

VOLUME 22 NO 1 | MICHAELMAS 2009

# Oxford Today

THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

## Which way forward?

The superhumans debate intensifies

## How to keep your head in a crisis

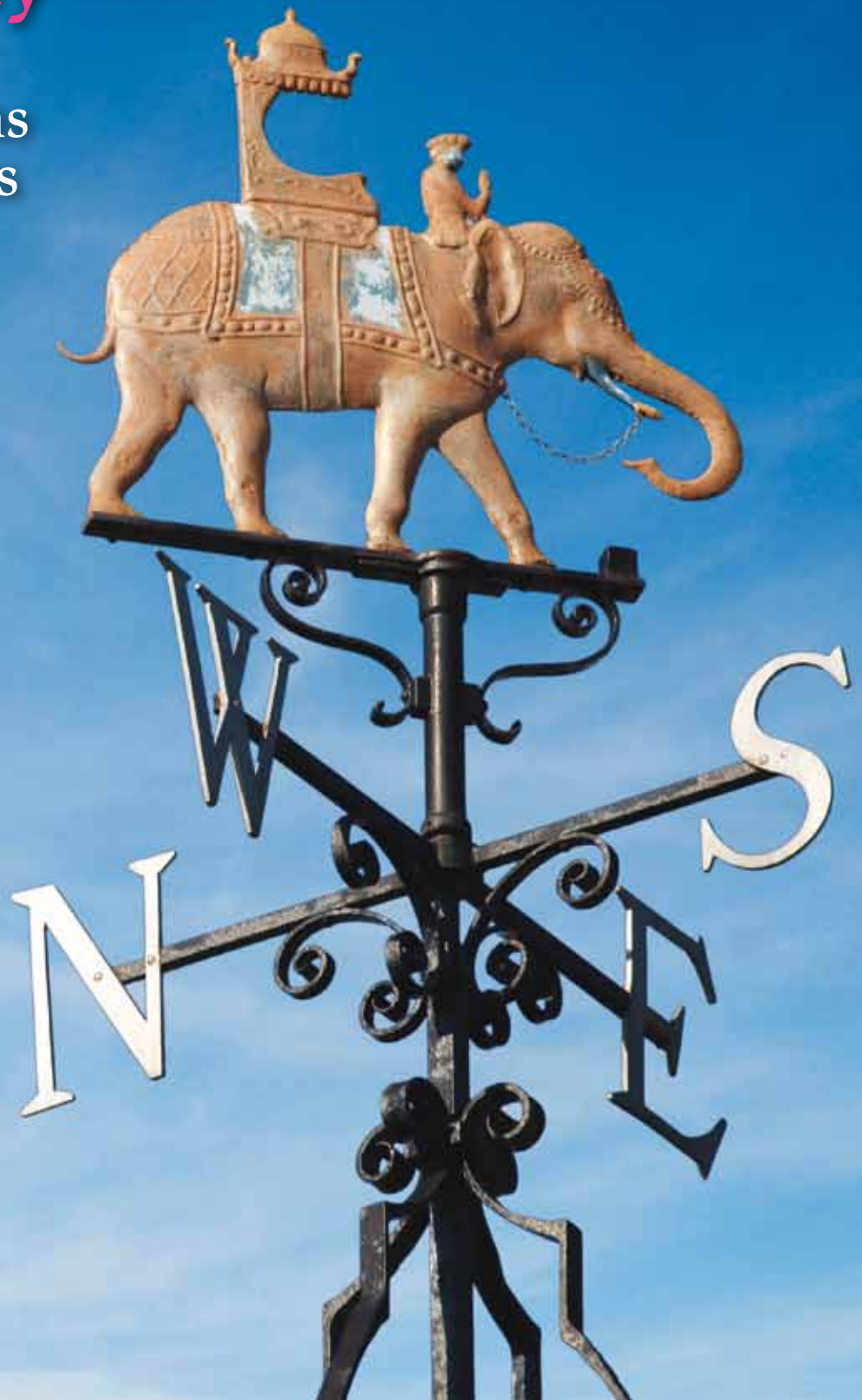
Denis Healey,  
Nigel Lawson

## Sharpening up a satirist

Ian Hislop on  
life before  
Private Eye

## Spin-offs pay off

Taking research  
to market



October 2009



## Dear Friends and Colleagues

The challenge of the new is always invigorating; it forces us to see and think afresh. Little surprise, then, that as the incoming Vice-Chancellor of one of the world's greatest universities, my strongest sense is a mixture of excitement and expectancy. I have a great deal to learn but what a place to do that learning!

As I begin that journey, I am delighted to have this early opportunity to make contact with you and to share with you some initial thoughts about our University.

One measure of Oxford's importance is the fact that round the world it needs no introduction. In conversations in recent months in many different countries, as I have prepared to take up this new role, I have felt a surge of pleasure and pride in the admiration and esteem that Oxford attracts.

Being the oldest university in the English-speaking world probably helps, but mere longevity would be a pretty flimsy basis for a reputation of real, perhaps unequalled, substance. It is what we are doing today, and what we aspire to do in the future, that must be the true measure of Oxford and its greatness.

I have had the good fortune to work in several fine universities on both sides of the Atlantic and the standards Oxford sets are rightly of the very highest. To be part of an institution and a culture with such expectations for and of itself is truly exhilarating.

In one important sense, though, it is an excitement with which I am already familiar. My own academic career as a lecturer and researcher has brought extensive contact with colleagues at the University, both in my own field

and more widely. So, Oxford may be a new location for me, but it is by no means an unknown quantity. I am greatly looking forward both to continuing my own research here and to becoming a closer part of this outstanding scholarly community.

I am coming to Oxford at a challenging moment for the world of higher education. Great universities like ours cannot expect to be significant players in enhancing the world's well-being and to be entirely immune to its travails. There will be time and opportunity in the period ahead for me to discuss the particular challenges that are likely to face us as a university, locally, nationally and globally, in the coming years. But this is not that moment. What I do want to state unequivocally now, though, is my confidence that Oxford is more than capable of meeting the challenges and indeed that it will do so.

It is a confidence based upon what I have seen already of the talent of my colleagues in every part of the University; of the outstanding quality of our scholarship; of the extraordinary mixture of rich intellectual diversity, and of unique opportunities to weave those diverse strands together: opportunities in which our colleges play such an important part.

But it is also a confidence based upon what I have experienced in so many places, of the loyalty and affection of the worldwide Oxford family; the Oxford that is located not on a map but in tens of thousands of hearts and minds. These are the bonds that do so much to sustain the University, and help also, I hope, to sustain your own sense of what is truly of enduring value and significance.

I do not want to end this first letter without paying tribute to the work of my predecessor, John Hood. A great many important and necessary things have been achieved in his time here. His own qualities and leadership were a vital part of those achievements. I hope and believe that working together with colleagues throughout the University and across the wider Oxford family of which you are part, we will build strongly upon them.

I also hope that in the months and years to come I shall have the opportunity to meet many of you personally and to learn more of your sense of what makes our University so special now and for the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Andrew D. Hamilton'.

Andrew Hamilton



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# Oxford Today

THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



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## COVER PICTURE

Change of direction: it is an Oxford tradition to find new uses for old buildings. This weathercock sits atop the former Indian Institute, at the corner of Catte Street and Holywell Street, which is now home to the History Faculty Library and the James Martin 21st Century School.



# News

## Charter aims to lift 'resource curse'

An international charter aimed at helping the world's developing nations benefit from their natural resources has been launched by a high-profile group of economists, lawyers and political scientists, including several leading Oxford academics.

Natural resources can be a mixed blessing. In countries such as Sierra Leone, Gabon and Nigeria, vast oil or mineral wealth has failed to translate into economic and social well-being for the majority of the population. These countries have fallen victim to the so-called 'resource curse', their resources fostering political instability, social conflict and environmental damage, instead of generating prosperity for future generations.

The Natural Resource Charter sets out to tackle this problem. It comprises a 12-point plan, offering guidance on the core decisions that governments in resource-rich countries face.

The charter's recommendations include: using competition to ensure that governments secure the maximum value; managing revenues to take account



MICHAEL NICHOLS/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK

*Miners digging for gold in Gabon. Developing countries often fail to translate potential wealth from natural resources into economic well-being for a majority of their citizens*

of volatility, and ensuring that decisions about natural resources are easily available to the public. 'Governments have to be held to account, which requires information to be publicly available,' said Tony Venables, BP Professor of Economics and Director of the recently formed Oxford Centre for the Analysis of Resource Rich Economics, one of the contributors.

To generate maximum impact, the charter will be presented at the World Bank-IMF annual meetings this autumn, as well as a range of other conferences. It received a welcome boost in June when

Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) gave it formal support in the White Paper 'Eliminating World Poverty'.

Other contributors include Paul Collier, Professor of Economics at Oxford and Director of the Centre for the Study of African Economies; Jim Cust, Coordinating Author, Department of Economics; Michael Spence, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, and Karin Lissakers, Director of the Revenue Watch Institute in Washington DC.

[www.naturalresourcecharter.org](http://www.naturalresourcecharter.org)

## New degree aims at creating sustainable cities

Oxford's Department for Continuing Education and The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment are collaborating to create a new part-time master's degree course in Sustainable Urban Development, starting next September.

The programme is designed for early- and mid-career professionals in the fields of development, sustainability, architecture, engineering, surveying and planning. It will help participants to understand the causes and consequences of urban growth and decline, as well as looking at alternative approaches to urban development. Two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities in 50 years' time, according to a 2007 projection by the UN Population Fund.

The Prince of Wales presided over the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation in May at Clarence House. <http://cpd.conted.ox.ac.uk/msud/>

## Oxford forum hears climate warning

Al Gore, former Vice-President of the United States, and Professor Sir David King, Director of Oxford's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment and former UK Government Chief Scientific Advisor, were among the speakers at the first Times/Smith School World Forum on Enterprise and the Environment, held at Keble College in July 2009.

The aim of the event, which attracted more than 200 business leaders, academics and politicians, was to find ways of converting the world's economies from high to low carbon, to slow the rate of climate change and halt runaway temperature rises. Gore said that the US, led by Barack Obama, had now taken its first steps towards tackling climate change.

President Kagame of Rwanda and President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives also spoke at the event. President Kagame described the work being done in his country to restore forests and wetlands after the ravages of genocide 15 years ago. Restoration was reducing flooding and improving soil, cutting fossil fuel use and

recreating wildlife habitats to lure back tourists. 'Not only government officials, but the population at large, have to buy into the reality that the environment is a critical element for their subsistence, and that they have a stake in conservation,' Kagame said.

President Nasheed, whose country is seriously threatened by sea level rise, announced plans earlier this year to make his country carbon-neutral within 10 years. He said: 'We face a very challenging future. Another 2°C rise and we will not be here. Climate change is not necessarily just an environmental or scientific issue. It's a security issue and human rights issue.'

Sir David hailed the World Forum a triumph and said Mr Gore had left delegates 'totally energised'. He added: 'One of the most important things to emerge from the World Forum was that the technological solutions we need are already there. The business world realises that our competitive future depends on companies that understand that moving to a low-carbon economy will give them an edge over their competitors.'



Professor Hamilton: 'The opportunity to serve is both inspiring and energising'

## Transatlantic crossing as Andrew Hamilton succeeds John Hood as Vice-Chancellor

Professor Andrew Hamilton was set to be admitted as Vice-Chancellor of the University as this issue of *Oxford Today* went to press, succeeding Dr John Hood.

Professor Hamilton was previously Provost of Yale University, and had taught in US colleges since the early 1980s.

In an introductory letter as Vice-Chancellor, to friends of the University (see inside front cover of *Oxford Today*), Professor Hamilton writes: 'I am coming to Oxford at a challenging moment for the world of higher education. Great universities like ours cannot expect to be significant players in the making of the world's well-being and to be entirely immune from its travails. There will be time and opportunity in the period ahead for me to discuss the particular challenges that are likely to face us as a university, locally, nationally, and globally, in the coming years. But this is not that moment. What I want to state unequivocally now, though, is my confidence that Oxford is more than capable of meeting the challenges and indeed that it will do so.'

Dr Hood, who was the first Vice-Chancellor in Oxford's history to be appointed from outside the University, is to become president and chief executive of the Robertson Foundation, a New York-based charity. During his five years as Vice-Chancellor, Dr Hood oversaw

the introduction of the ongoing Oxford Thinking campaign, which has already raised more than £750 million towards the University's future development. Dr Hood said: 'I'll miss working with the extraordinarily talented staff and students of the University.' Commenting on his term of office, he added: 'When you read the history of this University, it's a history of constant adaptation to changing circumstances. The last five years has just been a continuation of that evolution. I don't think you can ever sit back and say "Oxford's changed". Oxford is always changing.'



New York-bound: Dr John Hood

## EDITORIAL

### Forever changes

Another new Oxford year begins, and the familiar sights unfold. New students and staff arrive – this year accompanied by a new Vice-Chancellor – while others return from summer breaks to resume their work. The changing seasonal colours of Oxford in autumn have a reassuringly timeless quality.

But though Oxford may sometimes present an image of serene continuity, this is surely just the picture postcard view of ancient quads and never-ending summers by the river. The truth is nearer that expressed by Dr John Hood, who completed his term as Vice-Chancellor as this issue of *Oxford Today* went to press. The history of the University is one of constant adaptation to changing circumstances, he says. 'Oxford is always changing.'

*Oxford Today* reflects that process, too. What, though, do *Oxford Today* readers want from their magazine? This term we have the benefit, in addition to the regular correspondence we enjoy with our readers, of the results of our online readership survey, conducted last term.

Gratifyingly, your responses were encouraging, with 92 per cent of respondents describing the magazine as 'interesting', 'high quality' and 'enjoyable'. But there were those who feel the magazine is not particularly independent in its outlook, and some 10 per cent feel that it should be 'less formal', 'more interesting' and 'controversial', among suggested changes.

News about the University remains the most popular section of the magazine, followed by the longer features. The biggest change from previous surveys, which have used paper questionnaires, is in the use that *Oxford Today* readers make of the internet. Most readers – 85.9 per cent – want to continue to receive their magazine in its traditional, printed format, but there is an increasing appetite for more information and other services online.

That appetite reflects changing times: based on our survey, 93 per cent of readers own a mobile telephone, 76.7 per cent a laptop computer. Traditional sources of information, entertainment and recreation remain, however, with books being cited as a main interest (80.2 per cent), followed by music (58.7 per cent) and travel (54.5 per cent). And the increasingly internationalist outlook of the University is reflected in the distribution of Oxford men and women in every part of the globe.

How does *Oxford Today* respond to these changes? First, we can assure readers that there is no intention to move away from a printed format. But we will be looking at how we can use our website to bring you more information, regularly updated, and involve readers in new ways. Both in print and online, we will continue to present as objective and independent a picture as is possible of Oxford, its diversity and its achievements.

Some changes are forced upon us. Increasing distribution costs, together with fluctuations in the price of paper and energy, have forced us to reduce the size of this issue from 64 pages to 56. I hope, though, that our contents are as stimulating as ever.

We appreciate your thoughts and suggestions for the magazine's development as a reliable, independently edited source of news and opinion from Oxford and its growing international community.

**Greg Neale**, Editor, *Oxford Today*



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Major Sumner, an elder of the Australian Ngarrindjeri people, performing one of the smoking ceremonies held in Oxford in May, when three sets of Ngarrindjeri remains – skulls and lower jaws – which had been held in the University Museum of Natural History since the 19th century were repatriated. Their return had been requested by the Australian government. ‘Our belief is that when our people’s remains are not with their people and in our country, then their spirit is wandering’, Major Sumner said.

## Spin-outs pay off as technology transfer revenues increase

Isis Innovation, the University’s technology transfer company, increased its revenue to £5.6 million in the recent financial year, up from £4.7 million in the previous year. Some £2.9 million was given back to the University to support its core activities.

Isis saw growth in all three of its business divisions. ‘The opportunities for business to capitalise on University technologies have never been greater’, said managing director Tom Hockaday.

In the technology transfer division, the company struck 69 deals with organisations to develop Oxford technologies. These included a licence to the newly formed Oxford-Emergent Tuberculosis Consortium to commercialise a new, more effective vaccine for TB. The vaccine entered Phase IIb clinical trials in April 2009.

Another division of Isis, Oxford University Consulting, saw a 50 per cent rise in the number of consulting contracts it arranged, enabling Oxford academics to offer their expertise to industry and the public sector. These included contracts for academics involved in the development of the latest UN Human Development

Report. ‘Many companies are moving to a more outsourced model and use academic experts to provide guidance and input’, said Hockaday.

The company’s third division, Isis Enterprise, provided increased technology transfer training and innovation



management advice to organisations across four continents. The group also set up in Singapore to provide mentoring and

management expertise to companies in the Asia Pacific Region.

During the year, Isis Innovation set up four new spin-out companies and filed 64 new patent applications protecting Oxford inventions, bringing the total number of patents Isis manages to 400.

The company’s success is continuing into the current financial year, despite the recession. Over the last three months, Isis has marketed over 20 new Oxford technologies to industry in areas including DNA sequencing, communications security, stem cell cryopreservation, health outcomes questionnaires, solar cells, microwave amplifiers and a new malaria vaccine.

[www.isis-innovation.com/news/newsletter](http://www.isis-innovation.com/news/newsletter)  
*Innovation by the Isis, page 23*

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### University tops four tables

Oxford has been placed first in all four rankings guides to British universities published annually by leading national newspapers – the first time this has been achieved. The latest, in the *Sunday Times*, named Oxford as the ‘University of the Year’. Oxford has also headed rankings published by *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent*. Criteria assessed included staff-student ratios, graduate employment, teaching quality and student satisfaction. Oxford has also come top in the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) funding table, receiving £118.9 million for 2009-10.

### £1m gift for China Centre

St Hugh’s College has received a gift of £1 million towards the building of a new University of Oxford China Centre from an individual based in Hong Kong. The new building will be built on the 14½-acre site at St Hugh’s College and will bring together academics working on a range of research interests. The total cost of the new building will be £20 million, £2 million of which has already been raised this financial year.

### Award for composer

The composer and broadcaster Howard Goodall, an alumnus of Christ Church, has won the Composer of the Year title in this year’s BPI Classical Brit Awards for his work *Eternal Light: A Requiem*. The EMI recording features soloists Natasha Marsh, Alfie Boe and Christopher Maltman, together with Christ Church Cathedral Choir and London Musici. Conducted by the choir’s director, Stephen Darlington, it headed the classical charts for several weeks.

### Conservation diploma

A new Postgraduate Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice at Oxford is helping developing countries to protect endangered wildlife species. The eight-month diploma, launched in May, is a joint venture between Oxford’s Department for Continuing Education and WildCRU (the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit), part of the Department of Zoology.

A donation from Dr and Mrs Thomas Kaplan, founders of the Panthera Foundation, has enabled the programme to be developed. The gift will also allow WildCRU to offer fully funded scholarships for conservationists from developing countries.

[www.wildcru.org](http://www.wildcru.org)

### Art blossoms in the Garden

The University Botanic Garden has been awarded a grant of £50,000 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to fund a reciprocal artist-in-residence project between Oxford and Lisbon. The Botanic Garden will host Portuguese artist Gabriela Albergaria for a year, during which she will work in association with the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art. In Portugal, British artist Rob Kessler, a former artist-in-residence at the Garden, will be based at the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência in Lisbon.



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A woman with long, curly hair is sitting on a light-colored sofa, reading a book. She is wearing a light blue long-sleeved top and a patterned blanket is draped over her legs. The room is bright, with large windows in the background covered by white vertical blinds. To the left, there is a round wooden side table with a vase of purple flowers and a stack of books. A white lamp is also visible on the table. In the foreground, a white mug sits on a coffee table.

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## International internships help students prepare for world of work

A new international internships scheme involving alumni has been launched to help Oxford students become even more competitive in the worsening job market.

Graduates leaving university in 2009 are facing the toughest competition for jobs in decades. A report by the Association of Graduate Recruiters in June suggested that there are an average of 48 candidates chasing every vacancy.

Despite this, Jonathan Black, Director of the University's Careers Service, remains upbeat about prospects for graduates. Alongside organising the usual skills workshops and recruiter events, his focus over the past year has been to encourage undergraduates to get on-the-job experience. 'Giving our students something they can put on their CVs is just as important as getting them to come to a careers fair', Black said.

Under the new International Internships Programme, Oxford alumni offer summer placements to current students. Thirty-nine internships were offered this year, in organisations ranging from the Vermilion Partners, a financial services firm focusing on China, to Tradewind Books, a children's publishing house in Vancouver.

Laura Jackson, who is studying PPE at Corpus Christi, recently completed an internship at Disney, one of the world's biggest entertainment companies. 'During a typical day you can expect to be delivering tapes to producers, work with editors, attend voice-over sessions, carry out research for content and assist the production coordinators with forthcoming projects', she enthused. 'Each day is really different.' Alumni who can offer internships can go to [www.careers.ox.ac.uk/internships](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/internships).

■ In another new scheme, the Oxford Student Consultancy programme, groups of students offer their services for free to small and medium-sized enterprises, charities and community organisations in the Oxford area. They gain work experience and a chance to contribute to the community, while sponsors gain an innovative, outside perspective.

■ The University Careers Service is committed to supporting alumni throughout their careers. Two-and-a-half thousand graduates have already signed up to the University's new online system as job seekers. Alumni can also offer help to those seeking jobs, by signing up to the Oxford Careers Network as mentors, advisors or potential employers ([www.careers.ox.ac.uk](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk)).

PAULA BRONSTEINGETTY IMAGES



Young girls at the Jamia Hafsa madrasa in Islamabad

## £400,000 fellowship funds new study into the rise of Islamic girls' schools

Dr Masooda Bano, a postdoctoral fellow at Queen Elizabeth House, has been awarded a three-year 'Ideas and Beliefs Fellowship', worth more than £400,000, by the Economic and Social Research Council to study the growth of female madrasas – Islamic schools for young women.

The madrasas of Pakistan, particularly those in the North-West Frontier Province, have been the object of attention for their alleged role in fostering extremism among young men. Statistics suggest the influence of female madrasas is also growing, with nearly 236,000 girls now studying at almost 2,000 religious schools across the country.

Dr Bano's research will include a study of Jamia Hafsa, the madrasa attached to the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad, which was the site of a stand-off between

militants and the Pakistani state in 2007.

Dr Bano already has support from the Department for International Development (DFID) to study a similar phenomenon in Nigeria, and backing from the John Fell Fund for a project in Syria, enabling her to consider the role of female madrasas comparatively. She will look at why female madrasas are gaining ground, teaching conservative religious values and orthodox conceptions of women's roles, at a time when state and development agencies have been promoting liberal ideas on gender roles. 'A close study of the demand for female madrasas and their working, combined with in-depth analysis of processes of radicalisation as witnessed in the case of Jamia Hafsa, provides an opportunity to understand the factors that lead to the radicalisation of a society', she says.

## How red ants brought back the blue butterfly

A 40-year research effort led by an Oxford scientist has resulted in the successful reintroduction of the large blue butterfly (*Maculinea arion*) to the United Kingdom. Ecologists led by Professor Jeremy Thomas marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the initial reintroduction of the butterfly by publishing a report on the project in the journal *Science*.

The disappearance of the large blue butterfly in the late 1970s was originally attributed to insect collectors – but Thomas and his colleagues discovered that it was suffering because of the decline in a species of red ant (*Myrmica sabuleti*), which nurtured large blue caterpillars in its underground nests. The grassland in which the ants lived became overgrown as a result of changes in grazing and the wild rabbit population, so soil temperature dropped, and the number of red ants diminished.

Thomas's fieldwork in the 1970s was critical. 'From May to late September, I was living with the last UK colony, measuring

everything, including their behaviour, how many eggs they laid, the survival of individual eggs, how many caterpillars were in the plants', he recalled.

Thomas compiled tables showing the number of new eggs and those that survived each year from 1972 to 1977. These tables were published for the first time in the *Science* study. 'We are confident this will help those attempting to bring other species back from the brink', he said.

There are now tens of thousands of large blue butterflies on specially created sites across the south-west of England. It is one of just three UK butterflies on course to meet the Convention of Biological Diversity's target to reverse species' declines by 2010.



The large blue butterfly

DAVID TIPLING/NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY

## Pleased to meet you: Newcomers' Club marks its jubilee

In 1958 Professor Michael Argyle, on sabbatical leave in the United States, published a letter in the *Oxford Magazine*, claiming that some scholars from abroad were refusing invitations to Oxford because of the chilly reception they and their wives received. Lady Wheare, wife of the Rector of Exeter College, took up the challenge, gathered a small committee and, the following year, started the Oxford University Newcomers' Club.

This June the Newcomers' Club celebrated its golden jubilee at a reception at Rhodes House attended by some 140 people, including Lady Wheare. For 50 years, the club, run by volunteers, has welcomed to Oxford the wives, husbands or partners of newly appointed academics, visiting scholars and graduate students.

