BALLIOL COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

FLOREAT DOMUS

NEWS AND FEATURES FROM THE BALLIOL COMMUNITY | JUNE 2023



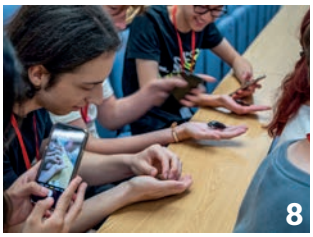
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FLOREAT DOMUS

























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We are enormously grateful to everyone who has contributed to this magazine by writing an article, agreeing to be interviewed, providing photographs or information, or otherwise assisting the Editor. We are always pleased to receive feedback and suggestions for articles: please send these to the Editor by email to anne.askwith@balliol.ox.ac.uk or at the address opposite.

Front cover: Dinner in Balliol Hall following the memorial event in the Sheldonian Theatre for Professor Jasper Griffin 1939–2019. Opposite: the Master speaking at the Sheldonian.

From the Master

Dame Helen Ghosh DCB

One of our sharp-eyed alumni pointed out to us recently that the Royal Charter Balliol received from Queen Elizabeth I in 1588 did not appear on the list of Charters granted on the Privy Council website. When I looked at the Charter, in the course of rectifying this omission, I discovered that it is concerned not with high-minded issues such as study or teaching but with the practical problems caused by our failure to settle on a single name for the College in the 300 years since our foundation. By the 16th century, this was causing headaches in proving legal title to land and property (though perhaps enabling us to elude some creditors!).

The most charming and evocative of the half-a-dozen variants was 'The Master or Warden of the College commonly called Balliol Hall on the outskirts of the town of Oxford and the Fellows or Scholars of the same'. Because of course 'on the outskirts' was what we were, north of the City Wall, beyond the City Ditch and on the edge of open country. How much has changed since then.

Being located on a busy street, these days thronged with post-Covid tourists once more, at risk of being run down as you step out of the gate by a speeding delivery cyclist, certainly makes you feel at the centre of things. Essential student services – the Bodleian, Blackwell's, plentiful sources of food and drink – are close by. And our students who live on our Dervorguilla site (Jowett Walk and the Master's Field) and at Holywell Manor – now a majority – are similarly privileged, with labs, faculty libraries and lecture halls just a stone's throw away. Any journey in the city – north, south, east or west – seems already half done.

I think there is something very apt about where we find ourselves. When we step out of Balliol, we go out into the world and grapple with its challenges and engage in its joys. That I believe is what the College stands for. As Tim Soutphommasane comments in his interview on page 6, although Oxford colleges 'are designed in a way that life is directed inwards … to be places that are sanctuaries from the outside world', we have to be prepared to look outwards.



In this year's *Floreat Domus*, you will read of some of the many ways in which our alumni 'look outwards' and the impact that they have, whether in working to improve outcomes in the UK and US criminal justice systems, employing prisoners in a local cheese-making business, working with a community of cocoa-growers in Ghana, or leading the National Health Service. Alumni have played an invaluable part too in enabling us to welcome the two scholars from the Ukraine whose stories are told on pages 4–5.

But as well as celebrating such stories, I believe profoundly that we should celebrate the more diffusive impact that we have through our teaching activity, particularly but not exclusively on our undergraduates, by training minds and instilling in them concepts about evidence and truth. At her admission ceremony in January, our new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Irene Tracy, and the Chancellor of the University, Lord Patten (1962 and Honorary Fellow), both emphasised that the University's world-class teaching, just as much as our world-leading research, is central to our mission.

The message that great teaching can have a formative impact on individuals and therefore on society as a whole came through loud and clear at the memorial events for Professor Jasper Griffin FBA (1956, Dyson Junior Research Fellow 1961–1963, Tutorial Fellow in Classics 1963–2004 and Emeritus Fellow 2004–2019) held in March, much delayed by Covid following his death in 2019. During the moving celebration of his life in the Sheldonian, a succession of Jasper's colleagues and former students described the impact which his research and teaching had on his field and on them. Recitations from the *Iliad* jostled with reminiscences from former pupils about sherry parties and challenging tutorials. His generosity and kindness, as well as his wit, shone through.

At the formal dinner later, the Hall was filled with alumni from the law, politics, journalism, teaching, creative arts, finance and business – all testimony to the breadth of the impact that the College can have outside its walls once our students go out into the world to make their way.

