oxford Mail reported that neighbours feared the return of what they termed “drunken revelry” which they associated with Plush’s old Park End St incarnation before it moved to its current location in Frewin Court. The date of the legendary venue’s grand reopening is yet to be announced.

Bill Nicholls/ CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Oxford University to launch coordinated mental health approach

Kate Monaghan reports.

The University of Oxford has announced that it will introduce a common approach to student mental health in the 2023-24 academic year.

The approach intends to ensure that students have access to a standard provision of mental health support, regardless of their college, department, or background.

The key goals of the new approach are clarity and co-ordination. Tim Hitchens, Chair of the Joint Student Mental Health Committee, has stressed that people in welfare-related roles across the University will work together to deliver the best support. A network of welfare leads will be introduced in every college and department for students to reach out to, with clear definitions of each person’s role.

Kathy Noren, Interim Director of Student Welfare and Support Services, has suggested that the current system can be unclear and complicated for students to navigate, meaning that students do not benefit from the support available as much as they could. She has said that these changes will provide students with a better understanding of the type and level of mental health support and services that the University can provide for them.

The approach also aims to connect welfare offered by the University with help available outside of it. It recognises that students may have serious problems or illnesses that require treatment beyond the capacity of the university. At the same time, it emphasises the intermediary support that specialist staff at the University can offer

by working with students to understand the degree of their difficulties and the next steps they should take, and by helping them to identify and access NHS services.

Speaking to *Cherwell*, a student welfare representative expressed concern that students may be deterred from asking for help with the knowledge that they may be asked to share information with others in the welfare structure, but she hopes that the promise of confidentiality will dissuade these worries. She said: “It’ll mostly depend on how this is communicated to the student so that it reassures them instead of causing stress.”

She also said that, to her knowledge, student welfare representatives were not directly involved in or made aware of the University-wide mental health policy discussions, but that the principles in the new policy are embedded in the peer support training they receive.

The changes do not intend to overhaul the existing support system, but to reorganise it. Spokespeople for the new approach encourage students to consider reaching out to existing Support Services if they are struggling with their mental health. These services include Counselling, Disability Advisory, and Sexual Harassment and Violence Support. One of the benefits of the common approach is that students will be directed to the most appropriate service for them and the problem they are facing, rather than having to make the decision themselves.

It is unclear at this moment what the exact provisions will be. The Chairs of the Joint Student Mental Health Committee have stated that more information about the approach will follow.

continued from front page.

businesses often “take a while to filter through”.

In response to claims that an Oxford company has no right to exploit the image of a Dorset monument, Fouget cites his own personal history with the county; he was educated in Dorchester, and has many friends living and working in the surrounding countryside. The Oxford Cheese Company has produced and sold Cerne Abbas Man cheddar for over 20 years, always using milk sourced from Dorset farms.

The hill figure at Cerne Abbas, which is first attested in 17th-century records but may date back to the Neolithic era, is one of several across the UK, including the Long Man of Wilmington and Oxfordshire’s own ancient Uffington White Horse.

This is not the first time its phallus has



led to controversy. A Gillingham resident led a campaign to cover up the Giant in the 1920s, with the backing of local clergy, while in 2016, Cerne Abbas Brewery’s own logo was censored in a Parliamentary bar.

Fouget remains unfazed by the press furore, which he describes as “perfectly harmless”. The company would be entirely happy to restore the Giant to its unaltered state, he says, and may use the current spate of public interest as an opportunity to do just that.

The Oxford Cheese Company sees nothing malicious or ill-intentioned in the reporting on the logo. Fouget describes it as simply a “talking point over dinner”.

Indeed, the publicity could even prove helpful for a local business always looking to spread the word about its products.

Image Credit: Pete Harlow/ CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons



Maggie Wilcox comments.

Analysis: The Oxford mental health crisis goes deeper than collegiate divisions

As a peer supporter, I have spent the last four terms learning about the many avenues students have to seek support for their mental health and have helped some navigate the system. We also discuss and implement strategies to safeguard our own wellbeing and that of our friends throughout our time at Oxford. Through this program I have gained valuable skills like active listening, tips for gaining self confidence and mindfulness techniques. One thing I have also come to realise is that the undergraduate lifestyle at Oxford is almost antithetical to mental well-being.

We were discussing the pressure cooker that is the eight week Oxford term in our twice-termly supervision just last week. As we talked about the issue of imposter syndrome, the disturbance of being in an intensely faced-paced envrionment for a relatively short period of time became all the more evident. It is difficult to establish routines, stable relationships, support systems and healthy wellness habits when you are forced to uproot yourself so frequently and change your focus abruptly.

It is no wonder that Oxford graduates go

on to succeed in the corporate, political and academic worlds. Those who have enough resilience to survive 3-5 years of managed chaos, near-constant movement and the rigour of an Oxford degree are certainly impressive individuals- and nearly all current students will fall in this group one day. The journey to being able to manage the ‘Oxford lifestyle’ is far from smooth, however. Indeed, a suspension of study leave has become so uniquely Oxonian that we have given it our own name, “rustication”.

Oxford’s condensed terms do not solely have downsides and from many perspectives they are innovative and valuable. They keep housing costs down and lead to an unparalleled academic experience, full of exciting experiential learning with professors who have more time to lead research than in many other institutions. However, all things come at a cost. Our brains are not hard-wired to be in a constant state of fight-or-flight. While many Oxford students outgrow this reasonable panic after a few terms, countless others struggle. I welcome attempts to harmonise mental health resources across our disjointed collegiate system, I fundamentally believe that anxiety, depression and other severe psychological responses will persist as long

Apollo Freemasons: Oxford’s not-so-secret secret society

Anika Gupta and Rufus Hall investigate.

Reaches and brotherhood ... the secret world of Freemasonry is something largely obscure and unknown to the uninitiated. *Cherwell* spent some time among the brethren of the Oxford Apollo Lodge to shine a light on this ancient order.

What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is one of the world’s largest non-religious, non-political, and charitable organisations. Its roots can be traced back to medieval stonemasons and Cathedral builders. It is founded upon the three principles of “Brotherly love”, “Relief” and “Truth”. Today, there are approximately 250,000 members under the United Grand Lodge of England and six million around the world.

The Apollo Lodge - a ‘lodge’ being a local group of freemasons - represents the freemasons who have matriculated at the University of Oxford. It held its first meeting on 10th February 1819. Now, meetings are held six times a year, with two ceremonies typically performed at each meeting.

At the Apollo Lodge, the traditional attire of white or black tie is commonly worn at meetings and dinners. At the dinners, charitable collections are made in support of local and Oxford University charities. Additionally, the Apollo Lodge funds seven grants of £1,100 each which are then awarded by the University.

Like any Masonic Lodge, the process for becoming a full member at the Apollo Lodge incorporates three distinct “degrees” relating to the values of Freemasonry. Symbolically, these degrees, namely Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason, are meant to encompass the development of the three stages of life: youth, manhood, and maturity.

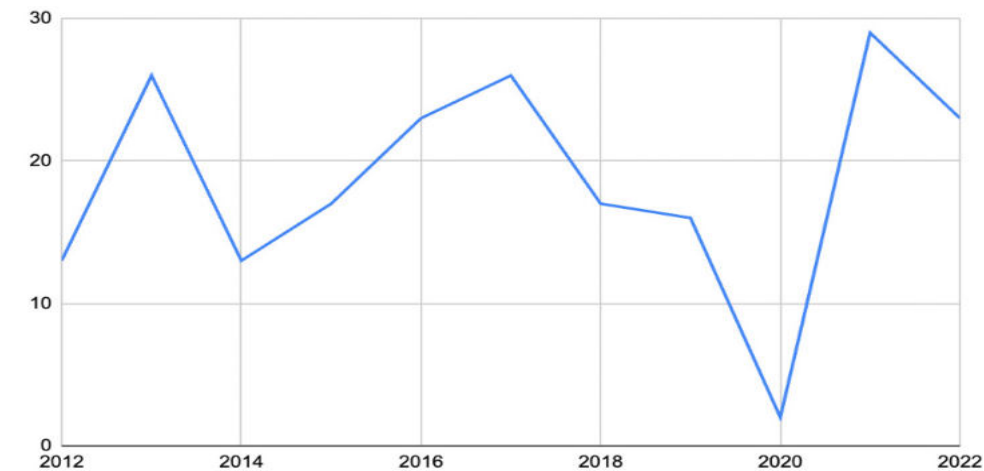
Conflict between the Apollo Lodge and the Grand Lodge was not uncommon in the early years. The Grand Secretaries of English Freemasonry took issue with the too rapid initiation of members into Apollo, which they considered to contravene the Masonic constitution. Apollo was forced to “petition the Grand Lodge for their forgiveness”, expressing their “regret at having, as inexperienced freemasons, acted improperly”, further pleading that “the Book of Constitutions was being revised and therefore they had no copy” when the Lodge had been constituted. Eventually, Apollo petitioned the Grand Master to permit the initiation of “gentlemen under 21 years of age”, promising that those proposed for initiation would be selected as eligible according to their “character and rank”.

The Apollo Lodge grew steadily through the 19th century and enjoyed a period of social extravagance in the latter part of the 19th century. Royal affiliations were strong, with the Lodge organising a ball in celebration of the wedding of Edward Prince of Wales in 1863. Queen Victoria’s youngest son Leopold was installed as master of Apollo in 1876.

Joining Apollo

In conversations with Apollo members, *Cherwell* was intrigued to uncover the variety of routes that led people to join the organisation. Whilst the secretive nature is intriguing for some, others are drawn in because they have close friends who are part of the Apollo Lodge, or even have freemasonry running in the family.

Chris Noon, Apollo Lodge Secretary,



Annual intake of Apollo lodge, 2012-2022 | Credit: Chris Noon

told *Cherwell* about his path: “I knew about freemasonry because my dad joined when I was about twelve. He didn’t tell me much about it at the time, but he took my family to a couple of open guest dinners, and we met some really great people. I had thought I’d join his Lodge when I turned 21, but then I had a chance encounter with someone who turned out to be a member of Apollo, who told me that I could join it younger because it’s a University Lodge (I was 19 at the time). I asked my dad whether he thought I should do this, or wait to join his Lodge, and he said he thought I’d get more out of it if I joined at University, where there would be more young people (and people who lived near me). And he was right!”

Currently, the qualifying age to join freemasonry is 18. Apollo’s current membership is around 300 and is made up of roughly 50 junior and senior members of the University and its departments, as well as alumni.

Like most lodges, Apollo does not recruit its members. Instead, it operates through a three-tiered application process. This begins with those who are interested in contacting the Lodge through its website. Once someone has got in touch, a two-stage interview process follows; the first being an informal chat with one of the Officers of Apollo Lodge, with no preparation or detailed knowledge of freemasonry being expected. The second interview is more formal, and candidates are expected to have dived into Freemasonry and reflected on the initial meeting.

The current Master, Alexander Yen, gave *Cherwell* insight into the specific questions asked in the interviews. In essence, interviewers want to know what the appeal of freemasonry is to the applicants. Yen told *Cherwell*: “We ask for an understanding of the three grand principles, what brotherly love means, what relief means, what truth means. Often, we try and ask them to link to personal experience; is there something that in their life that they have done? Have they been involved in charity before?”

Yen highlighted that the Lodge takes into account the different personal circumstances of prospective members. He stressed that the interviewers are keen to expose any of the applicant’s political ambitions. This is particularly crucial as discussion of politics and religion is forbidden among members. He said that an applicant might be asked: “Are you planning to be politically involved, and likely to cause political controversies for the Lodge?” Yen added that they “try and ensure people who are politically involved join after any ambitions are extinguished.”

It is a condition of membership that an applicant has belief in a Supreme Being or “Grand Architect of the Universe”. Crucially,

this does not mean subscription to religion.

Whilst a freemason’s commitment to brotherly loyalty may appear to have the potential for scheming and corruption in professional spheres, Noon emphasised that applicants should not wish to join the Apollo Lodge as a networking society: “Anyone who is thinking about joining to make business connections would be told that this isn’t what Freemasonry is about and that there are other societies one could join for this purpose, like Rotary... or, well, LinkedIn!”

Data suggests that the total number of initiates in 2023 will be roughly between 20-25. Over the last decade (2012–2022), the Apollo Lodge averaged about 19 Initiates a year. Figures include the pandemic but exclude members initiated at other lodges.

Reputational issues

If any at all, the image Freemasonry has come to cultivate is a slightly blurry, non-transparent one. Secretive, male-only Oxford dining societies tend to court bad press. The perception that Oxford freemasonry represents something elitist and outdated came to the forefront in Michaelmas 2022. Timetabling issues at the Oxford Union led to Freemason drinks clashing with a state school oriented access social event. *Cherwell* reported that the Freemasons’ “appearance in white tie caused particular upset” among attendees at the Union event.

Chris Noon suggested that perceptions of Freemasonry as exclusive and elitist were misguided. He himself attended a state school and felt that it was patronising to suggest that aspects of Masonic convention such as a dress code consisting in white tie and breaches might alienate those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. When asked about the intake for this year, he admitted that the Lodge does not collect demographic data, but said that “these people are of a number of different nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds”.

It is notable that accusations pertaining to the potentially exclusive and collusive nature of Freemasonry have courted press attention beyond Oxford in recent years. In 2017, the outgoing chair of the Policing Federation Steven White alleged that progressive policing reforms intending to support women and officers from black and ethnic minority backgrounds were being blocked by freemasons within the police.

David Staples, erstwhile Chief Executive of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), responded in a letter to the press saying that “the idea that reform within the Police Federation or anywhere else is being thwarted by an organised body of freemasons is laughable”, and emphasising the “organisational values of integrity and

service to the community” shared by police officers and freemasons.

When interviewed, some members of the Apollo Lodge expressed irritation at what they viewed as unfair publicity in a press that largely disregards their charity work. One member, who was initiated into Apollo in 1968 and has since been active in various London Masonic lodges, mentioned the 210-foot ladder which freemason donations had funded for the London Fire Brigade, as well as the £3 million pledge made to the London Air Ambulance charity to help towards a fleet of two new helicopters costing £15 million in total.

The member complained that there was little news coverage of these activities. When asked about the secretive Masonic image, he referred to the war years, suggesting that Freemasonry “became more sensitive to what people thought of it because of Nazi persecution”. There is little doubt that Freemasonry became the target of Nazi propaganda linking Jews and freemasons, particularly before the war.

Others have suggested that secrecy is an integral part of Freemasonry. *Guardian* journalist Iain Cobain wrote in 2018: “Freemasonry could not abandon its last vestiges of secrecy, even if individual masons wished to, because it is key to the future of the brotherhood. Men continue to join in order to discover what is being hidden from them.”

Moving Forward

Staples, who was Chief Executive Officer of UGLE for five years, told *Cherwell* that the position of CEO was created with him at the helm as part of a broader effort to modernise and open up the Masonic community.

In 2018, the *Guardian* reported that Staples said that the perception of Freemasonry as a secretive organisation is changing. He added: “We have a greater resolve to put forward a case – and it is a positive argument – to highlight that we are driven by integrity, by a desire to help those less fortunate than us, and to stem the flow of negative perceptions which has unfairly dominated public perception.”

Notable recent developments include the 2007 establishment of the Universities Scheme. This programme intends to broaden the appeal of freemasonry to a younger audience beyond Oxbridge. Noon said: “The Universities’ Scheme was set up to give students at more universities the opportunity to learn about and join freemasonry while they are still students.” He noted the success and popularity of the Apollo Lodge as well as the Isaac Newton Lodge at Cambridge, suggesting that the lower age of 18 at which one can become initiated into University lodges “gives it a chance to become a part of your life before you have career or family commitments”.

Whilst the Apollo Lodge remains a lodge exclusively for men, other university lodges accept women. This follows in a tradition of women’s freemasonry beginning with the exclusion of men from the Honourable Fraternity of Ancient Masonry in the early 1920s. In *Cherwell*’s discussions with Apollo members, there were whisperings about the potential for an Oxford University women’s lodge. In the meantime, Chris Noon told *Cherwell* that women who enquire about Apollo in Oxford are referred to the two women’s grand lodges in England, Freemasonry for Women and Order of Women Freemasons. Indeed, Noon was quick to reassure that “there are a few of these a year, too!”



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MICHALEMAS TERM 2022

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Cherwell Rent Report: Christ Church rent increase 12.86%

Univ holds out on turning on heating

Exeter infested with cockroaches

Union president Ahmad Nawaz removed from office

Lamb and Flag pub reopens

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HILARY TERM 2023

Cherwell

The rise and fall of Oxshag

Cherwell Sex Survey reveals St Peter’s students have the most sex

Temple Lounge Closes

Cherwell exposes Onyeka Nwelue’s fraudulent fellowship

University bans staff student relationships

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TRINITY TERM 2023

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Cherwell BNOC list released

Oxford drops Sackler name from all building and positions

Kathleen Stock speaks at Union amidst massive public outcry and media storms

Students film “Breakwater”, first feature film since 1982



Summer VIIIs has come and gone, the highlight event of the Oxford rower’s Trinity term card has left us for another year. A staple of Oxbridge culture, Bumps racing, coined due to the narrow rivers forcing a more unconventional form of racing to be adopted, is simple. Make contact or “Bump” the boat ahead of you to take their position. Conversely, all boats fight hard not to be bumped. If you neither bump nor are bumped by another boat you are considered to row over. Boring definitions aside, how did the regatta unfold?

John’s M1 and M2 are unstoppable?
Gaining 3 positions on Wednesday by getting the over bumps on Somerville, then bumping Christ Church IIs the next day and Mansfield 1s on Saturday, to say SJBC’s Eights week went well for John’s M1 is an



Bump on Queens by Hertford, Christ Church W1s (Head of the River), Osler House dressed as Pitbull, above. All images credit to Nikola Boysová

understatement. Almost identically Johns M2s who overbumped Corpus Christi’s M3s, rowed over the next day and then gained a position each day for the final 2 days. Johns’s W1s also did well therefore across all crews, a total of 11 places were gained for John’s, making it the most successful club on the river this year.