The club, which found its first home in two rooms in Museum Road, has since moved via Keble Road and Norham Gardens to its present accommodation in the University Club in Mansfield Road.

Dr Jennie Turner, Social Secretary of the club, said: 'The remit of the club has always remained the same – to ensure that newly arrived members feel welcome in Oxford and enjoy their stay. Last academic year we welcomed about 140 new Newcomers, from 37 different countries.'

The focal point of the club is the Wednesday coffee morning during each University term, but other events include guided tours of the Bodleian Library and the Ashmolean Museum, as well as walking tours of Oxford and visits to other major attractions.

Newcomers with children meet again on a Friday morning. An informal conversation group, a book group and an art group are also very popular.

In their turn, Newcomers' Club members have helped to arrange such events as international dinners. Japanese members, for example, have organised special tea ceremonies. Other social occasions include fund-raising events such as the Christmas Fair, and the sale of home-made marmalade.

The University gives the Newcomers' Club a grant each year. 'The ethos of this is that if the spouse of the person working for the University is happy and contented, then that allows the person employed by the University to concentrate on their work more effectively', Dr Turner explained. [www.oxforduniversity.newcomersclub.googlepages.com](http://www.oxforduniversity.newcomersclub.googlepages.com)

ROB JUDGES



## Lecture, books and music mark Berlin centenary

Oxford has been celebrating the centenary of the birth of Sir Isaiah Berlin, one of the most prominent of its 20th-century thinkers, with a series of events and publications stressing his continuing importance.

Berlin, a philosopher, historian of ideas and political theorist, spent his early years in Riga and St Petersburg (then Petrograd), where his formative experiences included witnessing both the Russian Revolutions of 1917. His family moved to Britain in 1921, and Berlin went to St Paul's School before studying Greats and PPE at Corpus Christi College. He was the first Jew to be elected to a Prize Fellowship at All Souls and went on to become Chichele Professor of Social and Political Thought and founding President of Wolfson College. Berlin died in 1997 and is buried in Wolvercote cemetery.

On the day of the centenary, 6 June, Wolfson's annual Isaiah Berlin Lecture, amalgamated for the occasion with the British Academy equivalent, was given by Dr James Billington, Librarian of Congress. As part of the same celebration at Wolfson, Murray Perahia gave a piano recital (Berlin was a lifelong music lover) and an exhibition entitled *Images of Isaiah* was mounted. Other commemorative activities included a seminar on Berlin's thought, held at All Souls, and the unveiling of a blue plaque outside Berlin's former home, Headington House, by two of his stepsons, to mark the four decades he spent there. Outside Oxford, events inspired by the

centenary took place as far afield as Toronto, Madrid, Potsdam, Riga and Jerusalem.

In his work, Berlin argues that values and cultures are irreducibly plural, and that this pluralism requires us to be deeply tolerant. The distinction he made between positive and negative liberty – 'freedom to' and 'freedom from' – still provides the starting point for discussions about political

freedom. Dr Henry Hardy of Wolfson College, who edits Berlin's work, said: 'In my view, his ideas are ever more relevant. Globalisation and population movement make questions of multiculturalism and tolerance central to our time.'

Dr Hardy and Oxford alumna Jennifer Holmes have co-edited a second volume of Berlin's letters, *Enlightening: Letters 1946–1960* (Chatto and Windus). The letters reveal Berlin's sharp observations on the events of the post-war years and on the politicians who shaped them, many of whom he knew personally. Dr Hardy has also edited *The Book of Isaiah: Personal Impressions of Isaiah Berlin* (Boydell Press), a collection of memoirs by those who knew Berlin or were influenced by him. In addition, Wolfson College commissioned a compilation of quotations from letters and extracts from recollections about Berlin's Wolfson years, *Isaiah Berlin and Wolfson College*.

A selection of Berlin's lectures and broadcasts is available online, both on the Oxford University website and on Oxford's iTunesU channel



STEPHANIE JENKINS



## Wraps come off as Ashmolean prepares for its reopening

Oxford Today photographer Rob Judges was on hand as staff at the Ashmolean Museum set about unpacking some of the museum's treasures in advance of its reopening in November after a £61-million redevelopment programme.

Among the paintings in the new Art of The Netherlands Gallery are (left) *A View over Flat Country*, by Philips Koninck (1619–88), and (right) *Portrait of Sir Dudley Carleton*, by Michiel van Mierevelt (1567–1641). The Stone Nandi, the Bull of Shiva (centre), sculpted in southern India around 1600, is one of the attractions in the new Asian Crossroads Gallery.

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## 'Audio tours' added to new digital aids for applicants

The University has launched a range of digital recruitment tools designed to help internet-savvy prospective students find out more about the reality of studying at Oxford.

A series of audio admissions tours is being developed for downloading from the University website on to MP3 players. The tours, which take 60–90 minutes, enable students to follow different routes around Oxford according to the subject area they are interested in. They take in colleges, departments and central locations while telling listeners more about the University and the admissions process.

Currently, the only tours available follow living sciences and physical sciences routes,

but other tours are planned and under development.

This summer, the University also launched a Twitter stream for those wishing to follow Oxford news, comments and events. Early tweets covered celebrations to mark the first Apollo moon landing and research findings about the importance of fathers in teenage girls' lives, published on Fathers' Day. The stream joins those from the Environmental Change Institute, the Saïd Business School, the James Martin 21st Century School, and others. Oxford's Facebook page has already signed up over 14,000 users.

([www.facebook.com/the.university.of.oxford](http://www.facebook.com/the.university.of.oxford))

([www.twitter.com/unioxford](http://www.twitter.com/unioxford))

## Summer school places set to double

Oxford summer school places are set to double by 2014. The new UNIQ Summer Schools will give high-performing state school and college students at the end of their first year of A-level studies the chance to spend a week experiencing life at Oxford.

Five hundred places will be available in 2010, rising to 1,000 places by 2014, thanks to a donation from the Helsington Foundation. Selection will be based on academic attainment, the context in which this was achieved, and the student's passion and drive for his or her chosen subject. The scheme will particularly target schools and colleges where students are achieving Oxford-level entrance grades but are not applying to the University.

The University is seeking alumni to talk at the UNIQ Summer School in July 2010 about their time at Oxford and the opportunities it led to. If you are interested, please register via the Oxford Career Network at [www.careers.ox.ac.uk/alumni/ocn](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/alumni/ocn).

## Bust of Persian poet celebrates college links to Iran

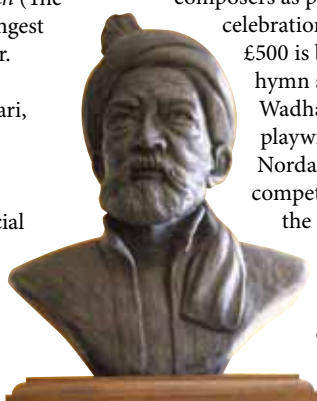
As Wadham College prepares to celebrate the 400th anniversary of its foundation next year, a bust of the Persian poet Abu-l-Qasim Ferdowsi has been unveiled in the college library. The gift of the bust celebrates not only Wadham's strong cultural links with Iran but also the 1000th anniversary in 2010 of Ferdowsi's epic work, *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings), possibly the longest poem written by a single author.

The bust, by the UK-based Iranian sculptor Mehran Ghahari, was unveiled by the Iranian ambassador to the UK, Rasoul Movahedian.

Wadham has enjoyed a special link with Iran since the end of the 1960s, when the then Warden, Sir Maurice Bowra, President of the British

Academy and one of the first co-founders of the British Institute of Persian Studies, welcomed a donation to construct the building of the new library in the college, where the emphasis would be given to Persian Studies.

■ Wadham has launched a competition for composers as part of its 400th anniversary celebrations next year. A prize of £500 is being offered for the best hymn setting of the poem, 'In Wadham Chapel', by the Norwegian playwright (and Wadham scholar) Nordahl Grieg. Details of the competition can be obtained from the Director of Music, Wadham College, Oxford OX1 3PN, or at [www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/alumni). The closing date for entries is 22 January.



## Making history of the OED

*The Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary*, said to be the world's first such publishing project, is published this autumn. The thesaurus, the work of academics at the University of Glasgow, and 40 years in the making, not only groups nearly every word in the 20-volume *Oxford English Dictionary* with other words of similar meaning, but also organises the words within each of the 236,000 plus categories, with the oldest words first, and those that have entered the language most recently shown last.

# Appointments and awards



## New appointments



### Principal of Somerville

**Alice Prochaska**, Librarian of Yale University, has been elected Principal of Somerville College with effect from 1 September 2010. Dr Prochaska studied at Somerville College and received her undergraduate degree and DPhil in Modern History from Oxford. She trained and worked as an archivist at the National Archives of the United Kingdom and had an increasingly high-ranking career as archivist and librarian in the UK before being appointed head of Yale University Libraries in 2001.

### Differential Equations

**Gui-Qiang Chen**, Professor of Mathematics at Northwestern University, USA, Visiting Chair Professor of Mathematics at Fudan University, PRC, and Visiting Professor in the Centre for Advanced Study, Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, was appointed Professor in the Analysis of Partial Differential Equations with effect from 10 August. Professor Chen is a Fellow of Keble College.

### Mathematical Modelling

**Alain Goriely**, Professor in the Department of Mathematics at the University of Arizona, Tucson, USA, has been appointed Professor of Mathematical Modelling with effect from 4 January 2010. Professor Goriely will be a Fellow of St Catherine's College.

### Control Engineering

**David Limebeer**, Professor in Control Engineering and Head, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Imperial College, London, was appointed Professor of Control Engineering and became a Fellow of New College with effect from 1 October.

### Musculoskeletal Sciences

**Udo Oppermann**, Professor in Molecular Biology, Principal Investigator: Dehydrogenases and Metabolism, Structural Genomics Consortium, Botnar Research Centre and University Research Lecturer at Oxford, was appointed

Professor of Musculoskeletal Sciences and a Fellow of St Catherine's College with effect from 1 July.

### Gastroenterology

**Fiona Powrie**, Professor of Immunology and Wellcome Trust funded Senior Research Fellow in Basic Biomedical Science at Oxford, was appointed Sidney Truelove Professor of Gastroenterology in the Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine with effect from 1 October. Professor Powrie became a Fellow of Green Templeton College.

### Islamic Studies

**Tariq Ramadan**, Research Fellow at St Antony's College, at the Lokahi Foundation, London and at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, and Visiting Professor at Erasmus University, Rotterdam, was appointed His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies with effect from 1 October. Professor Ramadan will be associated with St Antony's College.

### Chemistry

**Carol Robinson**, Professor of Mass Spectrometry at the University of Cambridge and Royal Society Research Professor, took up the post of Royal Society Professor in the Department of Chemistry with effect from 1 October. She holds this position concurrently with the Dr Lee's Professorship of Chemistry. Professor Robinson is a Fellow of Exeter College.



Michael Frayn



Fiona Powrie



Carol Robinson



Guy Stroumsa

### Abrahamic Religions

**Guy Stroumsa**, Martin Buber Professor of Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, was appointed Professor of the Study of Abrahamic Religions with effect from 1 October. He became a Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall.

### Operations Management

**David Upton**, Albert J Weatherhead III Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School, has been appointed American Standard Companies Professor of Operations Management at the Saïd Business School with effect from 4 January 2010.

### Visiting professorships

#### Contemporary Theatre

The playwright **Michael Frayn** has been appointed Cameron Mackintosh Visiting Professor of Contemporary Theatre, based at St Catherine's College. He will succeed the actor and director Kevin Spacey in October.

#### Broadcast Media

**Stephen Garret**, joint managing director of Kudos Film and Television, the makers of *Spooks*, *Hustle* and *Life on Mars*, has been appointed News International Visiting Professor of Broadcast Media and a Fellow of Green Templeton College for the academic year 2009–10.

## Vice-Chancellor's Circle

Trinity term saw the inaugural meeting of the Vice-Chancellor's Circle, which recognises the support of many donors to the collegiate University. Launched by the outgoing Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Hood, the celebrations included a reception and debate over dinner, 'Poetry is Beautiful, but Science is What Matters', led by a panel of Oxonian speakers. Speaking for the motion were Professor David Warrell and Professor Irene Tracey; against were Professor John Carey and Mr Michael Symmons Roberts. The debate was chaired by Geoffrey Robertson QC, with comments provided by Sir Simon Jenkins.

The Vice-Chancellor's Circle has 100 founding members, including University and college donors, individuals, trusts, foundations and corporate organisations. For more information, please contact Andrea Roger on 01865 611524 or [andrea.roger@devoff.ox.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.roger@devoff.ox.ac.uk).

## Queen's Birthday Honours

Four Oxford academics were recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours list:

**Ian Brownlie**, Chichele Professor Emeritus of Public International Law, Fellow of All Souls College, and former member and chairman of the UN International Law Commission, was knighted for services to public international law.

**David Hendry**, Professor of Economics and Fellow of Nuffield College, was knighted for services to social science.

**Christopher Ricks**, Professor of Poetry 2004–9, Fellow of Balliol College and Professor of the Humanities, Boston University, received a knighthood for services to scholarship.

**Andrew Ashworth**, QC, Vinerian Professor of English Law, Fellow of All Souls and Chairman of the Sentencing Advisory Panel, received a CBE for services to the administration of justice.

## British Academy Fellows

The British Academy has elected seven academics from the University as new Fellows:

**William Beinart**, Rhodes Professor of Race Relations and Professorial Fellow, St Antony's College.

**Robin Briggs**, Senior Research Fellow, All Souls College.

**Jean Dunbabin**, Senior Research Fellow, St Anne's College.

**Malcolm Godden**, Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon and Fellow of Pembroke College.

**Roger Pearson**, Professor of French and Fellow and Praelector, The Queen's College.

**Christopher Pelling**, Regius Professor of Greek and Student of Christ Church.

**David Womersley**, Thomas Warton Professor of English Literature and Fellow of St Catherine's College.

In addition, **Professor Sir Adam Roberts**, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for International Studies within the Department of Politics and International Relations and an Emeritus Fellow of Balliol College, took up the position of British Academy President.

## Royal Society Fellows

Three researchers have recently been elected Fellows of the Royal Society:

**Nicholas Harberd**, Sibthorpean Professor of Plant Sciences and Fellow of St John's College.

**Angela McLean**, Professor of Mathematical Biology and Senior Research Fellow of All Souls College.

**Richard Passingham**, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience and Fellow of Wadham College.

## ENCAENIA

This year's Encaenia Honorary Degree Ceremony honoured a poverty campaigner and humanitarian, together with leading figures from the worlds of science and the arts.

### Doctor of Letters

**Mr Fazle Hasan Abed**, Chairperson and founder, BRAC (formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee); Commissioner, UN Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor: 'A tireless defender of the needy, a citizen of Bangladesh and the whole world ...'

**Dr Santiago Calatrava Valls**, Dipl Architect, Dipl Engineer, Hon Fellow, RIBA. Architect and structural engineer: 'Superlative architect, in whose works function and beauty are conjoined ...'

**Mr Philip Pullman**, CBE, MA, FRSL. Prize-winning author: 'A most skilful weaver of tales ... for whose imagination one world has not sufficed ...'

### Doctor of Science

**Professor Erwin Hahn**, BSc, PhD, DSc, FRS. Physicist, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley: 'Wise investigator of the nature of things, whose fame the world re-echoes ...'

**Professor Barry Marshall**, AC, MB BS, FRS, FRACP. Professor of Clinical Microbiology, University of Western Australia: 'An exceptional physician ... in whom sense and courage have been uniquely combined ...'

### Doctor of Music

**Dame Mitsuko Uchida**, Classical pianist: 'Enchanting mistress of the keyboard, whose fingers reveal both the beauty and the profundity of musical compositions ...'

### Other Honorary degrees

On 9 May, the **Degree of Doctor of Letters** was conferred upon **Mr Roger Boning**, formerly Group Finance Director, Oxford University Press: 'An honourable and admirable businessman, a great friend and bulwark of this University.'

Also on 9 May, the **Degree of Master of Arts** was conferred on **Mr Antony Willis**, Research Technician in the Department of Biochemistry, latterly in the MRC Immunochemistry Unit: 'An expert collaborator, a devoted scientific investigator.'

On 23 May, the **Degree of Doctor of Letters** was conferred on **Ms Susan Reece**, formerly Managing Director, International Division, Oxford University Press: 'A masterly publisher, a great friend and support to this University.'

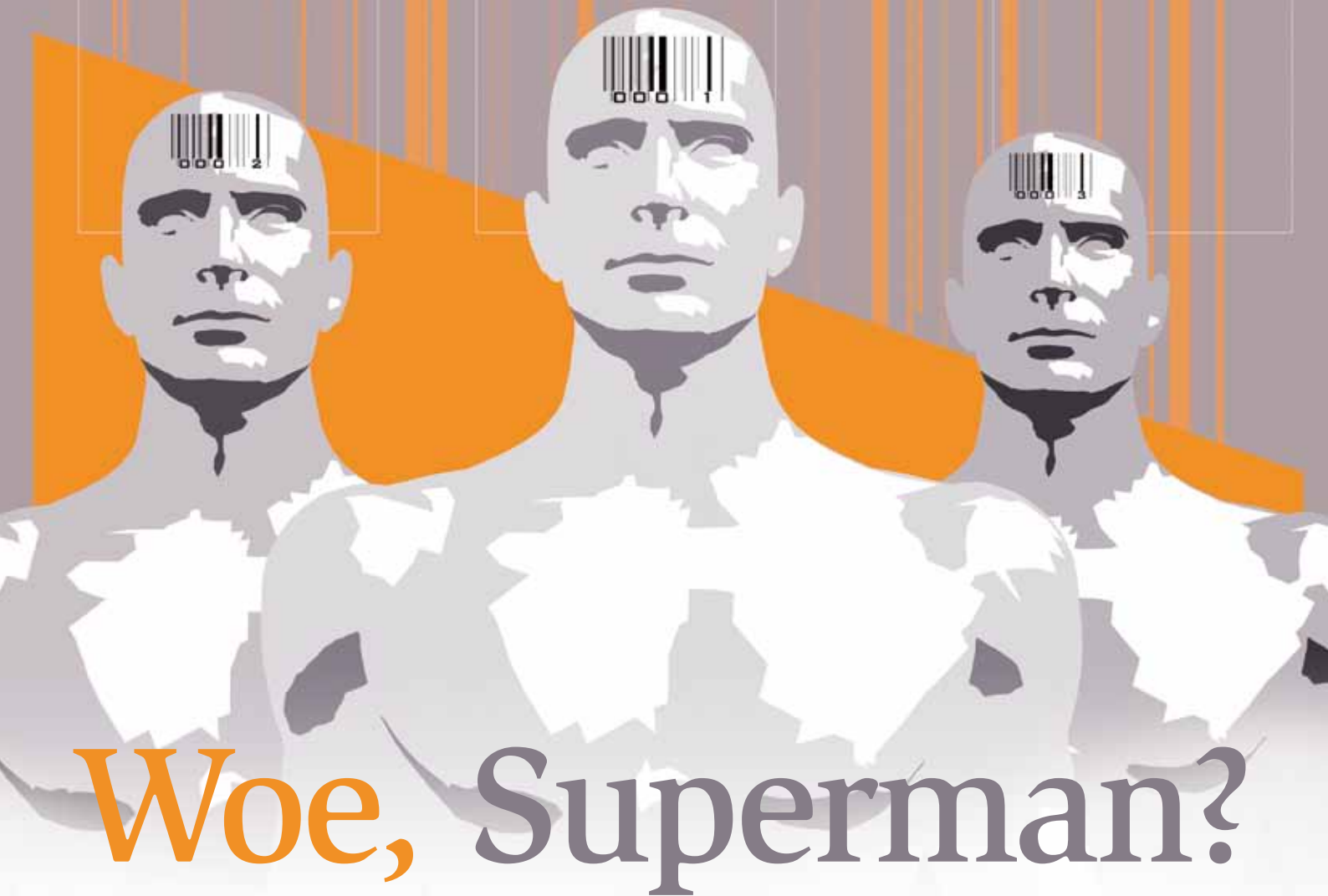
On 18 July, the **Degree of Doctor of Letters** was conferred on **Darcey Bussell**, CBE, formerly Principal Ballerina with the Royal Ballet: 'Mistress of lovely movement, who have wordlessly touched the hearts of those who have watched you ...'

and **Natalie Zemon Davis**, PhD, FBA, FRHS, FFAAS, Adjunct Professor at the University of Toronto, Professor Emerita of Princeton University, and George Eastman Visiting Professor at Balliol College 1994–5: 'Learned and perspicacious historian, who have described the lives of ordinary people with a pen as keen as it is elegant ...'



ENCAENIA HONORANDS: *Mr Fazle Hasan Abed, Dr Santiago Calatrava Valls, Professor Erwin Hahn, Dame Mitsuko Uchida, Professor Barry Marshall and Mr Philip Pullman*





# Woe, Superman?

Science is opening up the possibilities of significant human enhancement – and provoking a debate on the ethics involved. **Peter Snow** reports

**A**RTIFICIALLY engendered humans have long been a science fiction staple – from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to Huxley's *Brave New World* and, most recently, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Michel Houellebecq's *The Possibility of an Island* – their heroes dehumanised figures depicted amid bleak, biotechnologically devastated landscapes.

But in the year of Darwin's bicentenary, science fact presses hard on the heels of science fiction. Three decades since Louise Brown, the first 'test tube baby', woke to the world, breakthroughs are now trumpeted almost every month. Chinese scientists recently announced that they had cloned the first animals from skin cells. Earlier, British scientists revealed they had manufactured artificial sperm using stem cells from a five-day-old male embryo.

Human enhancement provokes violent controversy: the American writer Francis

Fukuyama branded 'transhumanism' (the radical enhancement of humanity by technological means) 'the world's most dangerous idea'. But genetic technologies are only one, if perhaps the most controversial, sector on the enhancement front.

Mood and cognitive enhancers such as Ritalin and Modafinil are now widely used. In sport, sophisticated performance enhancers consistently stay one jump ahead of the detecting authorities. At what is called 'the mind-machine interface' there are already treatments based on needles inserted into the brains of sufferers from Parkinson's disease. In future we may well see genetically engineered, digital or nano-level implants. Beyond these lies the vista of life extension. 'There is a significant chance that my own children will live beyond the age of 120', says Julian Savulescu, Director of Oxford's Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics. 'Thereafter we could be looking at two- or three-fold increases in human life spans.'

I first heard Savulescu lecture to a group of businessmen – brewers: purveyors, no less, of that ancient mood enhancer, alcohol – and was impressed by his ability to cut through the fog of assumption to the hard utilitarian specifics. But could it really be that simple?

At the Uehiro Centre Savulescu heads a group of some thirty research associates, plus graduate students and international visitors. A medic before he turned philosopher and recently hailed in a poll as 'Australia's top emerging thinker', Savulescu openly stakes out his position on human enhancement: 'I'm an enthusiast. To be human is to strive to be better. We have a duty to use our knowledge to achieve worthwhile goals.'

'Think of the comparative benefits. Estimates have been of as much as a 20 per cent reduction in poverty and welfare dependency as a result of relatively minor rises in average IQ across the population.' He

emphasises that increases at the lowest IQ levels – below 70 points – could bring the biggest benefits.

Perhaps most controversially, Savulescu favours what he calls ‘procreative beneficence’. At present, screening is limited by the number of eggs women normally produce and allows scientists to screen only for certain specific diseases. If scientists could scan a far larger number of embryos, using artificially manufactured sperm and eggs, this would allow couples to choose their ‘perfect child’.

‘I would only be opposed to changes here on safety or very clear and significant public interest grounds’, he says. ‘And this is not merely about reproduction. Many of these techniques provide knowledge and generate other valuable technologies. Embryonic stem cell research is one example. That arose, in part, because of the ability to artificially create human embryos. The prize involves possibly saving hundreds of thousands of lives. Since the arguments against stem cell research, for instance, are so weak I see no reason to stop it.’

Nick Bostrom, an associate of the centre and member of Oxford’s James Martin 21st Century School, co-founded the World Transhumanist Association (now known as Humanity Plus or H+) in 1998, sees human enhancement as potentially valuable in the face of the formidable global risks we face: ‘If we were smarter we would be better able to anticipate, analyse and devise counter-measures to existential risks’, while conceding that ‘radical forms of human enhancement can also increase some risks or create new ones. It is a non-trivial challenge to figure out how this plays out.’

‘Enhancers that extend the healthy human lifespan would be well worth developing’, he adds. ‘Anti-aging research, in particular, deserves a much higher priority, since age-related disease is the most common cause of death globally.’ Ultimately, he predicts ‘our risk of dying in any given year might be like that of someone in their late teens or early twenties. Life expectancy would then be around 1,000 years.’