To my astonishment, as I write this, I am marking the fifth anniversary of my arrival as Master. The time has passed so swiftly. When I was approached about the role, the reputation of the College as one that engaged with the world and its problems was very important in my decision to apply. I am very grateful to have been welcomed into its life and I have never been disappointed by the impact and reach of the College and its alumni. Floreat Domus!

Awards

New Year Honours 2023

The Right Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP (1970, pictured right), Member of Parliament for New Forest East and Chair, Intelligence and Security Committee: Knight Bachelor, for political and public service.



Simon Mellor (1976), Deputy Chief Executive, Arts and Museums, Arts Council England: Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE), for services to the arts.



Roland Keating (1979, pictured left), Chief Executive, the British Library: Knight Bachelor, for services to literature.

Marcus Bell (1985), Director of Equalities, Cabinet Office: Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE), for public service.

Christine Rice (1988, pictured right), opera singer: Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), for services to opera.



Dominic Jacquesson (1989), Vice President, Insight and Talent, Index Ventures: Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), for services to technology and to entrepreneurship.

Suzy Kantor (2002), Director, Personal Tax, Welfare and Pensions, His Majesty's Treasury: Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE), for public service.



Honorary award to foreign national 2022

Oliver Franklin (1967 and Honorary Fellow, pictured left), Honorary Consul for Greater Philadelphia: Honorary Commander of the British Empire (CBE), for services to UK/US relations.

Senior Members

Professor Martin Burton (Professor of Otolaryngology, Director of Cochrane UK and Research Fellow in Clinical Medicine, and Vice-Master – Executive): elected as the next Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, starting in September 2023.



Professor Edith Elkind (Professor of Computing Science and Research Fellow in Computational Game Theory): won the 2023 ACM/SIGAI Autonomous Agents Research Award for excellence in research in the area of autonomous agents, because she has 'made significant research contributions in computational social choice and algorithms for cooperative games', and for her 'extraordinary service to the community'.

Professor Tom Melham (Professor of Computer Science and Fellow and Tutor in Computation): won an MPLS Commercial Impact Award for a new commercial formal verification product, the C2RTL App, integrating software symbolic simulation.



Professor John Tasioulas (1989, Professor of Ethics and Legal Philosophy, Senior Research Fellow, and Director of the Institute for Ethics in AI): awarded an AI2050 Senior Fellowship by Schmidt Futures, which will allow him to pursue a three-year research project that will take a humanistic approach to the ethics of Artificial Intelligence.

Professor Denis Noble (Emeritus Fellow): awarded the 2022 Lomonosov Grand Gold Medal of the Russian Academy of Sciences for his work on the heart.



Vicky Neale (Whitehead Lecturer in Mathematics and Supernumerary Fellow at Balliol, pictured left): appointed President of the Mathematical Association in 2024 (before she died on 3 May 2023).

Professor Amit Chaudhuri (1987 and Honorary Fellow): won a James Tait Black award for *Finding the Raga: An Improvisation on Indian Music* (Faber, 2021).

Nada Al-Nashif (1984 and Honorary Fellow): designated Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations.

Junior Members

Yosuke Matsumiya (2022, DPhil Women's and Reproductive Health): awarded the Sakaguchi Scholarship – a scholarship for outstanding Japanese DPhil students at Oxford who are intending to take a leadership role in an international organisation in future.



Old Members

Professor David Clifton (Research Fellow in the Sciences and Lecturer in Engineering Science 2014–2018): awarded the IEEE Early Career Award for 2022.

Diana Berruezo-Sánchez (Career Development Fellow in Spanish 2018–2021): awarded a €1.77 million European Research Council Consolidator Grant to conduct her research on the cultural legacy of the sub-Saharan diaspora in 16th- and 17th-century Iberia.

Professor T.P. Wiseman (1957): awarded the British Academy's Kenyon Medal for work in the fields of classical studies and archaeology, for his 'enormous contributions to the fields of Roman history and literature'.

The Hon Bob Rae (1969) is to receive a Distinguished Service Award from the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians.

Professor Richard Susskind (1983) and **Professor Richard Ekins** (2003): named as Honorary King's Counsel (KC).

Professor Leela Gandhi (1986): awarded the University of Tubingen's Alfons Auer Ethics Prize for her work on postcolonial ethics and theory.

Soha Khan (1996), actress, and **Arghya Sengupta** (2008), Founder and Research Director at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, received UK India Achievers Awards for achieving excellence in their field.

Meera Sabaratnam (2000) is to join Oxford University's Department of International Relations (DPIR) as Associate Professor in International Relations and a Fellow of New College.