Worcester W2 Blades! Again?
Back-to-back Blades in Torpids and Summer Eights this year, Is there any stopping the Worcester W2s?

Brasenose: An impressive campaign
Brasenose’s M2s gained blades this year with an impressive campaign. Alongside them, the rest of the crews put on great performances making this club the third most successful down the Isis this time.

Exeter: Tale of two fates
Let’s see - the Women’s crews did excellently. Exter W1s got the over bump on Somerville, on Friday, and gained 5 positions over the competition. The W2s and W3s also had a great campaign, gaining lots of positions. The men however did not manage to share the same fate, and in fact, suffered the very opposite, the worst of which being the M3s who were very much on course for spoons but kept place on Saturday avoiding it.



Wadham worse for wear
Wadham College Boat Club had a particularly tough time. Not one of the crews gained a position and the W2s lost five positions across the week, so perhaps not a week to remember. Times like these warrant a special shout-out to its W3 crew, in a week where WCBc looked hit by a bad case of Murphy’s law, and each crew sunk like stones, this crew managed to stay afloat, gaining back on Friday the place they lost the day before.

Somerville: it was not great
Better luck next time to the Somerville crews too, they sit at the bottom of the table in places lost this year with an aggregate of 14 places. With only 3 competing crews this year, this number is put very mildly, quite bad. That being said, all hope is not lost, perhaps they’ll come back with some vengeance next year.

Chaplain’s Blessing: The Key to Hertford’s Summer VIIIs success

Lucy Derrick
Ritual is nothing new to Oxford, a historic institution packed with bizarre rites and traditions and Summer VIIIs, and the days leading up to it, are no exception to this. There is always a multitude of different tactics at play “guaranteed” to bring forth a successful eights campaign, and of course, the ever-aspired “blades” (trophy oars achieved by bumping on each of the four race days). Nothing exemplifies this better than Hertford College’s recent victory tactic, turning to divine assistance for Summer Eights in the form of a blessing from their chaplain.

As a rower for the Hertford W2 this term, when I first saw on our Boat Club Facebook page that this would be happening, I honestly thought it was a joke. We were told to dress in black tie and come to the chapel to have a mass, followed by a drinks reception and food. Everyone was anointed with holy oil, while the Chaplain’s charge decreed we were “Queens and Kings of the river” and that we should “go out and claim our crowns”. Despite the lack of enthusiasm from many of the rowers, I ended up finding the service very enjoyable, and W2 rower Pauline Droege described it as ‘wholesome’ and ‘calming’ before the stress of race day.

Jakob Timmermann (M2 and vice-captain elect) was the organiser of this event. The aim was to have an activity for the entire club rather than individual crews, stressing the importance of cohesion both in and outside the water. He said the idea came when he “read something in a book about warriors receiving a blessing before an important battle, and I thought it would be hilarious if we could do something similar for VIIIs. It was more of a joke at first,

but the more I got into it the more I started to genuinely like the idea. It definitely helped our club-spirit to do something hilariously over-the-top like a blessing for our campaign.”

Yet all was to be tested on the day of the race. It was full of Pimm’s in the sunshine and picnics on the banks, and you could find rowers, coaches, coxes and bank riders, all eagerly anticipating the unpredictable competition. The only thing you can guarantee about VIIIs is that nothing is guaranteed.

The adrenaline of the bunglines really does make you turn to auto-pilot, and the loud BANG of the start cannon shocks your muscles into moving before you can even process it. I honestly can’t remember much of my first race, but maybe that was because we were bumped within the first minute by Worcester. The first race of the tournament did not seem to be blessed...

The first day of eights was nerve-racking, with Hertford chasing Exeter M2, a team objectively faster than them. However, once at the gut, Exeter’s turn landed them straight into a tree, and Hertford sailed past them. At this point, many called this turn of events an ‘act of godly intervention’ as a result of the blessing. However, this was not the only time this miraculous event happened, with Hertford gaining a second bump resulting from another tree/boat collision two days later. On the last day, Hertford M2 finally won blades (15 years since this last happened) with a final chase again Merton. As they bumped Merton right outside of their boathouse, one half of the boat went absolutely crazy, screaming and laughing in ecstasy while the other half went really quiet and some, allegedly, even started crying. Some say that it was the tree in the gut that earned them two bumps, some saying “the best member of your boat is a tree”, while

others persisted that “the tree in the gut was divine intervention, there is no doubt”. I would argue that, as the saying goes; ‘good crews get 3 bumps, lucky crews get 4’, they were certainly a lucky crew.

The blessing therefore paid off with M2, however, the same could not be said about the other crews. M1 narrowly missed out on blades with a ‘row-on’ on Day 1. The women’s side fared worse, with W1’s bow suffering a concussion on the first day, and W2 being disqualified in their last race due to a split bow-ball. Despite feeling quite disappointed with our result on the last day, I still found joy in the achievements of the entire club.

So what does this mean for the future Hertford College Boat Club traditions? Is the blessing here to stay? Should other colleges aim to replicate something similar? Hertford has certainly recently seen great success, something the incoming committee wish to continue. In answer to the question, yes, this is something Hertford sees as becoming a recurrent pre-race tradition. They believe that it is nice to have a ritual at the beginning of VIIIs’ weeks that helps bring all the rowers together, intended to channel their excitement (and focus) together as a club. This was done lmore for a sense of confidence and bonding of the crews than religion. Jacob Moldover (M2) maintains that “as a Jewish person, people didn’t feel any obligation to pray in a personally religious manner, but was simply an opportunity for people to spend time together”.

However, Jakob Timmermann finishes by reminding aspiring rowers that “Ultimately, however, as cliché as it sounds, college rowing is not about the results – it’s about the friends (and memories) you make along the way”. In a university filled with bizarre rites and rituals, what is another one only intended just for fun?

Mad Hatter

Declan Ryder

Luton’s recent promotion to the Premier League, after beating Coventry in the Championship Play-Off Final on penalties on the 27th May, signals their return to the English top-flight for the first time in 31 years. Their downfall and subsequent rise since then have been well documented, and they were still playing in the Conference League, the fifth tier, less than 10 years ago. With a stadium capacity of just 10,356 and an away stand which literally requires fans to walk through steps in someone’s back garden, their newfound status in the Premier League has unsurprisingly been heralded as a magnificently bizarre fairy tale.

Whether they will be able to survive immediate relegation back to Championship football next season, however, is up for debate. Some have already written off their hopes of survival, but the extent of success of fellow relatively footballing minnows such as Bournemouth and Brentford in the Premier League over the past decade is a testament to how an intelligent, and well-run club can potentially flourish, regardless of the league’s notorious difficulty. Brentford, in particular, has operated on a rather shoe-string budget, with a net spend of just £781,000 over the past five years, considerably lower than that of all other Premier League sides for the 22/23 season over the same period. Chelsea, for example, who finished 15 points lower than the Bees last season, have a net spend of £653.21m over the five years, over 836 times the amount. In a footballing climate in which the uber-rich tend to dominate accordingly, such remarkable figures clearly show the potential to succeed without spending extortionate amounts.

Their manager, Rob Edwards, has undoubtedly done an exceptional job since replacing Nathan Jones in November, as has his squad, to achieve promotion, but as of right now, it is clear that they are likely not comparable in quality to those they will be competing against next season. In many ways, their activity over the summer will be crucial in defining their season - before a ball has even been kicked. It is likely that they will base their bid for survival on defensive solidity, first and foremost. They conceded just 39 goals in the Championship last season, the joint second-best defensive record and this foundation will have to remain relatively sturdy for them to stand a chance. What they do also possess, however, is an immense sense of team spirit, a bizarre yet intimidating stadium, and a sustained track record of impressive recruitment.

These factors, combined with necessary signings to bolster the squad, may very well prove enough for them to avoid the drop in the Premier League next year. But regardless of how the Hatters fare in the season to come, it is a breath of fresh air to see them competing at the pinnacle of English football once more. The likes of Erling Haaland, Mohamed Salah and Kevin De Bruyne will be competing in a stadium that’s stands overlook the washing lines of locals. It is weird and wonderful and a thrilling proposition for a league that has for too long been plagued with talk of Super Leagues and million-pound-a-week contracts. Football in its purest form.



Reflections of an Oxford Union reporter

Freya Jones on what it is like to cover the antics of Oxford's playground for politicians

For better or worse, I'm known around town as a journalist who reports on the Oxford Union - something I've done for both *Cherwell* and national newspapers over the last two years. Now, before I leave the country on my year abroad (putting as much distance between myself and the historic debating society as possible) I wanted to write a bit about my experiences of reporting there.

The Union's place within Oxford is interesting. An initially inconspicuous gothic building in the town centre, some students manage to do their entire degrees without setting foot in it. Maybe they're put off by the £300 life membership fee or avoid it for ideological reasons. Maybe joining never even occurred to them. But knowingly or unknowingly, they live alongside several thousand current students who own a life membership and others - like 6 former Prime Ministers - for whom a place on the Union's committee is a defining part of their time at Oxford.

Typically, Union committee members ("hacks") are held in some level of reverence or disdain by other students. My friends in college, who seem bored by the Union's very existence, often ask me how and why I have the will to report on these people. Let's start with "how", because there are a number of tricks to the trade...

Be available: any aspiring Union reporter should live on Facebook Messenger and be prepared to put their evening on hold to hear the latest gossip if necessary. Most hacks are so self-obsessed that they'll give you a lot of information if you're patient enough to listen. That said, it's always worth having multiple sources as a means of cross-referencing, to help distinguish the facts from the half-truths and self-serving agendas.

Read the Union's atrociously dull Standing Orders (read them and understand them!): seeing as the majority of recent committee dramas have been driven by "infringements" of these regularly-updated constitutional clauses, it's worth having working knowledge. One of my more down-to-earth sources recently told me: "this entire year in union politics is built on hacks not knowing rules" and it's true; the constitution seems to exist less as a foundation for running the society than as a means for angry twenty-year-olds to perpetually screw each other over. So, with political prospects pivoting on the contents of this immense PDF document, paying attention to its language in your reporting will do wonders for the Union's perceptions of your competence - and, in turn, how much committee is likely to tell you.

Live in the buildings: I can't stress this one enough. Making yourself part of the scenery is important, not only so people can sidle up and slip you secrets, but because it's amazing how much you can observe about the place just by sitting in it. Also, as it stands, committee doesn't seem to have addressed the fact that the walls are very thin, and their conversations are

consequently very audible. Only last week I was working in the Union, completely minding my own business, when I suddenly became privy to an officer's frenzied attempts to write a speech using ChatGPT after Peter Tatchell pulled out of the pride debate. And sometimes you learn things which are really interesting...

Beyond these ground rules, dress well and speak politely; apologise profusely for covering stories the hacks would rather you didn't (while covering them anyway), and make sure your caffeine dependency is slightly more visible than theirs (they'll respect it). It's really just a cultivated way of putting your sources at ease, by looking as if you could almost be one of them...

Well, as someone who spends most of the year running around town in Barbour jacket with a non-stop rota of coffees, there's certainly a world in which I might have been a hack - and the same could actually be said for several of my old colleagues at *Cherwell*. But as it is, I like writing a little bit too much, which led me to the realisation that demographic overlap and the ability to think like a hack might be helpful when trying to report on them.

But why would anyone want to spend their time in this way? My answer here is ever-evolving, and my relationship with the Union is complex. For my first term in Oxford, I didn't make it to a single event and bought a membership because I wanted to use the library. (I memorably got lost when I was trying to find the place and had to ask Michael - the then-Librarian - if he happened to know the way. Fortunately he did, although I had no clue who he was.) However, a week later I found myself reporting on his landslide election victory and in Hilary 2022 I started a writing column for *The Oxford Blue* on the weekly chamber debates. The real fun had started.

Now, every term the Union puts out a marginally updated version of its "How to get involved" guide for any fresher who might be tempted to join committee. If this had been better advertised, I might have made the requisite number of speeches in time to sell my soul and run for election, having been thoroughly taken in by the white-tie extravaganzas I'd witnessed from the press bench every Thursday. As it was, however, I found out more about the practicalities of being on committee when a series of articles called The Union As It Is fell across my desk for editing.

All of this happened in the run up to HT22 elections, and if you weren't in Oxford at that point, it's worth reading up on your Union history. After the results were announced, allegations of misconduct on committee sent the Union into a period of higher-than-average turmoil, which only concluded with Ahmad Nawaz's loss of the Presidency in MT22.

This largely explains why I stuck around so long: for the few members of the student press and the Union who were made aware of said al-

legations upfront, the captivating, horrible, and educational nine-month build-up to what ultimately happened was difficult to escape.

It was also an opportunity to learn a lot about journalism: the news team covering the Union in TT22/MT22 handled everything from source protection and police reports to the guidelines for reporting on sexual assault allegations.

I also learnt the technicalities of getting people "on record". In fact, since my article "Authoritarian and Impulsive: Union officers speak out against Ahmad Nawaz as members prepare to vote" was published, I've quite regularly been asked why I included so many named quotes from members of committee, given that the Union Standing Orders explicitly prohibit them from speaking to the press without presidential approval.

Well, to answer quite simply, I was up to eyes in "senior union sources" by that point last Michaelmas, and frankly sick of committee members who expected to hide behind student journalists and let the papers do their dirty work for them.

If they had strong opinions about the Michaelmas president, our editorial position at the time was that they should put their names to it. Subsequently, my article has been described as "groundbreaking" and "kingmaking". Personally, I just hope it sets a precedent for Union officials being a little less spineless.

I still take a dim view of those who tried to retract their comments after knowingly providing them on record; but fortunately, a number of committee's smarter individuals reached the sound conclusion that it would be good to put free speech into action, for a change, and the rest is history.

Setting the woes of the Nawaz episode aside, however, most of committee's routine interactions with the student press are downright weird.

Some of them are terrified: a hack strutting pompously around the bar in full tartan once froze on seeing me. "Oh no! It's a member of the press!" he squealed, his voice rising half an octave, before scarpering upstairs faster than I'd thought possible.

On another occasion, a dejected-looking officer wolfing down his Maccies in the courtyard replied to my offhand "hello" with an imperilled cry of "No comment!"

Then there are the ones who try to be charming: some hacks have invited me to taste hummus, review their biohazardous boats, skip queues, or drink unlimited free wine in the Union bar. Most of them exuded ulterior motives and were routinely atrocious at hiding their misguided expectations of favourable coverage

in return.

Still, things seem to have come full circle in my time here: last year there was a phase where most of committee didn't refer to me by name, but merely as "press" or, if I was lucky, "a reporter from *Cherwell*". These days (I was alarmed to discover) I only need to walk into the buildings and mention that I could do with a coffee before a seccie runs off to get me one, while I bemusedly try to remember who they are and wonder if I'm losing my touch. I don't know which of these instances is less embarrassing.

But the hacks you genuinely warm towards are undoubtedly the most problematic. Luckily for me, most of these individuals are now "semi-retired", "hack-adjacent", or cleanly out the other side, but the overlap between social and semi-professional settings in a place as small as Oxford is never without difficulties. Unsurprisingly, cordial relationships can sour

when the time comes for you to write something less-than-complementary about your previously co-conspiratorial coffee buddy. One moment you'll be photoshopping the doomed hack's face over a picture of the debate chamber to create an image for your article, telling yourself it's purely work and that they'll understand; the next moment they're phoning you up in tears, threatening

you, or reminding you how much fun you had at their party a week earlier.

Of course, the easiest way to avoid situations like this is not to get too close to committee, period. Working for a publication with a strict editorial policy will help with this, and sometimes you can also rely on a tedious Director of Press to kill the vibe. The worst of these have completely aired me, making my job ten times harder by going AWOL when I needed urgent statements on the Union's behalf. Others have provided me with flimsy laminated press passes or snazzy personalised lanyards in turn, while being equally sluggish at issuing any "official" information. The current one had his personality beautifully summed up in *The New Statesman* last week, and there's nothing more for me to add there at present (but please can I bum a cigarette sometime?).

Lacklustre DoPs or otherwise, good sources can obviously help to bridge the gap by supplying information in a timely manner, but the more cards you hold in a place like the Union, the more potential you have to become a political actor yourself, instead of a neutral reporter. This can be dangerous - while it may appeal to any personal desire for a power-trip, it's rarely conducive to good journalism.

Read full article online.

Image Credit: Maggie Wilcox

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It's amazing how much you can observe about the place just by sitting in it.



“Sexy is in the hormones of the beholder!”

Anika Schwarze-Chinatpatla on Dr. Sarah E. Hill

Have you ever wondered why you and your friends have such different tastes in men? Why is it that when your friend shows you a photo of their latest get, they think they’re really hot, but you’re sat there thinking they’re actually quite unattractive? Or vice versa when your friend tells you the person you like is actually just a bit ugly. Whilst it could be considered a gift that your friends aren’t all attracted to the same person (my set-partner and I certainly don’t have the same taste!), its not all that talked about why we find certain people sexy, and others not.

This article is inspired by the book ‘How the Pill Changes Everything’ by Dr Sarah E. Hill. A really quite profound concept raised in Dr Hill’s book is that the version of yourself that you experience, is very much dependent on the presence of different sex hormones. My commentary is also centred

around heterosexual cis-gendered women, primarily because this is where the majority of research in the field currently lies. I know that amongst the people reading this article, there will be a wide range who do not fall into this category, but I hope that you, too, will at least still find it interesting. What’s more, growing research suggests that the mating psychology of gay and transgender people isn’t hugely different to heterosexual cisgender peers, so you may find yourself reflected in these trends too!