Objections to human enhancement come from four main directions. The first is that genetic enhancements infringe the rights of those not yet born. Bostrom concedes that the issue of reproductive enhancement is complicated. ‘There the person is not deciding for themselves, so from a moral or philosophical point of view more questions arise. That said, my view is that increases in cognitive capacity and functioning, if they can be safely brought about, are a good thing and we should try to achieve them. The choice should lie with the parents.’



*Nick Bostrom: ‘Man will have been radically transformed by the end of the century’*

But won’t we nevertheless be creating a ‘genetic divide’ in society, a hostile faultline between the enhanced and the unenhanced? ‘The best way to avoid such a divide is to make enhancements generally available’, says Savulescu. ‘Like education, they should be freely provided by the state. There is a parallel with plastic surgery. If the benefits are trivial, leave it to the market; if the benefits are central to a good life, provide a basic level.’

A third objection could be called the ‘wisdom of nature’ argument: nature is infinitely complex, and we depart from her at our peril. ‘Certainly, humans are very complex, finely tuned organisms, and there are often very good reasons why we are the way we are’, says Savulescu. ‘But that is not to say every single component is optimal. Some aspects simply had a better chance to reproduce or have just survived.’



*Julian Savulescu: ‘I’m an optimist. To be human is to strive to be better’*

Darwin himself, Savulescu points out, was under no illusion about the imperfections of nature and the blind mindlessness of its own selection processes. In a letter of 1856 to his friend Hooker he included the comment: ‘What a book a Devil’s Chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering low and horridly cruel works of nature.’ ‘We should be careful’, concludes Savulescu. ‘We should gather sufficient evidence and act according to a justifiable set of values. But I believe that we can understand human nature and that we should intervene.’

But by embracing human enhancement aren’t we ultimately signing our own suicide note as a species? Savulescu deplors what he calls ‘species-ism’: ‘I do not believe there is any structural difference between humanism and racism or sexism. It is a club privilege, which gives greater weight to the interests of the club members and is endorsed by the club members ... Humans may become extinct just as Neanderthal man gradually became extinct. It is characteristic of evolution for species to come and go, to be replaced by others. There is something special about *Homo sapiens*. But that specialness will continue in posthumans or another life form, unless we are annihilated against our will.’

In place of humanism he would substitute ‘personism’. ‘There are candidate properties – rationality and the abilities to cooperate and to empathise – that if these other beings possess, then we should treat them no differently than other human beings, say, from other cultures or continents. And they should treat us with the same respect.’

If Savulescu and Bostrom are radicals in this debate, a more moderate, gradualist position is taken by Roger Crisp, Fellow in Philosophy at St Anne's and also an associate of the Uehiro Centre. 'The debate tends to be very polarised', he says. 'I think you need to specify exactly what is under discussion. I'm in favour of some enhancements if they are freely available to all as opposed to only a few and if the side-effects aren't too serious.'

'Others espouse more extreme scenarios involving, for instance, creating a new species. I would not really endorse that position and would ask two questions. If we spent money on this would we be doing something morally wrong (like using torture, for instance)? I incline to think not. Secondly, though, there is the question: is this the most effective way to achieve the desired goals? Probably not, in my view. I think we could be giving up too easily on the resources that we have already got. An example of this kind of thinking that passes over less ambitious alternatives is the idea that we might come to terms with environmental change by



CATHERINE PAXTON

Roger Crisp: 'Philosophy can take you down to the intuitive bedrock'

A doctoral student supervised by Crisp, Alexandre Erler, author of a prize-winning essay entitled 'Authenticity, Self-creation and Self-respect', also believes that human enhancement raises 'legitimate worries'. He is particularly concerned that memory enhancement and especially memory editing could infringe individual authenticity. His papers explore a series of human predicaments: a sexually abused daughter or a concentration camp victim wanting to forget the past, a born-again violent criminal who refuses therapy and locks himself away. 'There are appropriate responses to life events such as mourning', Erler says. 'Enhancers might help us to escape the pain but also disconnect us from the reasons why we have to feel in a certain way. The hard way might be the best way.'

Susan Greenfield, Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford, has just published a book, *ID: the Quest for Meaning in the 21st Century*, on the challenges technology poses to human identity. Pharmacological enhancements alarm Professor Greenfield more than neurological interventions which, being more elaborate procedures, are more considered. She stresses the role of whole brain interaction: 'A better brain is not simply one armed with a better memory. You shouldn't just be trying to be a better computer. There is a danger that enhancement will become a competitive endeavour. But it is not a linear arms race. We should be encouraging people to become better individuals all round.'

Even so, Greenfield describes a startling range of neurological possibilities: devices enabling paraplegics to activate prosthetic limbs by thought alone, and marrying brain cells with silicon chips (apparently neurones can be very successfully cultured on silicon,

like bacteria in Petri dishes). Further in the future, she envisages reverse cochlear implants that can not only turn sound into brain waves but also the reverse. Fitted with tiny radios, these open up the amazing possibility of directly transmitting thought from brain to brain – a prospect Greenfield says she finds 'scary and exciting in equal measure'. Greenfield outlines four possible scenarios for human identity: our present selves ('Someone'); a hedonist depersonalised version ('No one'); a socially oriented self ('Anyone'); and 'Eureka', an autonomous creative individual. 'For the first time in human history, the technology is there to enable us to have not just the technological toolkit but also the space and the time to shape a world that creates an environment in which all four personas can be developed into an integrated portfolio', she says. To achieve this, she proposes joint action by government, media, schools and the electronic products industry to encourage individual creativity, group working and a stronger orientation towards society.

At Oxford, as elsewhere, the debate goes on – but do not look for simple solutions. 'Philosophy does not provide answers,' says Crisp, 'What it can do is take you down to the intuitive bedrock and say: here is the issue; here are the things you could think about it; now it's up to you to decide.' 'Issues of practical ethics are best handled by people who are not simply specialists in that field', he adds. 'In Oxford we have people who know about larger questions such as the philosophy of mind, etc. And that's important, because what questions of practical ethics do is bring you quite quickly up against the old standard philosophical questions like what is our nature and what's the world like.'

'While the terms of this emerging political disagreement are still being negotiated,' writes Savulescu in *Human Enhancement*, which he has just co-edited with Bostrom, 'there might be a window of opportunity open for academic bioethicists to influence the shape and direction of this debate before it settles into a fixedly linear ideological tug-of-war ... the job of practical ethics is to increase the confidence in certain propositions where there is unjustified lack of confidence. The other job of practical ethics is to introduce uncertainty where we have unjustified certainty. And I think we have unjustified certainty that we'll continue to exist as a species in the next hundred years ... Our fate is, to a greater degree than ever before in human history, in our own hands.'

Peter Snow is an Oxford-based writer

ROB JUDGES



Susan Greenfield: 'For the first time, the technology is there'

adapting our bodies so we can live easier in very hot climates. That strikes me as crazy.

'Human beings, if faced with a problem, tend to like exciting solutions. They ignore the probabilities of their working out in unexpected ways, and the dangers. The view of people on the "radical wing" is that this could happen, so we've got to get it right. But isn't it more likely to happen if we develop the technology? It is also important to assess the probabilities of success in relation to the size of the investment that you are making. If you have a few million pounds, would it be better to spend it on cognitive enhancement or, say, Sightsavers International, who achieve remarkable results treating eye problems in developing countries for very little outlay per person.'

The era of the internal combustion engine may be almost over: **Georgina Ferry** meets an engineer who is preparing for a radically different future in transport

# Driving down Electric Avenue



ROB JUDGIES

leave others to think about the source of energy to drive it. 'Very efficient vehicles need to be as light as possible,' he says. 'A conventional motor might weigh as much as 200–300 kg. The question was, how could we make it lighter?'

The answer came from advances in materials. Conventional motors have fixed and rotating magnetic components that are made from rolled iron or steel, wound round with copper wire. In contrast, modern soft magnetic composites contain powdered iron and can be formed into three-dimensional shapes. 'That allows us to rethink the way the motor looks,' says McCulloch. 'We have developed a topology of motor that allows us to minimise the amount of material, and at the same time create paths for the magnetic flux that minimise how much gets lost on the way. Of the two main components of a motor, the stator and the rotor, we have reduced the weight of the stator by a factor of three or four, while the rotor is about the same. Overall, the weight is about half that of a conventional motor of the same power, and because we have minimised losses the efficiency is about 95 per cent. So there are lots of virtuous circles.' The new design is called a YASA motor (Yokeless and Segmented Armature).

The point of the LIFEcar project – the brainchild of Hugo Spowers (Oriel 1978; see OT 7.1 and box), founder of vehicle designers OSCar Automotive and more recently Riversimple – was to see if it was possible to produce an electric vehicle that performed like a sports car. With funding from the government, Morgan Motor Company, Malvern-based makers of classic sports cars for a century, provided a streamlined body

ABOVE LEFT: *Freewheeling: Malcolm McCulloch, head of the Electrical Power Group*

LEFT: *The lightweight YASA motor*

ABOVE RIGHT: *Delta Motorsport's new four-seat coupé, which will incorporate the new motor*

ABOVE, FAR RIGHT: *The Morgan LIFEcar*

**N**OT many scientific researchers get to see the fruits of their labours exhibited in the grounds of an elegant Italian lakeside villa, surrounded by crowds of admiring visitors. So it was a rather special moment for Dr Malcolm McCulloch, who heads the Electrical Power Group in the Department of Engineering Science, when the LIFEcar showed its paces in the Concept Car category at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este on Lake Como in April last year. From the outside, LIFEcar has a body that combines sharp futuristic edges with the wonderful curves of a bygone age of motoring. But inside it is

all future. LIFEcar runs on hydrogen, with an electric motor driving each wheel: it emits nothing but water.

In 2003 McCulloch decided to focus his research on sustainable energy, creating some of the technology that would enable us to function in a post-oil and carbon-neutral future. Transport is his priority: with Professor of Transport Studies David Banister and his colleague in Engineering Colin Axon, he recently received funding from the James Martin 21st Century School to set up an Institute for Carbon and Energy Reduction in Transport. 'By 2050 we're going to need at least a 94 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions per kilometre travelled,' he says, and as an electrical engineer he has set out to show how electric motors might contribute to that reduction.

Electric vehicles are not a new idea, but the standard milk-float, golf buggy or street-cleaning vehicle is powered by batteries and a conventional electric motor, both of which are heavy and not geared to high performance. Working with his graduate student Tim Woolmer, McCulloch decided to focus on improving the electric motor itself, and





DELTA MOTORSPORT

based on its Aero 8 model; McCulloch's group developed the motors; QinetiQ provided the fuel cell that generated electricity from compressed hydrogen, and Cranfield University researchers ran simulations of the vehicle's performance. The prototype, shown at the Geneva Motor Show in 2008, achieved a range of 250 miles, acceleration of 0–60 mph in 7 seconds, and fuel consumption equivalent to 150 miles to a gallon of petrol, with zero carbon emissions.

'We asked ourselves how we could get the acceleration that would make it feel sports-car like', says McCulloch. 'The trick was to separate the power requirement for cruising from that for acceleration. If you look at the normal way that you drive, most of the power is used for accelerating. So we installed ultracapacitors that allow you to store and release energy quickly.' The LIFEcar has a bank of 150 of these components, which capture the energy generated during braking and provide the power for bursts of acceleration. Meanwhile, the fuel cell – which generates energy by reacting hydrogen with oxygen from the air – has only to meet the energy requirement for cruising, and so can be remarkably small for the size and performance of the car.

Like all hydrogen-powered cars, LIFEcar faces an immediate problem: there are only around 100 hydrogen filling stations in the world at the moment, and the car manufacturers and gas distributors are each waiting for the other to make the big investment that will make hydrogen power more than an interesting research project. 'How do you break the catch-22 – no infrastructure without cars, no cars without infrastructure?', says McCulloch. 'One of our partners, BOC, has developed a small filling station that will fit on the back of a truck. You can put it down anywhere, and it will supply a small city with a fleet of about 100 vehicles. After that, you can build up the infrastructure piecemeal. We think Oxford would be the right size of small city to try this out.'

In the meantime, the LIFEcar consortium has just received funds from the government's Technology Strategy Board to develop a second generation of LIFEcar that will use the same electric motors and ultracapacitors, but be fuelled either by a small diesel engine and generator, or a battery. The aim is to commercialise the electric motors developed for LIFEcar, by making them versatile enough to work in other vehicles and be driven by other forms of power. Delta Motorsport, another small British-based company, has recently agreed to use the motors for the battery-powered four-seat coupé it plans to have ready for test drives by the end of this year.

'A number of people are coming to us because we produce very good motors', says McCulloch. 'We can see what different technologies are around, and look at what is the optimum combination of the different components. We are modelling a system that says



not only "How much carbon are you emitting per kilometre?" but also "What is the economic cost of that drive train going to be?" and "What is environmentally acceptable?" It's a much more holistic picture.'

Asked for his prediction about our future driving options, McCulloch forecasts that electric cars, with batteries charged from the national grid, will be the dominant model in 10 years' time. 'In 10–20 years I think there will be multiple sources – electric, hybrid, hydrogen, perhaps some liquefied petroleum gas – there'll be a whole ecosystem of variations coming through.' But the greatest change might not be in what we drive, but the way we drive. 'We need to address the whole issue of personal mobility. The problem at the moment is that most people want to own a vehicle to do everything from dropping kids at school and picking up shopping to going on holiday. My view is that we are going to have different vehicles doing different tasks. You won't own a car at all.

There will be providers who will lease you the right vehicle for each task. You might cycle or walk to work, but when you want to shop you'll hire a small car for a few hours. If you want to go camping in Wales, you'll hire a vehicle geared towards that particular task.'

By the end of this year, Oxford YASA Motors will be established as a University spin-out, with the aim of developing electric motors suitable for commercial production. Oxford could be one of the first cities to benefit from a smaller carbon footprint, cleaner air and quieter streets as a result.

[www.icert.ox.ac.uk](http://www.icert.ox.ac.uk)

Georgina Ferry is an Oxford-based science writer

## Urban runabout unveiled

In June this year, the company Riversimple, founded by Hugo Spowers (Oriel 1978) to 'move people sustainably' unveiled its two-seater hydrogen-powered urban vehicle, the Hyrban, in London. Like the LifeCar, it has YASA motors on each wheel and is powered by a fuel cell backed up by ultracapacitors storing the energy from regenerative braking. Despite the fuel cell's tiny 6 kilowatt output, the Hyrban can reach speeds of 50 mph and has a range of 200 miles on one tank of hydrogen: its consumption is the equivalent of 300 mpg.

The demonstration model was backed by the Piech family, who have close associations with the Porsche marque, and Spowers is now raising the funds for a fleet of 10 production prototypes. If all goes well, he hopes to be building vehicles for members of the public to put through their paces in 2011. But you won't be able to buy one: the Riversimple business model is based on long leases that include all the fuel you need. Spowers is also making all the designs available online so that suitably adventurous people can make their own, and even suggest improvements. [www.riversimple.com](http://www.riversimple.com)



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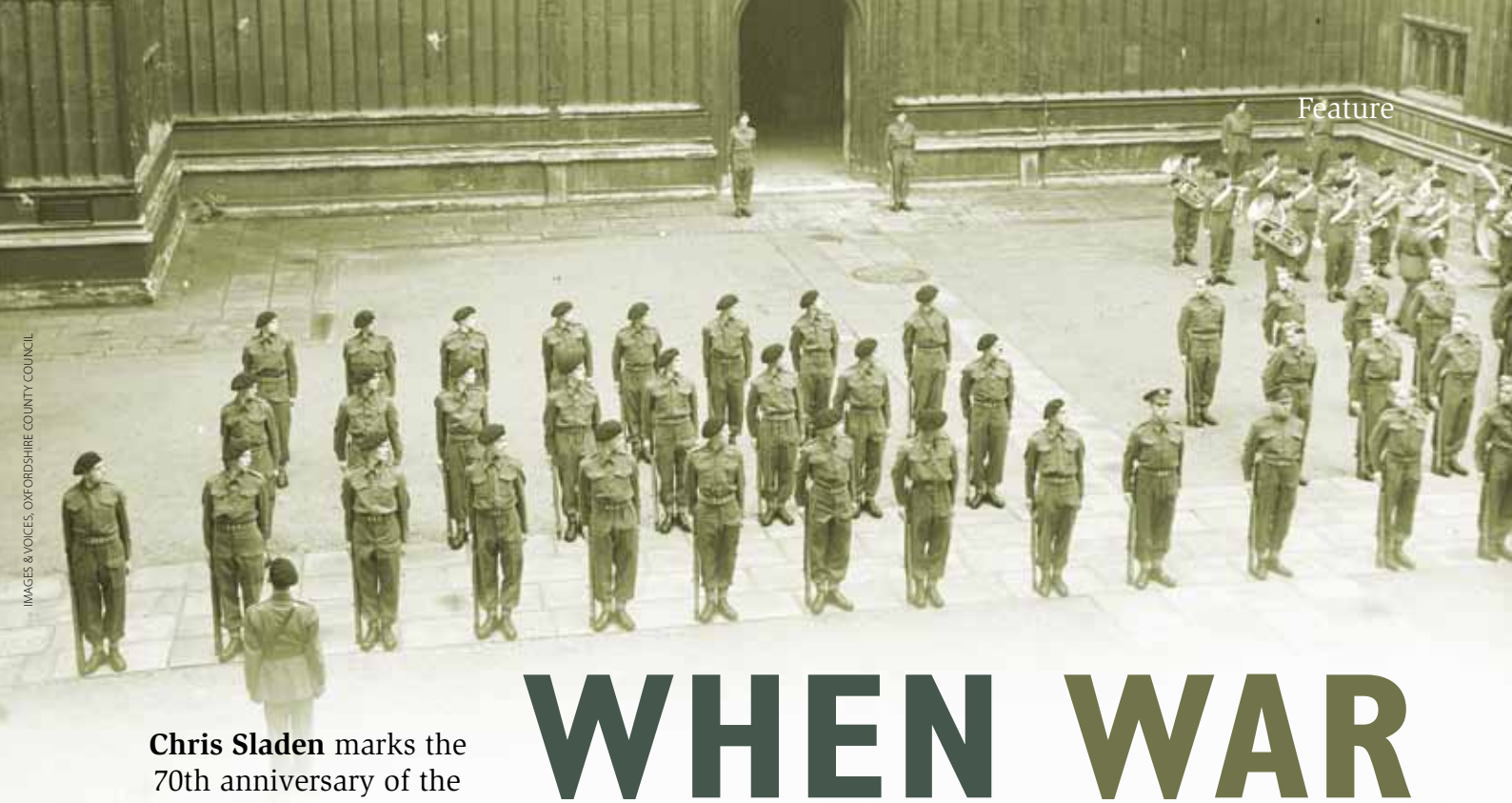
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**Chris Sladen** marks the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe with an assessment of its impact on the University

# WHEN WAR CAME AGAIN

As it had done 25 years earlier, war broke out during the Long Vacation of 1939. How it would affect university life was, for a while, uncertain; Freddie Madden (Ch Ch 1935) recalls some concern, as he was about to embark on his DPhil, as to whether Oxford would be 'in action again' at all. After minimal delay, however, term duly began and, he says, 'work went on as usual ... well, as usual as it could in the circumstances ... old college rules continued ... tutorials, seminars and lectures went on fairly normally.'

At first, it was the time of the 'Phoney War'. For Oxford, the most immediate impact came from the flood of young evacuees, some temporarily lodged in colleges (at Christ Church, some were found not to have been baptised, and this was hastily put right). When term began, Madden and others settled back into routine. Numbers of undergraduates had fallen sharply; conscription initially applied only to men aged 20 and 21, thus excluding many younger students, but by agreement between the War Office and the University a recruiting office was set up at the Clarendon Building and some 2,000 undergraduates and postgraduates

aged 25 or under volunteered. As a result, student numbers fell from 4,500 (850 of them women) in 1938 to 3,400 (750 women) in 1939.

Where Madden settled down to his doctoral thesis, David Morris, arriving as a Fresher to read Modern History at BNC, decided there was 'absolutely no point in doing any work at all': at the end of their first year, undergraduates were to be set some simple papers (no more testing, he claims, than the school leaving examination of those days) and would then be entitled to a BA degree following war service. In the understandable belief that 'it was all soon coming to an end', he determined to sample



traditional Oxford pleasures – skating on Port Meadow, and punting on the Cherwell while, as he now recalls, 'the British army was fighting for its life on Dunkirk's beaches.'

As conscription was successively extended (from 1941 it also applied to single women aged 20–30) student numbers continued to fall until, in 1944, the total was

about 2,500, of whom nearly one-third were women – the highest proportion yet recorded. Even so, the nadir of 1918, when only a few hundred undergraduates remained in Oxford, was avoided. From 1942 onwards only new matriculands aged under 18 were accepted, augmented by short service military students, among them, towards the end of the war, a handful of Americans (thanks to the US 'GI Bill of Rights' of 1944).

By the time Rosemary Maples (now Rosemary Jameson and living in retirement in south Oxfordshire) came up to Somerville to read English in 1942, the degree course had been fixed at two years (plus an extra six-week term during the Long Vacation); only those who committed themselves in advance to becoming teachers qualified for the three-year course. It was, she thinks, hard work for



THE PRINCIPAL AND FELLOWS OF LADY MARGARET HALL

ABOVE: An Officer Training Corps parade in the Schools Quad of the Bodleian Library, c.1940

RIGHT: Digging for victory at LMH

## When war came again

the two-year students, who got to skip only two or three of the Finals papers: 'It wasn't like ordinary peacetime Oxford, but we thought we were jolly lucky to be up at Oxford at all.'

Dons, and other college and University staff, were also conscripted. By 1940 nearly 25 per cent of Oxford's academic staff were either in the forces or working as temporary civil servants. Less predictably, one (unnamed) professor is celebrated in a history of Morris Motors as 'one of the most skilful fitter-assemblers' at the Cowley works, helping turn out 40 Tiger Moth aircraft each week, plus parts for more sophisticated machines.

Many from the poorly paid ranks of college servants – 'scouts' – were either conscripted or joined the dextrous professor at Cowley. John Spencer (CCC 1940) is one of several contributors to a college anthology who remembers female 'bedders' coming back from retirement to serve as 'scouts'. Innovation might, however, be taken too far: the wartime marriage of a Corpus undergraduate to the daughter of his female 'scout' was 'much frowned upon', writes Spencer.

While the number of 'scouts' diminished, their duties increased. Many served alongside dons in the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), later the Home Guard. Maurice Bowra, Warden of Wadham, was second-in-command of the Oxford South Company, drilling 150 postal workers in the quad ('our mails are safe at any rate', wrote Isaiah Berlin). Bowra took command of the Company from Frank Pak- enham when the latter – never the snappiest dresser on campus – was reprimanded for being 'improperly dressed' on parade.

During the day, undergraduate and post-graduate students would exercise with the University Training Corps. Others joined college fire brigades, exercising with city crews.

Dons, scouts and students served together as fire-watchers on college rooftops. A round-the-clock team of 20 was stationed at Merton, control centre for all buildings on that side of the city. John Croft (Ch Ch 1941), who would become head of the Home Office Research Unit in the 1970s, has written of 'many a starlit night on the roof of the library watching bombers limping home from raids on Germany'. At several colleges the ladders or stout ropes provided as escape routes in case of fire proved invaluable to those wishing to climb into college in the black-out. Rosemary Maples, whose home was south of London, where the reality of the Blitz was all too evident, remembers Somervillians helping out at the Radcliffe Infirmary, but thought the fuss Oxford made of air raid precautions 'ludicrous'.



ST HUGH'S COLLEGE

Freddie Madden, who went on to a long and distinguished post-war career as a historian – Reader, Professorial Fellow and Emeritus Fellow of Nuffield College – was fortunate, in 1939, to find a room in his old college; others were shunted unceremoniously into neighbouring colleges: from BNC, David Morris found himself following the pagan evacuees into Christ Church's Meadow Building. Several colleges were requisitioned for civil servants. Balliol hosted bits of the Foreign Office; Merton the Ministry of Transport, Queen's the Ministry of Home Security. Much of St John's was occupied by the Ministry of Food's controllers of fish and potatoes – 'the biggest fish and chip shop in the world', quips Whitehall historian Peter Hennessy.



PUNCH LIBRARY

ACANTHUS

"Balliol may be a bit earlier, but this is one of the oldest Ministries in the University."

As in 1914, the Examination Schools became a hospital, as did St Hugh's (where pioneering work was done on head injuries) and Ruskin College. London's Slade School of Fine Art was decanted into the Ashmolean. The New Bodleian was first hiding place for college paintings, stained glass and other valuables, many later shifted to more remote places, while the lowest level of the building became an air raid shelter for 2,000. A static water tank was erected in Radcliffe Square, but Merton designed and built its own, claimed the local press, 'to harmonise with the surroundings'. Individual colleges prepared refuges in cellars and basements; the *Oxford Mail* alleged that one college had converted its cellar but provided only one entrance; if this became blocked, the report said, egress was to be effected with a pickaxe: 'This useful tool will be kept in the porters' lodge – the non-arrival of dons at high table would be signal for excavation to begin.'