Professor James Maynard (2009): awarded a 2023 New Horizons Prize for Early-Career Achievements in Mathematics in recognition of his multiple contributions to analytic number theory and in particular to the distribution of prime numbers.





Wenmiao Yu (2015): elected to the UK Young Academy, a new network of early career researchers and professionals.

Isabelle Stuart (2016): awarded a Sachs Scholarship by Princeton University, giving her the opportunity to spend a year as a visiting student in Princeton's Department of English.

Stefan Constantin-Buliga (2018) was in an Oxford University team that won a bronze medal in the delayed 2020/21 World Finals of the International Collegiate Programming Contest.

Samuel Myers (2018) won the Society for French Studies' Gapper Undergraduate Essay Prize 2022.

Hollie Booth (2019): received the European Early Career Conservation Award from the SCB Europe Section at the 21st European Conference on Computational Biology for her 'extraordinary contributions to the conservation of sharks and rays while also protecting coastal livelihoods, through applied interdisciplinary research to inform conservation action'.



See more awards for Old Members in News and Notes, a supplement to this magazine.



Stuart Bebb

Left, Maryna Oproshchenko; right, Viktor Savchenko

Scholars from Ukraine

Thanks to those who contributed to the Balliol Ukraine Crisis Appeal, Balliol was able to offer sanctuary to two Ukrainian scholars.

Viktor Savchenko (Research Fellow)

Viktor comes to Oxford under the British Academy's Researchers at Risk Fellowship scheme, in association with Cara (the Council for At-Risk Academics) and the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics.

Viktor is an Associate Professor in Civil Law at Kharkiv National University. Having completed a PhD and a Masters in Law, he is now working to become a Doctor of Law. Six months after he began a substantial piece of research for this purpose, Russia invaded Ukraine.

From the first day, Kharkiv – one of Ukraine's largest cities, close to Russia – was bombed every day and many buildings were destroyed. Work at Kharkiv University continued, but 'You really could not work safely,' Viktor says, 'because every day you would hear the siren and not know what would be next. I would take the baby for a walk in the park and see the rockets – it was very dangerous.' Deciding he must find somewhere to complete his research and a safe place for his wife and two young children, he connected online with Professor Tom Douglas (Professor of Applied Philosophy based in the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics) and found that Professor Douglas's research is close to his own. 'We created a connection and understood it would be very interesting to work together.'



Stuart Bebb

'I want to understand the autonomy of humans and freedom of will in the context of legislature.'

Now Professor Douglas is Viktor's supervisor.

'My research is into freedom of will in civil law, so I want to understand the autonomy of humans and freedom of will in the context of legislature. Professor Douglas does something like this in the context of philosophy,' Viktor explains. 'We understand that law and philosophy are very close, and with my research it is important to understand the grounding it is based on, and that is always found in philosophy.'

Arriving in Oxford felt very strange. 'My first impression was that I could not believe I was here. Oxford is like a unicorn for scientists, like a fairy tale! You can't believe that you can actually be part of this place – it is like another world. The first thing we saw was Broad Street. We came at nine in the evening, so it was very dark and there were not many people around. We saw the clear beauty of Oxford.'

For his five-year-old son, coming to Oxford was an adventure, and he has enjoyed starting school a year earlier than his friends in Ukraine. His daughter was too young to understand

the change, but for all of them there are many small things that are different to Ukraine, and they miss Kharkiv; they are also concerned for the friends and family they have left behind.

Nevertheless, Viktor thinks Oxford is 'a very wonderful city'. The family are learning 'to understand Oxford and the British mentality and identity', and their house in Oxford has become a second home. 'We are very thankful. Oxford is very comfortable; a very quiet place for rehabilitation after our situation. It is a very good place for my work; Oxford is the best place for researchers because you have everything that you need, and you can cycle between places!'

What next, after he completes his dissertation? 'It's hard to say at the moment,' Viktor replies, 'and I am thankful that I don't have to answer that yet. In one way, I really want to return to my university in Ukraine to continue there. In another way, I really love Oxford, and if I have the chance to stay in the University it would be a higher step for my career – it is the number one university in the world. Maybe if the right opportunity comes up, I will give it a try.'

Maryna Oproshchenko (2022, MSc in Financial Economics)

Maryna has a fully funded place as part of Oxford's Graduate Scholarship Scheme for Ukraine Refugees 2022/23.