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If I’m going to share my body with another human being for 9 months, then I’m going to be picky about who gets to be the father

Before diving into the depths of who and what we find sexy, let’s dig into the evolutionary-theoretical background that underpins the why. By Darwinian theory, reproductive advantages are considered ‘useful’ or ‘beneficial’ traits, that promote the passing on of our genes. Our successful female predecessors

made decisions that lead to their survival and reproduction, in a process known as natural selection. Those traits that help us pass on our genes are then inherited through the generations. Broadly, passing on genes requires two key things to happen. The big one, as you may have guessed, is having sex. The prerequisite of this, is surviving for long enough that you get the opportunity!

For the purpose of this article I will define women and men in the biological terms of their gametes: the female egg, and the male sperm. Women have a finite number of sex cells (we are born with the number of gametes from birth) so, evolutionarily, it is important that our eggs are fertilised with the ‘right’ sperm. Biologically, women invest much more into their offspring prior to conception, as their eggs are much larger (requiring more energy processes to create them), than their smaller male counterparts- sperm. Evolutionarily, this means that much less investment is needed

from a male, in order to pass on their genes. For your average male, this sounds a like pretty good deal, as evolution has not only put lots of low investment sex on the cards, but even made it an advantageous strategy. As such, males are generally considered to be more sexually opportunistic- for evolutionary purposes only, of course. Females on the other hand are typically less sexually opportunistic, which makes sense given the 9 month long pregnancy that would result from successful conception- if I’m going to share my body with another human being for 9 months, then I’m going to be picky about who gets to be the father. Importantly to remember, a woman could have endless sex should she want to, but can only produce one pregnancy within a 9 month period; a male on the other hand could produce a pregnancy every time he has sex. As such, evolution has lead to us women to consider sex as being more consequential, and thus we have evolved to typically be more discriminating about our sex partners (at least prior to the development of

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Don’t blame Darwin, blame your grandma

contraceptive methods).

Overall, the decisions that women have made previously (which allowed for their survival) have been passed on through generations (As Dr Hill so astutely put it: Don't blame Darwin, blame your grandma.) The feminist in me wants to add at this point that I am not trying to suggest that all women should have children, nor that all women want to have children. We have developed the way we have because of the choices our ancestors made, but that does not mean we have to, nor should make the same choices that they did. Besides, we don't have to - we now have contraception to help us along the way!

Now, back to evolution. With Darwin's theory in mind, what are the benefits that we as women can gain from a mate. Firstly, the direct benefits. These include love, care and affection, financial stability, and vitally, parental care to your children. These characteristics are most beneficial in a long term relationship. The indirect benefits are genetic and include the healthy characteristics that make your children more likely to survive and reproduce. Typically, these are the characteristics we are attracted to, and thus what we find sexy. Signs of 'healthy genes' have historically included 'masculine traits' such as a sharp jawline, and athletic build (which typically indicate higher testosterone levels). As such, that sexy man you were checking out on Broad Street the other day, probably had some pretty beneficial genes he could give your future kids. I guess you're not as shallow as you thought you were - you're just trying to ensure the best possible outcome for your children!

Interestingly, what we find sexy varies at different stages of our ovulatory cycle. The peri-ovulatory phase (also called the follicular phase, which is during and after you bleed - days 1-14 of your cycle) is the point at which conception is possible. During this time, it makes sense that we are attracted to the men that can give us the most indirect benefits (aka their sexy genes). Why? Because this would give our children the healthiest possible genes, such that they are

more likely to survive. What is more, those kids will probably inherit their father's sexy qualities, giving them the classic reproductive advantage of... well, being sexy. Our desire for sexy men at different points in the ovulatory cycle varies - known as the ovulatory-shift hypothesis. Studies have shown that women in the fertile stage of their cycle not

only have greater sex drive, but also feel greater attraction towards the typically 'sexy' phenotype. This is in contrast to stages of the cycle when conception is not possible, when commitment traits (those direct benefits) are considered more attractive. This is due to the cyclical nature of your hormones. The oestrogen surge

in your fertile phase coincides with attraction to 'sexy' traits, whilst increased progesterone at other stages coincides with attraction to 'commitment' traits. As such, when it comes to picking our partners, women prioritise different traits at different points in our cycle (a tension which ultimately boils down to: sexy vs committed).

So what do we do if we want it all, evolutionarily speaking, of course. How has evolution helped us get 'the good genes' (from the people we find sexy), but also helped women ensure we receive commitment to raising our child? As you may have noticed during your time roaming the streets of Oxford, these two characteristics combined is not always so easy to find in one male alone! A sexy man without commitment issues is surely a rare find!

As such, choosing a mate in a world where evolution has selected for males who are sexually opportunistic can require trade-offs. The extent to these trade-offs is highly dependent on what we are looking for - a long term partner (eg if you're wanting to leave Oxford with a spouse!), or a short term partner (probably more along the lines of what the Ox-shagger had in mind...). Do we want someone who will show investment in our offspring and thus aid their survival and further reproduction, or instead, someone who will pass on their good genes to our offspring, (and yes, by good genes I mean

their 'sexiness'). Historically, the best choice in regards to promoting the survival success of offspring, is picking a partner who is willing and able to invest in your child (commitment).

And yet... some women are able to get the best of both worlds. What if you were able to ensure investment in your children from a primary partner (lets say, perhaps, your library crush from the Radcam finally noticed you and turned out to be a loving, caring and reliable partner). But, at the same time, you were able to get the sexy genes from someone else (lets say that tall handsome stranger you hooked up with in Parkend last week). This is where it all gets a bit scandalous.

Am I saying what you think I'm saying? Potentially, yes. Cheating.

Now, hold your breath for a second before you dismiss me for being a wholly immoral person. You (and I too) may have some fundamental opposition to this evolutionary strategy, but hear me out, because its pretty interesting to dig into the theory behind the dual-mating strategy. I reckon that you'll find it pretty fascinating.

It is important to note at this point that not all female species have to undergo this trade-off situation. Most sexually reproducing organisms only get indirect benefits (the good genes) from mating as they don't require the investment (direct benefits). Humans, however, are faced with the inevitability of such a conditional strategy because, in an evolutionary setting, offspring would typically be worse off receiving both direct and indirect benefits from the same mate.

I'm not saying this is true for everyone and, besides, its very difficult to pull it off successfully (without the primary partner realising the kids he's caring for, are in fact not genetically related to him). Women opting for this strategy are faced with the risk of abandonment if they get caught (as well as that moral conscious too). My aim here in telling you this, is simply, to emphasise Dr. Hill's point, that women's mating psychology has, by evolutionary design, a built in capacity for such a dual-mating strategy. The darker side to this, which is in my opinion

even more fascinating, is that this effect of 'preference-for-sexy-men-during-our-fertile-window', is typically most pronounced in those women who already have partners. Now that's messed up, right? Research suggests, that women in partnerships, exhibit the psychological changes that aid dual-mating during periods of high fertility, to a greater extent than women who are not in partnerships. Results from studies (I'll list a few at the bottom of this article!) have shown that in experiments, partnered women were more preoccupied by flirtatious distractions than unpartnered women, and this preoccupation was greatest at times when the women were most fertile (which makes evolutionary sense because this is the time when sex would result in passing on of genes). What's more, our fertility can be subconsciously detected by males through various cues (also shown in studies), thus increasing their attraction to us during this period of time too! Overall, this means that at points of high fertility cheating may actually be more likely, than at points of low fertility.

Importantly, all these different cues and preferences are subject to our hormones, and the way they affect our brain. Our sex hormones, importantly, don't just effect out reproductive system, but also other very important systems in the body. This is really quite important as it raises questions of what changes in our hormones might mean for your body and brain. As outlined in Sarah E. Hill's book, your sex hormones can influence your body in all sorts of ways, which, until reading this book I hadn't ever considered. Since then, quite frankly, I have become obsessed

with this book, and I really encourage everyone to read it for a much more in-depth discussion on evolution, women, sex and identity. Consider this article a brief summary of her first couple chapters, I hope this makes you want to read the rest because it

only gets better!

Artwork by Ellen Appleby

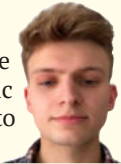
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A sexy man without commitment issues is surely a rare find

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Ball ticket resales: have they gone too far?

We’ve gone mad
Freddie Maud

Extortionate ball prices have driven its attendees to drastic means. Rowing boats to get into LMH, dressing up as Scouts and designing replica wristbands - these examples only scratch the surface of how some of Oxford’s students have broken their way into college balls. In a city where the cheapest fast food available is an £8 Wasabi curry and where hall dinner prices are climbing through the roof on a daily basis, ball prices as they currently stand are inhumane.



Suck it up
Nyat Aron-Yohannes

Yeah, prices suck, but there is a reason behind the super high prices. Think about it... there is high demand because of Covid, there are V.I.Ps and special performances. On top of that, these balls happen once every 3 years. You will never get the opportunity to go to Oxford Ball as a university student again. Buy now, worry later xx



Mummy’s Money
Adam Saxon

Balls are a quintessential part of the Oxford experience. Dress up fancy, put on your best shoes, and play posh for an evening (or just be yourself for a fair portion of the people at this university). In my opinion, if you are going to resell your ball ticket it is your duty to milk a fallen member of the aristocracy for as high a proportion of the money mummy has given them this week as possible. After all, could one ball night you would (probably) be disappointed with be worth passing on funding for all your nights out for a year?



For the many not the few

Ailish Gaughan

Balls are great fun - if you can afford it. We all appreciate wacky themes and wild survivors breakfasts, but what about making what is essentially one of the most exclusive events, just that bit more accessible? Considering balls are supposed to be for students, shouldn’t we be catering everyone who deserves the time off, including those who (shock) don’t own their own white tie.

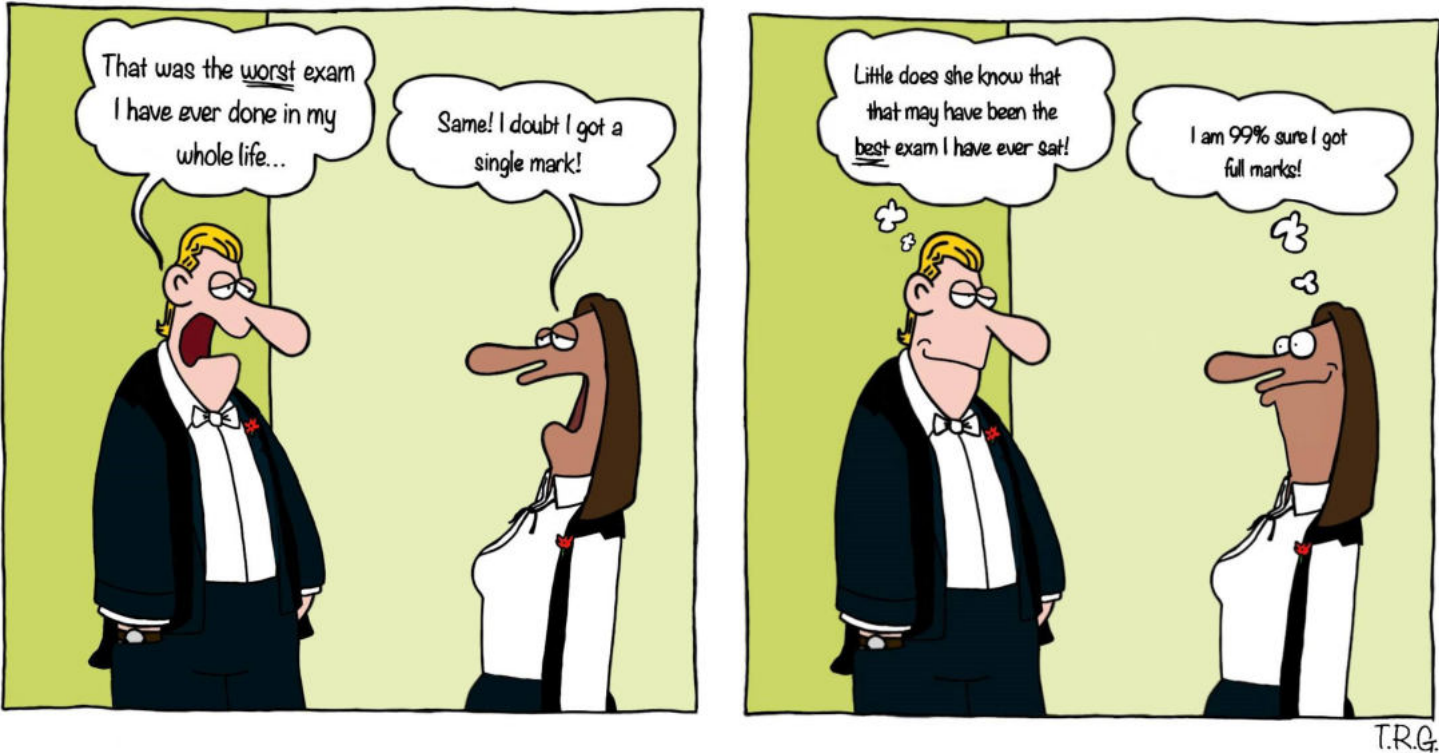


Salut, Paris
Oli Sandall

A weekend in Paris in exchange for a ball? A £500 bidding war for Magdalen Ball? I’m sure Daddy will front it. In all seriousness, can you put a price on fun? Probably, but it doesn’t mean that exploiting the desperation of others wanting to have fun is fair. Saying that, I would probably take the weekend in Paris + face value ticket.



Every Oxford student after an exam:



“That’s not misogyny, babe.”

Violet Aitchison

If I were born four hundred years ago, I’m pretty certain I would have been burnt at the stake for being a witch. Being told to “shhh” and how “scary” I looked by a six foot two, mullet-sporting man on Mayday morning at Magdalen bridge reminded me of this fact. I forgot how “scary” a woman with an opinion could be.

Today we live in a society where the dialect surrounding misogyny has been transformed into something more clandestine. Whilst I cannot literally be condemned to death for possessing the qualities of a witch, I can still be condemned socially for the same reasons. If a woman is confident, passionate, or independent, it’s not uncommon that these traits will be translated by some men into “cocky”, “bossy”, or “overbearing”. Through these covert changes in language, misogyny is able to slip through the cracks.

Four hundred years ago my left thumb might have been tied to my right toe before I was tossed in the moat surrounding the Oxford castle and prison. Had I sunk and drowned, I would have been innocent. Had I floated, I would have been a witch, fished out, and burnt at the stake. Not the best odds. The man on the bridge on Mayday looked like he’d have quite liked to toss me into a body of water, although he probably wouldn’t have gone as far as burning me. The reasons why a woman could be accused of witchcraft four hundred years ago were many and spurious. Watch out if your neighbour’s cow died or a child fell and hurt themselves outside your house or a man had impure thoughts about you. Also watch out if you lived alone, didn’t have children or were outspoken. The man on the bridge identified my ‘witchiness’ on similar

grounds - I was wearing red eyeliner, which apparently made me look “scary”. He repeated this word many times when I called him out.

As I stood on the bridge being berated for being “scary”, I realised just how helpless these women must have felt when on trial. How does one prove they did not curse their neighbours’ milk? How could they show that their cat was not the devil incarnate? How would I respond to the allegations of sinisterness? When someone shouts something at you enough it starts to feel like your reality. After the fifth time, I began to wonder whether I should have spoken up

in the first place, whether I was being unnecessarily provocative. It made me wonder whether, if a man in my town told me that I was a witch enough times, purely because of my stubbornness or because of the mole on my neck, I would believe it. I feel lucky to have been brought up to stand up for myself and for other women around me when faced with similar situations; however, this is

not the case for everyone at Oxford, let alone across the world. I could not help but think of all the women stuck living with men such as the one on Magdalen bridge, who have to take daily jabs at their intelligence, or have to make sacrifices in order to protect men’s fragile egos. Of course, encounters such as these may not seem like such a big deal in the grand scheme of things and, to an extent, they aren’t. Women across the world are still facing extreme persecution not dissimilar to, if not exactly like, actual witch trials. My experience with the casual misogyny on Mayday morning is incomparable. However, it is also important not to become complacent in the face of these types of interactions, as these casual, misogynistic behaviours will and have begun to become commonplace amongst young men. We must stop accepting misogynistic jokes in order to set an example for future generations. What does it say about modern society if men are allowed to start calling women “scary” for speaking up? Is this not

exactly how the witch-hunting craze started in the first place?

Most astonishing was how the man in question began to back his claims with evidence, by pulling up a photograph of a witch on his phone. It was in this moment that I most sympathized with accused “witches” of times past, not least Rachel Clinton, a Salem “witch”. Her accusers professed that she showed “the character of an embittered, meddlesome, demanding woman—perhaps in short, the character of a witch”. I felt as though the picture on the man’s phone was the modern-day equivalent. Fortunately, the absurdity of this man’s actions was enough to settle any anxiety I might have otherwise felt about being too “outspoken”. I told him that, had he just told me that he was misogynistic in the first place, we might have saved ourselves from the ensuing back and forths. At this point, his girlfriend felt it necessary to inform me that “that’s not misogyny, babe”. I found the misogyny pretty blatant in this interaction. A picture of an actual witch had been shown to me. However, it did make me think about all the small ways in which boys and men are able to belittle women without being called out or, in this case, by being defended. Even when I was clear in my mind of my ‘innocence’, I couldn’t convince him his friends. Though we may no longer risk being tied to a cucking stool and dumped into the river Cherwell, we are nevertheless still tested on our ability to conform with standards set by men centuries ago. I did not fit his paradigm because I was not willing to accept his casual misogyny, so he used his physical dominance to shout down at me, I suppose in the hope of my surrender.

I suppose being a witch is a slightly self-fulfilling prophecy, one that I’m fond of myself. But whilst I might be able to laugh at my own ‘witchiness’, we do have to be careful that the road to casual misogyny doesn’t become a slippery slope. Just consider how you might have reacted five years ago, had someone told you that Roe vs Wade would be overturned. Fairy tales, even the most sinister ones, can always turn out to be real.