Another chore for the scouts was daily erection and dismantling of the black-out. For colleges, the cost of blacking out hundreds of windows of assorted sizes in medieval, Tudor or 19th-century buildings was considerable. Before term began, Oxford's shops had reported that blinds, curtains,

ABOVE: Nurses and patients at St Hugh's College, which became a military hospital specialising in head injuries, treating some 13,000 patients between 1939 and 1945

LEFT: A 1942 cartoon by Acanthus (Harold Frank Hoar) in *Punch* reflects the Whitehall takeover

ABOVE RIGHT: Sir William Beveridge, then Master of University College, greets evacuee children from Ashford, Kent



black paint and brown paper were already in short supply. Watchful over his charges' well-being, the then Master of Pembroke asked what action was proposed to protect undergraduates against the solicitations of prostitutes in Oxford's darkened streets. He might have been cheered by the recollection of another 'Corpuscle', Peter Wakefield (CCC 1939 – his post-war career would be in the Diplomatic Service) that 'life ... sobered up in the face of the war ... the black-out reduced the temptation to sally out of an evening'. On the other hand, the memoirs of John Harper-Nelson (Trinity, 1940) tell not only of afternoons devoted to rugby and rowing, but evenings of 'jazz, pubs and publications', concluding: 'to the relief of its adherents and the exasperation of its critics, life at Oxford flows, like the Isis, with inexorable tranquillity in peace or war. And the budding Labour politician Christopher Mayhew, on leave in Oxford in 1941, wrote to his mother, 'less butter is eaten with crumpets; inferior brands of sherry are drunk ... [but] fundamentally Oxford is just the same.'

Historian Paul Addison concludes that food was one of the more depressing aspects of life in wartime Oxford: 'unappetising meals ... meagre rations of milk, tea and sugar, and a pound pot of marmalade per term.' Others disagree: Freddie Madden says: 'I don't think there was noticeably any rationing [in 1939]'; David Morris found Christ Church food, that first year of the war, to be 'magnificent'. At Somerville Rosemary Maples seems not to have been so lucky. Living in college (just one Somerville building had

*Pre-war indolence and hedonism had given way to application and austerity'*

been requisitioned), she says that 'most of the time we were jolly hungry'. There were frequent sorties to the Little Clarendon Street bakery, whose loaves would be devoured whole, without butter or jam.

Other shortages – of cigarettes, razor blades and soap – may have irked more; Maurice Bowra is said by his biographer

to have found the lack of lavatory paper 'particularly galling', telling Penelope Betjeman that he used the *Daily Mirror*, until it blocked Wadham's drains. A common hardship was lack of heating. David Morris found Meadow Building rooms unbearably cold: one jug of hot water a day was provided and, when he came back after the Christmas vacation, the sheets were so cold and damp that steam rose when he got into bed. Things were scarcely better at Somerville, where, Rosemary Jameson says, students quit their rooms and huddled in the library to work.

Some who tasted Oxford's charms before going off to war never returned: John Harper-Nelson's memoirs are dedicated to 'those who made being at Oxford such fun but never survived to enjoy the memories'. Soon after the war, the *Oxford Magazine* estimated that 1,719 members of the University had lost their lives and, although this was an underestimate, the real total was still smaller, both absolutely and as a proportion of all those who served, than was the case in 1918. Some survivors, like Richard Burton (Exeter 1944), chose to perform in other arenas. Before embarking on his career as journalist, broadcaster and author, Ludovic Kennedy, after 'a year of self-indulgence' in 1938–39,

did return in 1946 finding, he writes, 'the indolence and hedonism that had characterised the pre-war period ... had given way to application and austerity'. And Sir Roger Banister writes in his 2004 autobiography, *The First Four Minutes*, of Exeter College being 'given a new unity and enthusiasm' by the influx of ex-servicemen who formed 90 per cent of the undergraduate population in 1946: 'If they spoke to us and gave us the benefit of their wartime experiences we were surprised and grateful to be noticed. If they chose to ignore us we were not hurt.'

David Morris, who had registered as a conscientious objector in 1940, working first with bombed-out families in Bermondsey, then with the Friends Ambulance Unit in China (his 1948 memoir is titled *China Changed My Life*), switched, at BNC, to law in 1946, later practising as solicitor, barrister and judge. He remembers post-war Oxford being 'full up – three or four times the number of students compared to pre-war. Everyone I knew had been in the war [and] we worked bloody hard. After six years' absence [study] was quite a strain,' but 'we were just so pleased to be back'. There was nothing to drink save weak beer and – oddly – rum; college food was 'infinitely worse than during the war ... but we didn't mind.' Even at its drabest, rationing yet more severe than in wartime – bread now rationed: no crumbs of comfort for Somervillians – David remembers Oxford as 'still magical'.

Outwardly, the Oxford of the late 1940s might look much the same as it had a decade earlier, albeit shabbier. Colleges and University, however, were about to embark on decades of radical change. How much of that change might be attributed directly to the war compared with other engines of change is debatable. Prominent among those engines was the Education Act, 1944 – nicknamed the 'Butler Act' – a crucial lever in determining the future composition of Oxford's undergraduate population.

Writing in the *Oxford Magazine* earlier this year, Michael Lee (Ch Ch, 1950) highlighted what he saw as the 'sheer amazement' of the first generation of those 'Butler's scholars' who benefited from central and local government funding for undergraduates. In 1947, Lee points out, around 10 per cent of Oxford undergraduates were dependent on local authority awards, but nearly 50 per cent received ex-service grants; by 1960 over 80 per cent of all undergraduates enjoyed some form of state finance.

**Chris Sladen** (Ch Ch 1953) is a regular contributor. He acknowledges, with particular thanks, Paul Eros, Deputy Director of Development, Corpus Christi College, as well as John Harper-Nelson's *Oxford at War* (1994).



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What is the best way to turn the intellectual work of academics into something commercially viable? **Michael Gross** reports on an Oxford success story

**O**XFORD'S experience with commercial ventures could be said to go back to 1586, when the University obtained the privilege to print books, an operation that evolved into Oxford University Press. However, the Press has never been 'spun out' as an independent company, the pattern for commercial ventures in more recent years.

During the Second World War, Britain consciously chose not to patent key inventions such as radar and penicillin, for strategic reasons. But in 1949 the government set up the National Research Development Corporation, which in 1991 merged with the National Enterprise Board to form the British Technology Group (BTG); this was then privatised as BTG plc.

Success stories of BTG and its predecessors include the development of cephalosporin antibiotics, which generated more than £150 million of licence income for their inventor, Sir Edward Abraham, who donated large parts of this fortune to Oxford. However, there have also been missed opportunities, including the development of the hybridoma technique for producing monoclonal antibodies (by Milstein and Köhler at Cambridge), which was never patented.

Graham Richards, a professor emeritus of Oxford's Chemistry Department, has been heavily involved with technology transfer – the conversion of academic results and ideas into commercial ventures – in a variety of roles. He firmly believes that Oxford alumna Margaret Thatcher (Somerville 1943) deserves the credit for the recent boom in academic company foundations in the UK and dedicated his recent book *Spin-outs: Creating Businesses from University Intellectual Property* (2009) to the former prime minister.

Mrs Thatcher made two key innovations, Richards argues. First, she changed tax rules to make venture capital available in the UK. More importantly, he says, in 1987 she gave the rights to intellectual property generated from government-funded academic research to the universities, on condition that they set up mechanisms to facilitate its commercialisation.

ABOVE: *Charting new courses: Oxford research has had unexpected potential commercial applications, such as new materials that improve surface qualities for ocean-going yachts.*



# Innovation by the Isis

After this crucial change, some universities commissioned BTG to look after their intellectual property, while others chose to handle technology transfer locally. And in 1988, Oxford set up Isis Innovation Ltd as a wholly owned subsidiary company. Whenever any results of potential commercial interest emerge, Isis Innovation covers the entire cost of patent applications. Previously, researchers held their own intellectual property, but also had to pay these costs up front, which often deterred them from trying to commercialise their ideas.

Tom Hockaday, the managing director of Isis Innovation, thinks that contact with the academics is crucial for the success of technology transfer. 'The most important thing for us is to talk to the researchers as much as possible and to encourage them to come and share their new ideas with us,' he says. When it comes to starting a company, the staff at Isis Innovation's office in Summertown puts all the pieces together. 'Our role is to build the team that becomes the company,' Hockaday explains, 'bringing together the researchers, the investors and the management. We want to assemble a cohesive team around world-class technology.'

The ownership of the new company is split three ways between the University (as represented by Isis Innovation), the financial

backers and management, and the researchers. 'There are no firm rules about this,' Richards says, 'except that the total must add up to 100 per cent!' However, in a typical case, the investors may take 30 to 40 per cent of the shares, reserve 10 per cent for the management and leave the rest to be split between the University and the researchers.

Richards has personal experience as an academic researcher whose work was commercialised. In 1989 he co-founded Oxford Molecular Ltd, based on molecular modelling software he and his group had developed in the Physical and Theoretical Chemistry Laboratory.

Oxford Molecular went through the typical rollercoaster ride of spin-out companies, with various rounds of funding and expansion, flotation on the London Stock Exchange in 1994 and acquisitions of other companies. At its high, the company had a market share of 25 per cent in the global bioinformatics market and 400 employees in the UK and the US.

But the dream came to an abrupt end in 1997, when the company's share value dropped by 80 per cent during a general crisis of biotech stocks. As the investors turned against the management, Richards resigned from the company, which was liquidated in 2000 and its parts sold off to

# Oxford Nanopore Technologies

In July this year, science minister Lord Drayson inaugurated the new home of Oxford Nanopore Technologies at the Oxford Science Park, marking the rapid success of the University spin-out company that is only four years old and now has 65 employees.

The company was founded in 2005 to commercialise ideas based on the work and long-standing experience of Hagan Bayley, Professor of Chemical Biology at Oxford. Bayley's research specialises in the molecular gateways in cell membranes that selectively allow the passage of small molecules or ions. In the cell, these structures are normally known as ion channels or pores, but as Bayley modifies them in order to use them in new technological applications, he refers to them as nanopores.

The key to their use in detecting molecules is that a current passing through a nanopore can change in a characteristic way when a single molecule passes through the pore. Therefore, the passage of each molecule can be recorded as an electrical signal.

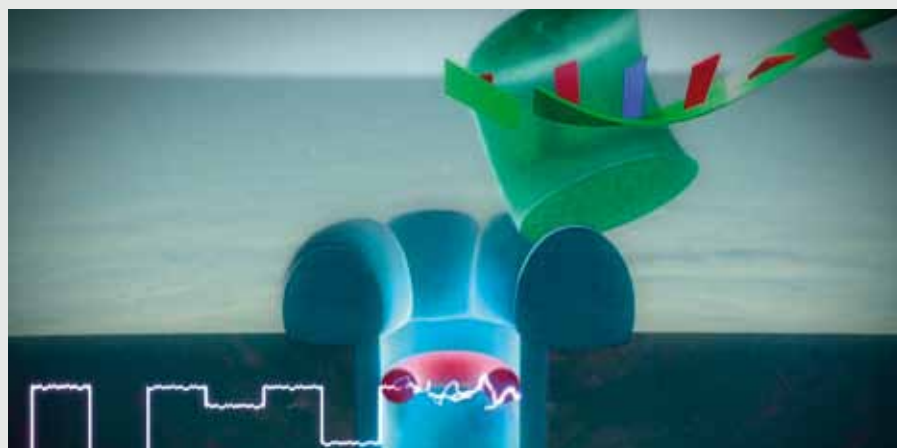
Oxford Nanopore is currently focusing on using this technology for genome sequencing. In a paper published in *Nature Nanotechnology* in February, the company's researchers show that a nanopore based on the natural pore protein alpha haemolysin, but with the chemical modification of an additional binding site built into the narrow passageway, produces distinct electrical signals for each of the four standard building blocks of DNA. The system can even recognise when a building block is modified with a methyl group, which is a very important feature for the understanding of how genes are switched on and off during development.

In order to develop this technology into a working DNA sequencer, the researchers now have one extra step to accomplish. They need to attach an enzyme that cuts the DNA into its building blocks (an exonuclease) to the nanopore. In that step, they will have to ensure that both the cutting and the transportation across the pore that leads to the electronic detection of each building block, can happen under the same conditions and at the same speed.

With this extra feature, the researchers hope, the nanopore technology will be ready to become the next generation genome sequencing technology, which could allow routine sequencing of human genomes at a price of \$1,000 or less.

Dr Gordon Sanghera, the company's CEO, says: 'We are developing a sequencing system that for the first time analyses DNA at the single molecule and without a label. That means that the system can achieve levels of speed, cost and simplicity, enabling many more researchers to conduct much more DNA analysis. A dramatic fall in the cost of sequencing will have a profound effect on medical research, affecting the drug development process, disease risk management, the tailoring of drugs to an individual and much more.'

When this development comes to fruition, however, Oxford Nanopore will leave the sales and marketing of the sequencing technology to Illumina, a company based in San Diego, California, with which it has already signed contracts. Staying in the research and development field, the company will then be able to focus on other applications of their technology, for example for sensors that could detect environmental hazards, explosives or drugs.



Schematic visualisation of a protein nanopore (blue) coupled with a processive enzyme (green) to sequence DNA

foreign companies. At the end of the day, however, the University made a profit of £10 million out of this story.

The lesson he learned from this experience, says Richards, is that one needs three key ingredients for a successful spin-out company: good science, good management and the funding. While funding may be more readily available at some times than at others, he says it's often the lack of experienced chief executives that is holding back British start-ups. By comparison, in California it would be easier to find CEOs who have been through the process before and could bring in their valuable experience.

Other successful businesses created by Isis Innovation include PowderJect, the company co-founded by engineering professor Brian Bellhouse and the current Science Minister, Paul Drayson, and Oxford Asymmetry, founded by Steve Davies. While PowderJect has not achieved its target of bringing needle-free injection to the clinic, its purchase of a vaccine manufacturer turned out to be extremely fortunate, and eventually earned large sums for the founders and the University (see OT 19.3). Oxford Asymmetry, founded in 1992, is now part of Evotec, a leading drug discovery company.

Among the more recent foundations is Oxford Catalysts, spun out in 2005 to commercialise research conducted by Malcolm Green and colleagues at the Inorganic Chemistry Laboratory (see OT 21.1). The company is developing green solutions to today's environmental problems and is thus very much in demand and growing rapidly.

Commenting on the technology transfer culture at Oxford, Oxford Catalysts' Chief Operating Officer Dr Will Barton says: 'It's clear that the visibility of successful spin-out companies like Oxford Catalysts or Oxford Advanced Surfaces is helping to fuel the interest among researchers at Oxford in commercialising their technology. I saw evidence of this a few weeks ago in the Department of Engineering Science at an exhibition of spin-outs ... and the trend is also clear ... around particularly the scientific disciplines. With government funding now targeting a number of key "societal challenges" where technological innovation has a major role to play, the time could well be right, despite the challenging financial situation.'

Another recent foundation is Oxford Nanopore Technologies, based on the research of Hagan Bayley's group at the Chemistry Department (see sidebar). Graham Richards thinks that 'Oxford Nanopore is the most exciting new company right now. If it succeeds in making human genomes

accessible for less than \$1,000 per person,' he says, 'this could become Oxford's first one-billion-pound company.' The \$1,000 price tag is widely seen as the threshold below which genome sequencing could become a routine diagnostic tool used in every hospital.

Technology transfer doesn't always mean founding a new company. In some cases, Isis Innovation may make a deal to license the intellectual property to an existing company that already has the right infrastructure and people in place to continue developing the new technology and eventually to take

it to the market. This is what happened in the case of the work of Dennis Lo and James Wainscoat at Clinical Laboratory Sciences. Their development of safer tests for prenatal diagnostics of conditions including Down's syndrome and rhesus incompatibility has been licensed to the US company Sequenom.

When eventually introduced to the clinic, these tests should replace risky procedures like amniocentesis and thus save the lives of healthy babies.

*It's increasingly important for the UK to create new technology.*

*We need this innovation'*

Raising the game of technology transfer to a whole new level, Richards was also the driving force behind the deal that helped to build the new Chemistry Research Laboratory. Investors paid £20 million in exchange for one-third of the University's equity in any spin-out companies generated over a 15-year period. These rights are now held by IP

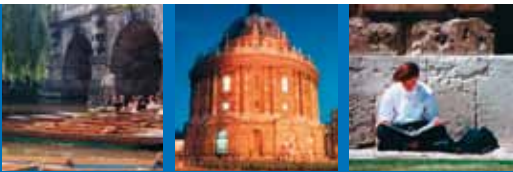
Group (formerly IP2IPO - 'intellectual property to initial public offering'), of which Richards has been Senior Non-Executive Director since 2007. IP Group has also struck similar deals with other universities, including Southampton, York and King's College London.

The first company to be spun out under this new deal was again based on Richards' own research. Inhibox produces a screensaver that enables computers that would otherwise be idle to do something useful for cancer research, namely model how potential cancer drugs might fit together with their designated targets in the cell. Following his retirement from the Chemistry Department, Richards occupies a modest office at Inhibox HQ in Oxford city centre, where he also finds time to reflect on 20 years of technology transfer. 'When we come out of this crisis, the Chinese will still produce cars cheaper than we could,' he says, 'so it's increasingly important for the UK to create new technology. We need this innovation.'

**Michael Gross** is a science writer based in Oxford.

*Spin-Outs: Creating Businesses from University Intellectual Property*, by Graham Richards, Harriman House, 2009.

[www.isis-innovation.com](http://www.isis-innovation.com)



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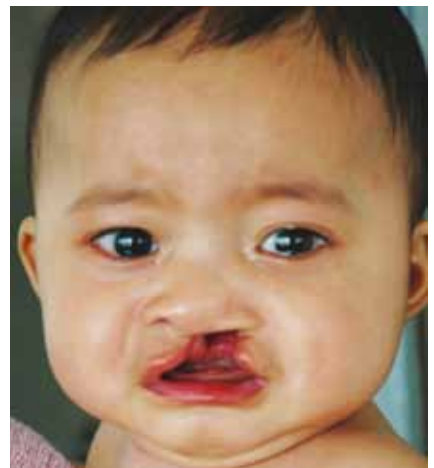
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# Science findings



## Quantum sensor is the cat's whiskers

One of the most mind-bending concepts in modern physics could form the basis of highly sensitive magnetic field detectors with a variety of applications, according to an Oxford research group's recent paper in *Science* (29 May 2009).

'Quantum entanglement' means that the quantum states of two or more subatomic particles – such as photons or atomic nuclei – are inextricably correlated. For example, while you cannot know whether an individual particle is spinning clockwise or anticlockwise, you do know that all entangled particles are spinning in the same direction.

Jonathan Jones of the Centre for Advanced Electron Spin Resonance (see



JOHN MORTON AND SIMON BENJAMINI

OT 21.3 p. 20) and his colleagues created a 'Schrödinger cat state' by applying radio frequency pulses to a star-shaped molecule

with a central phosphorus atom surrounded by nine hydrogen atoms. Like the cat in the Austrian physicist's famous thought experiment, which was both alive and dead at the same time, all ten entangled nuclei were spinning clockwise and anticlockwise simultaneously.

In a weak magnetic field, the spins change in a way that can be measured using nuclear magnetic resonance. 'In order to make the measurement,' says Jones, 'we have to disentangle the system. We then find that the spin of the central atom has changed almost ten times as much as it would have done in a non-entangled system – in other words, our system is ten times as sensitive to a magnetic field.'

## Drink, drugs and schizophrenia: a potentially violent mix

The fear that people with schizophrenia might commit violent crimes seems borne out by figures that show they are twice as likely as people without the condition to have committed such an offence. But a study by Dr Seena Fazel of the Department of Psychiatry, together with colleagues in Sweden, shows that most of the increased risk is due to drug or alcohol abuse. Those who do not have

drug or alcohol problems are only 1.2 times more likely to be convicted of violence than the general population, as opposed to 4 times for those who also have problems with drink or drugs.

Writing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (20 May 2009), Dr Fazel argues that mental health professionals should be vigilant about detecting and treating substance abuse. 'These problems are prevalent in schizophrenia,' she says, 'but there are evidence-based treatment strategies for drug and alcohol abuse and so the risk of violence can be reduced.'

## Disappearing ash can mislead volcano watchers

Volcanic eruptions have long-lasting effects on the surrounding environment, displacing people, disrupting economies and affecting agriculture and ecology. When the Chaitén volcano in southern Chile erupted for the first time in thousands of years in May 2008, Sebastian Watt (a DPhil student at Worcester College) travelled to South America within weeks to measure what happened to 160 million tonnes of ash that showered down on an area of over 200,000 square kilometres, mostly in neighbouring Argentina.

Working with Argentinian scientists, Watt was able to collect samples from over 200 sites and make the first scientific assessment of the size and impact of the eruption. But they found that a few months later much of the ash had been blown or washed away by the elements.

As most volcanoes can lie dormant for years before blowing their tops again, it is important for emergency planning to be able to evaluate the likely impact of another eruption.

Watt and his co-authors argue in the *Journal of Geophysical Research* (28 April 2009) that estimates of the size of historic eruptions may be too low, because much of the evidence has disappeared.

'This makes it extremely difficult for volcanologists to reconstruct a past eruption,' says Professor David Pyle of Earth Sciences, Watt's supervisor and a joint author on the paper.

## Keep pigs under surveillance, say flu experts

An international team of experts in the evolution of infectious disease has warned that influenza viruses in pigs must be monitored much more closely if the world is to avoid pandemics such as the current swine flu outbreak.

Dr Oliver Pybus from the Department of Zoology, with colleagues from the Universities of Edinburgh, Hong Kong and Arizona, compared the genomic sequences of viruses taken from the current outbreak in humans with almost 800 samples from pigs, birds and humans collected over recent decades. Using computational methods developed in Oxford to reconstruct the evolution of the current H1N1 strain, they found that it had been circulating in pigs for a decade before it emerged in humans earlier this year.

Writing in the journal *Nature* (25 June 2009), the authors point out that flu viruses from many sources, including birds and humans, have mixed in pigs to produce new strains. 'Lack of systematic swine surveillance allowed for the undetected persistence and evolution of this potentially pandemic strain for many years,' they say.



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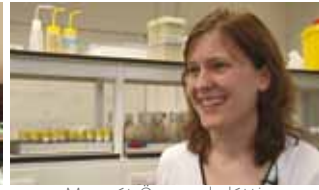
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Alex Parker



Mia Blundell



# Faced up



Finn Toner



Ben Williams



Mark Elliott

Some walls encircle, barring access. But a wall just put up in Oxford should be anything but daunting. The 'Wall of 100 Faces', a series of short filmed interviews with 100 students, is a new feature on the University's website, designed to help prospective applicants get a better idea of what Oxford life is like.



Irum Ali



Chang Liu



Emily Paulin

The students interviewed for the project are a mixture from Britain and overseas; undergraduates, graduates and visiting students, men and women, selected in proportion to the University's current make-up, and were filmed talking about various aspects of their lives at Oxford. The films, on average 1 minute long, were made by Hannah Madsen (Hertford 2003), a recent graduate, and the project overseen by Christopher Eddie, Oxford's Web Officer.



Jennifer Peng



Sally Rushton



Emily Barritt

The 'Wall' will help dispel some persistent stereotypes about Oxford students, Eddie hopes, in ways not possible through traditional prospectuses, or even open days. 'Imagine being able to meet 100 current students any time you want, without having to leave your seat. That is what the Wall of 100 Faces offers', he said.



Lara Green



Will McCallum



Colleen Reding

The 'Wall', which also links to the students' courses and colleges, will be updated regularly with around 30 new films each year.



Kylie Murray



Marie Tidball



Mo Ghanbari

[www.ox.ac.uk/100faces](http://www.ox.ac.uk/100faces)



Niel Bowerman



Simon Williamson



Sophie Duker



Timmy Pleydell-Bouverie



Kudrat Virk



Ignacio Silva

Oxford student journalism is still living up to its colourful traditions – and is a springboard for those who aspire to media careers, says **Chris Baraniuk**

# Hack to the future?

It's two o'clock on a Wednesday morning. Most Oxford students are either tucked up in bed or adding the finishing touches to an overdue essay, but at the *Cherwell* offices on St Aldate's, the night is still young for the senior editorial team, who are slaving over page designs and unedited copy to meet the student newspaper's press deadline the next day. Student journalism at Oxford has always demanded die-hard enthusiasm and unrelenting commitment. Yet the potential rewards are great – for many have found success, fame (or notoriety, or both) in the national or international media.

While many student publications have come and gone since the late nineteenth century, two have shown greater resilience. *Cherwell* celebrates its ninetieth anniversary next year, while *Isis* magazine has been around for well over a century. And since 1993, *The Oxford Student*, published by the Oxford University Student Union, has been *Cherwell's* rival, so there's no lack of tradition or competition.