Before coming to Oxford, Maryna worked as a financial analyst at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in Kyiv, having completed her BA and Masters in International Economics at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and then worked as a corporate finance consultant at KPMG Ukraine. When Russia invaded Ukraine, 'It was an amazing shock,' she says: 'We were absolutely lost and didn't know what to do.' She was able to relocate temporarily to Paris, where she continued working remotely, supporting emergency liquidity projects for Ukrainian clients – projects aimed at assisting energy security, for instance, or supporting the national railway operator to keep the service running.

Knowing that the reconstruction necessary in Ukraine – an 'unprecedented need for a European country in our time' – will require much financing, Maryna applied for the Oxford course in order to learn new methods and tools of analysis. Her aim is to be able to conduct reconstruction projects that will help Ukraine not just to recover but also 'to be better and to move forward'.

'The course is really interesting,' she says. Rigorous, and at times scientific, it complements the knowledge she has already. 'It's taught by the Saïd Business School, which provides practical and financial understanding, jointly with the Department of Economics, so there is always this link sustained between how financial markets influence economic policy and the wider economic developmental framework,


Stuart Bebb

Maryna's aim is to be able to conduct reconstruction projects that will help Ukraine to move forward.

and how economic policy has an impact on financial markets.' By giving her 'a profound knowledge of how things really work and how they can be deployed to real-life analysis', it will be very useful for her future and the work that she does.

Apart from her studies, what she is enjoying most about Oxford is the people. 'It seems to me that people are very open, very kind, they are truly happy to talk to you.' She likes the fact that Oxford is an international community. 'It's always nice to discover people from different backgrounds, and for me as a person coming from Ukraine it's especially valuable that no matter what country a person is from everyone is supportive.'

Oxford, with its collegiate system, is very different to how higher education works in Ukraine. 'Oxford has the community of the college, the community of our department, and the communities we can join based on our interests, so people are always united by values, or by background, or their interests, and you never feel bored.' Acknowledging the fun of the Holywell Manor community at Balliol too, she feels that this 'constant communication brings with it a lot of energy, which helps you go through the intense studies and any personal obstacles: it really makes you feel stronger.'

She particularly enjoys the fact that there is always one subject that anyone can talk about for hours: what they study. 'People here are very much engaged in and passionate about what they're doing; it's always incredibly interesting to talk about subjects I know nothing about – medieval manuscripts, or genomical medicine, or astrophysics.' She marvels that when people with so much expertise gather, 'they find words to explain their complicated subjects so that we truly understand each other and can think together about deep things going on.' She had not expected people to be so involved in such discussions. 'They're conversations that never end, over many lunches, evenings in the MCR – that really is unique to the colleges.'

'My deepest gratitude goes to alumni and to everyone who made all this happen, because I really feel that it does launch me already. I hope I will translate my own transformation into fruitful results for the projects I want to embark on.'

Balliol and the other participating colleges and departments are in discussion about extending the scholarship scheme, and hope that you may consider adding or renewing your support by making your gift at www.give.balliol.ox.ac.uk.

Oxford's first Chief Diversity Officer

Floreat Domus meets Professor Tim Soutphommasane (2004)

With the creation of the new post of Chief Diversity Officer for Oxford University, it is a source of pride for Balliol that the first incumbent is one of its own: Professor Tim Soutphommasane, a graduate student from 2004 to 2009, who has returned to Oxford to take up the position. A political theorist and human rights advocate, he was previously at the University of Sydney as Director of Cultural Strategy, and before that with the Australian Human Rights Commission as Race Discrimination Commissioner.

A fresh opportunity

The role of Chief Diversity Officer was created as a result of the University's Race Equality Task Force, which reported in 2022 and produced a Race Equality Strategy. Tim is responsible for implementing that strategy, as well as taking forward other work in progress and developing the University's work on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). He acknowledges the 'good foundation' that has been laid by Oxford colleagues and students in recent years, such as 'institutional reflection on racism' prompted by the Black Lives Matter movement and the murder of George Floyd, 'multiple exercises' in the University on gender equity, and the 'sustained efforts' of the Equality and Diversity Unit. 'We're not starting from scratch, but there is an opportunity to renew the agenda on EDI. That gives us a chance to think afresh and to try new things.'

Tim sees the work ahead as being broadly about three tasks: increasing the diversity of staff in the collegiate university, academic and professional; increasing the diversity of the student body, both undergraduate and graduate; and building a more inclusive culture. 'It must be our aspiration to attract and retain the best academics and staff and to continue being a magnet for the best students, not just in Britain but in the world. When you think of it this way, EDI goes to the core of what we do. It's about creating the conditions required for being a global leader in academic excellence.'