The Debate Chamber

Ailish and Freddie go head to head, debating whether prelims really matter

Prelims don't count, sure. But they do matter! Trinity term is arguably the best bit of the entire year and it's seriously a right of passage that freshers get that first taste of Oxford summer with a couple pesky exams thrown in. We did it – so can you. The highs are only high because of the lows, right? You wouldn't appreciate the sun as much as you do unless you're spending half the time in a library. Also, this is an opportunity to get in your tutors' good books. Trust me, set the bar at a decent height and you can relax for at least two more terms. Plus, I've heard from STEM students its pretty useful having first year content nailed down, and if you do humanities it will always come in handy. Actually, I think its precisely because they don't count towards your degree that they matter. This is literally the best way to practice exams, without the actual exam result making a difference. It also looks pretty great on your CV for any job, internships or otherwise which you might want to apply for. It's good to keep your options open. Not that its ever the end of the world if it doesn't go how

you wanted – its really all about practice. And sorry but someone has to say it. If you're here, you're probably a bit of a nerd anyway. Don't deny it. Pretty much no one would turn down a scholars gown now would they? No point hiding it. You've got the rest of your degree to stress about real exams, so chill out, but still care. And finally, *in hushed tones* trashing! Which we definitely don't do because its very, very bad. You know for a fact that you've always wanted that quirky little photo in the weird penguin outfit covered in paint, eggs, flour, prosecco, confetti and cream (and probably some disease – filled river water too, for good measure). Of course, don't overdo it (please), but what's there to lose by trying?



Prelims are important, don't get me wrong. But to take revision seriously? You'd have to be mad. As I see it, the benefits of prelims are twofold - exam experience and finishing them. On the first point, I can confidently say that nothing will prepare you more for the final exams of your degree than waiting in the sweltering heat of the tent outside Exam Schools, anxiously squeezing random bits of last minute information out of your peers, and finally quivering on some wooden stool beneath the grandeur that is the Oxford examination hall. This experience is a timeless one, and is certainly not dependent on how much revision you have under your belt. Whether or not you know the names of every Mongol Khan from 1206 to 1771, you will be subjected to the steely, imperious glare of some

eighteenth century benefactor, peering down from some larger-than-life portrait. Whether you have scribbled a hundred practice essays or none, you will spend every other minute wondering why having an bizarrely shaped, felt mortar board beneath your seat is supposed to help your performance. Holding a few extra pens is about the only good reason I've managed to find. Now, onto the next bit. Getting prelims done. Let's be honest. Whether or not Schools has borne witness to a revision-informed masterpiece by your hand, you will undoubtedly feel immense relief when bursting your way out into the open after three hours of hell. Some will be greeted by friends and a crate of Peroni. Others will happily take a shower and collapse in bed. Either way, the sense of liberation will be overwhelming. If you do happen to get yourself trashed, then consider yourself initiated into an age-old - dare we say essential - component of the Oxford University experience. Looking back at your prelims, whether from the end of your degree or some distant place in the future, being covered in flour, shaving foam and baked beans, and cast into one of Britain's filthiest rivers will inevitably shine above any number of revision nights in your memory.

Protesting with Pride

Jui Zaveri

On a grey and characteristically dreary Oxford afternoon, Bonn Square was transformed into a place bursting with colour, light and life. Students and staff from all walks of life came together in order to protest the Union's platforming of the notoriously transphobic philosopher, writer and apparently "gender-critical feminist" Kathleen Stock that evening. The trans rights protest, the counter-protest and the conveniently timed release of Channel 4's controversial documentary *Gender Wars*, starring Stock herself, all coincided on Tuesday 30th May. Since then, national and even international media has been awash with coverage of the events leading up to, during and following this day. Somewhere along the way, the issue has devolved into a discourse on free speech. Stock's supporters rail vehemently against the alleged conspiracy to subdue their trans-exclusionary opinions. For those of us on the other side - dubbed the "woke mob" by the Daily Mail - this has never been about anything more radical than the freedom to exist.

For weeks, tension had been brewing. The Oxford University LGBTQ+ Society first issued a statement criticising the Union for their invitation of Stock. In a statement posted online, the society said it was "dismayed and appalled" by it and urged the historic debating society to rescind their offer. Many JCRs and MCRs followed suit. 44 Oxford dons signed an open letter in her favour. Over 100 signed one against. The media leapt at the scent of a sensationalist story. Billboard Chris - a vocal gender critic- spent a day around the Radcliffe Camera with a provocative sign saying "Children cannot consent to puberty blockers". Even Prime Minister Rishi Sunak weighed in with the warning that "a small but vocal few" should not be allowed to shut down discussion and debate. Everyone had

an opinion.

On the day of the Stock event, the LGBTQ+ Society organised and promoted their own - 'Oxford Trans + Pride'. The day consisted of two panels hosted at Lincoln College titled 'Between Free Speech and Hate Speech' and 'Trans+ Joy Across Generations', followed by a 'mass rally' at Bonn Square, then a march to the Oxford Union in order to stage a peaceful protest outside. During the rally, two-minute speeches from speakers such as Max Van Kleek - an associate professor - were interspersed by a trio of organisers teaching the crowd some chants that would be used during the protest. Our voices were heard: it is reported that the "fracas" was easily heard within the Chamber. The media coverage of the protest has been laughably self-contradictory. Singing and dancing to Whitney Houston's "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" or Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun", waving rainbow flags and wearing flag capes, handing out leaflets and bottles of water, organising welfare spaces in the nearby St. Peter's College and Frewin Annexe is somehow simultaneously the behaviour of violent "militants" and, according to Stock herself, "actual babies". For those of us protesting, the emphasis was very much on the peaceful celebration and amplification of trans voices and joy rather than the hatred and bigotry Stock and her followers thrive on.

Freedom of speech is not synonymous with the right to a platform, just as misinformed ignorance and blatant hate speech are not the same as scientifically proven facts. TERFs like Kathleen Stock will always have a platform in the digital age. This was never about her right to speak, it was about the privilege of speaking at the Union - a prestigious space with weight behind its name. In a world where trans discourse is constantly weaponised, the Oxford Trans+ Pride protest was a joyful though impassioned assertion of our power, our unity and most importantly, our simple right to exist.

The cutback and growth of Britain's urban hedges

Louis Johnson

On a recent visit back home, I was absent-mindedly staring out the window when I saw an astonishing sight: hedges. The leafy suburbs of west London are home to an artefact which has vanished from many of urban Britain's front gardens. The story of this nation's hedges is a story of shifting national attitudes, but there are encouraging signs that we may be seeing the hedge's restoration. They offer a habitat for many species such as hedgehogs, sparrows, wrens and robins, to name a few. Hedges have also been shown to boost air quality and lessen the impact of flooding, both benefits in an age of increasingly extreme weather patterns.

Urban hedges began to appear en masse in the Victorian period and the early 20th century. However, the surge in popularity in paved-over gardens has not been kind to the hedge. Many front gardens have been turned into driveways, while back gardens are being uprooted in favour of "sterile patio space". Both trends bode poorly for the hedge, and more widely, the vitally important green spaces that prevent Britain's cities from becoming ecological wastelands. Indeed, the growing prevalence of paved surfaces in areas such as floodplains have worsened the extent of flooding, and causes warmer local temperatures because of heat-absorbing concrete. There has also been a steep but predictable decline in many hedge dwelling animals, sparrows having lost their nesting sites. The destruction of the urban hedge is a likely culprit for the loss of these animals.

The hedge's fall represents a growing detachment from our roots (pun intended). According to the social historian, Dr Joe Moran, front gardens have been linked to community spirit, as each family makesure that theirs looked nice for the neighbours. As Britain's sense of community has eroded, so has the front garden's importance. In particular, Thatcher's right-to-buy policy also led to the loss of front gardens, as once

council-mandated upkeep was replaced by formless expanses of concrete.

Gardens are a tiny slice of the wonder of nature in our dense and grey cities. They are a living link with the insects that pollinate our crops, the trees that give us air. They are a connection to the vibrant past when our ancestors across the world lived off of the land, and a communal space for neighbours to talk. Nature is humanity's common heritage, and the fall of the urban hedge is a metaphor for what our individualistic world has lost.

However, an unlikely coalition of gardeners, conservationists and ecological activists may be coming to the hedge's aid. Climate group Extinction Rebellion's call to end the "crazy paving" being installed in Britain's cities has been echoed by the Royal Horticultural Society, which has praised the hedge's role in tackling the climate crisis. More widely, the British government has laid out plans to re-introduce nature to Britain's urban areas, as the detrimental effects of a lack of green spaces on the environment and on physical and mental health have become known.

The humble hedge has faced heavy trimming, but there is still life for this wonderfully quaint and essential part of the nation's cities. As we become increasingly aware of the dire reality of climate change, we must regain our respect for nature. The only way for humanity to survive the intersecting ecological crises of our age is to become a steward of this Earth rather than its imperious master. In our own very small but vital way, this begins at home.

We need urgent planning reform to incentivise hedges as part of a return to the green gardens of old. Of course, for this to be successful, it must be accompanied by a culture shift away from cars in cities. But bringing back this fading feature of Britain's front gardens is both a concrete move in fighting the environmental crisis and a symbolic one, recognising our commitment to the natural world which sustains humanity and embracing this quietly ancient British tradition.

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



Playfully serious protest since 1781.

John Evelyn

There's something in the air in Frewin Court. Not just the scent of coffee from hundreds of vote-securing meetings. No, dear reader, the scent of friendship wafts in the halls of the Union. And it's not just from the rain seeping through the roof. Indeed, everyone wants to be everyone's friend this week. Does anyone else notice that they're extremely popular at the end of 7th week?

Regina George will be glad that Macaulay Culkin's Doppelganger's watch was twenty seven seconds late, meaning Battle of the Blondes Pt. 2 failed to materialise and she has been left uncontested in her bid for the presidency. Some of her Officer candidates do not have the same luxury, however, with the Flying Scotsman and 70s Pimp going head to head despite rumours the Pimp was chickening out. Whoever can make the biggest #IMPACT on the voters, or get the #BACKing of the Members, we'll find out on Saturday. Miss Congeniality, however, won't have to worry about that, and SBS in Spirit also appears to be home safe. Unless some bloke called RON gets any traction...

Jersey RO can thankfully put a mostly stress-free scrutiny behind him, despite the appearance of a certain dubious SPC fresher. Another exception is a certain political society's President (?), whose manifesto was hotly debated by the team of pedants. The Union would certainly know a thing or two about bickering over presidencies. Despite anonymous efforts, the claim stood, in a Union first wherein the impulse was not to immediately remove a President. Nonetheless, it seems that the goal of *Kiwi accent* 'five minute sec-cies' was finally realised.

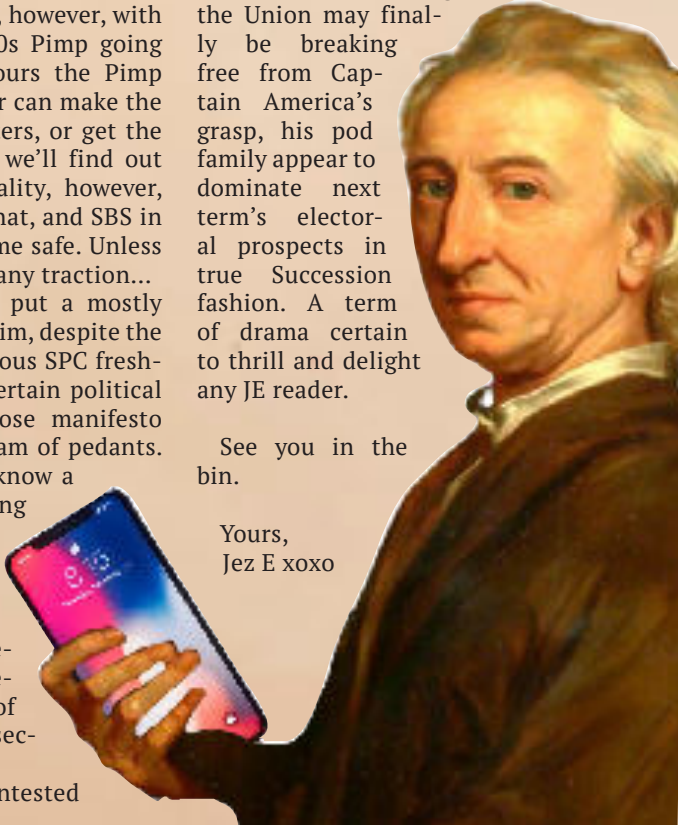
This term's most hotly contested

election also doesn't seem to be letting up. With nominations open and Ginny Weasley turning up the hacking a notch, who knows what will come of their efforts? This JE could naturally never comment on internal elections, though he doubts anyone will be able to match the sheer chaos invoked by Pint-Sized Thatcher throughout her reign. It's her last term...right?!?!?!?

Despite the drama, it looks like Limp Dick might have a calm end to his presidency. As he and the Rose of St Anne prepare for retirement, the shortest Officer team on record will be preparing to see if they can reach high enough to sit on the thrones. And though the Union may finally be breaking free from Captain America's grasp, his pod family appear to dominate next term's electoral prospects in true Succession fashion. A term of drama certain to thrill and delight any JE reader.

See you in the bin.

Yours,
Jez E xoxo



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Masthead

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She does it all

Puzzles
Su-dope-u / Turtully good at puzzles

Creative Team
Sean "Heinz Beans" Hartnett



For me, this is an end-of-an-era leader. For almost two years, I've based my personality around being a 'student journalist', whatever connotations that might bring. In MT23, I'll have to surrender that part of myself to history (both metaphorically and literally). Despite all the effort that student journos put into making you think of their names when you think of Oxford news, the concept of papers like Cherwell, OxStu, and the Blue as student organisations often gets lost on people. They're generally represented as amorphous, amateur, and agenda-driven media machines which sometimes spit out a clickbaity graphic about a celebrity coming to Oxford but more often churn out articles about Oxford's cycle lanes or vaguely-cancellable made-up rankings. As much as I wish *Cherwell* could claim the same enduringness of journalistic voice and editorial direction as the FT or the Guardian, this can obviously never be the case. *Cherwell* changes termly, in line with the ambitions of its new EiCs and the incredible graft of its team. Without the willingness of dozens of students to set their degrees aside and write our content, the paper would simply stop existing. As Trinity draws to a close, I want to thank these incredible people for everything they've contributed: not only have they made this term's paper a joy to put my name to, but they've shaped the paper's identity, from its aesthetics to its voice. I hope that many of them choose to stay on for another term, whether as editors or as writers.

I am sad to be going but thrilled to be leaving *Cherwell* in the hands of Suzanne and Thomas, who will certainly make next term the best one yet. I hope to see them continue our long legacy of upsetting hacks, sparking scandal, and taking student journalism far too seriously.



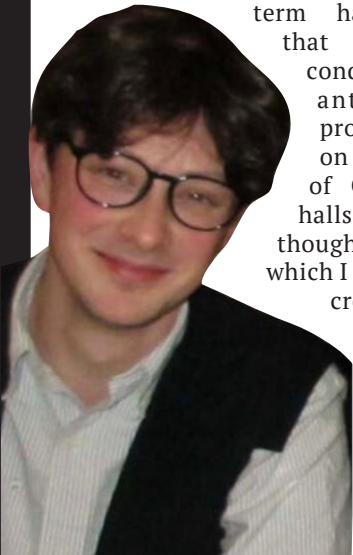
Meg Lintern
Editor-in-Chief

Izzie Alexandrou
Editor-in-Chief

THANK @ YOU

for reading and contributing to *Cherwell* this term.

Thomas Bristow
Deputy Editor



One of my tutors last term had the idea that you could conduct an entire anthropological project based on the custom of Oxford formal halls. It's a funny thought, but one which I think has some credit. I don't know enough to attempt that here, but the custom of formal halls really is a strange

one to consider. Some colleges have them every day, some a few times a week and some once a week or rarely at all. Each college also varies in its customs, sometimes greatly. At my own college (Brasenose), most people will wear something vaguely smart, but so long as you're wearing a gown it's fine. I'll shamefully admit I've gone wearing trackies before, though it was during my short-lived rowing career. Other colleges, however, would expect no less than a suit and tie. The variation in food is also interesting, with stories of spaghetti at Christ Church and of course the infamous (and almost definitely false) beans on toast at Keble. At Brasenose, the food is usually pretty good, especially for the price, which leads me onto another point. I've heard of

I'm still discovering my relationship with "loss". I didn't mourn leaving college after finishing A-levels since I spent the majority of time at home due to lockdown, and I didn't miss home when I came to university since the short terms mean I'm there just as much as I am here. But now that my second year is coming to an end, I'm starting to feel an increasing sense of loss, and that time is running away from me. This time last year, I thought my time at *Cherwell*, and in Oxford, was infinite, but saying goodbye to *Cherwell* feels like the beginning of the end - when I come back next term all I'll be is a silly finalist, and that is terrifying. The end of my term as Editor brings up a lot of feelings: comfort in knowing I won't need to neglect my degree anymore, relief that we don't have to deal with Twitter and Oxfess slander, but most prominently, I feel sad, and like I'm passing on the baton with a full, yet heavy heart. I also can't help but feeling slightly territorial, as I watch the new Editors-in-Chief discussing their Michaelmas plans - I miss the buzz and excitement of planning a newspaper, and I'm almost jealous that it's not my job anymore. I owe so much gratitude to Isaac, Pieter and Charlie, who got me hooked, working on the *Cherwell* News Machine at the beginning of last year, and I'm incredibly grateful for everyone who I've worked with along the way. But, I'm most grateful for Meg - you've made the 12 hour Choffice shifts absolutely fly by, and our joint delusion during lay ins has been the highlight of my term. I couldn't have asked for a better co-Editor of an "influential arm of the Oxford establishment" than you. And, despite desperately missing *Cherwell*, I am so excited to see what Suzanne and Thomas do with the paper - I wish them them the best of luck, and hope they enjoy their term as much as I've enjoyed mine.

formals costing as little as £4 and as much as £20 depending on the college, and the Oxford Formal Ticket Marketplace is rife with sellers and people begging for a seemingly mythical All Souls formal. The hierarchy of the college is make clear for all to see. One must stand as high table file in with their flowing gowns, before they sit to eat better food and drink better wine. Even amongst us students there are those with scholar's gowns and those without, something which is constant subject of debate. It is a weird occasion, but one which is undeniably a key part of the 'Oxford' experience.