The list of former contributors to these publications alone reads like a *Who's Who* of British media. Peter Preston (St John's 1957) went on to edit the *Guardian*; Sir Peter Stothard (Trinity 1969) to edit *The Times*. Paul Foot (Univ 1958) became perhaps the most celebrated crusading journalist of his day; Peter Sissons (Univ 1961) a leading television newscaster.

Tony Bottrill (Christ Church 1961) edited *Cherwell* in 1964 before working for the *Scottish Daily Mail* and later the Treasury and World Bank. He remembers how student journalism brought him into contact with many notable figures, including two actor-comedians who would find fame with television's *Monty Python*.

'Terry Jones and Michael Palin provided the cabaret at a *Cherwell* party which I gave as Editor in Christ Church cellars. Another highlight was the chance to interview the Beatles, one day in 1963 when they were already on the road to fame. The photographer from the *Witney Gazette* and I ambushed them in the car-park of the Windrush pub in Witney, where they'd been having lunch, and they posed for pictures and a chat.'

For Bottrill, *Cherwell* was the stepping stone to a professional career. 'When I went to the *Daily Mail* offices in London for a party



Today's headlines – tomorrow's headline makers? The three leading student publications: *Isis*, the *Oxford Student* and *Cherwell*

after *Cherwell* won the *Daily Mirror's* student newspaper of the year award, the Deputy Editor of the *Mail* offered me a job as we stood in the gents", he laughs.

Liz Jensen (Somerville 1978), author of seven novels including *The Rapture* and *Ark Baby*, wrote for *Cherwell* in the late 1970s and remembers a male-dominated newsroom, but also a student rag that offered career opportunities like those found by Bottrill. 'Apart from me and two others, there were no women at *Cherwell* in 1979, and I remember the atmosphere being very laddish', she says. 'But we all wanted to work in journalism, and *Cherwell* was the obvious stepping stone.'

For the termly editors of Oxford's student press, the undertaking has only got more daunting. Podcasts, video reports and blogs now complement traditional reporting, and each term both *Cherwell* and *The Oxford Student* take on an average 'staff' of around 50 students. Current editors estimate that they spend at least 35 hours a week working on their respective papers, which means they are effectively taking, unpaid, a full-time job while also studying.

Both newspapers stay afloat financially thanks to the efforts of business teams who sell advertising for the publications and their websites. *The Oxford Student* is managed by Oxford Student Services Ltd, the commercial

arm of the Student Union, while *Cherwell's* business (managed in the past by one Rupert Murdoch [Worcester 1953], among others) is run by Oxford Student Publications Ltd (OSPL). OSPL was incorporated in 1961 and now owns both *Cherwell* and *Isis*, as well as *Etcetera*, a literary and creative supplement to *Cherwell* founded in 2007.

Being a *Cherwell* editor is not necessarily a career move, though. One of this term's [Michaelmas 09] editors, Harry Thompson (Wadham 2007), who is studying engineering, is not yet sure whether he wants to be a professional journalist. However, his appreciation of the paper's tradition was enough to spur him on towards the editorship, he says.

'Our offices are teeming with old issues of *Cherwell* and it's interesting to see how the paper has evolved over the years in terms of style and presentation, and also in terms of the shifting editorial bias.' When *Cherwell* was founded in 1920, it championed a very vocal liberal-labour and, progressively, pro-feminist slant. While aspects of the paper's liberal heritage have been evident through the years, there have been (relatively rare) periods when more right-wing sympathies have surfaced.

For one former award-winning editor of *The Oxford Student*, a career in journalism is

# NEWS IN BRIEF

certainly on the horizon. Matthew Holehouse (Queen's 2006), who was this summer on a placement at the *Sunday Times*, and due to begin an investigative journalism course at London's City University this autumn, found editing a student newspaper an excellent way of 'breaking into' the industry.

'OxStu definitely opened doors for me, in that it gave an elementary grounding in news-sense and methodology, and generated a small pool of quality contacts and issues that as a professional you build on,' says Holehouse, 'although in this climate and in this industry, it's hardly the case that nationals are camping at your door simply because you've edited a student newspaper.'

But the national press does camp on Oxford's doorstep. Some of the biggest *Cherwell* or *Oxford Student* news stories of the past year have caught the attention of national news media, including early reports of the controversy surrounding the election of a new Professor of Poetry. Ruth Padel, who topped the poll, subsequently resigned after admitting she had emailed journalists about the record of her main rival.

When student press-inspired stories hit the national headlines, it's the University Press Office that is usually left to pick up the pieces. Ruth Collier, Head of Press and Information Office, says that student journalism is often prone to mistakes and exaggeration.

'It's amazing that students manage to produce newspapers every week while doing a demanding course,' Collier agrees. 'However, as they're not able to do it full time, are less experienced and have nowhere near the same size of staff as the nationals, distortions do come in. In the rush to beat the rival paper, basic journalistic principles of balance, quote-checking, fact-checking and so on can go out of the window. Also, the [student] papers get away with murder sometimes because they know that certain people [such as college authorities or the University] aren't going to take legal action.'

These concerns aside, Collier believes the student press at Oxford, which does not offer any journalism or media courses, is nonetheless probably the most energetic in the country and is extremely successful at propelling ambitious student writers into media careers. Ginny Dougary, one of the judges at this year's *Guardian* Student Media Awards, commented that young journalists in the UK who impress employers often do so via the student press and, despite the rise of journalism courses at other universities, 'Hunger, commitment and originality count for a lot.'

**Chris Baraniuk** (Somerville 2006) is currently writing a history of *Cherwell* and is interested in hearing from former editors and writers. Contact [cherwellhistory@gmail.com](mailto:cherwellhistory@gmail.com) or write to Chris Baraniuk, Archives and Alumni, Cherwell, 7 St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1BS.

## Mayor's fund for assaulted student

The Mayor of Oxford, Mary Clarkson, has set up a fund for Kentaro Ikeda, a graduate student reading for a master's degree in Educational Studies at St Edmund Hall, who was attacked and severely injured by two teenagers in Marston while cycling back to his rooms last year. Kentaro underwent four emergency operations at the John Radcliffe Hospital before being airlifted to Japan. His attackers, both 18, were jailed for a total of 16 years earlier this year. Kentaro's mother has had to give up her teaching job to look after him. Ms Clarkson said: 'I hope the fund will support the family through this difficult time.'

## Student Union posts loss

Oxford University Student Union (OUSU) has announced losses of £41,447 for the 2007/8 financial year, and projected a fall in income for the 2009/10 financial year of £28,000. Lewis Iwu, the outgoing president of OUSU, insisted that the 'forecasts, by their very nature, change.' A large part of OUSU's income (£91,857) is taken from the subscription fees college JCRs and MCRs pay in order to be affiliated, and motions to disaffiliate were rejected by Balliol and Christ Church JCRs last term.

## Crash halts Eights race

A collision in the Men's 1st Division in Summer VIIIs caused one of the races to be halted. University College's 1st VIII collided with Oriel's 1st boat, which had drifted into the racing line after being bumped by Pembroke. University ended up sixth on the river, rowing over every day, while Oriel finished third.

## College choir sings in Harry Potter film

Queen's College Choir has recorded a song to feature in the latest *Harry Potter* film, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. The choir was approached by composer Nicholas Hooper to perform the song 'In Noctem', which they rehearsed in Oxford before recording in the Abbey Road studios in London. The choir, with 25 singers, is conducted by Owen Rees, the Director of Music at Queen's. It has been in the limelight before, having sung for the BBC several times.

## Commons protest

Alice Heath, JCR President at University College, and three other students, were escorted out of the Houses of Parliament by police in May after they glued themselves to a statue in St Stephen's Hall. All four were part of an environmental group, Climate Rush. Ms Heath, a first-year PPE student, said they were protesting against the government's decision to fund up to four coal-fuelled power stations.

## Student held in Iran

At the time of going to press, an Oxford student was still being detained in Iran after being arrested in the unrest following the disputed presidential election in the country earlier this summer. Mohammadreza Jalaeipour, a graduate student of Middle Eastern Studies at St Antony's, was arrested at Tehran airport in June after going back to support the opposition politician Mirhossein Mousavi. A college spokesperson said they were 'deeply concerned' about Mohammadreza's detention.

## ... and news without briefs...

A group of Oxford students have followed down the now well-travelled route pioneered by a Yorkshire Women's Institute branch, by posing naked for a charity calendar. The charity, TravelAid, said money raised from the venture would go towards projects in the developing world. Students are pictured preserving their modesty with, variously, mortar boards, gowns and books. Some Merton College students have also produced a similar calendar, designed to raise funds for charities supported by their JCR.



Student scene news was compiled by **Elen Griffiths** (Jesus) and **Timothy Sherwin** (Merton)

Politically, Denis Healey and Nigel Lawson were poles apart. But both had to grapple with economic vicissitude. **Alicia Clegg** meets two Oxford men who left their mark as Chancellors of the Exchequer

# Budgeting in good times and bad



*Far from cross benchers: Denis Healey and Nigel Lawson in the House of Lords*

'You haven't looked at it,' says Lord Healey of Riddlesden (Balliol 1936), with a hint of reproach. I glance at the flyleaf of his memoirs, *The Time of My Life*. From under a freshly applied signature, a cartoon face below give-away bushy eyebrows grins back at me.

It is 30 years since, as a pugilistic Chancellor of the Exchequer, Denis Healey waged war on raging inflation, fought political assailants – often from within his own party – and in the screeching tabloid headlines of the day applied 'cap-in-hand' to the International Monetary Fund for a credit bail-out. Then, just as things were beginning to look up for Jim Callaghan's Labour government, along came nemesis in the shape of a catastrophic clash with the trade unions and the final unravelling in the electorally fatal 'winter of discontent'.

A decade later, during the late 1980s credit boom, it was the turn of another high-flying Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson (Christ Church 1951), to suffer on the rack of public service. A mutually damaging public row over exchange rate policy with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher led him to resign his post, just at the point when he was struggling to get a grip on resurgent inflation.

Now, as the global economy haltingly claws its way back from the financial abyss, it seems a good time for *Oxford Today* to interview two former chancellors about the travails and occasional pleasures of what is often described as the loneliest job in government.

'When it was going well, it was enjoyable,' says Healey. 'But most of the time it was just bloody hard work. Usually, I ended my diary "went to bed, dog tired"'

We talk at his idyllic family home perched high above the Sussex Downs. The day is blisteringly hot. But Healey, approaching 92, appears not to notice. A former defence secretary, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1974, under Harold Wilson, and continued under Callaghan until Labour's defeat in 1979. Apart from two years understudying the post in opposition – he became shadow Chancellor with 'no more knowledge of economics than the average newspaper reader' – Healey assumed the chancellorship with little economic experience. He does not consider this a handicap. Economics, he says, is a branch of 'social psychology'. So, the challenge for any chancellor is to understand how people behave, for which the requirements are 'intellect and intelligence', not economic theory.

Lawson's preparation for what he has termed 'the one job in government which I had always coveted' was considerably more rigorous. He served his economic apprenticeship as a financial journalist, and as Financial Secretary to the Treasury became a leading architect of Thatcherite economic policy. 'I'd been writing about economic policy and studying how chancellors conducted themselves for years. I had views that I had expressed [and wanted to put to the test].'

I meet Lord Lawson of Blaby over coffee in the House of Lords. He attends parliament most days, commuting weekly from his home in France. At 77, he looks much like the famously self-confident chancellor who cut a swathe through post-war financial conventions – just more weather-beaten by the effects of the French sun and several stones lighter.

I ask Lawson, who presided over several landmark acts of financial liberalisation, whether, in the light of the recent banking crisis, he wishes that he had imposed stricter controls on financial institutions. He replies that, in fact, the 1987 Banking Act provided for tougher prudential supervision than had existed previously or which, for that matter, exists today. 'Unfortunately, the first thing that Gordon Brown did when he came in as Chancellor in 1997 was to destroy all that and set up a new system which has proved to be completely dysfunctional.'

He does, however, admit to one regret. 'If I had been able to foresee all the consequences, I think I would have tried – although it would have been difficult because it was not in those days a Treasury responsibility, the Department of Trade and Industry was, absurdly, the lead department – to persuade my colleagues that we needed to enforce a separation between commercial banking and investment banking.'

What characteristics must a chancellor possess? 'The ability to sleep well,' and 'the capacity to take decisions' on partial information, retorts Lawson crisply. 'You won't



ROB JUDGES

earlier at Balliol, sounds surprisingly modern. 'The great thing about Balliol, in those days, was that it was only interested in people's brains,' he says proudly of his college, which, even in the 1930s, boasted a mix of social classes and ethnicities. 'It was very much an intellectual, not a public school, college.'

Always politically active, Healey joined the Communist Party in a stand against fascism, then became chairman of the Labour Club. When war broke out, shortly before the beginning of his final year, he volunteered immediately. After weeks of delay, waiting for his call-up papers to arrive, he was instructed to return to Oxford and finish his degree. Despite having missed virtually a whole term, he graduated with a double first. The next few years would be spent as a soldier specialising in assault landings behind enemy lines.

Healey's other great pursuit, which he has cultivated with passionate intensity throughout his life, leavening official trips abroad with visits to galleries, opera and theatre was – and still is – the arts. As a student, he expanded his cultural horizons voraciously, sampled musical genres of all kinds, wrote poetry and started the New Oxford Art Society. He is still an enthusiastic photographer.

Through the arts he also developed a life-long talent for making friends across political divides. Cross-party friendships at Oxford included the Balliol organ scholar, and later Conservative prime minister, Edward Heath.

What have they enjoyed most since leaving office? 'Being able at my relatively advanced age to open new chapters in my life,' says Lawson. He mentions having moved his home to France, and his work in the House of Lords. Recently, he has become heavily involved in the politics of climate change and published a book on the subject, *An Appeal to Reason: A Cool Look at Global Warming*. Still a contrarian, he takes issue with the consensus view that global warming poses an imminent threat to humanity, and questions the assumption that the benefits of rapidly cutting global carbon emissions would outweigh the overall costs to the world of constraining economic growth.

At 92, Healey still 'keeps in touch with politics'. He visits the House of Lords roughly 12 times a year. But his greatest pleasures are his lifelong love of the arts; his wife, the biographer Edna Healey (St Hugh's 1936), whom he met at Oxford, and his family. I ask whether he ever hankers to be back in Number 11. His reply is blunt. 'No, not really. It's much nicer here.'

always make the right decisions; but what is absolutely disastrous is if you can't make up your mind.'

For Healey, 'judgement' matters most. For support on this matter, he cites a medieval predecessor, 'Richard son of Nigel': 'The highest skill of the Exchequer does not lie in calculations but in judgement of all kinds.' The vagaries of official figures sometimes taxed Healey's own judgement to the limits. When in 1976, he applied to the IMF, it was for a politically controversial loan. But the Treasury's public sector borrowing requirement forecast, which provoked the application, turned out to be massively too high. Had accurate statistics been available, he says, he would have judged the loan unnecessary.

A third requirement for a successful chancellorship – on this both men are in perfect agreement – is not minding being in a minority of one. 'If you want to join a group, it limits your freedom of manoeuvre,' says Healey. 'Bad parents cave in to their children all the time, because they want to be popular. But, it is not the right way to bring up a child,' says Lawson. 'There is a certain similarity

*'When it was going well, it was enjoyable, but most of the time it was just bloody hard work'*

[between the role of a good parent] and the role of the chancellor in dealing with his spending colleagues in cabinet.'

How much did Oxford – Healey read Mods and Greats; Lawson PPE – contribute to their political formation? For Lawson, 'The House' was a 'marvellous place to be'. In his memoirs, *The View from No. 11*, he recalls fencing, acting, skiing and 'a large number of parties'. He never spoke at the Oxford Union or bothered to join the University Conservative Association, but he says he relished the cut and thrust of tutorial debate, often taking a contrarian position. Oxford philosophy, he recalls, 'trained its practitioners to think clearly and identify nonsense, however dressed up, which was not a bad training for politics'. His most serious political involvement was as president of the Strasbourg Club, a group devoted 'to the then unfashionable cause of European union'.

If Lawson's Oxford, which included membership of the Chatham, 'a somewhat decadent high Tory dining club', has echoes of *Brideshead Revisited*, that of Bradford Grammar School-educated Healey, over a decade

## Snap decision that refocused a life

Being hit over the heart by a sniper's bullet is all in a day's work for a photojournalist – if his specialism is guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency. 'Fortunately, I had very good sniper plates (body armour) which took the impact – even though the left panel blew out,' says Keith Lepor (St Antony's 1988). 'That was, probably, my closest call.'

For over a year, Lepor has been on assignments with the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, where he embedded with NATO troops and led a team of Afghan print and radio journalists. He came to photojournalism late and chose combat to differentiate himself from younger rivals.

'When you are trying to build a career you do things you might not want to do,' says Lepor, who previously embedded with UN troops and guerrilla groups in Central Africa. 'You have to prove yourself.'

Originally a specialist in international relations, who took a detour into consultancy and private equity, Lepor also saw combat work as an opportunity to re-enter issues that had gripped him at Oxford. 'It was clear [to me] that guerrilla groups and state-sponsored terrorists



KEITH LEPOR

A young boy watches French coalition troops: one of Keith Lepor's images from Afghanistan

would increasingly challenge global security, in general, and western security and economic interests in particular. For me, it was the natural focus.'

His experiences have given him a profound admiration for 'the young men

and women, on remote battlefields, who sacrifice their lives.' As a photojournalist, he says, your aim is to become invisible. 'You're there to cover the action. But you never want to become part of the story.'

[www.keithlepor.com](http://www.keithlepor.com)

## Mirakle in Mumbai

'Get an idea and just do it, man,' shouts Dhruv Lakra (Saïd Business School 2007) over a mobile from a noisy Mumbai taxi. 'Life is too short!'

In the background, horns honk and toot; brakes screech alarmingly. Oblivious to the noise, a team of messengers thread across the city, delivering packages

to offices. Their employer is Mirakle Couriers, a social business that Lakra set up, last November, to create jobs for deaf young adults – while operating profitably.

Lakra planned the business while completing an MBA in social entrepreneurship as a Skoll Scholar at Oxford. Weeks after he graduated, the

business was up and running. A former investment banker, he had quit finance after witnessing the human devastation of the tsunami of Boxing Day 2004. Then his father lost the use of his legs in a car crash, which woke Lakra's interest in disability.

Today, Mirakle Couriers employs over 30 profoundly deaf young adults from poor backgrounds. But for Mirakle, few would have jobs. The women do the sorting. The men deliver. To communicate, everyone uses sign language and SMS text messaging.

The biggest problem the business faces, in a culture in which disability is seen as 'a curse', is prejudice. 'Because of the discrimination they have encountered since childhood, deaf workers think of themselves as pretty much worthless,' says Lakra. 'People are embarrassed by disability.'

Mirakle is challenging that mindset. Already, its clients include Indian corporate giants such as Aditya Birla Group. For now, Lakra is concentrating on Mumbai. But he has big ambitions. Asked how large he wants Mirakle to grow, he replies: 'As big as FedEx or DHL.'

[www.miraklecouriers.com](http://www.miraklecouriers.com)



Getting their messages across: some of Dhruv Lakra's Mirakle Couriers in Mumbai

## Translating a student idea into commercial gain

While his peers were starting City careers in finance and law, Christian Arno (St John's 1997) was building Lingo24, a web-based translation business, in his parents' spare bedroom in Aberdeen. He had tested the idea, as an undergraduate, during an exchange year in Italy where, he says, he persuaded other exchange students to sell translations over the internet for 'beer money'.

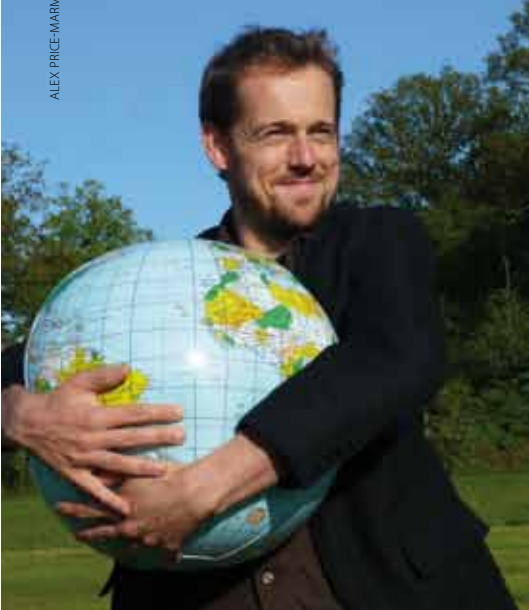
Arno launched Lingo24 commercially in 2002, supported by fellow entrepreneur James Owain Shepherd (St John's 1997), who was building a web development company. Start-up funds came courtesy of a nest-egg amassed by gambling £500 from his student loan on the stock market. 'If I had sold at the right time, which of course I didn't, I would have made £100,000', he says ruefully. As it was, he made £15,000, which was enough to get Lingo24 started.

Today, Arno works with Jack Waley-Cohen (St John's 1998), who came in as a business partner in 2003. Instead of hard-up students, they now employ a global network of professional translators who provide a 24-hour service from their homes around the world. The most common requests are for translations from English into the major European languages. More obscure requirements that Lingo24 has satisfied include such African tongues as Shona and Ndebele.

So far, the business, which has a turnover of more than £3m, is thriving, despite the recession. Some clients have postponed projects. But against this, says Arno, the company has benefited from businesses pursuing export opportunities in emerging markets. 'In times of uncertainty people need to communicate more', he insists.

[www.lingo24.com](http://www.lingo24.com)

ALEX PRICE-MARMION



## Building bridges across religious divides

'A priest in a dog collar and a Muslim woman in a hijab' sounds an odd pairing. But, together Chris Chivers (Magdalen 1985) and Anjum Anwar are challenging stereotypes.

Chivers is Canon Chancellor at Blackburn Cathedral, in a town dubbed the most segregated in Britain. He arrived in 2005, with a commitment to interfaith dialogue fired by a period working with Desmond Tutu on truth and reconciliation in South Africa. Once in post, he forged a partnership with Anwar, an education officer at the Lancashire Council of Mosques. When the London bombings on 7 July 2005 blew apart cross-cultural understanding, they took to the streets to talk to local people. 'It was a strange sight, but somehow it got people talking.'

Two years ago, their double act was formalised when Anwar became dialogue development officer at the Cathedral, the first Muslim anywhere to be appointed as cathedral staff. No fan of 'hotel-style multiculturalism', in which different communities 'stay in their own rooms', Chivers has run youth initiatives with Anwar (who was awarded an MBE in 2005 for services to the community), exploring terrorism and social cohesion. One



JASON LAWTON

Challenging stereotypes: Anjum Anwar and Chris Chivers

initiative of which he is particularly proud is a project in which children from predominantly white and predominantly Asian schools were asked to photograph the most important people and things in their communities. Then both came together to build an imaginary town.

Chivers' next priority is youth leadership, a topic of particular concern in a town where the academically ablest leave for university and rarely return. 'We have to give all our young people [irrespective of their academic attainment] a feeling they are in a community to which they can make a difference', he says simply.

[www.blackburncathedral.com](http://www.blackburncathedral.com)

## Big Fish, Little Pond – how a film-maker is developing an industry's future

When the South African authorities declared her *persona non grata*, under apartheid, Melanie Chait (Wolfson 1991) turned to making award-winning documentaries in Britain and studied for a doctorate at Oxford. Now, she is back in Johannesburg running the Big Fish Digital School of Filmmaking, a social enterprise that trains talented young black adults, who otherwise would not have jobs, for media careers.

Chait hit on the idea of starting a film school to tackle unemployment – 40 per cent of black under-25-year-olds with secondary education are jobless – while serving on the board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Surveying the post-apartheid workforce, she realised that her industry was headed for a crisis. 'Under apartheid everyone in [the film industry] was pretty much white and the workforce was ageing. There was no planning for when people retired and no training in new technologies.'

Her solution was to start a free digital film school that would select the most able black candidates, from deprived backgrounds, and use award-winning film and television professionals to teach them. Since its launch in 2003, Big Fish has trained almost 700 students. Most now have jobs as producers, editors and cameramen in large film and television companies. Many others are building their

own ventures under the aegis of Little Pond, a production trust that supports former students early in their career.

Big Fish has also won accolades. For the past two years, its students have taken first and second places in the national Bafundi Film and Television Festival. A remarkable achievement, she says, 'when you consider that our students are competing against the elite film schools, which charge a fortune'.