As far as the student population is concerned, his first impressions on returning to Oxford were that it is much more diverse than it was when he was here as a student: 'When you walk the streets or through College the place does feel slightly different to how it did 15 years ago.' The data confirms those impressions, but, he notes, there are 'still a number of groups that are under-represented in Oxford's student body – for instance, UK students from Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. And, obviously, there remains a lack of diversity when it comes to the socioeconomic background of students.'

'EDI – equality, diversity and inclusion – goes to the core of what we do. It's about creating the conditions required for being a global leader in academic excellence.'

An inclusive culture

While diversity of students and staff is fairly easy to measure, an inclusive culture is harder to define. Tim explains what he means: 'I would say that an inclusive culture at Oxford on these issues should involve staff and students being a little more confident about how they can handle questions of diversity and inclusion. We know that these often involve issues that are contentious or sensitive. That can sometimes deter people from conversations that are necessary. We need to be more confident in starting conversations and in conducting them.'

A second marker of an inclusive culture for him is a sense of community. 'We need to have involved in this work not just those who have designated responsibility but also others who care about these issues: staff and students who volunteer and do things on top of their work to pursue them, and leaders committed to equality and diversity as part of the University's mission in teaching and research.' Getting the sense of confidence and community right, he argues, will lead to a more courageous institution, by which he means an institution with 'the courage to try and do new things, and the courage to hold its ground when it's under scrutiny or challenge'.

Achieving change

So how will he approach this work? Being someone who used to play a lot of cricket – as a student he was captain of the Balliol first XI – he provides a cricket analogy. 'I remember lots of tricky wickets in Oxford. You've got to pay attention to the pitch and the conditions, and you've got to take your time to get your eye in. That's how you build a good innings.'

‘A lot of the work on equality, diversity and inclusion begins with a conversation. So you’ve got to be prepared to have conversations, and to talk to people who may have different views.’

One characteristic that strikes him about Oxford is how vast it is, because of its collegiate and highly devolved nature, which sets it apart from many other places. ‘This is a university with many parts and diversity is its virtue. It’s what makes this place so interesting. That means that I have a particular challenge to get around to different parts of the University and to understand the issues people are thinking through. What works for one college mightn’t work for another, and what works within one department mightn’t translate to other departments.’

Another aspect he observes is that ‘Oxford has built into its very architecture a certain character that looks inwards. Just about all the colleges are all designed in such a way that life is directed inwards; they’re built to be places that are sanctuaries from the outside world.’ So, although Oxford generates answers to many of the world’s problems, ‘We can’t always presume that it has all the answers to the world, and Oxford, as a university, has to be prepared to look outwards.’

Meeting people is an essential part of getting his eye in, because to achieve change, Tim says, ‘There’s not one single answer that you can apply across different parts of the University.’ Change can come from all manner of sources and, he says, ‘A lot of the work on EDI begins with a conversation. So you’ve got to be prepared to have conversations, and to talk to people who may have different views. That is, in part, how you stimulate change.’

Starting with momentum

He has been encouraged by the conversations he has had already, after only a short time in the job. ‘It’s clear that there’s a community of staff and students dedicated to EDI across the collegiate University,’ he says, ‘and I’ve been thrilled to meet so many of them so quickly. The welcome that I’ve had has been fantastic, including here at College, and I see that as a reflection of the desire of the Oxford community to do more on equality, diversity and inclusion. I’m pleased to say that we’ve started with momentum. We’ll now need to convert that into action.’



Tim Soutphommasane

Stuart Bebb

A Day in the Life of the Balliol Outreach Officer

Pravahi Osman (The David Freeman Outreach Officer) gives a glimpse of her busy life

At 8.15, coffee in hand, I log on to my computer and for the first hour of the day, I look through my emails. I check if there are any last-minute issues relating to the school visit today: a group of Year 10 students are arriving at 10.00. I flag some new enquiries from teachers to deal with later. As usual there are admissions enquiries and applications for our access programmes; and a number of graduates have replied to my adverts about teaching opportunities and making videos for our Springboard Video Collection.