“Strapping on a kilt is symbolic of stepping outside your comfort zone”: In conversation with Liberation Kilt Company President, Giles Jackson

Discussing resistance through art and culture with the tartan-clad global resistance movement, Liberation Kilt Co.

A sponsored article by the Profiles Team

Liberation Kilt Company is a non-violent global resistance movement whose mission is “to fight 21st-century injustices with the soft power of culture”. Founded by Loftus McLeod of Skye, an 18th-century freedom fighter, Liberation Kilt Co. has designed a range of tartans promoting social causes, which have inspired hundreds of art, fashion and design students around the world. The Company has just launched an exciting collection of artworks confronting the two existential crises of our time--the war in Ukraine and climate change--and its first retail store is on the drawing board. Liberation Kilt Co is a registered Benefit Corporation and donates 50 per cent of its profits to charities aligned with its mission.

Cherwell talked to Giles about art, culture, and the kilt, and their role as tools for resistance in a troubled world.

Tell us about your tartan collection

“Tartan textiles have served as a badge of identity since the Bronze Age, when nomadic Celts wandered as far as the Tarim Basin in Northwest China. Inspired by tartan’s long and glorious heritage as a badge of identity, we struck upon the idea of designing a collection of contemporary tartans symbolising the hopes and fears of global social movements fighting against the illiberal tide. We have registered six tartans, with more in development, including a tartan against structural racism, a collaboration with a South African NGO.

Keeling tartan: Named in honour of the late Charles Keeling, the eminent climate scientist, this tartan symbolises the shift from fossil fuels to clean energy and was adopted by the World Wildlife Fund for COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland.

Blueheart tartan: Named in honour of the United Nations’ Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking, this tartan symbolises the collective heartbeat of victims of human trafficking.

Havel tartan: Named in honour of the late Vaclav Havel, the dissident playwright and celebrated essayist, this tartan protests the imprisonment of writers of conscience around the world, and was made possible by PEN International, the literary society.

Yamaguchi tartan: Named in honour of the late Tsutomu Yamaguchi, who survived the nuclear

attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this tartan transforms the nuclear hazard sign into a radiant symbol of hope for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Liberty Square tartan: Named in honour of the Occupy movement, this tartan symbolises the golden rule of shareholder capitalism: those with the gold make the rules.

Tahrir tartan: Named in honour of the Arab Spring protestors, whose spirit lives on from China to Iran, this tartan protests authoritarian rule everywhere.

Tell us about the Rebel Tartan Project and what you hope to achieve.

Having registered the tartans, we began to forge relationships with Scottish mills. I stumbled across an article in the Financial Times about the work of Julianna Sissons, then Fashion Designer-in-Residence at the V&A Museum, who lectures on fashion and design and now serves

as external examiner at Central St. Martins. We met for tea at the V&A, when she saw in the tartans a means to fire the creativity of her students. So began the Rebel Tartan Project (rebeltartanproject.org), an international collaboration of art, textile and fashion programmes confronting global issues in highly creative ways. Participating institutions include Glasgow School of Art, Nottingham Trent University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Wimbledon College, Norwich University, Brighton University, L’Institut Supérieur des Arts Appliqués in Paris, Bunka Fashion College in Tokyo, Donghua

and Wuhan universities in China, and India’s Pearl Academy. We have also collaborated with progressive industry groups, including the Ethical Fashion Forum (now Common Objective).

When will the tartans be available to the public?

We have an exciting range of tartan products in the works, including kilts, scarves, blankets, and throws. We’ve been developing and testing prototype products with various Scottish partners, including Glenisla Kilts Ltd, official supplier of kilts to the Scottish regiments, whose commercial clients include Prada, Vivienne Westwood, and Burberry.

How much has Scottish and Gaelic culture influenced the mission of Liberation Kilt?

Tha buaidh bhunaiteach air a bhith aig cultar na Gàidhlig agus na h-Alba air amas amas Companaidh Fhèilidhean an t-Saoiraidh! (Translation: Scottish and Gaelic culture has had a profound influence the mission of the Liberation Kilt Company!) Indeed, a kilt is to blame for this entire project. If I had not worn mine to a street protest against fossil fuels back in 2009, I would never have been approached by the wild Scotsman who grabbed me by the arm and said, “Aye, that’s

“**Over the centuries, tartan has proven an effective tool for unifying people around a shared set of ideals**”

what this movement needs—its own clan tartan!” This serendipitous encounter inspired the Keeling climate change tartan.

My grandfather was born in Edinburgh and served in the London Scottish Regiment, so I’ve long been fascinated by Gaelic culture, which gave people such a

strong sense of shared identity and belonging. Parliament understood very well the soft power of culture. The Dress Act of 1746, which banned the wearing of tartans and Highland dress by all except government troops, was instrumental in stamping out dissident elements. Since then, tartan has been adopted by various

establishment and anti-establishment causes as an official (or unofficial) badge of identity. One positive outcome is tartan’s tremendous versatility. Tartan works as well with leathers and Doc Martens as it does with wing-collared shirt, jabot, and cuffs. The creative possibilities seem endless.

How can tartan nurture a sense of solidarity in social movements?

Wael Ghonim, the activist whose protest helped spark the Arab Spring, said “the power of the people is greater than the people in power.” While true in principle, social movements are often beset with fractures and divisions which undermine their momentum, significance, and reach. Reasons include disagreements over core principles, tactics, or desired outcomes, internal power struggles, external repression, resource limitations, and the lack of a unified front. Over the centuries, tartan has proven an effective tool for unifying people around a shared set of ideals. We’re using tartan in a new way, to literally weave the issues into the fabric of everyday life, making them more palpable, and hopefully, easier to talk about.

One unfortunate consequence of the culture wars is that people are fearful of leaving their comfort zone and discussing issues with people with whom they may disagree. The “echo chamber” shields us from alternative viewpoints, diverse opinions, or critical analysis, reinforces existing biases, and inhibits meaningful dialogue and understanding. Social media has only made things worse, not only due to rampant misinformation, but also, “opportunity cost”: the more time we spend on social



media, the less time we spend interacting face-to-face. One of the great insights of Rutger Bregman's book, 'Humankind: A Hopeful History', is that fear, prejudice, and hatred stem from a lack of contact with strangers. There's no substitute for face-to-face interaction, which builds understanding, trust, and mutual acts of kindness. When short of inspiration, I just have to imagine two strangers connecting and going on to do great things together, only because they happened to be wearing the same tartan. "Only connect!"

How does the kilt represent freedom for you?

Strapping on a kilt is symbolic of stepping outside your comfort zone. It signifies a willingness to take risks, embrace new experiences, and defy convention, which is at once exciting, liberating, and empowering. As Eric Musgrave put it, "the kilt appears to endow the wearer with superpowers—or at least super belief in himself." I've also found that wearing a kilt has a positive, disarming effect on others. Decoding the tartan from which the kilt is made adds another layer of interest and depth to the conversation, since every one of our patterns holds a special meaning.

Do you wear a kilt yourself?

I wear various prototypes we have made. I wore a kilt to COP26 and mistakenly assumed that countless others would be wearing kilts too. I was repeatedly stopped in the street by people needing directions, and never failed to disappoint them.

What would you say is the biggest threat to humanity at the moment?

James Cameron, the film director, hit the nail on the head when he said that the human condition is to stand on a razor's edge between the demons of greed and aggression and the angels of our better nature. He divides the world into "takers" and "caretakers." Both are capable of love and empathy, but these are manifested in entirely different ways. From the taker's perspective, civilisation is a fragile veneer that will crack at the slightest provocation. Law and order are the only thing protecting us from the savagery of our neighbours. Love and empathy extend only as far as one's kin and close friends. From the caretaker's perspective, on the other hand, love

and empathy encompass the whole of humanity and the entire planet we call home. Humans are not a breed apart, but an



inseparable part of nature.

The optimist in me thinks the takers are losing their grip—as examples, witness the assault on good old-fashioned shareholder capitalism, and the success of Avatar—the highest-grossing film of all time. But the pessimist in me thinks we're not moving fast enough. I worry that crossing the 1.5 C threshold will trigger a doom loop in which multiple crises feed off one another, setting the stage for an AI takeover. The 1 percent may think they can isolate themselves from the worst, but as Cameron points out, the two wealthiest Americans perished on the Titanic. We have nothing to lose by running a few crazy experiments.

What does the phrase 'the soft power of culture' mean to you?

Simon Schama wrote an inspiring essay, published in the Financial Times, called "Art versus the tyrants," in which he observed that the old battles against illiberalism were never decisively won. "They need to be refought", he says, "and with the help of the unlikely weapons that

once opened eyes and changed minds: the soft power of culture — poetically charged words, images, music, all of which can, in some circumstances, exert a force beyond the workaday stuff of politics." If anything's going to get us out of this mess, it's going to be the creative intelligence of real human beings working together, not some optimised algorithm.

What role do you see fashion/art more generally playing in political and social movements?

William MacAskill has said that we're living through the global equivalent of the Hundred Schools of Thought—a vibrant era of philosophical and cultural experimentation in ancient China. The moral views that shape society are like molten glass that can be blown into many different shapes. Whether the glass sets into a sculpture that is beautiful and crystalline or mangled and misshapen is largely up to us. It's important that we avoid premature "value lock-in," by keeping our options open as much as possible and encouraging cultural and political experimentation.

I think that fashion and art are vital to this process. However, both seem to be moving in the wrong direction. According to Artnet, just 25 artists are responsible for almost half of all post-war and contemporary art auction sales. Beyond their demographic similarities, most of these artists have a recognizable style, because it's important to buyers that their peers recognise the works they own. This is hardly a recipe for experimentation! The same thing is happening in the world of fashion, where the existing giants grow ever bigger, more powerful, and more corporate. The consumer, meanwhile, has no clue that many of their favourite brands, from Tiffany to Christian Dior, Givenchy to Stella McCartney, are all owned by the same entity. So, as they shop, they're unknowingly fuelling the problem of concentrated power. It's high time we changed the rules of the game. The Open Markets Institute, an anti-monopoly think-tank, argues that no country or company should make up more than 25 percent of the market. Given the influence of vested interests in politics, the "rule of four" seems like a pipe dream. But what if we were to abolish representative democracy and go direct? We have the technology. We should devote more time debating such issues (ideally, with the combatants in kilts).

What gave you the idea of merging fashion and political change?

All credit goes to the Scotsman I met at a street demonstration all those years ago. He inspired not only the tartan collection, but also

the legend of Loftus McLeod, a relatable symbol of resistance against oppressive forces and unequal power structures. In a world of Goliaths, we all need a David to identify with, as well as to keep our spirits up. "Life is too absurdly capricious to be confronted with high seriousness," as Peter Aspden said.

Who are your major influences?

Adam Smith, economist and philosopher. This year marks the 300th anniversary of his birth. In his 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' (1759), Smith reflects on our capacity for sympathy, the ability to imagine ourselves in another person's shoes, as well the problem of extending its reach when there is "no sort of connection." Enter the tartans.

Rutger Bregman, historian. I'm inspired by his account of the real-life Lord of the Flies, which is radically different from William Golding's benighted version. As Bregman points out, stories are not just stories. They shape behaviour more profoundly than we realise.

William MacAskill, moral philosopher. Future people count, and what's more, they'll outnumber us by orders of magnitude. His Significance--Persistence-Contingency framework is a useful tool for deciding where to invest one's time and energy.

Michael Jackson, anthropologist. "Every life crisis involves, in some sense, a crisis of agency," he says.

Agency involves more than an individual subject; it occurs within fields of interaction.

Reach out if you have project ideas or would like to get involved. giles@liberationkilt.com

Image captions:

Page 14: Giles Jackson

Page 15, clockwise from top right:

Lianne La Havas wearing Liberation Kilt (credit Mark Pickthall)

QR code with more information about Liberation Kilt

Eliud Kipchoge wearing Keeling Tartan Scarf

Artwork from the Climate Kunst Collection



SCAN ME

My cake resembling the recipe. A summer lager. Netflix and chill. Getting a seat on a busy train. The taste of strawberry milk.

Getting invited. Hugged. Listened to. Just feeling like I'm on it.

Dad calling me just to say 'hi'. A good bargain. A gin and tonic.

The keys to my first real flat. The feeling of being grown-up.

A concert where I know every song. Turning twenty. Twenty-one.

Realising I am more than my thoughts. When my German visa arrived. Playing a show my friends all saw.

I'm happy to be alive.

A hardback with 50% discount. My laptop fully charged. Remembering to take the Pill. The sound of my own heart.

I wish I could tell my younger self. You'll work out all this stuff.

You're going to be happy in this life. Not always. But often enough.



What makes me happy

by Ursy Reynolds

Image via Rawpixel (CC0 1.0)

Fashion

The shift towards online thrift: a guide

Shaan Sidhu

Once upon a time, my mother used to vehemently admonish against wearing “other people’s tat”. However, after many an intense discussion, I seem to have persuaded her of the benefits of shopping for second-hand clothes and accessories. Often, we buy pieces from the same high-street label, except my Karen Millen tends to be a decade older than hers. Although it is still not enough for my mother to convert to the thrifting shift, she is constantly reminded, partly by her experience, partly by my own tastes, that the quality of new clothes has gone downhill.

So far, I have emphasised the importance of quality and have made no mention of cost, even though the latter is what motivates many to shop second-hand or vintage. However, finding older pieces that last longer is an equally exciting prospect. A steal is a steal, so I shall provide expertise about where and how to acquire one online.

Depop

Founded in the UK in 2011 and now perhaps the most globally accessible app or website for buying and selling second-hand pieces, Depop is the one that comes to mind when one thinks about buying ‘vintage, streetwear, one-of-a-kind, Y2K’ for the first time. Though I have found and bought some

of my favourite staples from here, I recently decided to limit the types of garment I purchase from Depop given how much the prices have inflated since I joined.

If your reason for thrifting involves no financial compromise, then Depop’s plethora of independent vintage sellers will certainly appeal to you. Lots of people set up shops and businesses with a curated aesthetic and a consistent style of stock. Since these sorts of accounts are aiming to make a significant profit rather than selling old unused wares, the prices are ultimately going to parallel those on the high street. However, you can occasionally appreciate that the higher cost reflects not just the quality of the piece, but the effort put into garment

sourcing in the case of more established sellers.

That said, if you hunt closely and ‘like’ or ‘save’ all the pieces you at least like the look of (despite the price), you can develop a curated ‘Suggested for You’ page, which might help you get closer to finding more pieces you like. I reserve Depop personally for pieces for formals and balls, and general style inspiration.

Vinted

As soon as you open the app, Vinted presents you with a curated newsfeed that considers not only your preferences for sizes and brands, but also takes into account the descriptions of your commonly favoured or searched items. This algorithm thus

makes Vinted one of the easier websites to navigate through and find new wardrobe pieces. Though there are signs of inflation here and there, I find the prices to be generally more reasonable than on Depop, to the point that Vinted is my go-to app for hunting for new clothes and styles.

There are fewer people trying to make big buck from selling their clothes and more who want to simply clear out their wardrobes. The app also encourages buyers and sellers alike to send in offers, and this insistence on price negotiation can really impact how much money you save depending on whether the seller approves it.

The only drawback is the additional fixed buyer protection fee that goes on after the item and shipping prices. As the name suggests, it is a regulation in place to help you in case of damages, losses, or scams, and it only amounts to about a pound more, but is certainly off-putting when your total sky-rockets from £3 to £6.85. Other than that, I could not recommend Vinted more.

It is okay to deliberately buy fast-fashion second-hand since it is already in circulation and will not constitute to financially supporting unethical practices. Honestly, the longer it avoids landfill the better.

Read full article on cherwell.org.

Image credit: jcomp on Freepik.



An artistic process: rediscovering the family love for garment making

Lucy Derrick

On the 8th of August 1992, my mother walked down the aisle in a beautiful white silk dress. It was made in its entirety by my paternal grandmother. She was a mother of seven in the north-east of England, with no formal sewing training, no money to waste on fabrics, and no time to waste on mistakes. Nonetheless, in the months before the wedding, my grandmother, a master seamstress, painstakingly crafted and perfected one of the most important dresses my mother would ever wear. Growing up I thought she was a magician, forming clothes from thin air. I always aspired to one day have that same ability, thinking up all the different things I could make. It is only recently, after my first attempts at sewing, that I have truly come to appreciate the skill and intelligence that went behind her craft.

When I was around fifteen years old, in one of my philosophy and ethics classes, my teacher made us watch a documentary titled 'The True Cost'. I had not quite realised the impact the fashion industry had on the environment, and for the first time I became properly aware of the term 'fast

fashion'. Exploring sustainable avenues became a priority. I became a keen frequenter of charity shops and resale sites, initially seeing them as the best way of practising slow fashion. No matter how many clothes I bought there, I saw it as helping the environment. Over time however, I found myself questioning more and more the origins of the clothes I was buying, even from charity shops. I found they did not last very long, did not always fit right, or were not exactly what I wanted. I believe this to be an unavoidable fact of mass-produced clothing. When something is made to fit people in divisions such as size eight, size fourteen or size twenty-four, individually distinct shapes and measurements are not properly accounted for.

When making your own clothes, things can be individually tailored to yourself, often being of higher quality and longevity. Not only were these therefore better clothes I would wear for longer, they would consequently also be sustainable garments. I was desperate to learn to sew. I couldn't escape the feeling, however, that my grandmother's years of expertise had died with her.