[www.bigfish.org.za](http://www.bigfish.org.za)



Focus on the future: Big Fish film students

Oxonians at large is written by Alicia Clegg

# Preview

## Ashmolean Museum

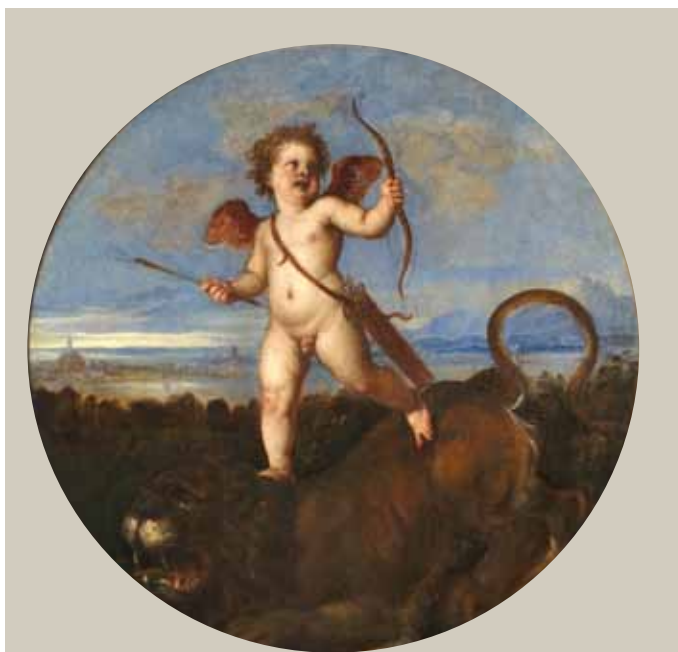
7 NOV 10.00–22.00 &  
8 NOVEMBER 10.00–20.00

### The Ashmolean reopening

Join the museum to celebrate its reopening in a special weekend-long launch. For the first time, visitors will be able to explore the new building designed by Rick Mather Architects. Located to the north of the original museum, it comprises more than 30 new galleries, a suite of temporary exhibition galleries, a new education centre, state-of-the-art conservation

studios, and Oxford's first rooftop restaurant. Inside, discover how civilisations developed as part of an interrelated world culture in the redisplay of the Ashmolean's world-renowned collections. Each object's story will be told by tracing the journey of ideas and influences through time and across continents, over four new floors of dedicated galleries.

In the Cockerell Building, the newly refurbished galleries of Western Art will open for the first time since their closure in 2008.



ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM

## New Ashmolean, new Titian

The Ashmolean Museum has acquired *The Triumph of Love*, a little-seen circular painting by the great Venetian artist Titian. It is likely to become one of the Ashmolean's major attractions when it reopens in November after its £61-million redevelopment. The painting, which dates from the mid-1540s, was executed for Titian's patron Gabriel Vendramin, and was originally a cover for another painting by the artist, of an unidentified noblewoman dressed in black.

The painting depicts Cupid armed with a bow, quiver and arrows, standing on the back of a lion that grows impotently as love rides triumphant. It was acquired by the Ashmolean under the Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) scheme, under which items of historic or artistic importance may be given to the nation in place of inheritance tax. The donation to the Ashmolean was made possible with an additional grant of £180,000 from the independent charity, the Art Fund.

Dr Christopher Brown, Director of the Ashmolean, said the painting would have 'tremendous appeal'.

## Museum of the History of Science

UNTIL 21 FEBRUARY  
**Steampunk**

Polished brass, plush velvet, rivets, cogs and leather – imagine the technology of today with the aesthetic of Victorian science. From redesigned practical items to fantastical contraptions, this exhibition showcases the work of 12 Steampunk artists. Expect steam-powered computer mice, clockwork hearts, brass goggles and the latest state-of-the-art eye-Pod ...

TOM BANWELL



Steampunk art: *Underground Explorer* by Tom Banwell

BODLEIAN LIBRARY



Hebrew translation of Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*, c.1300

## Bodleian Library

8 DECEMBER–3 MAY 2010

### Crossing Borders: Hebrew Manuscripts as a Meeting-place of Cultures

The Bodleian's winter exhibition tells the story of how Jews, Christians and Muslims have together contributed to the development of the book. It illustrates the cultural exchange, the social interaction and the religious toleration between Jews and non-Jews in the Muslim and the Christian worlds during the late Middle Ages. The exhibition draws on the Bodleian Hebrew holdings, one of the largest and most important collections of Hebrew manuscripts in the world.

## Christ Church Picture Gallery

UNTIL 7 FEBRUARY 2010

### The Poetry of Draped Figures

How drapery and clothes enrobe the human figure, and how to depict the varied qualities of material, was and remains one of the challenges in art. With more than 30 Old Master drawings, this exhibition explores this seemingly mundane topic and illustrates its richness and creative power. Works on display include an early sheet (c.1400) with column-like, cloaked figures, Leonardo da Vinci's study of a sleeve and drapery studies by Figino, one of Leonardo's followers.



**Oxford Alumni Card holders** can obtain 10% discounts at the Ashmolean, Bodleian and Museum of Natural History shops,

## Modern Art Oxford

UNTIL 29 NOVEMBER

### Karla Black

The most comprehensive exhibition to date of the Glasgow-based artist Karla Black, comprising an ambitious series of sculptures made specifically for the upper galleries of Modern Art Oxford.

UNTIL 29 NOVEMBER

### Encounters: Cova Macías

Cova Macías's practice examines how young people construct their identity. This exhibition, the Spanish artist's first in the UK, contains compelling video work, in which the young protagonists present themselves and their stories to camera, blurring the line between documentary and fiction.

RIGHT: *Love Song*, 2004, by Cova Macías



COVA MACÍAS

## Oxford Bach Choir

5 DECEMBER

SHELDONIAN THEATRE, 19.30

### Mendelssohn's *Elijah*

Soloists: David Wilson-Johnson (Elijah), Katherine Broderick (soprano), Claire Bradshaw (mezzo-soprano) and Thomas Walker (tenor) join the OBC, its Principal Conductor Nicholas Cleobury and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for a performance of Mendelssohn's celebrated oratorio.

19 DECEMBER

SHELDONIAN THEATRE, 19.30

### Carol Concert

Come and celebrate Christmas with the Oxford Bach Choir and its Associate Conductor Timothy Byram-Wigfield. Since they began in 2003, the OBC carol concerts have become a popular feature in Oxford's concert calendar and this year will be no exception. The programme will be a mix of old and new, with the chance to join in some well-known favourites.

## Oxford University Orchestra

6 NOVEMBER

SHELDONIAN THEATRE, 20.00

### William Walton – Symphony No.1

### Richard Strauss – *Tod und Verklärung*

Conductor: Peter Stark

## Pitt Rivers Museum

UNTIL 15 NOVEMBER

### Carolyn Drake:

**Photographs of Central Asia**  
Photographs from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan by Istanbul-based photographer Carolyn Drake.

UNTIL 11 JANUARY 2010

### Gérard Mermoz: Objects in Performance

This installation responds to the way the ethnographic collections are organised within the museum. It reinterprets the 'Cabinet of Curiosities' in a contemporary vein, exchanging the scientific taxonomy of museum displays for a theatrical staging of the objects, offering visitors an alternative basis for their appreciation.

UNTIL 31 JANUARY 2010

### Archive highlight: John Bradford, Pioneer of Landscape Archaeology

This archive case display spotlights the groundbreaking use of aerial photography in landscape archaeology by former Pitt Rivers Museum archaeologist, John Bradford (1918–75). Bradford's images of Etruscan cemeteries, Italian neolithic sites and Roman centuriation, as well as sites in the UK, formed the basis of his celebrated book, *Ancient Landscapes* (1957). The display also highlights how Bradford's wartime work with the RAF led to innovations in this area of archaeological discovery.

## The University Museum of Natural History

3–27 NOVEMBER

### Darwin's Leftovers

As part of the Charles Darwin bicentenary celebrations, the museum is hosting an exhibition of knitted Victorian taxidermy. Inspired by the preserved animals, birds and reptiles collected by Darwin, members of the Stroud Knitting Group and children from Gloucestershire schools have created a whole natural history world.

## Royal Society Lecture

17 MARCH 2010

SHELDONIAN THEATRE, 18.30

### Royal Society Wilkins-Medawar-Bernal Lecture Given by Melvyn Bragg

To mark the relationship between Wadham College and the Royal Society as they celebrate their 400th and 350th anniversaries respectively, Melvyn Bragg (Wadham 1958) will give the Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar lecture. This is a free public lecture on the history of science and is part of the Oxfordshire Science Festival 2010. Tickets available from 1 December, from Tickets Oxford, [www.ticketsoxford.com](http://www.ticketsoxford.com), tel: 01865 305305, or in person from The Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2LW.

## Ashmolean Museum

Beaumont Street  
Tel: 01865 278000  
[www.ashmolean.org](http://www.ashmolean.org)  
Tues to Sat 10.00–17.00  
Sun 12.00–17.00

## The Bate Collection of Musical Instruments

Faculty of Music  
St Aldate's  
Tel: 01865 276139  
[www.bate.ox.ac.uk](http://www.bate.ox.ac.uk)  
Mon to Fri 14.00–17.00  
Sat 10.00–12.00 (full term only)

## Bodleian Library

Broad Street  
Tel: 01865 277213/277216  
[www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about/exhibitions](http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about/exhibitions)  
Mon to Fri 9.00–17.00  
Sat 9.00–16.30

## Botanic Garden

Rose Lane  
Tel: 01865 286690  
[www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk](http://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk)  
Daily 9.00–17.00

## Harcourt Arboretum

Mon to Fri 10.00–17.00  
(May to Oct, daily 10.00–16.30)

## Christ Church Picture Gallery

Christ Church  
Tel: 01865 276172  
Mon to Sat 10.30–13.00, 14.00–16.30  
Sun 14.00–17.00

## Museum of the History of Science

Broad Street  
Tel: 01865 277280  
[www.mhs.ox.ac.uk](http://www.mhs.ox.ac.uk)  
Tues to Fri 10.00–17.00  
Sat and Sun 12.00–17.00

## Modern Art Oxford

Pembroke Street  
Tel: 01865 722733  
[www.modernartoxford.org.uk](http://www.modernartoxford.org.uk)  
Tues to Sat 10.00–17.00, Sun 12.00–17.00

## Museum of Oxford

Town Hall, St Aldates  
Tel: 01865 252761  
[www.museumoxford.org.uk](http://www.museumoxford.org.uk)  
Tues to Fri 10.00–17.00  
Sat & Sun 12.00–17.00,

## Oxford Bach Choir

[www.oxfordbachchoir.org](http://www.oxfordbachchoir.org)  
Tickets: Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, OX1 2LW  
Tel: 01865 305305  
[www.ticketsoxford.com](http://www.ticketsoxford.com) or [www.oxfordbachchoir.org](http://www.oxfordbachchoir.org)

## Oxford University Orchestra

[www.ouo.org.uk](http://www.ouo.org.uk)  
Tickets: Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, OX1 2LW  
Tel: 01865 305305  
[www.ticketsoxford.com](http://www.ticketsoxford.com)

## Oxford University Philharmonia

[www.ouphil.oums.org](http://www.ouphil.oums.org)

## Pitt Rivers Museum

Parks Road  
Tel: 01865 270927  
[www.prm.ox.ac.uk](http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk)  
Monday 12.00–16.30, Tues–Sun 10.00–16.30

## The University Museum of Natural History

Parks Road  
Tel: 01865 272950  
[www.oum.ox.ac.uk](http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk)  
Daily: 10.00–17.00

The major theme of this year's Alumni Weekend, which drew participants from around the world, celebrated the achievements of women from the University. **Jenny Lunnon** reports

# The female firsts among equals

In a faded group photo from 1896, each young woman scientist proudly cradles a microscope, stethoscope or other emblem of her discipline. Among them is animal morphologist Jane Willis Kirkaldy (Somerville 1887), who would have a long and distinguished academic career and teach future Nobel Prize-winning chemist Dorothy Hodgkin (Somerville 1928).

The third annual Oxford University Alumni Weekend, held between 25 and 27 September, provided a steady stream of such reminders of the courage and sheer doggedness of the pioneering women who decided that they must fulfil their intellectual potential and make a useful contribution to society, through studying and working at an institution that had excluded them for more than seven centuries. In fact it was not until 1959 that the five women's colleges were awarded the same status as the men's, even though Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville had been established back in 1879 and women had been able to take University degrees since 1920.

The principal theme of the Weekend, 'Meeting Minds – An Equal Citizenship', offered around 1,000 participants the chance to learn about and celebrate the achievements of Oxford's women within academia and the wider world. Guided tours of former women's colleges revealed tributes to famous and unsung female academics, benefactors and alumnae. St Hugh's, for example, displays a striking portrait of imprisoned Burmese politician Aung San Suu Kyi, who studied PPE there in the late 1960s and is an Honorary Fellow, while a plaque commemorates neuropsychologist Freda Newcombe, who spent almost 40 years in Oxford assessing and caring for people with head injuries.

One walking tour focused on sites associated with women who went on to become noted writers, including Vera Brittain, author of the influential memoir *Testament of Youth*, and detective novelist Dorothy L Sayers, whose *Gaudy Night* is set in Oxford; another looked at the role of such anthropologists as Beatrice Blackwood and Makereti in the development of the Pitt Rivers Museum; and a third recalled the

many eminent female politicians who have received their education at Oxford.

The three days also showcased contemporary achievements by alumnae and academics. Sarah Outen (St Hugh's 2004) shared vivid memories of her record-breaking single-handed 124-day row across the Indian Ocean, and Hilary Lister (Jesus 1991) described her gruelling 1,500-mile journey around the British Isles in a yacht adapted so that she can sail it alone, despite the fact that she is quadriplegic. Other sessions highlighted important new research by female academics.

Some events reflected the multiple responsibilities that characterise many women's lives. In a panel discussion entitled 'A Woman's Place is in the Boardroom', investment fund manager Nicola Horlick (Balliol 1979) described how she coped with the serious illness of her daughter, Georgina, while continuing to work at the top of her profession. In another session, IT entrepreneur and benefactor of the Oxford Internet Institute, Dame Stephanie Shirley, spoke about her autistic son, Giles, and her commitment to promoting better understanding of this disorder.

Other lectures and discussions looked at different aspects of citizenship and equality, or considered how the University can increase the representation of women in professorships and other senior academic and administrative roles, and improve diversity in its broadest sense, through such initiatives as the Career Development Fellowships.

Between sessions, some delegates shared personal memories of the era before women's colleges were properly part of the University. Jean Thompson, who came up in 1942 to read French at St Anne's, said: 'I think we just took it for granted that the men had all those colleges and we didn't.'

At a reception at the University Museum, Baroness Ruth Deech, former Principal of St Anne's, said: 'I have found this to be a very moving weekend. What a long way we have come, from acceptance to integration, and from integration to leadership.' Then, to laughter, she concluded: 'The woman who wants to be equal to men ... is lacking in ambition!'

PHOTOS BY DICK MAKIN AND ROB JUDGES





## Up to the roof, and there are diamonds in the sky

Having clambered up to the roof of the Denys Wilkinson Building in Keble Road after dark, some intrepid alumni were rewarded with an unusual and dramatic view of the glowing rose window of St Aloysius' Church. But looking up was still more exciting. It was a cloudless night and they used the Department of Astrophysics' Philip Wetton Telescope to obtain clear views of Jupiter, with its huge, swirling storms and four moons.

Because 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy, the Alumni Weekend included a strand of astronomy-themed events and activities. Among these were a tour of the Radcliffe Observatory at Green Templeton College, once an important place for astronomical observations, and a touring photographic exhibition in the University Parks. One image showed the Hercules Globular Cluster of stars, 25,100 light years away, 'hanging in the sky like a bag of diamonds'. It was first noted by Oxford astronomer Edmond Halley in 1714.

Somerville Junior Research Fellow and co-presenter of *The Sky at Night*, Dr Chris

Lintott, brought his audience up-to-date with Galaxy Zoo, the largest 'citizen science' project ever undertaken. It has enlisted the help of 250,000 people in order to identify different types of galaxy, providing much new and valuable information and showing that amateur enthusiasts can still make a genuine contribution to scientific endeavour – and do things that even powerful computers cannot do easily or accurately. So successful has been the approach of Galaxy Zoo that similar projects are planned. These will involve members of the public in such diverse research as monitoring the behaviour of crows and helping to transcribe a vast archive of fragments of papyri excavated in Egypt a century ago.



## 'I just want to come back and be a student again'

As in previous years, the 2009 Alumni Weekend offered a mixture of intellectually stimulating lectures and debates and more relaxing activities, including a *Messiah* Sing-In. There were also receptions and dinners, some college-based. Organisers responded to feedback from the previous two Weekends by making the breaks between sessions slightly longer, to enable participants to travel between venues or to socialise more easily.

Many people remarked on how much they had enjoyed the chance to step out of their everyday working lives – or retirement – and be exposed to so much exciting information, enquiry and debate, both in their own fields of interest and in areas that were completely new to them.

Sharon Maidment (Jesus 1978), who read *Literae Humaniores*, had never before been inside an Oxford science building but decided to attend some of the astronomy-related events. She reflected: 'It opens your eyes to the incredible work that people are doing here and makes you think of new things you might do in your own life.' Former metallurgy student Joanne Clark (St Catherine's 1982), said: 'I just want to come

back and be a student again. I'd appreciate it more this time!'

Dr Helen Caldwell (Somerville 2001), who studied chemistry but is currently writing a novel, found the Creative Writing Masterclass helpful and inspiring. And for other alumni wishing to develop their interests or career, or take a new direction, there was plenty of practical advice and information on offer, covering distance learning courses offered by the Department for Continuing Education; the University's podcasts on iTunes U; the wealth of web-based resources based on the digitisation of printed books; the alumni services provided by the Careers Service; and the professional networking opportunities offered by the Alumni Office.

A selection of Alumni Weekend events can be watched or heard at:

[www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk](http://www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk) or  
[www.ox.ac.uk/itunes\\_u](http://www.ox.ac.uk/itunes_u)

For more information, and to register interest in next year's Weekend, which will be held between 24 and 26 September 2010, see the website address above or telephone 01865 611621.

## Oxford for life

*Alison Edwards, Head of Alumni Communications, reports on a range of new schemes linking students past and present*

Over the last two years, the University Alumni Office has been busy laying the foundations of a new programme aimed at current students.

Increasingly, the majority of university applicants are thinking about their future career, even before they arrive at college, with more candidates making their UCAS choices based on graduate employment statistics, than on which is the 'best student union bar'. First-years are already worrying about which career path to choose, second-years are trying to firm up internships and work experience placements for the 'long vac', and finalists are wondering why the old milk-round companies don't seem quite as thick on the ground as they used to ...

### Building a community

It is now more important than ever that the University prepares its students for life after Oxford, and the University Alumni Office is keen to play its part in this process. Alumni, after all, are uniquely placed to offer advice and support to current students, based on their own skills and experience. This



ROB JUDGES

was one of the main aims behind the setting up of the Oxford Student Alumni Society (OxSAS) in 2008. Supported by the Alumni Office, but run by students, for students, the group aims to introduce its members to the concept of life after Oxford, drawing on the expertise of a range of engaged alumni who, through speaking at events, can help students prepare for the wider world.

### More than an education

In addition to speaking at OxSAS events, alumni have the opportunity to engage with students in a variety of ways.



The well-established Oxford University Society Student Awards scheme provides funding for student travel (and has recently been expanded to offer support for sport and hardship as well). The aim of the scheme is to support and foster personal growth and development, initiative and enterprise. The travel funds come from donations by Oxford alumni, as well as commission earned via the Oxford Alumni Travel Programme, and the monies have been used by students to help with everything from cultural tours of China to expeditions to Greenland.



LEFT: *The Oxford10 2008 Christmas Party*  
CENTRE: *Some of last year's OxSAS committee members*  
ABOVE: *Tom Venables (Ch Ch) won an OUS travel award*

For alumni who are looking for a more active way to engage with current students, there are a number of practical initiatives to help prepare tomorrow's graduates for the workplace. The Careers Service runs the Oxford Careers Network, a database of alumni willing to offer career

## PIGEONHOLES

### Forthcoming events

Oxford10 Christmas Party at Shakespeare's Globe, London:  
5 December 2009  
Varsity Rugby: 10 December 2009  
Meet the new Vice-Chancellor:  
18 February 2010  
The Boat Race: 4 April 2010  
North American Reunion:  
16-17 April 2010

The full events programme can be seen at [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/events](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/events)

### Oxford10

Oxford10 is a network for graduates of the last 10 years, and organises a wide range of events, including wine tastings, gallery viewings and high-profile speaker events. Other initiatives include a new mentoring scheme, in which recent graduates help current students or those just leaving university. If you'd like to get involved, please sign up at [www.oxford10.com](http://www.oxford10.com).

### New chairman for OUS

The retirement of Dr Richard Repp, member of the Oxford University Society's Board since 1987 and Chairman since 2005, was announced at the Open Meeting during the 2009 Alumni Weekend. The Rt Hon The Baroness Shephard of Northwold, Gillian Shephard (St Hilda's 1958), has been appointed as Dr Repp's successor by the Chancellor, who is President of the Society.

### Board elections

The Oxford University Society Board is seeking the views of members on a proposal to alter the method of election for some of the Society-elected members of the Board. The intention is to help ensure a balanced representation of the membership as a whole and continuing representation by branch officers. Further details are available at [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/governance](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/governance) or by contacting the address at the top of this page.

Comments and suggestions should be received by Monday 14 December 2009.

## Contact the Alumni Office:

If you have any questions about the information included on this page, or would like to find out more about the alumni relations programme at Oxford, please contact us at: [enquiries@alumni.ox.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@alumni.ox.ac.uk); +44 (0) 1865 611610. Alumni Office, University of Oxford, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD, UK.



mentoring to students unsure of what direction to take or how to get into a specific industry or occupation. Similarly, the Oxford University International Internships Programme (OUIIP) was set up in 2008 to provide work placements in a range of sectors, to give applicants the chance to gain essential skills and experience, preferably outside their country of origin. All of the placements in 2009 were offered through alumni.

### It's not 'goodbye', it's 'au revoir'

The longest part of an individual's relationship with Oxford takes place after they have left the quads and halls of academia. The Oxford10 programme, for alumni up to 10 years out, aims to help with the transition from student to alumnus. Its volunteer-run committee organises a wide range of events and activities aimed specifically at recent leavers, from 'New2London' talks to the annual Oxford10 Christmas party.

Our student programme can only continue to develop and expand with the active involvement of our alumni, but the benefits to both parties look set to go on growing. For more information on any of these initiatives and any other activities undertaken by the Alumni Office, see [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk).

### How you can get involved

Speaker events: do you have some valuable experience that students could learn from? Would you be able to spare an evening, in Oxford or London, to talk to a group of students? Contact us at [students@alumni.ox.ac.uk](mailto:students@alumni.ox.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1865 611617.

Oxford Careers Network: the more alumni who register a profile with the database, the more students benefit. You can simply post a career history, or volunteer to act as a career mentor. See [www.careers.ox.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/alumni) for more details.

If you went down in the last decade and are interested in being involved in our Oxford10 programme, we'd love to hear from you. The committee is always looking for volunteers to help organise events, or to suggest new activities. Simply visit [www.oxford10.com](http://www.oxford10.com) to find out more.

Internships: the OUIIP is already looking for new sponsors for the 2010 internship programme. See [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/internships](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/internships) for more information about the scheme

To find out how to support student initiatives at Oxford financially, you can visit the campaign website at [www.campaign.ox.ac.uk](http://www.campaign.ox.ac.uk)

## Oxford Alumni Travel Programme

The closing date for the 2009 Travel Photography competition has now passed and our panel of judges has selected the winners. To see these entries, visit [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/travel\\_competition](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/travel_competition).

The new 2010 brochure for the Oxford Alumni Travel Programme is now available. Tours are accompanied by trip scholars, who offer an expert insight into the destinations visited.

### FORTHCOMING HIGHLIGHTS



HURTIGRUTEN-YVONNE REINHOLDSTEN

#### Polar Nights and Mystical Northern Lights

14–18 FEBRUARY 2010

Explore the Norwegian coast on this joint Oxford–Cambridge, astronomy-themed voyage with trip scholars Professor Roger Davies (Oxford) and Dr Peter Clarkson (Cambridge). This tour will include a series of lectures throughout the cruise and at least one session will be spent on deck, at night, exploring the heavens.

For further information, visit [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/travel](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/travel)



ACE STUDYTOURS

#### The Somme

24–27 APRIL 2010

Join this exclusive tour to the Somme battlefields to learn about the poetry and music of the war years, accompanied by Malcolm Oxley. Visits will include the northern and southern sectors of the Somme battlefield, the Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval and the Historial de la Grande Guerre Museum.

## New Oxford Alumni Card



A new, plastic version of the Oxford Alumni Card will be issued with the Hilary issue of *Oxford Today*. It will look very similar to your current card, although you will have a new Alumni Card number. Please note: the new card will be attached to the *Oxford Today* address sheet – do not throw this away! For more details visit: [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/alumni\\_card](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/alumni_card). Please ensure we have your current contact details by completing the update form at [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/update](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/update).