My phone alarm reminds me to check that the Buttery Archive Room has been set up for the school visit and that the ICT works. I visit the Lodge to say hello to the Porters and remind them that the group is due to arrive, and I text the undergraduates who have volunteered to take the group on a tour. Then I organise the workshop materials. As this group comes from an area with a low participation in higher education, it is important to do an exercise where they rank their concerns about going to university, so that we can address issues such as student loans, fitting in and coping with workload. We will also discuss the types of teaching at Oxford and where different post-16 subject choices can lead, to help prevent poor subject combinations which reduce opportunities. At 9.50, the teacher texts to say that the group are approaching the College, so I go out to greet them before their tour. After my workshop, I hand over to Jack Robinson, the Outreach Assistant, who will take the group to lunch in Hall, then to the Natural History Museum for a taught session, followed by a walking tour of Oxford.

'We received some great feedback, such as "Thank you so much for the session. The students absolutely loved it and were really engaged." We have been besieged by other schools wanting to get involved.'



Students on Balliol's Frontier science programme handle cockroaches at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History during the residential part of the programme.

After lunch, more office work. I email offer-holders with resources to support their transition to university; then I contact tutors involved in our Subject Taster days to finalise session titles and timings. I finish off a presentation I am giving at a Heads of Sixth Form conference. Then at 3.15 I log on to our Year 10 Discovery programme.

This new online after-school enrichment programme was piloted with Year 10 students in six schools, and we have been besieged by other schools wanting to get involved. We received some great feedback, such as 'Thank you so much for the session. The students absolutely loved it and were really engaged, so thank you!' The students are given a booklet in which they complete a

pre-session task and activities during the session; then there are optional follow-up activities. As this programme expands, it will provide a pathway for students to take part in a sustained contact programme from Year 10 all the way to the point of university application in Year 13.

At 4.30 I have an online meeting with a Gregson Scholar: a teacher from one of a small number of schools receiving financial and academic support from Balliol to develop their provision for able students. This teacher is asking for support with teaching photosynthesis at A-Level. I know that this isn't something our tutors can help with, so I contact the Biology Department to ask for a graduate with expertise in this area.

At 4.55 I log on to our Frontier science programme to take the register and introduce the session before handing over to the graduate who is leading it. I take a quick look at tomorrow's calendar – an online session on writing personal statements, a workshop on super-curricular learning and a presentation to record for a parents' evening: just another day in outreach at Balliol.

So much of our Outreach work is only possible thanks to the generous support of Old Members and friends. To make your gift to Outreach, please visit www.give.balliol.ox.ac.uk.

Encouraging diversity

Petros Spanou (2018) describes his access work

As a first-generation university student, I developed a sensitivity to, and an awareness of, the numerous challenges faced by first-generation students and those from minority groups and under-represented backgrounds at university. I am therefore committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment, and over the past decade I have developed a passion for access and outreach work.

While pursuing my studies in history at Oxford, I have had two outreach tutorships, at Balliol and at Oxford's History Faculty. Both have provided me with the necessary contextual knowledge about the UK's higher education and the University's admissions policies.

The Balliol tutorship gave me the opportunity to design and deliver workshops based on my research to school students (Years 11–13, ages 15–18). The first workshop, a Springboard video, was part of the Oxford for East of England programme and focused on Victorian wartime cartoons. The second workshop examined Victorian illustrated newspapers and periodicals. Both workshops were interactive and included various activities which helped students develop their critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills. I also provided students with lots of useful resources for further study.

As an outreach tutor at the History Faculty, I led history skills workshops for groups of school students and teachers, contributed talks to outreach study days and history-related events, and shared information about studying history at university through workshops and online resources.

In July 2022 I visited Reading Girls' School and delivered two academic taster sessions on 'Religion and War'. I also worked as a graduate outreach tutor for the St John's College's Inspire Programme and for Pembroke College's OxNet Summer School. In August I worked as a skills tutor and history tutor for Lincoln College's Study Days. For these programmes I taught tutorials, assigned reading to school pupils, marked their essays, and delivered skills development and other academic workshops.

Between July and September 2022 I worked as a history tutor at Opportunity Oxford, the University's academic programme which helps to prepare talented UK offer-holders from under-represented backgrounds for successful student careers before they begin their studies at Oxford. For this programme I designed and delivered study skills workshops and historiography classes on gender and empire, race and empire, global and imperial history, and microhistory.

My work in various access and outreach programmes across the University has been one of the highlights of my time in Oxford and has enriched my experience as a DPhil student. I thoroughly enjoy working with school pupils, and I have found the experience very rewarding. Having successfully defended my DPhil thesis in November 2022, I am currently applying to various academic posts in the UK. However, I will continue my work in access and outreach on a part-time basis until the end of the current academic year, designing and delivering online workshops for Balliol's Floreat 2022/2023 programme and continuing to work as an access associate at St John's College, Oxford.