Luckily for me, my grandmother made sure to pass on her knowledge and

expertise to my Auntie Sheila.

From a young age Sheila learned the trade first-hand. I was ecstatic that she was willing to teach me these same skills, with the time I spent learning with her becoming core memories of mine. I would go to her house, and little by little she would begin training me in the different techniques required. Not only did I revel in learning a new skill, I enjoyed being closer with my family, as I felt that I was also learning more about my grandmother, and the kind of life she lived.

Soon came the time when I would start doing projects of my own, following on from my auntie's constant crafting of a new dress, shirt, or skirt. I told her what I was thinking of making, and she delved into her extensive back catalogue of patterns and books. She found me a pattern for a three-tiered, ruffled maxi skirt – something that with the right adjustments, would be perfect.

In all honesty, it took me far longer than I anticipated. Far longer. The complexity of my first try at a large garment, alongside the fact that I had to be at university most of the year, meant that the project was often pushed to

the side. I very much underestimated the difficulty of skirt-making.

Each section often required mastery of a totally different skill, let alone the various equipment required for proper craftsmanship.

The ruffling was the hardest part, with me often stitching layers together wrong. My perfectionism often meant that I would have to start again. I would get frustrated, and not want to finish, but with the support and guidance of my aunt, I persisted.

The summer after it was supposed to be finished, I finally had my skirt. It fit perfectly around my waist and was just the right length.

My friends joke that I never fail to mention I made the skirt I'm wearing, but it's hard not to feel a sense of pride and achievement, especially with something that took so much out of me to make. I feel like it is a garment I truly enjoy wearing, and hopefully (with the odd touch up here and there) I will still be wearing in the distant future.

Throughout the process, I could not forget those who used to have to make their own clothes out of necessity, in comparison with me, who is lucky enough to only have it as my hobby. I thought often of my grandmother, and how I feel that her past practices, such as the recycling of fabrics and the longevity of clothes, are still teaching me about sustainable fashion today.



Art

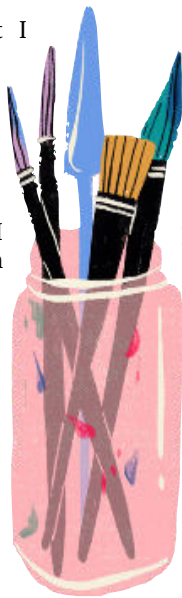
Notes from the arts editor: a candid reflection

Kelsey Moriarty

Rembrandt's *Isaac and Rebecca*. A beautiful painting by all accounts. Soft, dignified, introspective. In the centuries it's taken the paint to dry, it has amassed a horde of admirers – Vincent van Gogh among them. He wrote that he'd be happy to give up ten years of his life to sit in front of the painting for two weeks, with nothing but a crust of bread, admiring the details. It's utterly ridiculous! They lived lifetimes apart! But that's art, I suppose – the power it has transcends borders and all of our mortal trappings.

It's a constancy that has inspired me throughout my life. You may be interested to know that *Cherwell* didn't actually have an arts section until this term. I wasn't

involved in the paper then, but I imagine arts was sort of strewn across the other subsections of the culture section. To be the person who brings it out as an individual section, to let it shine in its own right, has been such an exciting privilege. I feel now that I understand more the ways in which art's constant power affects other people and the way they interact with it. Having received so many articles, it has been such a great experience to read through them all and see how art fits into their lives and their understanding of the world. Reading through first drafts, there is a palpable sense of being 'let in' – someone has trusted you with their thoughts



and their writing. At a panel I went to this term, featuring Lyse Doucet and Krishnan Guru-Murthy, they both described getting 'the bug'. Colloquialisms aside, it gets to the core of what makes student journalism so wonderful – it feels like being on the precipice, getting the chance to see the next great writer or piece in the early stages. As the arts section is such a new one, I have been constantly reminded of this.

Aside from anything, it's been a break. Art is a therapeutic endeavour at the best of times, and with the stresses of Oxford by now so familiar, editing the section has been a such welcome breather. Creative outlets are so important, and in editing the arts section I've become acquainted

with my own creative outlet, as well as those of others. It's certainly not as fast-paced as news, but there is comfort to be found in this. The constancy of art, and people who write about it, is reassuring. Sitting in bed with a cup of tea and someone's first draft open, or flicking through the print edition after its completion, there's an odd sense of vindication – art is not going anywhere. Art produces art in a way that is cyclical, and can meander on at its own pace for years and years. It is in many ways a self-sustaining process, but it always needs people. I have been very lucky in that regard this term.

I suppose the overall message here is if you've ever thought of editing or writing something, get it out. The strange and elusive nature of art means it may very well outlive you.

Kesha’s ‘Gag Order’: a review

Marlon Austin

“All the doctors and lawyers cut the tongue outta my mouth,” Kesha says. Her once-playful talk-singing now sounds raw and vulnerable over the trembling piano chords of *Fine Line*. The song is calmly venomous in its disdain for those who have wronged her, and is loaded with references to her almost decade-long ongoing legal battle against former producer and label head Lukasz Gottwald on her aptly-named album *Gag Order*. Although it is the final release under the record label of her alleged abuser, the album is all Kesha, a meticulously crafted and finely tuned testament to her prowess as a songwriter. With her claims of sexual assault and emotional abuse dismissed back in 2016, and a counter-suit for defamation approaching trial in July 2023, *Gag Order* eschews the optimism and hope of *Rainbow* and *High Road* for the cynicism of someone forced to fight against her will. “There’s so many things I said that I wish I left unsaid,” the embattled star sings on the final song *Happy*, “I’ve gotten used to the fall.”

Other songs are even more deeply personal, describing her difficult journey in grappling with trauma. “You don’t wanna be changed like it changed me” is ominously repeated amidst the grip of claustrophobic synthesisers in *Eat the Acid*. This is purportedly a warning given to her about the dangers of LSD, but it takes on a new meaning in the context of Kesha’s story. The music video shows her face

trapped amongst a cacophony of probing hands. This parallels with the uncomfortable album art that shows her imprisoned within a plastic bag, an embodiment of the suffocating loss of control echoed throughout the desolate landscape of the songs within.

“The bitch I was, she dead, her grave desecrated,” she declares over a cash-register beat on album highlight *Only Love Can Save Us Now*, before transitioning into the gospel-infused chorus. The death is musical as well as lyrical: frenetic synthesisers and drum machines are swapped for spoken interludes from spiritual leaders. Produced by the inimitable Rick Rubin of Johnny Cash, Beastie Boys and The Strokes fame, the album is a sonic departure for anyone with even a passing knowledge of her discography. Though the dollar sign in her name has been gone since 2014 and the irresistible auto-tuned hooks have been sparse since *Warrior*, *Gag Order* is still a remarkable turn into the world of alternative pop.

Synthesisers crouch in the shadows instead of forcing songs forward and acoustic instruments fill the space between them; the piano line in *Too Far Gone* is reminis-

cent of Halsey’s Nine Inch Nails-produced *If I Can’t Have Love I Want Power*. The real star of the album, however, is Kesha’s voice, the oft-doubted star showing once and for all that she truly needs no auto-tune to shine (though how anyone could doubt her after the high note in *Praying*, I have no idea.)

Kesha is something of an anomaly in that despite writing some of the greatest pop songs of the 2010s, she has never been looked upon as a great songwriter. Her lyrical sarcasm was mistaken for sincerity and *Praying* was the first time many truly listened to what she was saying. Her previous songs, despite their lighter subject matter, were in no way worse for using synthesisers over Steinways. Regardless of your feelings on her “vapid” party anthems or their authenticity, the quality of *Gag Order* is enough to prove any doubters wrong.

We all know the iconic opening line of TiK ToK, with Kesha’s knack for brilliantly memorable one-liners and songwriting one of the only constants across her discography. The pre-choruses of *C’Mon* and *Crazy Kids* are pop perfection, as is the desperately lonely autotune (along with the endlessly fun pun) in *c u next tuesday*. “I’m gettin’ sued because my mom has been tweetin’ / don’t fucking tell me I’m dealing with reason” she screams - her lyricism made all the more powerful by the struggles she has publicly endured for so long.

Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Books

Bill Lewis’ infatuation with the everyday

Freya Ebeling

*Railway tracks
Bursting from their
Ribs, revealing a lack
Of heart in their art.*

These are the words of Bill Lewis, a founder of the ‘Stuckist’ movement and a member of the Medway Poet Society. In his poem ‘The Futurists’, he laments the soullessness of postmodern art, echoing the remodernist ‘Stuckist’ manifesto of his fellow radicals. This manifesto demands that art helps us to “know ourselves and thereby our true relationship with others and our connection to the divine”. Lewis’ work does exactly this.

Bill Lewis, born in 1953, is a Kentish poet and painter. He imbues the quotidian with meaning in a way that helps us to fully see and know ourselves. There is something mythological in the most prosaic of his verse, but beyond this fascination with the transcendent lies an intense infatuation with the human.

I encountered Bill’s collection *The House of Ladders* (2012) when I happened upon his exhibition in Rochester. Here, he displayed his art and spoke about his poetry. I recall reading ‘The Sun Is A Yellow Dog Holding A

Blue Bone In Its Mouth’, a poem recounting the challenge of writing a haiku about my hometown, Medway. Initially, I was bewildered: why on earth would somebody write a poem about Medway? But Bill managed to imbue my hometown with a poeticness that my familiarity with it had obscured: he transformed Medway into art.

I was privileged to interview Bill, where he told me that he “look[s] for poetry in poems but often [doesn’t] find it.” In his own art, though, he finds poetry both in the poetry and the world he inhabits.

Bill spoke about what he called the “cul-de-sac that is Postmodernism”. He asked “how can something be Postmodernist when Modernism isn’t over?” For Bill, Postmodernism consisted of “sterile installations need[ing] lengthy explanations... [of] why they are art”. Remodernists aim to re-establish the meaning that Postmodernism lacks in their works, aiming to make art art again.

Despite growing up in Kent, Bill’s art contains influences from Magical Realism to Marc Chagall. I asked him how Magical Realism informs his work. He replied, “perhaps a better question might be how does it inform my life?” His belief that Magical Realism isn’t just a literary mode but a mirror of life struck me: having also grown up in Medway, I wondered if I could glimpse my own world in his art. Bill told me that painters try “to see the essence of a thing.” I wondered if his

art could help me to see the “essence” of my hometown.

Bill finds a Larkinesque tone of resignation in Medway. He surrenders agency to his subconscious, complaining that he is “stuck with foxes” in his ‘Bloody Foxes.’ Foxes are everywhere in his poetry, and whilst he tries to resist their infiltration into his verse, he ultimately surrenders himself to them. Medway swims through the lines of Bill’s verse, whether he likes it or not. It is as inseparable from his poetry as we are from the environments we inhabit.

Bill said that reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reminded him of Kent (which made me think we couldn’t be living in the same Kent...). He noted that Kafka reminded Marquez of “things his grandmother would say”. I began to dread what sorts of conversation Marquez would’ve had with his grandmother, but I also wondered whether this personal connection with literature was what the Remodernists pursued. But when I first met him, Bill told me that his poetry is about himself. His work thus

reflects the outer and the inner: it is a reflection of his world and his identity.

Perhaps this is what gives Remodernism the “heart” it pursues. But injecting “heart” into “art” doesn’t necessitate the creation of solid meaning. Bill told me he’d rather a poem be incomprehensible than “lack poetry”. Bill would rather art be meaningless and poetic than meaningful and poetry-less. In ‘The Algebra of My Sadness’, Bill states “a poem is its own meaning”, resigning himself to the fact that “if it could have been said any other way it would have; but it couldn’t, and it wasn’t”. Poetry is a product of his own subconscious, of his surroundings, and of itself: it has its own essence which cannot always be understood, and doesn’t always need to be.

Image via Rawpixel / CCO 1.0



“A Joy to Watch”: *Window Seat* at the Burton Taylor

Will Wilson

There are few environments more inhospitable to human personality than the interior of a Boeing 747. “Ah, 23B! Home sweet home”: the words of a madman. A friend of mine has decorated their room in Oxford with some posters of Hokusai’s The Great Wave, Van Gogh’s Starry Night and The Godfather; on an EasyJet flight from Heathrow to Barcelona, the closest equivalent to such bold self-representation is removing your shoes or letting your seat back, only to discover with horror that this brings you several inches closer to the toddler who’s going to give you tinnitus for the next two hours.

Cleopatra Coleman’s decision to set her new play, *Window Seat*, in an aeroplane, thus comes as something of a surprise. From the characters in a drama we hope for something distinct and individual, but on most flights I have found myself too enraptured by ‘tantrum in G Minor’ to give the idiosyncrasies of my personality, let alone anyone else’s, much thought. Yet in Coleman’s case this choice of setting is a stroke of genius, because it is precisely the conflict between character and convention (person and passenger) with which *Window Seat* deals.

The plot is structured around a conversation between middle-aged mother Trix (Marianne Nossair) and her adolescent daughter Lois (Avanthika Balaji), recently returned from her second term at university. These two, at first glance, couldn’t look more different. For Trix, think Dolores Umbridge’s philosophy applied to Kate Bush’s wardrobe: florid and quirky, but governed by an urbanity that always keeps the handbag tucked neatly under the seat. Lois’ altogether more androgynous appearance, her

boyish clothes and short hair—a detail her mother fussily laments—contrasts starkly with this. Even the characters’ movements, directed by Lydia Free, point to the subtle differences between them: whilst mother applies hand lotion with fastidious elegance, daughter carelessly kicks her trainers off and rests her feet on the seat.

What generates the drama in *Window Seat* is the collision between this apparent difference and an underlying similarity between the two characters. Lois and her mother’s various discussions repeatedly lead back to the question of whether Trix’s behaviour towards her daughter is motivated by nostalgia for a life she herself could have had, but did not live. “An interior designer and an artist could not be more different”, Trix assures us, but as the play progresses it becomes increasingly evident that she is living certain aspects of her life vicariously through her daughter. Trix admits how “Freudian” it is that she named her daughter after an old unrequited lover, and this makes it only natural to wonder whether Lois is just a symptom of her mother’s unfulfillment. Trix wants to be a passenger in her daughter’s future, but only if that future is a passenger in Trix’s own fantasy of the life she never led. And the audience is a kind of passenger too, patiently attending to action they are not part of.

Passengers, moreover, are passive. I’ve always liked to think that the louder the toddlers cry, the faster the plane goes, but alas, we

don’t live in Monsters Inc. Trix is waiting for her daughter to do what she always wished she had; Lois is waiting for her mother to give her permission to do those things; the audience is waiting for the stalemate to be broken; and everyone is waiting for the plane to take off. This aesthetic of delay does draw the audience into greater sympathy with the characters, but it also risks reducing the play to a series of swings between action and reaction. Trix can only show her concern for her daughter’s well-being when Lois brings up the topic of music festivals; Lois can only criticise her mother’s obstinacy when Trix expresses her disapproval for her son’s partner. Dialogue is necessarily reactive to some degree, and in fact Lois’ horrified responses to her mother’s outrageous comments produce some of the funniest moments in *Window Seat* (which is, I should stress, hilarious). “I became the Jeremy Clarkson of tits”, is brilliant enough on its own, but Nossair’s unapologetically nonchalant delivery, not uncoloured by a hint of mischief and followed by the helpless squirming of Balaji, makes it practically unforgettable. However, it does occasionally feel that the characters are merely waiting for their cues from one another rather than engaging in a natural conversation.

Nonetheless, the play is a joy to watch. Coleman always provides just enough detail in the dialogue to allow the audience to follow what is happening with-



Image credit: Cleopatra Coleman

Success in *Succession*

Darren Trisno

What will people say at your eulogy? This question should centre one’s focus in life. Things fade in relevance as you realise, all that matters is friendship, family and the little things in life.

Succession portrays what happens when you do not heed that warning; when you spend your life feeling invincible and immortal. Logan Roy dies, having spent his life amassing his fortune and abusing his family. He dies on a business trip while skipping his eldest son’s wedding. He dies on the floor of his private jet as he is about to sell his multi-billion dollar company. Alone. At his funeral, Shiv, Logan’s daughter, asks his closest advisors “How bad was Dad?” and the best they could muster was that he was a “Salty dog, but a good egg.” A titan of industry. A feared and respected leader. A man who died surrounded by C-suite advisors, with no one who could say they truly loved him.

Succession has been accused of glorifying the rich and celebrating the old-money lifestyle. Everything about the Roys, from the food they eat to the clothes they wear to the locations of their family trips has been subject to many blogs and posts. However, *Succession* manages to succeed where films like *Wolf of Wall Street* have failed. It has depicted the lifestyle of the ultra rich while being painfully critical of them. “Already rich.”

The first thing the show does is portray the lifestyle from the point of view of the Roys. This is not new to them. It is not glamorous to them. A private jet ride feels as momentous as a car ride. The trips to exquisite locations and beautiful backdrops are not only barely acknowledged, but they tend to be locations of severe

character drama. A husband is told that his wife does not love him in a villa in Italy. A son is told to go sacrifice himself by going to jail whilst on a yacht. A family legacy hangs in the balance in a Norwegian retreat. The lifestyle is not luxurious, it is toxic.

The cinematography, with snap zooms and a handheld quality to the camera work, almost never aims to accentuate how glamorous anything is; it is always framed as excessive and yet still insufficient.

In the writing, when the characters acknowledge their wealth, it is often at their lowest points, where they are grasping for anything to fill their void of insecurity and trauma. At his lowest, Kendall throws a large birthday party, with the most overindulgent decorations, while wearing the biggest, most gaudy gold chain. This stands in stark contrast with his usual “quiet luxury” wardrobe that is comprised of more old money outfits, where you have to be “in the know” to even notice that these are luxury pieces. When Lukas Mattson insults the siblings by saying that he wants to buy their family firm to “make them rich”, Kendall quickly retorts “already rich”. In the world of *Succession*, wealth is not something to celebrate and even acknowledging reveals deep-seated issues.