## External member sought for Council

The University is beginning the process to find a new external member of the University Council, with an advertisement in this issue of *Oxford Today*. The vacancy will arise in Michaelmas term 2011. The role is a voluntary one, but external members will be expected to spend a minimum of two days per month in Oxford.

Contact the Registrar's office for further details. [diana.hulin@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:diana.hulin@admin.ox.ac.uk) or 01865 280415. See Directory, page 53

## New Alumni gift range

The University of Oxford Shop is introducing an exclusive new range of products for alumni, including clothing, pens, glassware, a special watch and other items.

The new range is available online at [www.oushop.com](http://www.oushop.com). All Oxford Alumni Card-holders are entitled to a 10 per cent discount on all products in the University Shop.



## Oxford around the world

Enclosed with this issue of *Oxford Today* is the 2009–10 edition of our annual publication, *Oxford Alumni Networks at Home and Abroad*. This publication highlights the valuable work that alumni volunteers do, from helping Oxonians connect with each other, to acting as University ambassadors in their locality.

Work is currently under way on redeveloping the networks section of our website. Check back in November to find out all about alumni groups at [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/networks](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/networks).



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Specially discounted joining fees for *Oxford Today* readers range from £57.50 to £135 depending on place of residence. 2010 annual subscriptions range from £109 to £270 (effective from 1 November 2009 if wished). The joining fee is waived for those aged 17-25.



For further information please contact the Membership Department, remembering to quote OXFORD TODAY.

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\*London clubhouse: gin & tonic £4.50; pint of beer from £3.95; house wine from £3.65; bar food £4.85-£6.00; three course lunch/dinner in the restaurant from £24.95; in the garden £22.75; scones, Devon cream and preserves with tea or coffee in the garden, buttery or drawing room £6.70; evening events from £4.00; air-conditioned bedrooms £95 - £180; e-mail and computer facilities in Central Lounge, broadband internet connection in bedrooms. Prices correct at time of design, September 2009.



# Scrumdown with the kids

Oxford's rugby chief is taking the sport 'away from the ivory tower', to schoolchildren. **Steven Casey** reports

**S**TEVE HILL is a rugby missionary. The University's Director of Rugby has run summer schools for local children for the last five years, and now he's enthusing about his Rugby Academy, in which Blues players work with 9 to 14-year-olds for 10 cold, dark Thursday evenings from January to March. But, I ask him, what's the benefit for OURFC? After all, Hill can't award university places to his charges. Isn't it all rather tangential to his 'core business'?

Hill suggests that he's 'growing support', but he knows his match-day turnstiles will hardly clog up with a few extra families. Eventually the evangelist in him breaks out. 'Look, when I came here 13 years ago this was the rugby equivalent of an ivory tower. But everyone in the game has a responsibility to attract people into rugby. The number of 18-year-olds coming to universities in general, wanting to play our sport, is declining every year, and we can help reverse that.

'I also firmly believe that the best coaches need to work with the youngest players, not just with mature stars. They do it in Australia, and their drop-out rate is far lower than ours. OURFC has great coaches – Brian

Ashton [the former England coach] is coaching our backs, for heaven's sake! – and we should be passing on their knowledge.'

Hill himself is one of only 10 RFU level 5 coaches, the highest qualified in the game, and for years he has been passing his knowledge on beyond his University sides, through his college coaching scheme. But the academy, established with 45 young players in 2009, spreads his expertise far wider.

'Rugby coaches at school or junior club level don't do much for individual skills. We give them far more individual attention – one coach per 10 youngsters – and they work on basics like catching, passing, the "clear-out", one-to-one tackling.'

Will Sharp, a 13-year-old front-row forward from Abingdon, thinks that's exactly right for him. 'My club does some skills work – mostly team organisation – but then we all play match rugby where we might not get a chance to use the skill – or we get away with doing it badly. At the academy we practise the skill, then they create a "match situation" demanding that skill, and it's monitored. Everyone tells you to keep your body low when you tackle, but at the academy it's enforced!'

Will points out another advantage. 'For instance, the rules on mauling have changed recently and "bridging" was made illegal. But we're learning with current Blues players, and they've worked out effective new maul-

ing. My club coaches are very old-fashioned: if you're tackled you go to ground immediately. But Steve has taught us the new rugby, where you offload and keep the ball alive.'

Under Hill, OURFC has a budget to help players get coaching or refereeing badges, and Hill takes the education of his coaching network very seriously. The academy, too, educates coaches. 'The dads who bring their children along are often the "mini-rugby" coaches at the clubs, so surreptitiously, we're also teaching them. It's not just what to coach, it's how. Coaching generally is becoming more "player-centred", and kids certainly learn better if they're encouraged to think up their own answers.'

Brendan McKercher, the Blues' scrum-half and a former professional with Borders in Scotland, loves the communication challenge. 'I had the under-10s this year, and you've got to make every minute enjoyable or they soon lose interest. So we use a lot of rugby-related games, like a form of tag in which you can't run with the ball, so you're forced to pass. For me, the satisfaction of seeing them achieve something new is enormous.'

'Everybody wins,' observes Hill, 'our students, the kids, their dads and their own clubs or schools.' I remark that it's far more than the other headline sports clubs in Oxford do (though smaller University sports are often good at outreach). 'Hey, we have a one-line mission statement in this club, and it's "Beat Cambridge"', grins Hill. 'But being good citizens doesn't detract from that at all.'

ABOVE: *Bright prospect: Freddie Priors, aged 10, an aspiring scrum-half, in a practice session with Brendan McKercher, his coach at the academy*

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# Reviews



Books and CDs reviewed in *Oxford Today* all have an Oxford connection: their subject-matter is the University or city, and/or the author is a current or former student or academic. We welcome suggestions from authors and publishers. Please send brief details to the Editor, at [oxford.today@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:oxford.today@admin.ox.ac.uk). We cannot mention every book or CD, and choose those likely to be of general interest, rather than specialised academic texts.

## Making the world less wrong

*Mark Davies* discovers the life story of a pioneering humanitarian

### The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb, the Founder of Save the Children

Clare Mulley

Oneworld

9781851686575, £18.99

'The world is wrong.' This was the precocious assessment of Eglantyne Jebb (1876–1928) when aged only eight. Clare Mulley's meticulously researched biography details the subsequent influences on the woman who went on to try to alter this early assessment, by founding the world's largest independent organisation for children, the Save the Children Fund (SCF).

Ironically for someone who was to inspire such permanent benefit for the world's children, Jebb never had children herself, nor did she ever marry. 'I don't care for children', she is quoted as saying in 1900 – though she did, obviously, care about them. During her years at Lady

Margaret Hall (1895–98) 'she went "slumming" around the less affluent parts of Oxford like the alleys by the canal' and undertook voluntary work in London's deprived East End, an experience the girl from a comfortable rural upbringing in Shropshire found sufficiently inspiring to consider leaving Oxford before completing her degree.

However, it was the desperate condition of civilians in Europe after the First World War that inspired Jebb's greatest achievement. It was then that she realised a truism of civil conflict: that 'the soldiers are the "Heroes of Europe", but it is the thousands of sick and starving and helpless and deserted folk ... who pay the price for war's arbitrament'. It was this realisation that spurred Jebb's efforts to raise awareness and money for the children who were victims of the war, including those of Germany; for this supposed lack of patriotism she was



arrested in 1919. Later that year, she and her younger sister, Dorothy, launched the Save the Children Fund at a packed meeting at the Royal Albert Hall.

Eglantyne Jebb continued to steer SCF until her final years, despite ill-health. Readers should be aware that it is her life, and the many and varied influences on it, with which the book is most

concerned, rather than the organisation she founded. Consequently, it is not until Chapter 12 (of 16) that we reach the all-important year of 1919. It is a testimony to Jebb's remarkable humanitarianism, that the one rule she announced from the Albert Hall stage that year, to 'help them whatever their country, whatever their religion', still holds true in an organisation that, 90 years later, now works to make the world less 'wrong' in over 120 countries.

**Mark Davies** is an Oxford historian, writer and guide with a background in international development

## Digging deep into the past

*Nina Morgan* on a tale of strange fossils, lost life forms and exotic locations

### Darwin's Lost World: The Hidden History of Animal Life

Martin Brasier

Oxford University Press

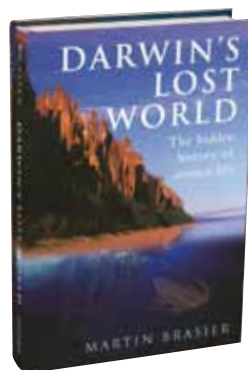
9780199548972 £16.99

It is 150 years since Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* appeared, and Darwin-themed exhibitions and events abound. Darwin's book shocked Victorian society with its suggestion that life forms evolved over millions of years: by implying that Earth was very much older than many believed, it challenged the literal truth of biblical creation.

Darwin himself recognised that his book raised many unanswered questions. One of the great conundrums centred on the 'Cambrian explosion', when a vast range of life forms seemed to suddenly appear in the fossil record in rocks at the base of the Cambrian period (542–488 million years ago). Darwin referred to the

Precambrian – the period that pre-dates the Cambrian and is now known to have spanned more than 80 per cent of Earth's history – as 'a Lost World'. And so, in many ways, it remains. The cause of the Cambrian explosion – and indeed, whether it really happened – is a topic that has dominated the career of Martin Brasier, a palaeontologist/palaeobiologist who now leads a thriving research group at the Department of Earth Sciences in Oxford.

In spite of the repeated references to Darwin and other early geologists, this book deals less with historical research than with Brasier's own career. And a fascinating one it is. After studying modern Caribbean marine ecosystems, in the early 1970s he became hooked on Precambrian life, having been presented with a rock from the Ediacara Hills in Australia,



famous for containing fossils of early multicellular life.

Brasier's search for Precambrian fossils has taken him to remote areas around the world. His descriptions of the logistical, political and cultural challenges he has had to overcome make for amusing reading. For example, a taste for arak, a fermented mare's milk 'tasting faintly of yoghurt and lightly scented with eau-de-cheval-derrière', he reveals, is de rigueur in the steppes of Outer Mongolia.

If you are expecting a book about Darwin's work, this one may disappoint. But if you are searching for a read that combines musings on the origins of life, the universe and everything, with cracking yarns about a geologist's adventures in the field, this is for you.

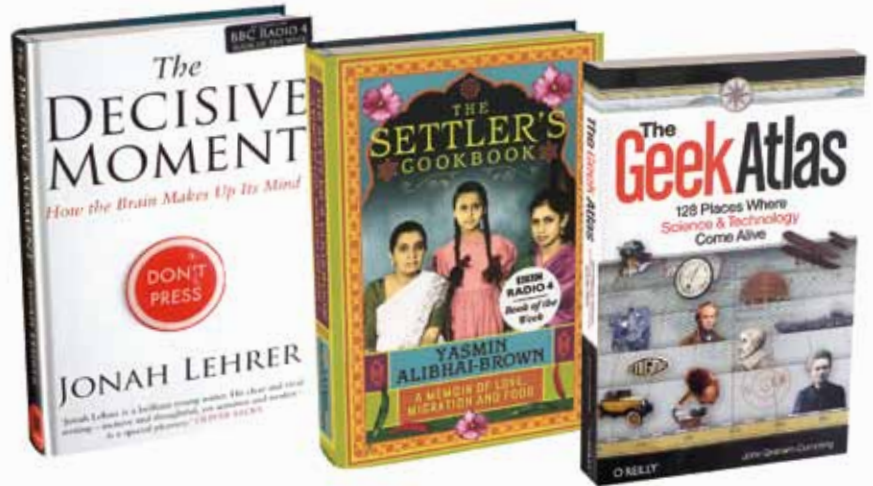
**Nina Morgan** has a DPhil in Geology (Wolfson 1976) and is a science writer based near Oxford

# Book briefings

The physicist Niels Bohr defined an expert as 'a person who has made all the mistakes that can be made in a very narrow field'. In *The Decisive Moment: How the Brain Makes Up Its Mind* (Canongate, 9781847673138, £16.99), Jonah Lehrer (Wolfson 2003) explains how the methods of modern neuroscience – notably brain-imaging – are helping us to understand the complexities of human decision-making and considers the implications for education and learning in general. He concludes: 'The problem with praising kids for their innate intelligence ... is that it misrepresents the neural reality of education. It encourages kids to avoid the most useful kind of learning activities, which is learning from mistakes. Unless you experience the unpleasant symptoms of being wrong, your brain will never revise its models. Before your neurons can succeed, they must repeatedly fail. There are no shortcuts for this painstaking process.' His analysis – just one aspect of an eloquent book bursting with ideas – may be of particular interest to those who have experienced the Oxford tutorial system and reflected on the pros and cons of this pedagogical approach.

How people made choices in the early modern era, from around the Reformation to the American War of Independence, is a subject that has absorbed Sir Keith Thomas, Fellow of St John's and All Souls, and former President of Corpus Christi, for much of his academic life. His immersion in that historical period has enabled him to construct what he calls 'a retrospective ethnography ... approaching the past in the way an anthropologist might approach some exotic society'. In *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (OUP, 9780199247233, £20) he investigates the decisions people made about such crucial matters as work and personal relationships as they strove to achieve 'a life well lived'.

The Oxford approach to teaching, as it was in the early 1970s at least, did not suit Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (Linacre 1972), who found her graduate studies in English literature



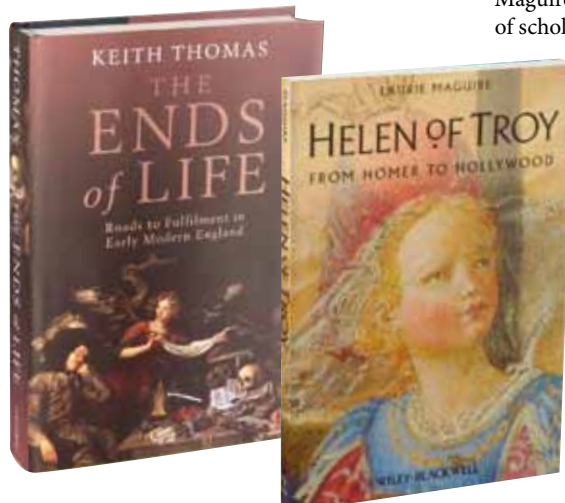
a demoralising experience. One useful life skill she did acquire while at Oxford, however, was how to cook, learning recipes and methods over the phone from her mother. Dishes appropriate for a student budget included spicy potatoes cooked in 12 different ways. *The Settler's Cookbook: A Memoir of Love, Migration and Food* (Portobello, 9781846270833, £20) is an unusual autobiography punctuated by the recipes that are entwined with Alibhai-Brown's memories. Having grown up as an East Asian in Uganda, she found herself exiled in Britain when her entire community was expelled by Idi Amin. The blending and adapting of different culinary traditions becomes a metaphor for the gradual acceptance of life in a new land by a person with a complicated history and an exceptional sensitivity to the nuanced meanings to be found in food.

It can be hard to obtain information about sights of current or historical scientific interest from tourist offices. To address this problem, John Graham-Cumming (LMH 1986) has written *The*

*Geek Atlas: 128 Places Where Science and Technology Come Alive* (O'Reilly, 9780596523206, £22.99). In this original and entertaining guidebook, his starting point is places associated with eminent scientists and their breakthroughs. These range from the huge and impressive, such as CERN in Geneva and the Very Large Array of radio telescopes in New Mexico, to modest museums such as the Institut Pasteur in Paris and the Mendel Museum of Genetics at Brno in the Czech Republic. They also include the Iron Bridge in Shropshire, and other pioneering bridges, and the Cambridge pub where Crick and Watson announced that they had discovered the secret of life. Descriptions of places are complemented by accessible explanations of the relevant scientific ideas. Oxford is represented by the Museum of the History of Science, the Penicillin Memorial, the house of astronomer Edmond Halley, and the site of Robert Boyle's laboratory, which prefaces a short exposition on Boyle and the gas laws.

Oxford Professor of English Laurie Maguire brings an exceptional range of scholarship to her literary biography

*Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood* (Wiley-Blackwell, 9781405126359, £17.99), in which she examines the many contradictory ways in which the myth of Helen has been retold over 28 centuries. Her concluding chapter, 'Parodying Helen', celebrates the vein of irreverence this solemn story has inspired.



Book reviews are edited by  
Jenny Lunnon

## Literature on the move

David Sargeant welcomes some new perspectives on a controversial grouping of post-war poets

### The Movement Reconsidered: Essays on Larkin, Amis, Gunn, Davie and their Contemporaries

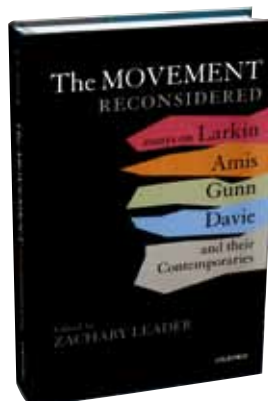
Edited by Zachary Leader  
Oxford University Press  
9780199558254, £18.99

It is only appropriate that some of the qualities that characterised the Movement – the name coined in 1954, by the literary editor of the *Spectator*, for a clutch of emerging writers – should also imbue this collection of 17 essays dedicated to a reconsideration of its work. A conversational clarity and down-to-earth intelligence ensure that the volume will reward the attention of the casual reader, even as it becomes essential reading for students of the Movement and its times.

As Zachary Leader notes in his introduction, the splenetic opinions expressed by some Movement writers – Larkin's dismissal of the 'mystification and outrage' of modernism being one of the more polite – have too frequently been met with an equally indiscriminating critical response. In these essays, however, the contributors are given licence to go their separate ways within

the subject's boundaries, which results in readings that never become crude or programmatic.

Much of the book's richness lies in this range and variety. For instance, Craig Raine's tracing of the undercover romantic strain in Larkin's poetry gives way to Terry Castle's compelling account of Larkin's strangely dedicated impersonation, in the *Willow Gables* fictions, of 'a leering, half-mad, sapphically inclined author of books for girls'. We get Colin McGinn pondering Amis's great comic novel *Lucky Jim* in relation to the rise of the 'ordinary bloke' in 1950s philosophy, followed by Deborah Cameron on the Movement writers' ideas about language. And one of the chief pleasures of the volume is the inclusion of pieces by Anthony Thwaite and Robert Conquest, who were actually there when the Movement was on the move, and by Blake Morrison, who produced one of the first major studies of its work.



What these essays share, beyond their subject matter, is the ability to write jargon-free prose that makes room for the human character of both of the writers under discussion and the essayists themselves. In the first place, this gives readings that are as lucid as they are perceptive. However, even without observations as sharp as that of James Fenton on the 'little ugliness tax' we have to pay to get to

the beautiful bits in Larkin's poetry, it would be hard to resist the charms of a volume that can make room, in passing, for an anecdote featuring Harold Pinter and a pair of sunglasses, or Nicholas Jenkins's recollection of how W G Moore, responsible for policing Larkin's boozy residence at St John's College, was also responsible for 'gently' introducing him to alcohol 'in the form of Woodpecker cider'.

David Sargeant completed his DPhil on Rudyard Kipling's prose in 2008 and is now a lecturer and JRF at Somerville College



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# Distractions

## Exercise

Clues are divided equally into three types:

- (i) an extraneous word must be removed before solving, noting its first letter;
- (ii) the wordplay yields the answer plus an extra letter;
- (iii) a letter in the definition is a misprint and solvers must identify the correct letter to replace it.

The 48 letters thus found indicate an event whose consequences can be seen in the grid, connecting Oxford with five unclued entries.

Please send your solution by 4 January 2010 to Distractions, c/o Janet Avison, Public Affairs Directorate, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD. This issue's prize is a copy of *The Geek Atlas: 128 Places Where Science and Technology Come Alive* (O'Reilly, £22.99).

John Higgs, *Queen's 1979*

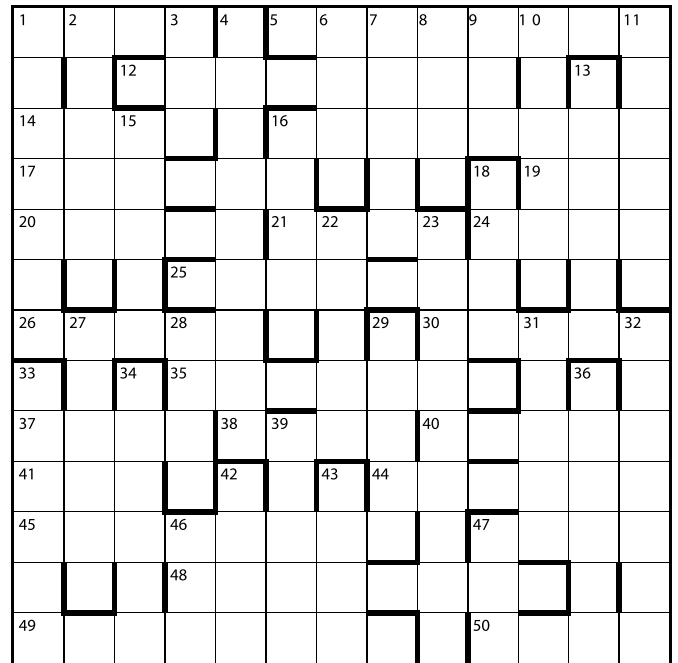
TRINITY CROSSWORD SOLUTION, PAGE 53

### ACROSS

- 1 Female composer of opera using traditional tale (4)
- 14 Blur distinction at first, showing regret about it (4)
- 16 Evil form with ghastly head shocking member of cinema audience (8)
- 17 Bach's top-grade composition (6)
- 19 Secretary has right form (3)
- 20 Grain store almost holding nothing (5)
- 21 Dreadfully sharp file (4)
- 24 Therapist also makes this essential oil (4)
- 25 Henry made a surprisingly fine new leader (7)
- 26 Judges make law stick? About time! (5)
- 30 Machinery injecting drug into sugar mixture (5)
- 35 Engineers speak about limited time off duty (4-3)
- 37 Cry from Scots, receiving English yeomen's arrows launched from here? (4)
- 38 One turned cap around, shielding face (4)
- 40 Grub cooked in a commercial establishment (5)
- 41 Scots not part of church (3)
- 44 Phantoms seen wandering within confines of empty Bodleian (6)
- 45 Seeded Frenchman also in action (8)
- 47 Send our schedule back (4)
- 49 Narks one by beginning to laugh in odd snorts (8)
- 50 Brats sounding like innocent little creatures (4)

### DOWN

- 2 Sort of holly one notices about after start of Yuletide (6)
- 3 Tore enormous tiger's heart out (3)
- 4 Worked fabric and glanced away, unravelling top part (9)



Crossword Editor: Mark Thakkar (*Balliol 1999*)

- 6 Showy plait in hair I styled (4)
- 7 Still dancing, enjoying cheerful tunes (5)
- 8 Philosophies in text that I turned up (4)
- 9 Hear old sheep catch up (3)
- 10 Takes on sorting post after a day off (6)
- 11 Newspaper raising concern about a 'medicinal' herb (6)
- 13 Butter ordered again finally by diner (6)
- 15 40 songs composed for goddess (5)
- 16 Had wild time in Florida (5)
- 18 Sharpen garden tool - new, almost (4)
- 22 Holy places where Virgin Mary, perhaps, receives thanks (5)
- 23 Turns from religion and summons demons, embracing a terrible sin (9)
- 27 Source of creed? Oceania, surprisingly (6)
- 28 Native American cutting top from hide (4)
- 29 Shoddy lid erected at ends and tacked over (5)
- 31 Proverb initially ignored, containing nothing amazing - it's self-evident (5)
- 32 Before appointments, nurse calms patients down? (7)
- 34 Half seen, rising behind those dunes (6)
- 36 Depression reported - issue note for tranquilliser (6)
- 39 Partly trained ring-tailed lemur (5)
- 42 Growl at some strangers turning up (4)
- 43 Heartless philosopher is a bit of a fool (4)
- 46 To read a newspaper (3)
- 47 Length of material for fashion magazine (3)

## Bridge

Twenty years ago, a team of four students and two dons made it to the last eight of the two major national knock-out events. The team's most recognised player was Richard Haydon, then Dean of Brasenose and now one of its senior faculty. Here is a deal defended by him.

North-South got to their second-best game contract after aggressive tactics from West. Let's look at the projected fate of Four Hearts on a top spade lead. Declarer wins and unblocks the heart queen, comes to the diamond queen and cashes a second top trump, then runs diamonds. East ruffs in as soon as he can, but South can discard both his spades and has ten tricks.

In fact West chose to lead the club ace at trick one, which looks no better for the defence, but South 'deceptively' dropped his club king. West stolidly continued with the club ten, squashing South's nine and forcing declarer to put up the queen from dummy.