I hope that Oxford and its colleges will continue to fund these wonderful programmes and events, which make a meaningful contribution to the learning experiences of pupils across the UK.



Stuart Bebb

GLORIOUS FOOD

Featuring some Balliol stories involving food

A Taste of Balliol

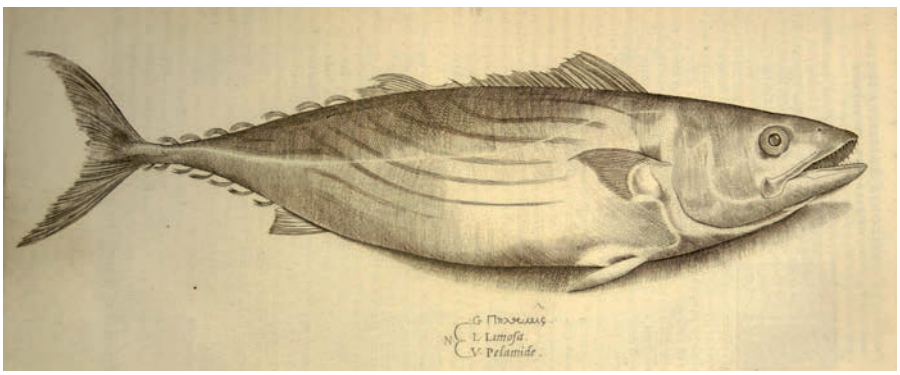
Highlights from Balliol Library's exhibition

The Library's exhibition in Hilary Term 2023 explored food and dining through Balliol's historic collections, with a focus on the buildings of the Hall and the kitchen; the staff who worked in them over the centuries; celebrations and traditions; the food itself and the supply chains that brought it to the table. Finally, it looked to the future: what impact the climate crisis will have on our food systems, and what our food at Balliol might look like.

Early cookbooks

Few books on food preparation made their way into a scholar's library such as Balliol's, where minds were supposed to be focused on the brain rather than the belly. Food preparation only appeared on the 17th- and 18th-century shelves by stealth. A scientific treatise on new methods for pressure cooking or salting fish might be acquired. Occasionally a pamphlet about a new ingredient or spice, say chocolate or coffee, coming from the New World would be bound in a volume of geographical or literary tracts. Practical cookbooks giving insight and instruction on culinary practices are still relatively rare in the Library, although some recipe collections have found their way into the special collections through recent gifts.

In his spare time, Hippolito Salviani (1514–1672), chief physician to three successive popes and the Farnese family, liked to frequent seafood markets, where he examined the recent catches. He eventually produced one of the earliest, and most beautiful, books dedicated to fish. The illustrations are drawn from observation – Salviani chiefly writing of those creatures he had actually handled – and then rendered into engravings, a printing technique which allowed finer production of detail than cheaper woodcuts, giving the impression of scientific veracity. The text offers advice on the palatability of each fish and suggestions for seasoning and preparation. In the section describing tuna, Salviani got carried away: the heading 'Hunc piscem nostrum amiam esse' translates as 'This is our favourite fish' and he notes that 'The delicacy of the flesh is pre-eminent and it is of the sweetest taste.' Compare this description to that of the angler fish, whose flesh is 'slimy, excremental, tasteless'. The book, given to the College in 1677 by Sir Thomas Wendy's heirs, was obviously a fixture in the Library as the front board still bears a mark from where it was chained to the shelves.



Tuna from Hippolito Salviani, *Aquatilium animalium historiæ, liber primus*. Rome, 1553. [Balliol College Library, 30 f 96]

A new Hall

Balliol people today may be surprised to learn that until about 150 years ago the Library stacks beneath the Reading Room housed potatoes, flour and kitchen equipment. The building that we now know as the New Library used to be Balliol's dining hall and kitchen. This 15th-century building, sometimes called the Old Hall after its original purpose, was partly panelled and partly whitewashed in the early modern period, and furnished with tables and benches, a fireplace and a lectern for reading from the Bible. The kitchens and buttery were located near the entrance to the Hall, where the Butler sat to record charges in his account book.