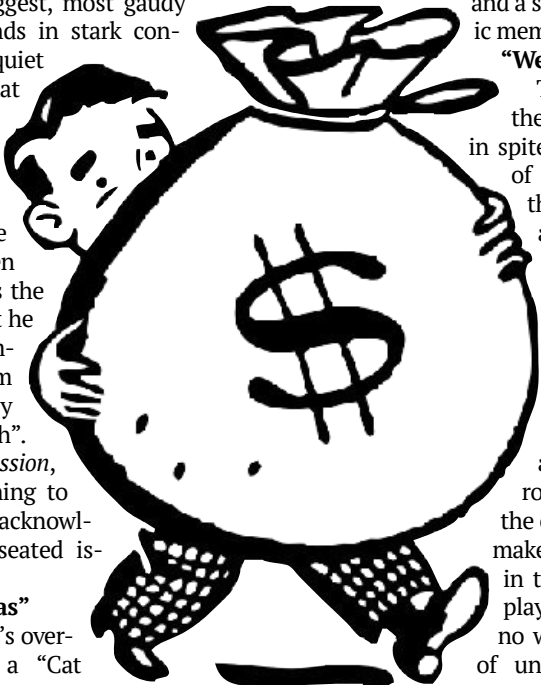
“Cat food Ozymandias”

Shiv calls her father’s over-the-top mausoleum a “Cat

food Ozymandias”, as it was sourced from a pet supply businessman, or “petfood.com guy”. By spending most of the 4th season in the wake of Logan’s death, the audience gets to see just how fleeting the power Logan held is. Just days after his death, all of the monuments of his success are reduced to laughable monuments of a man quickly being forgotten. The same Logan that was such a force over the last three seasons is now seen as an afterthought. Once again, in the world of *Succession*, overwhelming success really is not worth much. Logan sacrificed his life building a business to barely enjoy its spoils. The common stereotype of leaving a legacy and being remembered is also proven painfully false. Like all the other great men of history, Logan is now an afterthought at best and a shameful and traumatic memory at worst.

“We are bullshit.”

Through the writing, the audience sees how in spite of all the wealth all of the characters enjoy, they are deeply broken and hurting. No one in *Succession* is truly happy. No one is the hero. No one wins. In spite of Tiktokers attempting to “baby-girl” (delusionally romanticise a character) their way into rooting for any one of the characters, the writers make it abundantly clear in the ending: when you play this game, there are no winners. In a moment of uncharacteristic clarity,



out making the relationship between the two characters seem overlaboured or mechanistic. Tilly Dyson’s sound design interjects the performance with announcements that provide comic relief—geese sunbathing on the runway—whilst also providing an element of direction that gently draws the play towards its conclusion. Gently, because we are not to expect any sudden climaxes or dilemmas.

The structure of the dialogue is aggregative as well as reactive: more and more topics are slowly incorporated to flesh out the emotional history of mother and daughter without us really registering that this is happening. There are no passionate declarations of devotion nor violent outbursts of anger. The word “love” is spoken only once, yet the familial love between Trix and Lois is not cast into doubt for even a moment. It emanates from the cheeky intimacy of the humour, the warmth of the reminiscences, the fervour with which Balaji raves about feminist literature and her radio show and the quiet tenderness with which Nossair encourages her.

Peter Kessler complains of *Window Seat* that “these characters’ vehicle just doesn’t quite take flight”, but I think that it is this which makes the play simmer so powerfully in its final third. This power is that of potential rather than attainment, like knowing the seatbelt sign will turn off but not knowing quite when. No, we never learn whether Lois goes to the festival, or if her brother becomes reintegrated in the family. But the energy the play generates towards its close is such that the audience is bestowed with the freedom to imagine all of these things, and that is no bad thing.

Image credit: Cleopatra Coleman

Film & TV

Roman Roy spells out the main thesis of the show “We are bullshit.” None of the siblings come out of the show having won the whole company, despite all of them having been close to the finish line multiple times.

In the end, they are all just lost children, with no purpose, unresolved childhood trauma, and a broken and potentially irreconcilable family.

Tom Wambsgans, CEO

In another show about 3 spoilt, rich kids with generational wealth trying to usurp their emotionally abusive titan of a father, Tom would have been our hero. Coming from a humble(ish) background, he married into the family by becoming Shiv’s husband. By backroom politicking, working really hard (especially this season, and being the brunt of endless humiliation and ridicule (a “pain sponge”), he worked his way into being the CEO of the firm. He managed to become what none of the siblings could be. He won.

Not in this show. Here Tom won an empty seat, being the puppet of Lukas Mattson, promising to be subservient to a man who openly confessed to wanting to sleep with his wife. In the final frame, he extends his hand to Shiv, an act of marital love now representing a sort of call to “kiss the ring” and pledge allegiance. He has everything and nothing.

To say that no one wins in *Succession* is not new. We knew that would be the case since the first season. The heartbreaking reason why we keep watching is just to see how much everyone is willing to lose. Unlike the characters, maybe we are the ones who should heed the warning of Logan’s death. To check in with your friends even during exams or application season, to put the pen down and pick up the phone to call home, and that a family is worth more than a family legacy.

Image credit: OpenClipart / CCO 1.0

The rejection letter

Ayaat Yassin-Kassab

What exactly did I plan to do with my life? For 20 years, words like ‘talent’ and ‘potential’ have floated around me. I’m confident, charming, intelligent, I’m good. But not good at anything, except maybe Wordle. Before my Oxford interviews, I prayed they wouldn’t ask me something like ‘why Oxford?’ or ‘why literature?’. If they had, I would have blinked back at them and delivered some obviously phony speech about passion and drive and bringing diversity to the field, and they would have smiled up at me and crossed out my name in bright red ink. Instead, they asked me to analyse poems and talk about them, so I did. My talent, my ‘passion’, was evident in my work, and I was afforded the luxury of avoiding that ominous question for a while.

At the time of writing this, I just received a rejection letter. I had secured my place on a journalism course but was in desperate need of funding. I was shortlisted after a written application, had the interview, and a few days later, was told that the interview panel: “were not convinced of [my] drive or passion for journalism”. There they were – my least favourite words, ‘drive’ and ‘passion’, the ones I was glad to dodge in my interview three years ago, and the ones that let me down today.

My ego took a hit. I was rejected! That’s not fun. But there was something about that line that stood out from the rest of the (thankfully brief) rejection letter, something that went beyond vanity. Once the gut punch had subsided, and after I had called my mum and informed her of the outcome, I realised that those words would be the ones to let me down again and again in interviews to come, because

I myself am not convinced of my passion or drive for anything in particular.

In a field that has become so competitive, you need to be bloodthirsty. You need to communicate a burning, spitting determination compelled by some profound experience or longing. The word ‘passion’ (I hate to do this but I’ve spent three long years as an English student so I do – technically and according to zero rulebooks – have the right) is derived from the Latin ‘pati’ meaning ‘to suffer’, and all OED definitions of ‘passion’ in its noun form are linked to ideas of suffering, pain, disease, or extreme emotion lapsing into mental derangement. I don’t feel that way about anything. I really like writing articles, and editing them, and I could see myself effectively bossing people around as an editor one day – it’s that simple. To me, that’s good enough. That’s confirmation that I’d thrive in the field. I enjoy journalism without being able to explain why. I’m also not that

interested in communicating my ‘passion’ and I’m too stubborn to hone that skill. Perhaps that makes me difficult...

But the question still plagues me. ‘Why?’ Why literature, why Oxford, why journalism, why anything at all? Why is there no deeper meaning behind what I do, and why can I not win over an interview panel where all I have to do is explain why? The ego thing probably holds more sway than I initially let on – I’m hurt that they didn’t like me, and it makes me dislike myself. But I’m also worried that I’m simply not interesting enough to care deeply about anything, and that means that I won’t succeed.

But I ask myself again: what exactly did I – before my degree ended, and before my funding rejection – plan to do with my life? I suppose I planned to float through it, and I

expected that some opportunities would pass me by, and other more suitable ones would present themselves to me fairly willingly. Although I’m no stranger to hard work, I expected that some good luck would push me forward and decorate the career path with a few rose petals. I planned to spend time writing and reading, to spend some time in the sun, to spend some time with my loved ones, and to make some nice meals for dinner. At Oxford, there is a high-achieving atmosphere that encourages us to keep pushing and makes us feel guilty when we don’t. But I’ve just finished my degree and ‘passion’, or something similar to the interview panel’s definition of it, is not something I’ve found yet. So (and this felt, to me, like a big realisation) why don’t I stay at home and do what I planned to do all along?

My plan is one that is unfixed, unfastened, and yet I expected certainty. This is the first of many rejections I will get. It’s an opportunity for real reflection which, I’ve discovered, feels more like a lurching of the stomach than a clearing of the fog. In the meantime I’ll be at home, reading, resting, and gravitating to whatever actually interests me.

Image Credit: Yuan-yuan Foo



TOP 5

Things the editors will miss about Oxford

Having friends close by

The collegiate boarding school vibe means that there is always a friendly face around to chat to. Company is never far away.

Sunny Spires

Sunbathing in the quad and walking through sun-kissed Rad Cam as you experience the Brideshead summer you were always meant to live.

Dinner in Halls

The communal dining experience sitting at the long tables, talking with friends until the hall staff kick you out. Perhaps not as riveting as the standard family dinner.

Black Tie Events

There’s nothing like trekking to Freud on a random Monday for a black tie BOP or society event, dancing the night away under the grecian dome and twinkling fairy lights.

The Library Atmosphere

The solidarity of being in a packed library churning out a rushed essay is, for many, essential to motivation. Over the vac, we can guarantee you’ll be languidly flipping through pages in the privacy of your own home.

Aries 21 March - 19 April

Term is coming to an end now, so take this opportunity to share things that you haven’t had the courage to before.

Capricorn 22 Dec. - 19 Jan.

You might be leaving for a while, or looking to new things, but if you are prepared to try them then you’ll be surprised by how well they work out.

Aquarius 20 Jan. - 18 Feb.

It’s your summer of love, Aquarius! Be spontaneous and say yes to things you don’t normally say yes to.

Pisces 19 Feb. - 20 March

Notice the little things in these last few weeks of term and pay attention to the details. They might surprise you.

Taurus 20 April - 20 May

Pluto Retrograde moves into Capricorn, and this encourages you communicate with the people who are important to you.

Leo 23 July - 22 Aug.

This week, take the time to reconnect with people you’ve drifted from, and make sure to tell them you appreciate them.

Cancer 21 June - 22 July

New opportunities are coming your way these last few weeks of term. Keep an eye out for these, and make the most of them.

Libra 23 Sept. - 22 Oct.

Are they your friend or are they more, Libra? Be honest with yourself before you leave to solve any confusion.

Scorpio 23 Oct. - 21 Nov.

As term begins to wind down, take this chance to make the most of the Oxford and enjoy things that might pass you by?

Sagittarius 22 Nov. - 21 Dec.

Mercury enters Gemini this week, and helps you to understand people who are different to you.

Horoscopes

Things each sign should keep in mind before the end of term...

Gemini 21 May- 20 June

You’re almost there – let yourself enjoy the feeling of accomplishment that comes with finishing the term. You did so well!

Virgo 23 Aug. - 22 Sept.

Wrap up loose ends and heal the things you’ve been meaning to before the term is over. You’ll feel better for it.

Cherpse



TOM

First Impressions

My date turned up late, sweaty, and wearing gym clothes – it seemed like he had just come back for a run?!

Did it meet your expectations?

I was expecting there to be some awkwardness considering it was a blind date so it was good that the conversation flowed.

What was the highlight?

Realising that we are probably loosely related!

What was the most embarrassing moment?

When he greeted me at the start of the date and a drop of sweat dripped down from his hair onto my forehead...

Describe the date in 3 words:

Funny, surprising, sweaty

Is there a second date on the cards?

Potentially but just as friends!

“

*My date turned
up late, sweaty,
and wearing gym
clothes...*

JERRY

First Impressions?

I felt a bit bad that she was early for the date... I hadn't had time to go back home after my run so had to go straight there. Oops.

Did it meet your expectations?

I felt like the conversation was more interesting than just the usual small talk I would expect from a first date.

What was the highlight?

We both had very similar and niche music taste which was a pleasant surpsising.

What was the most embarrassing moment?

Realising that we are third or fourth cousins or something like that...

Describe the date in 3 words:

Flowy, fun and relaxed

Is there a second date on the cards?

Maybe!

Looking for love?

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

Tales from the trip

Finals were done and my two best friends from home, Maria and Gracie, were visiting me in Oxford so, naturally, we decided to do acid. The first tab was taken at 8pm and we set off through Uni Parks into a field. For two hours, we got bitten by midges, felt cold and bored, and nothing happened. It was fake. About ten minutes into the walk back, we started to laugh uncontrollably. Everything was funny, my body felt light and warm, and I had butterflies in my chest. "Guys I'm definitely not sober." We double dosed and ventured outside onto main quad. We started by sitting on the chapel steps. After that we strolled over onto the grass. At this point it was pitch black and we were staring up at the stars, which glittered and shone. After a location change (5 metres to the left), we lay on our stomachs and watched a hedgehog snuffle around the grass for food. "What do we do about him?" "Nothing, he's a hedgehog". The first bathroom break rolled around, and we all felt nervous about leaving our spot. What if we lost our place? It had become The Safe Space. We were laughing and reminiscing: Gracie, who studies nursing, decided she wanted to pursue acting again; I had psychoanalysed people we went to school with – a lot had happened. But eventually, we tore ourselves away and went to the toilets. Mo

senses were very heightened. I was suddenly aware of cracks between doors and windows; little streams of light that went otherwise unnoticed. We went back outside, and found another spot on the grass, this time on the opposite side of the quad. It was starting to feel like an absurdist play. Moaning about the cold, and about our tiredness, we did nothing to alleviate either sensation. Back again. Lying down again. We carried on. I normally feel nervous about tripping in front of other people, unable to let go, and scared that I'm sounding stupid. But with my best friends since childhood, it felt easy, light. I couldn't shut up. I was stuttering and spluttering, sounding out different epiphanies and revelations. We wouldn't stop bickering, as usual, but it was like we were kids again, camping in the back garden. "Paul McCartney must have felt like this at least once," said Gracie. Then, I started to see things. I'm not a visual tripper. I've taken other psychedelics before, and my vision never really changes, so this was a first for me and I was in complete awe. I felt like a child, staring wide-eyed at the sky above saying "woahhhhhhhh" over and over as pinks and purples and blues swarmed into intricate hieroglyphic patterns which merged in interesting ways as they rippled and changed. The Keble chapel started

wobbling; the bricks blending gently into the skyline behind. The grass was wet with pink dew – it was glittering. I kept rubbing my eyes, expecting it to go back to normal. The cross-shaped cement path which divides the grass suddenly became a deep blue, and the grass itself was waving gently, moving up and down as if taking deep breaths. “You both look like little lemurs right now,” Maria said. We had been outside for hours, so we went in to get warm. Gracie started eating chocolate, and we stared at her, confused as to why she had begun to eat when that felt like such unfamiliar territory to venture into. She put it down on the counter, “that wasn’t the right thing to do”. Maria wanted tea but I only had herbal. The kettle was boiling. “I still don’t have English breakfast.”

"It's okay. By the time this boils we'll have figured something out." I decided I needed to shower. As I was scrubbing my hair – my eyes closed – I saw a chorus of dark-skinned ladies with huge curls and gold crowns singing for me, as though they were lining a grand stadium. As they looked down at me, golden light streamed from their hands and washed me with warmth. Then Maria showered, then Gracie. We lay in bed for hours, giggling and talking, and we didn't fall asleep until about ten in the morning.

The art of being silly

Molly Dineley

At the end of term, you can walk the streets of Oxford and see a certain look in the eyes of all the students you meet; the fatigue of eight weeks of work mixed with a vacancy that can only be seen in someone who has experienced too many Bridge Thursdays. With each new term your hopes rise. This is the one, you think, that will turn out perfectly. Then reality sets in by week five at the latest. Rinse and repeat. But what can you do to keep yourself sane when you have to stay in the library for the third night in a row? Or if you have to bail on a hangout because you still haven't finished a presentation due tomorrow? The only thing that can really work is to go off the rails a little. As a treat. Most of the people here go a little crazy from the general world anyways, so why not lean into it?

I've been told countless times about the importance of a work/life balance, but maybe the real metric we must measure ourselves against is the stillness/silliness balance. Stillness is necessary for your silliness. Taking moments to enjoy the quiet of life makes the loud moments more interesting. What's the point of coming to what might be one of the most 'serious' institutions in the world and letting that go unchallenged? Of course, being silly is more than just a mere feeling – it's a mindset. You could be silly every now and then, but there is joy to be obtained from committing to silliness even in your most serious moments. In your tutorials you may know everything you need to, but sometimes the best memories are the times when you could laugh with your tutors about a topic.

Possibly the best way to make friends is by being silly. I do many a silly thing with my friends (the silliness of that sentence is not lost on me), including a termly

week seven cat maid bar crawl (which has previously been erroneously labelled the ‘animaid society’). Big or small, these actions make us who we are and bring us together into groups, each with its own quirks. Whilst sharing the same sense of humour and doing frivolous things together for the sake of it can be a bonding activity, silliness is also a way of creating your own individual identity. Self-expression often comes from the ‘silly’ in life, whether it’s the whimsical application of neon eyeliner in the morning, or dancing randomly on Cornmarket Street with your friends to scare the tourists.

So, at least once before the end of this summer term, give yourself license to do something stupidly silly and sillily stupid while you're still here. Go crazy! Be your truest self. Have fun in the sun. Use lots of inane mental health slogans in your daily vocabulary. Keeping yourself upright amidst the wave of work that comes each week is no easy feat. Let yourself be silly in as many little ways as possible.