If East ruffs in, then South can pitch

a spade, and arrange to cash his trumps and run diamonds. East scores one more trump trick, but no spades. Haydon as East found a superior defence, though. On the club queen he discarded a diamond loser (correct whether South has a club left or not). Declarer took the heart queen and came to the diamond queen to test trumps. Then he started to run diamonds, but Haydon could ruff the third diamond, and the defenders were assured three more tricks, whether South over-ruffed or discarded, for down one.

Could declarer have done better after trick two? Yes; he must play on diamonds before taking the heart queen from dummy. When East ruffs high, declarer pitches a spade. He can then win the spade switch, cross to the heart queen, and lead a fourth diamond. This neutralises one of the defenders' major-suit winners.

**Barry Rigal** (*Queen's 1976*)

DEALER EAST

N/S VUL.

NORTH

♠ 10 5 2  
♥ Q  
♦ A K J 7 3  
♣ Q 7 6 2

WEST

♠ K Q 7  
♥ 3  
♦ 9 7 4  
♣ A 10 8 5 4 3

EAST

♠ 9 8 6 3  
♥ J 10 8 6 5 2  
♦ 10 6 2  
♣ J

SOUTH

♠ A J 4  
♥ A K 9 8 7 4  
♦ Q 5  
♣ K 9

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♥
3♣	Dbf.	Pass	4♥
All pass			





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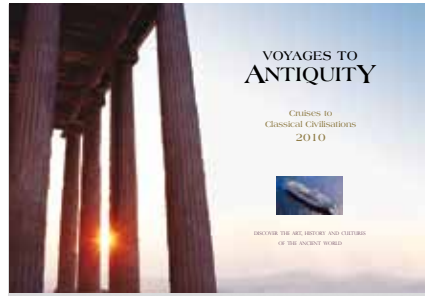
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# Obituaries

## Ralf Dahrendorf

Lord Dahrendorf, KBE, FBA, who died on 17 June 2009, aged 80, was for ten years from 1987 Warden of St Antony's. He brought to the post an international reputation as a sociologist and equally appropriate experience as an academic administrator, not least as a former director of the London School of Economics.



His dazzling career, moving from one prominence to another, in high academic and political roles, had started even as a teenager in wartime opposition in Germany. Later, in peacetime, it took in doctoral work at Hamburg and then at the LSE. Book after book appeared on sociological and democratic political themes, and a practical political career as a Social Democrat and later Free Democrat Party representative developed rapidly in Bonn, and soon as a Commissioner in Brussels.

In 1974 he became the first foreign director of the LSE, a difficult post he held

for a decade, and in 1987 he succeeded Sir Raymond Carr as Warden of St Antony's.

The Oxford college was different in scale from some of his previous responsibilities, but no less demanding. There were acute financial problems and building needs to be seen to, as well as general leadership at a time of international tension in eastern Europe and the Middle East. He managed to maintain a neutral academic ambience throughout the international graduate student community, amid his own many international commitments.

Dahrendorf took British citizenship in 1988 (having already become an honorary KBE), and in 1993 was appointed a life peer, sitting as a cross-bencher. He was also appointed to the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. In May 2009 St Antony's marked his 80th birthday with a special international colloquium celebrating his various academic interests.

## David Pears

The philosopher David Pears, FBA, Student of Christ Church 1960–88 (and previously Fellow of Corpus Christi College, 1950–60), died on 1 July 2009, aged 87. He was Reader in Philosophy, 1972–85, and was then awarded a personal professorship.

His undergraduate work at Balliol was interrupted by war service, but on returning to Oxford to complete his Greats course, he soon turned fully to philosophy and became part of the robust discussion groups that then placed the University at the centre of the philosophical universe. He was soon asked (with Brian McGuinness) to retranslate the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and wrote many articles and several books on Wittgenstein. Though teaching widely – and being held in great regard by his pupils in Oxford and America – he published much. He also found time to organise the Christ Church art collections into their fine new gallery, and was a director of the Oxford Museum of Modern Art.

## Max Hartwell

R M Hartwell, Fellow of Nuffield 1956–81 and Reader in Recent Social and Economic History 1956–77, died on 14 March 2009, aged 88. A specialist in early 19th-century British economic history, with views on the beneficial results of the Industrial Revolution that set him at odds with a Marxian consensus, he came to Oxford after holding a chair in economics in New South Wales. Vigorously provocative in argument, and a fine supervisor of graduate students, he latterly taught courses at the universities of Virginia and Chicago.

## M F Scott

Maurice FitzGerald Scott, FBA, Emeritus Fellow of Nuffield College, died on 2 March 2009, aged 84. Originally a science scholar, he served in the army from 1943 to 1946 and changed to PPE on arriving at Wadham, where his career as an economist began; his BA was followed by study for a BLitt at Nuffield.

Early postings to international organisations (including the OECD) gave him a broad perspective on economic policy and development issues. He returned to academic life and was tutor in economics at Christ Church, 1957–68, before becoming an official Fellow of Nuffield College, where he spent the rest of his career. He retired in 1992, having become a Fellow of the British Academy in 1990. Of his many writings in mid-career, his much-cited study of *Industry and Trade in Some Developing Countries* (OUP 1970) has been particularly influential.

## Margaret Gelling

Margaret Gelling, FBA, an honorary Fellow of St Hilda's College, died on 24 April 2009, aged 84. She had long been a leading expert on the study of English place-names. Her work was of special importance in the history of Anglo-Saxon settlement, and she compiled detailed surveys for Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Shropshire. Her other writings included *Signposts to the Past* (1978) and (with Ann Cole) *The Landscape of Place-Names* (2000). Her researches were firmly based on keen-eyed local observation as well as documentary scholarship, and she stressed the importance of landscape as a source for the naming of places.

## Michael Cox

The novelist Michael Cox, who died of cancer on 31 March 2009, aged 60, was a former member of the staff of the Oxford University Press, where he was prominent in the reference books division. A Cambridge graduate, he became a rock musician and then worked for a popular-health publisher before coming to Oxford in 1989. At OUP he compiled some excellent English literature reference books and commissioned many others. Retiring early when a rare cancer was diagnosed, he took to writing fiction, and his Victorian novel, *The Meaning of Night* (2006), which received an unprecedented advance (of £500,000), was a great success.

## Venetia Burney Phair



Mrs Venetia Burney Phair, who died in May 2009, was an Oxford schoolgirl who at the age of 11 gained the extraordinary distinction of naming a planet. The granddaughter of the former Librarian of the Bodleian, Falconer Madan, she read in *The Times* of 14 March 1930 of the discovery of an as yet unnamed planet. Alert to classical

legend, she suggested to him that it should be called 'Pluto', after the Roman god of the underworld. Madan was able to pass on the suggestion to a friend who was president of the Royal Astronomical Society; he in turn approached the Lowell Observatory in Arizona, and the name was confirmed on May Day 1930. Venetia and her school each received a £5 reward. Her role was not forgotten: in her old age (she died aged 90) the naming of the (now declassified) planet was commemorated in a film.

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The Nominations Committee starts work in Michaelmas term to find a candidate to nominate to Council and Congregation to fill the next vacancy for an external member of Council.

Last year the Nominations Committee of Council identified Sir Crispin Davis and Sir Paul Nurse as nominees, and they are external members of Council from HT2009 and MT2010 respectively. The committee, chaired by Alice Perkins, a current external member of Council, is now starting work to fill the vacancy for an external member which arises in Michaelmas term 2011 when Bernard Taylor's period of office ends.

Early in 2010, once the criteria for nomination have been finalised, the Committee will formally be seeking nominations from members of Congregation and applications. The role is a voluntary one, with a significant time commitment - external members will be expected to spend a minimum of two days per month in Oxford.

If you would like to register your interest in the role, or in nominating someone for the role, please contact the Registrar's office to request further details.

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## Solution to Trinity 2009 crossword 'Eights Week'

Across answers were ATABAL, ASAHI, TEMP, AWOL, OORIAL, LAHAR, ANTRES, OMASA, EMERY, BETAKE, BOXEN, MANANA, GOAL, XEMA, TEMPE and MAYHAP. The grid revealed the following bumps: Wolfson b Templeton, Somerville b Harris Manchester, Mansfield b Keble, and Pembroke b Exeter; overbumps were achieved by Oriel over Balliol and by Magdalen over Merton.

1	A	2	T	3	O	4	R	5	I	6	A	7	S	8	A	9	H	I				
10	W	12	O	L	P	13	O	M	14	N	15	A	16	T	17	E	M					
	D	12	L	13	A	14	P	15	O	16	B	17	A	18	L	19	A	20	L	21	S	
14	L	15	A	16	S	17	O	18	M	19	A	20	N	21	T	22	R	23	E	24	H	
16	A	17	R	18	A	19	S	20	A	21	L	22	E	23	M	24	A	25	G	26	Y	
19	B	20	E	21	T	22	A	23	M	24	A	25	N	26	O	27	X	28	E	29	N	
	30	O	31	K	32	E	33	B	34	A	35	N	36	A	37	N	38	Y	39	M	40	E
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Andrew Fisher Trinity 1984

# Letters



*Oxford Today* welcomes letters for publication, which can be sent either by post or by email (see p. 1 for addresses). We reserve the right to edit them to meet space constraints; the best way to avoid this fate is to keep letters to 200 or fewer words. Unless you request otherwise, letters may also appear on our website [www.oxfordtoday.ox.ac.uk](http://www.oxfordtoday.ox.ac.uk).

## Access all areas

As the product of a pre-war state grammar school, I was shocked to read Peter Weygang's letter (*OT* 21.3) calling for their re-establishment. Though at my school there were a few pupils from poor families, the vast majority were middle class. So it has remained, and so it will remain in any divided school system. This is hardly surprising; middle class families provide the cultural background and social incentives that enable boys and girls to leap the examination hurdles that are inevitable when a good education is regarded as a privilege for the few.

The post-war, so-called tripartite system (it was never that) was the most divisive educational regime ever imposed by legislation. When it was clearly seen to be failing the country, the grammar schools (some of them) were replaced not by secondary moderns, as Weygang states, but by comprehensive schools. I prefer Professor Brian Simon's term: common secondary schools.

The best comprehensive schools were as good as any grammar school. They educated a socially broader group of students to the highest levels. It has been the failure of successive governments to provide sufficient financial resources and political support for comprehensive schools that has led to the present problems of the state system.

It was encouraging to learn from the interview with Professor Marcus du Sautoy in the same issue that he was educated at a comprehensive school.

**David Grove**  
*Balliol 1941*

Peter Weygang (*OT* 21.3) makes a most eloquent plea for a grammar school renaissance. There is, however, an alternative. A year ago the *Independent* published a letter of mine which went as follows: 'Having taught Oxbridge aspirants for 13 years in an independent school and another 13 in a somewhat atypical comprehensive, I reached the conclusion that the ideologically driven imposition of "mixed-ability" teaching in state schools had been profoundly detrimental. If "setting by subject ability", whereby pupils are taught in the set appropriate to their ability in each subject, had been the norm over the past 40 years, the level of achievement by state schools would have been considerably greater.'

After this Professor John Stein of Magdalen wrote to me saying that originally he had been very well disposed to comprehensive schools but had eventually concluded that 'mixed-ability' teaching had been the ruin of them.

Lastly, both David Cameron and Gordon Brown have come out in favour of 'setting by subject ability'. If this policy were pursued, there would be no need for a grammar school renaissance.

**Julian Dare**  
*Trinity 1955*

Perhaps we might take more notice of Peter Weygang's views on education if he did not display such woeful ignorance of the state education system. He writes: 'the secondary modern school, which largely replaced the grammar schools ...'. The secondary



## Access all areas?

Jenny Lunnon reports on how Oxford is reaching out to prospective students

**T**here's a saying that has always given me pause: 'What does it look like to be a student at a university in a world of 7.5 billion?' It's a question that's become increasingly relevant in the wake of the report's findings, and one that's worth asking of all of us.

modern school was instituted alongside grammar schools to educate that vast majority of students who failed, aged 11, to be selected by a discredited examination for grammar schools. Who knows what talent was written off, and still is in some areas, by this system?

Pauline Neville-Jones, a Conservative Shadow Minister, had a professional, educated mother, a stepfather who had been to Cambridge, was a student at LMH and she worries about 'social engineering' impairing the academic record and standing of Oxford and Cambridge ('My Oxford'; *OT*.21.3). She should now be aware of the all-party report which describes how the 'leading 13 universities are still failing to give enough preferential treatment to bright pupils from lower-income homes ... it is for universities to determine their own admissions procedure, but we would like to see all universities taking into account the context of people's achievement.'

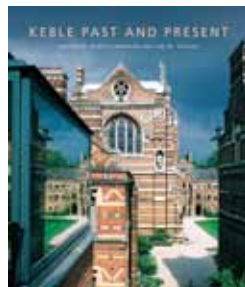
Finally, why do the colleges not publish degree classes achieved by students educated in the private sector alongside those achieved by state-educated students? It might be revealing!

**John Heywood**  
*Lincoln 1957*

## College histories

I very much appreciated your article on recent college histories ('History in the Making' *OT*, 21.3). But I was sorry that while *Keble Past and Present* was featured in an illustration it did not receive any discussion in the article itself.

This book, edited by my colleague Ian Archer and myself and obtainable from the college, was published by Third Millennium in November 2008, and does indeed have a highly illustrated format. However, it is also the first history of Keble, and based closely on a large amount of archival information and material sent in recently by old members and others, as well as interviews and unpublished



memoirs. Space was limited, but we have made some of the extra material available on the Keble website ([www.keble.ox.ac.uk/AboutKeble](http://www.keble.ox.ac.uk/AboutKeble)). We believe that the book tells a compelling story about the transformation of the college from its austere Oxford Movement beginnings to the lively place it is today, and I would not want your readers to think that because it is illustrated it is any the less novel and authoritative. Indeed, much of the story is told in the illustrations, many of them rare, which have been beautifully reproduced and presented by the publishers.

**Averil Cameron**  
*Warden, Keble College*

Your readers might be interested in another history, of the first interdisciplinary postgraduate Oxbridge college: Linacre. *Bamborough's Linacre* is a collection of memories by members of the first ten years or so, as a tribute to its first remarkable principal, John Bamborough, with many photographs.

It can be ordered, for a contribution to a memorial fund, from Dr Eva Wagner, 17 Templar Road, Oxford OX2 8LR; email: [markus.wagner@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:markus.wagner@tiscali.co.uk)  
**Eva Wagner**  
*Linacre 1962*



## Wilde brought to book

In his generous and perceptive review of my book *Oscar's Books* (OT 21.2), David Vaisey, Bodley's Librarian Emeritus, claims that I mistakenly state that Oscar Wilde 'borrowed' and 'took out' books from the Bodleian. Yet, as Wilde himself once remarked, the truth is rarely pure and never simple.

My claim that Wilde borrowed Bodley books was based upon the work of the scholar Philip E. Smith II. In his article 'Wilde in the Bodleian, 1878–1881' (*English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 46, 2003), Smith examines the 'Bodleian Library Papers Entry Book 9/4 Camera Radcliviana 1877–[October 1883]', which lists the 'request' and 'return' of materials at the library over that period.

Smith discovered a number of entries relating to Wilde, a few of which are reproduced here:

1880: Mar 13 Gladstone, *The State in its Rel.*

1880: Apr 14 Terence, *The Andrian*,

[+ 2 plays]

1880: May 22 Wilde returns Gladstone/  
Terence

The Gladstone title was *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1841); the Terence was a volume of three plays in English translation. The first two entries are Wilde's 'requests', but we can assume (and Smith does so) that he was issued the books either on, or soon after, the date of those requests. The final entry is the most interesting because it reveals that Wilde 'returned' the Gladstone and the Terence long after his request for them – over a month in the case of the Terence, over two for the Gladstone.

Of course this does not prove that Wilde 'borrowed' or 'took out' these books. Smith speculates that the library had a system of reserve shelving for requested volumes in use by readers. There is, however, no direct evidence to support this theory, and I think it equally likely that the Bodleian had, at the time, some borrowable book stock which fellows, scholars and graduates such as Wilde, were permitted to take to their rooms. The notion of reserve shelving surely contradicts common sense – would a library really allow a reader to keep a book on reserve for more than two months?

**Thomas Wright**

*Magdalen 1991*

## Lost cities

I was disappointed by Stephanie Dalley's reference to 'misinformation' in the Bible ('Life yet for the lost cities of the gods', OT 21.3). A more qualified stance would have been appropriate. Her disregard for the views of Christians was all the more conspicuous in a piece which was respectful of Islam.

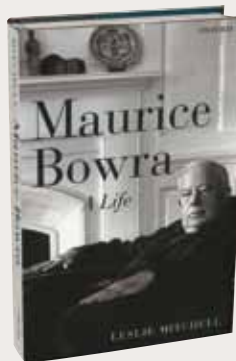
**S Hanson**

*BNC 1986*

## In praise of Bowra

Sir Anthony Kenny's review of Leslie Mitchell's *Maurice Bowra* (OT 21.3) misses the inherent paradox in his subject. His conversation, letters to old friends and so on are socially snobbish, against 'seriousness, democracy and science', as Sir Anthony reports, in short 'anti-prig, anti-Eliot, anti-solemn, anti-Balliol'.

His actions, as Warden of Wadham and as Vice-Chancellor, belie all this. He gave every support to an enthusiastic body of young fellows in transforming Wadham after 1945; aiming at academic excellence, recruiting from northern grammar schools, earnest and hard-working, perhaps to a fault, strongly committed to



PPE and Science, and to graduate studies; in short, an imitation Balliol. On a University level he supported the earnest Oliver Franks against the cavalier Harold Macmillan for Chancellor, argued for the proposed zoology tower in the Parks, and so on. As a young

don he gave readings of *The Waste*

*Land* in his rooms, and gave up attempts to be a serious poet when he realised he could not compete. Sir Anthony, as a closer reading of Mitchell might indicate, is taken in by Bowra's mask.

Any resemblance to the odious Mr Samgrass in *Brideshead Revisited* is far from the mark. Might Sligger Urquhart be a better fit?

**Cliff Davies**

*Wadham 1956*

## That word again

Mike Wood (OT 21.3) can be reassured that 'ALUMNI', like 'former member' and 'old member', is without any meaning at Oxford. On matriculation you become a 'member of the University' and remain so with validation when you receive your MA.

**Dennis Brooke**

*Keble 1951*

## Hot air?

It was with sadness and disappointment that I read Jack Dixon's attack ('Hot air?' OT 21.3) on Chris Patten's support for 'the global warmers' (as he puts it), doggedly claiming that there is no scientific evidence for human-induced climate change.

In light of the evidence pouring in from studies such as in the latest reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), including important work being carried out in my sub-department here in Oxford, such a dogmatic rejection of the notion that human activities are leading to changes in the climate is becoming almost impossible to defend. This is especially the case in light of the most recent changes observed during the past 20 years; evidence that was conveniently ignored, for example, by the programme-makers of the notorious Channel 4 *Great Global Warming Swindle*, broadcast in 2007.

To condemn current claims of human-induced climate change as a 'propaganda scam' is to perpetuate a serious slur on the integrity of the majority of active climate scientists which is, in my experience, wholly unjustified. I can assure Mr Dixon that Oxford scientists are playing a full and important international role in applying rigorously objective and honest approaches in their efforts to observe, model and predict

variability in the climate system and to evaluate its causes (see, for example, reports in *Nature*, April 30 2009). But I am afraid that the balance of evidence from this work, in common with the majority of research elsewhere, provides stronger support for the 'global warmers' than to the climate sceptics.

If Mr Dixon and others who share his opinion require further evidence to convince them to take global warming seriously, then they need look no further than to his alma mater for information (e.g. see <http://climateprediction.net/content/climate-science-explained> and associated links). The only additional prerequisite is an open mind.

**Peter L Read**

*Professor of Physics, University of Oxford  
Head of Atmospheric, Oceanic & Planetary  
Physics*

## Academic refugees

May I add a word to your admirable piece about academic refugees ('A refuge for the persecuted, release for the fettered mind', OT 21.3)? The Faculty of Literae Humaniores was enormously improved – indeed, one might almost say transformed – by the arrival from Germany in the 1930s of such great scholars as Eduard Fraenkel, Paul Maas, Felix Jacoby, Rudolf Pfeiffer and Paul Jacobsthal. I was privileged to know Professor Fraenkel, whose famous seminars set standards that were demanding indeed; attendance at them was not for the faint-hearted, but the benefits were great and long-lasting. When Fraenkel became Corpus Professor of Latin in 1936, some dissenting voices were heard – but were at once decisively silenced by a few authoritative words from A E Housman, Professor of *Latin at Cambridge*.

**Professor Colin Leach**

*Brasenose 1951*

# Home from Gnome

The satirist, journalist and broadcaster recalls undergraduate delights



## Why did you decide to apply to Oxford?

My school [Ardingly College in Sussex] encouraged us to try for Oxbridge. A number of my friends in the years above me had gone to Oxford, particularly Nick Newman, now a cartoonist, and Simon Parke, who became a vicar. They both appeared to be having a marvellous time, so I thought: I want to do that.

## Why did you apply to Magdalen?

I liked the look of it; no other reason. I'm sure that I was also told that it was a terrific college. I applied to read PPE originally, because I'd done a lot of maths [at school]. But I got halfway through the reading list and thought: I don't want to do this, and changed to English.

## What were your first impressions of Oxford?

I remember thinking how beautiful Magdalen was. I had a very modern room, which I was very disappointed by, in the Waynflete Building – baths, and hot running water. I remember thinking how clever everybody else in my year reading English was, but that became a real bonus, too, as I became friendly with them.

## Who were your tutors?

My tutors were John Fuller, who was marvellous and very laid-back, and David Norbrook, who's now very eminent indeed, and Bernard O'Donoghue, who I liked very, very much, and who made Anglo-Saxon interesting. I still think it's interesting, and it's entirely his fault.

## What kind of a student were you?

The first and third years, I worked very hard. In my second year, I did a lot of student journalism and put on a lot of reviews and acted in them, so then I don't think I was hugely diligent. But I enjoyed the work a lot. It gave me a chance to read everyone I'd ever wanted to who was any good, which if you are going to become a writer is fairly useful.

I got a first in my Mods. John Fuller sent me a note saying 'you could have knocked me down with a feather', which made me think – thanks for your vote of confidence! At the



end of my time at Oxford, I'd done quite well, and told him I was thinking of doing research. He said, 'Oh, I wouldn't do that ...'. He told me I should become a journalist and I'd have much more fun, which was very good advice.

## Had you done any journalism before Oxford?

I'd done the school magazine, and when I got to Oxford I took over a defunct magazine called *Passing Wind*, which Nick and Simon had started. I borrowed some money from the Old Etonian in my tutorial group, a man called Fergus Fleming – now a fine travel writer – bought the rather dismal assets of the magazine, and ran it for three years, which was enormous fun. I paid him back, I'm glad to say.

## What was student journalism like then?

I did a bit for *Cherwell*. *Isis* seemed to me even then far too fashionable for me. Clovis Meath-Baker ran *Cherwell* and loved it deeply. Then the late, great Harry Thompson became Editor. *Cherwell* then was incredibly mischievous and spiky and looking for trouble, and very good fun.

## Did that shape you as a journalist?

I think I already had the satirist's outlook: I was probably looking for a vehicle, to be

honest. If I look at the essays I wrote, I seem to have done a huge amount of Congreve, Restoration comedy, Swift, Dryden, Pope – the people I read might have given some indication of what I was going to do later in life.

## Any regrets?

I'd like to have read history. I would definitely do it now. But you can't do everything.

## Would you like to be a student again?

Oh yes. And I've a major fantasy that, somewhere, there would be a college so desperate that they will ask me to be Master.

## What do you think of Oxford today?

I'm obviously a supporter. Environments where excellence can flourish, I'm all for. Chris Patten, the Chancellor, made a rather good speech on that old chestnut of accessibility, I thought, when he said that focusing on tertiary education is missing the point: it's absolutely obvious where the problem is in this country, and it's in secondary education. To blame the top universities for failing to increase the social mobility lower down the scale seems to me to be completely stupid.

## Is there anything Oxford should change?

I was asked to support the Oxford Thinking campaign, and I think it's very good that it's fund-raising and becoming more professional, but I do hope the University doesn't become PR-obsessed. One doesn't want to be bland, and uncontroversial and New Labour. Hopefully, Chris Patten will stop that happening. There's nothing like a terrific row: I mean, the Oxford Poetry Professorship row was marvellous! Dons fighting, that's what we want. The idea that everything is Ivy League perfection, happy, smiling, sailing peacefully on – we definitely don't want that at Oxford!

Ian Hislop joined **Private Eye** magazine on leaving Oxford, and was appointed Editor in 1986. He presents documentary programmes for BBC television and radio, and is a regular member of the satirical quiz programme, *Have I Got News For You*.



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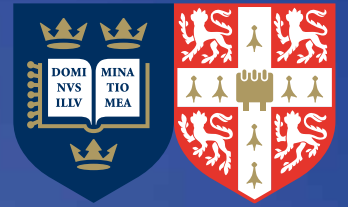
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