Image Credit: Molly Dineley



DOUBLE TAKE:

“My best friend is cheating on his LOVELY boyfriend!”



Hello my darlings! Now this is quite a juicy one but that makes it all the trickier. When it comes to our close friends, it can be really difficult to comment on their behaviours. The first thing to say would be: how did you find out? Because if your best friend has told you themselves what is going on, then it may be that they’re looking for some advice. Of course, there’s no excuse for cheating, but this could be an indicator that this relationship isn’t feeling right for your friend and they’re acting out because of it. The best thing to do would be to sit them down and have an honest conversation. Don’t overly berate them, because the likelihood is that they know what they’re doing is wrong (as is often the case) but they’re feeling stuck. Just talk about why they’re doing it, what’s making them feel this way and try and help them fix the situation – probably by breaking up with their current partner before they do anything else that might hurt them.

An important thing to say is: DON’T just rush in and tell their boyfriend (as lovely as he might be!). Although you might think you’re being the hero, this is absolutely not the case. The first thing that will go wrong is that your best friend will certainly not be your best friend by the end of this debacle. You will have betrayed their trust and demonstrated that you seem to care more about their current partner than your friendship with them. Whilst they might have done a bad thing, is it really worth losing them for?

Hearing it from their partner’s best friend is also not the way that their boyfriend should find out either. Learning that someone has cheated on you can be such a blow to your confidence and self-esteem and is such a hard thing to be able to process. If they’re going to find out, it should probably be because their current partner has told them, and not because you’ve gone behind your best friend’s back.

I’m sorry that you’ve found yourself caught in such a tricky position, but hopefully it will be over soon and both parties can move on as soon as possible.

For now, happy end of term and have the best summer vacation!

See you soon,
Auntie Alice x



Coming on a little strong here with the “LOVELY”, don’t ya think? However, we can use this to our advantage.

Before I get into it, let’s weigh up a couple of things. When you say “best” friend – how “best” are we talking here? If you’re super close with the guy, it’s better to stay out of the drama. You know what they say, “Mates before dates” and all that, so it might not be worth losing your best friend over. Even though their actions are a bit gross, and you’ve probably lost A LOT of respect for them, the drama probably isn’t worth it.

That’s the sensible side dealt with – now for the juicy bits.

Is the drama worth it? Do you find yourself bursting to spill the tea with every one of your friends? Is this boyfriend really that lovely? (By lovely I mean DROP DEAD GORGEOUS)

If your answer to any of these questions is “HELL YES” (or similar), then I say spill the beans as soon as you can and make sure you’re around to be that shoulder to cry on.

I’m assuming that this best friend of yours goes to Oxford so, honestly, what do you have to lose? You can go out with a bang and create enough drama that this Trinity term will go down in history as the most realistic re-enactment of the end of an *Eastenders* episode. You’ll put an abrupt end to the cheating by ending their relationship and you might even be able to benefit from the company of a LOVELY and single man before the vacation starts. Life’s too short.

For now, there are drinks to be drunk, holidays to be had and luxurious lives to be led while we distract ourselves from the inevitability of responsibilities between the next few months. I am manifesting for each and every one of you beautiful people, a steamy summer romance and many a wild night out to remember. You deserve it. It’s been a heck of a term.

Goodbye my dearests!
Mad Hatter x

To: The Editors and Readers of Cherwell

From: Aaliyah Khan

Final Submission Cancelled

Send

To the Editors at Cherwell –

My final letter of apology goes to you, and to the readers. I have finished my final exams, I have submitted every single paper, I have said my dishonourable farewells to the Honour School of English Language and Literature. I will never write again. For my last excuse, it is this excuse. The column for this week will have to remain empty.

My three years at Oxford have been filled with emails written. I have composed my vows to the literature through them. I have written in joy; in sorrow; in sickness; in health; beside myself; despite myself. There have been awful letters sent and worse ones received. I am impossibly thankful that those were always ones on the way to better news. For now, all of my emails have been sent.

I am left in complete honour and full gratitude to the real recipients of my very real emails who unfailingly treated me with the kindness and care I almost did not deserve. There are far too many to name. I hope to only return to your inboxes with invitations of good news.


To you all I am forever indebted.

All my best,
Aaliyah Khan
Worcester College, Oxford

Martyr’s Memorial, St. Giles

Flynn Hallman

Its movement blurs above, and stalls,
where rooks, encircling, shift in murmured folds
and the street-lights silhouette ash-keys.
In their wind-drawn pirouettes each falls
to ground to find their leaves grown old,
shuddering in their senescence, curled like effigies
martyred in an orant pose,
burned away but imitative of movement still.



At first I heard the noise,
the wings struggling against
stone unseen until
I caught the bird, its feet
enmeshed beneath his eyes,
how he watched it thresh the air
in memory of flight, unmoving
intercessory hands,
indifferent to the sight
of its becoming almost stillness.

Sardines with Gurkha chutney and charred peppers

Angus is back again with a recipe from his travels and this time it's one full of spices to enhance the flavours of the simple sardine. Here, he uses fresh ones but tinned options from Tesco achieve absolutely the same effect. Similarly, chopped tomatoes will more than suffice.

INGREDIENTS

Gurkha Paste:

- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 2 tomatoes
- 1 bulb of garlic
- 4 green chillies chopped
- 1 inch ginger, chopped
- 1 bunch of coriander stems, chopped
- 1 tbsp of ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
- 1 tablespoon turmeric powder
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 2-3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons vinegar

Other ingredients:

- 2 plum tomatoes chopped
- 1 red pepper. Half chopped half cut into strips.
- 1/2 cup of fish stock
- 4 sardine fillets

METHOD

- Heat your oven to its maximum temperature and cook the onion tomatoes and garlic until they begin to blister (10-15 minutes)
- Put them aside and once cool remove blistered skins, roughly chop and place in a blender.
- Add the remaining ingredients of the chutney to the hot components and blend to a paste.
- Take your pepper strips and add to a very hot dry skillet. Char both sides and set aside. Once cold enough to handle remove the most charred parts.
- Pat dry your sardines. Fry 1 tbsp of the Gurkha paste in a drizzle of oil on a medium heat until the oil takes on a bold red colour. Be careful not to burn.
- Add the fish fillets and seal both sides.
- Add the chopped tomatoes and peppers. Add a lid and soften for 3-4 mins.
- Add half a cup of the stock and reduce until thick.
- Top with chopped coriander and Gurkha chutney.



Barefoot Bakery: Cakes, bakes, and great value

Oliver Hall

Cakes, brownies, cruffins, pastries, croissants... Barefoot Bakery has just about everything that you could ask for from a café. Yet what makes it even more special is the ethos behind it and every single dish on offer. Fraser and his wife Emily started out as a market stall just under ten years ago and ever since, locally sourced and high quality ingredients have seen them become Oxford's go-to place for cakes and bakes.

These days, Barefoot is spread across several locations. The main café is located on Walton Street and it is here that you'll find all of the large slices of cakes and the widest selection of other options. Just a short walk away on North Parade, there's the first bakery location where all the cakes are still made, as well as a smaller café with mini-cakes and brownies.

I sat down with Emily and Fraser in the Walton Street location to chat all things cakes and bakes, as well as, of course, sampling a selection of items. The pair explained first just how important locally sourced and high-quality ingredients are to them: with everything from eggs to butter, the business goes to great lengths to find the best products they can, just like Emily used to when she was baking for family and friends at home.

This focus on ingredients means that each and every cake tastes brilliantly strongly of its bases. We first saw this in the pumpkin and ginger slice: here, the ginger and vegetable flavours are complimented superbly by the cream cheese icing. That icing is a constant across all the other cakes too and really comes into its own when balancing sweeter options like the courgette and lime. So often, the sweetness of frosting is overpowering but at Barefoot the cake is given room to shine and is all the better for it.

The cakes on offer changes with the seasons and by the day but an even wider selection can be found in 'mini cake' form on North Parade. These are great if you aren't fancying a whole slice to yourself but are still in the mood for an indulgent treat. Perhaps the most unique thing about Barefoot is the high proportion of vegetable-based bakes. Emily described to me just how lengthy the testing progress can be with each and every cake tried and tested to perfection over the course of weeks and sometimes months before it reaches customers.

Even more indulgent are the cruffins. I've never seen these anywhere else but

Emily makes the point that it is very hard to go wrong with croissant pastry, whatever form it's in. Each one is more than generously filled with all manner of options from banoffee to chocolate ganache. Those were the two that I tried and although I'd recommend both, I do so with two provisos: prepare for a mess and maybe skip lunch first! These are a meal into of themselves and leave crumbs wherever they go.... The chocolate ganache followed on the theme of being rich rather than sweet and the banana dominated the banoffee.

Brownies are most popular of all and, of course, are on offer in all manner of flavours. Plain and simple chocolate fudge was far from plain or simple and the centre managed to strike that perfect balance of being soft but still fudgy. I didn't get a chance to try it but peanut butter stood out as an appealing alternative too.

Perhaps more than anything else, that pre-discussed focus on provenance, vegetable-based choices, and the fact that everything is made in house, leaves the bakery scope to provide more options for different dietary options than you will see almost anywhere else. Sticky-toffee apple cake is a gluten-free favourite but there are countless others too with vegan and dairy-free options across the board.

In terms of price-point, Barefoot makes no bones about the fact that their cakes aren't cheap. That isn't the point and in spite of recent inflation and energy bills, they have only raised their prices twice in their history. What you get is more than reasonably priced and worth what you pay. We still aren't talking anything over £5.

As well as the cafés, Barefoot Bakery is renowned for its wholesale business. You can find everything from vegan almond croissants to brownies across the city and some, such as Peloton Espresso

on Cowley Road, have even created special days to recognise their arrival. 'Doughnut Thursday' here was the first place I ever tried a Barefoot item and for a long time, I wasn't even aware that they had a physical site! This has become a larger and larger aspect of the business and the



bakery now hires multiple drivers alongside Fraser himself to deliver by bicycle and van.

Whole cakes can be made to order too and this is available both online and in person with all manner of customisation options. A friend of mine recently did this and there is something that strikes me as extremely rewarding about going in, sampling a few options, and landing on the one you want. Aside from anything else, it's a great excuse to eat cake (if you need one that is).

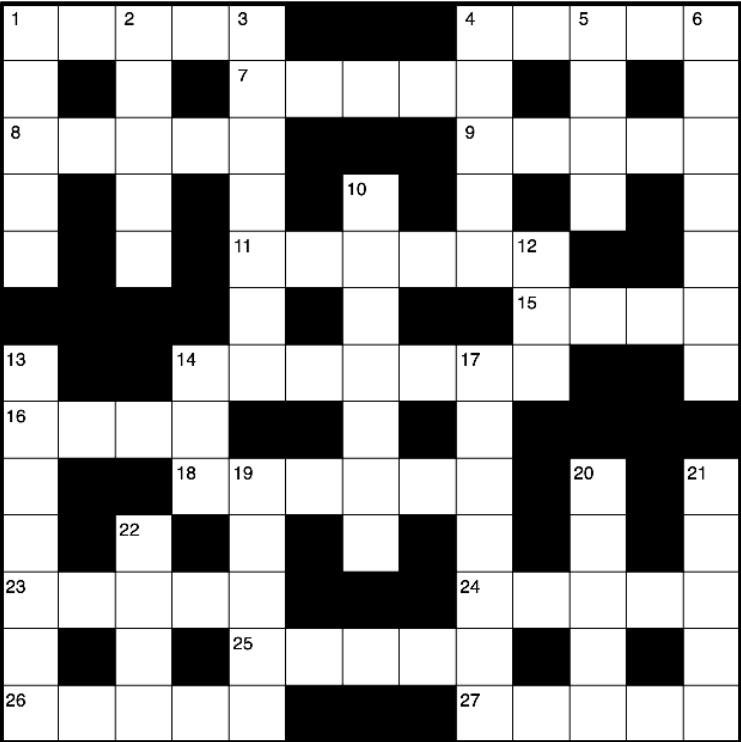
Barefoot hits the nail on the head in so many ways and speaks to me as yet another example of the values and care required to succeed in today's market. Amid spiralling inflation across the board, reduced consumer spending, and the struggles of Brexit, the high street is seeing a boom in businesses focussed on ethically sourced and high-quality products. Barefoot falls firmly into that category and its continued success is richly deserved.



Kevin and Timmy



Cryptic Crossword by Sarah Beard



- ACROSS
- DOWN
1. Most of poetry, is a walk in the mountains, syllables counted (5)

2. Cake decoration says "I'm a vocalist" (5)

4. Deadly spears hit (5)

7. Mum's car always comes back round again (5)

8. Perish in gold - Goodbye! (5)

9. Sunday criticism (5)

11. Ninety-one in the midst of a French summer rouses (6)

14. Disorganised presale is a setback (7)

15. Painful cry between rival separator is needed at a wedding (4)

16. You row? Sounds like you've got money! (4)

18. Hides what Tokyo used to be in a suit (6)

23. For instance, the magic flute is all in operation (5)

24. Shade conceals death (5)

25. Meat is incorporated in me (5)

26. Bit of a muffin and a hot drink is a nice break from everyday routine (5)

27. Keane and Capone are aristocratic (5)
1. Blood-soaked organ in niche art (5)

2. Cake decoration says "I'm a vocalist" (5)

3. The deranged Kulu eel is a Hawaiian native (7)

4. Fortune teller uses a projectile covered with tar? (5)

5. Futuristic weapon to get rid of your past lovers reveals what's inside (4)

6. These two household pets use a lot of photo-shop (7)

10. Jumps between the seas (7)

12. The First Lady after sunset (3)

13. The French man getting married needs stretching out (7)

14. Decay between bistro tables (3)

17. The last to start makes parents suffocate (7)

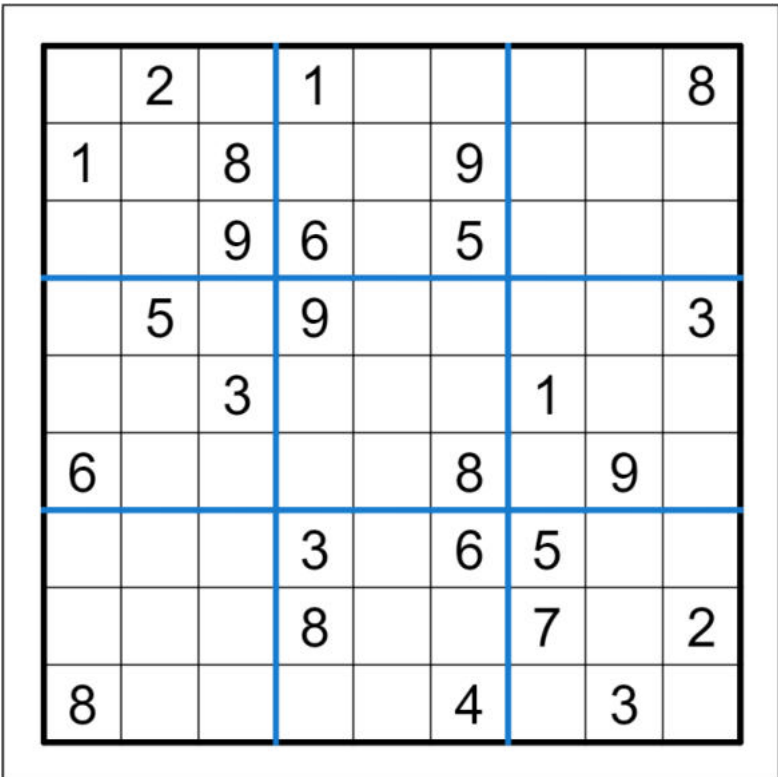
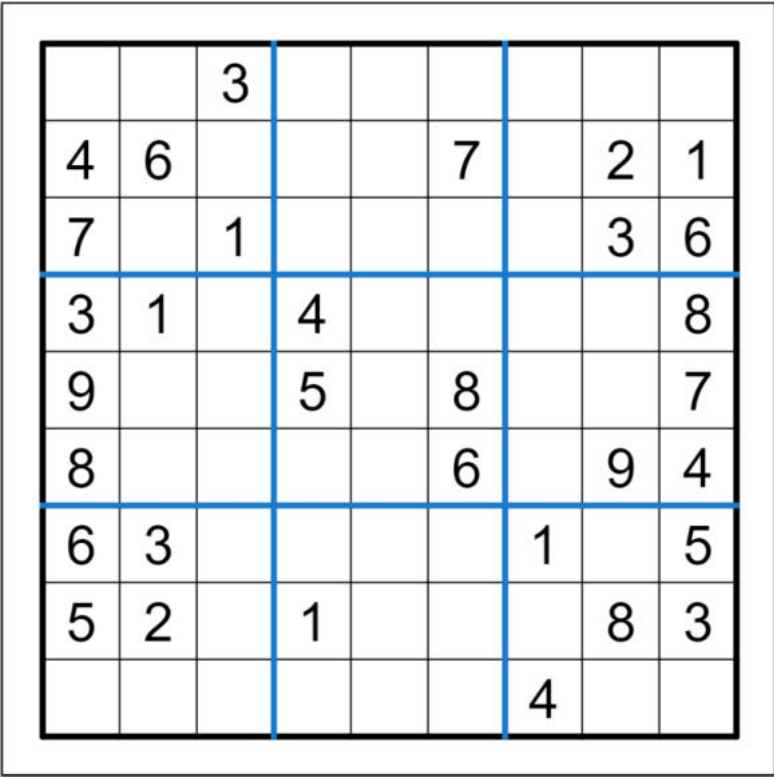
19. Kill Bill actress makes a lot of savory food (5)

20. A companion to sleep with on Queen's Lane (5)

21. Drab academia makes alumni expel finalists - tasty garnish (5)

22. Cows argue (4)

Sudokus by Lewis Callister



View last week's answers online at Cherwell.org