In the 1870s, the Hall, Buttery and ground-floor kitchen were completely reconfigured when Alfred Waterhouse was commissioned to build Balliol's magnificent new, larger dining hall at the north end of Garden Quad. Since the Old Hall was no longer needed for dining, and Balliol needed Library expansion space, the College converted the Old Hall into an undergraduate reading room.

The Waterhouse Hall was opened with a fanfare in 1877, by Benjamin Jowett, Balliol's famous Master from 1870 to 1893, who had been 'desirous that [Balliol] should have a good reputation for eating and drinking'. It incorporated a buttery, shop, kitchen and common room. Apart from the organ, which was added in the 1880s, and wooden panelling added by Waterhouse's son, Paul, in 1910, the Hall looks much the same today as it did when it was opened.



This article is based on the catalogue for the exhibition (where references are given), which is available for purchase at £5.00 plus postage and packing: please email library@ox.ac.uk.

Cutting from a 19th-century illustrated journal: engraving showing the Inauguration Dinner for the new Dining Hall, 1877. Presented by Professor Nicholas Dewey (1952), *c.*1975. [Balliol College Archives, MISC 22/6]

Kitchen improvements

Much thought went into the development of the new Hall and kitchen, from ventilation and equipment to the workflows of the staff. The Butler, consulted on the best layout, noted that they must have 'two large tables near the lifts, one for plates, the other for glass and pots'. One proposed plan for the new kitchen boasted a better bakery with good light, a larger pastry larder, and privacy for the WCs – although it was felt that the proposed jelly storeroom was on the large side. A plan by C. Jeakes & Co (1870s), shows the space, designed for maximum efficiency, featuring modern technology including lifts up to the Hall; specific steamers for potatoes, fish and meat; hot plates and a hot table.

By the mid-20th century, the kitchen facilities needed refurbishment and updating. New tiling, modern equipment, mechanical ventilation, lifts, electric power and gas mains totalled more than £17,000 (the equivalent of over £500,000 today). The kitchen did not, however, gain a dishwashing machine until 1954, and then only on the condition that it would not 'cause undue noise in Hall'.

As the kitchen was undergoing structural alterations in the late 1940s, Balliol was considering drastic changes to the workforce in order to save money, including contracting out catering work to a third-party firm, Peter Merchant Ltd. The Master elect, Sir David Lindsay Keir (Master 1949–1965), was opposed to the proposed change. He was sceptical that the savings would be worth it, noting that contracting out 'departs from the principle … that the College is a self-contained household', which he believed fostered a sense of belonging. The catering firm proposal did not go ahead, and the new kitchen opened with a new chef in 1950.



Kitchen staff in the refurbished kitchen, early 1950s [Balliol College Archives, PHOT 2012]

Dining at Balliol

Bertrand Faucheux (Executive Head Chef) reports from behind the scenes

The kitchen's main function is clearly to prepare food for students, Fellows and staff. One of the joys of working at Balliol is that we always cook with fresh ingredients regardless of the type of meal. We take the same care when searing delicate scallops for a Balliol Society dinner as when preparing a butternut squash and ricotta lasagne for a Hall lunch. Numbers of meals vary from 500 per day during term to 1,000 in our summer school and wedding season in July.

Apart from the usual daily meals, the Balliol kitchen brigade serves dinners most days. As well as doing Formal Hall dinner on Tuesdays, Consilium Dinner on Wednesdays, Guest Night on Thursdays, and Concert Nights every other Sunday, we regularly have other dinners – in the Senior Common Room, the Old Common Room or in Hall. Many of these fine dining events are for external customers: academic-related during term (people from the University or from a University department) and out of term, also for non-university clients. Additionally, throughout the year, there are dinners for alumni such as Gaudies.

The menus for these dinners are our best, and we are always on the look-out for new ideas. We draw inspiration from a variety of sources: online or from the latest cookery books, particularly books written by Michelin-star and innovative chefs. We like to try out new ideas and techniques, and as a team we experiment with different recipes and adjust them to suit. Obviously it is nice for all our members to try this lovely food, but there's also a commercial aspect to it: the banqueting and conference business subsidises student dining.

'We take the same care when searing delicate scallops for a Balliol Society dinner as when preparing a butternut squash and ricotta lasagne for a Hall lunch.'


Stuart Bebb

Bertrand Faucheux



Mohit (right) in the kitchen with Tyler (centre) and Max.

We have been increasingly aware of the environmental impact of the food we serve at Balliol and Mohit Talmaki, our Head Chef, and I have been involved in the challenging task of reducing it. Minimising food waste and offering a larger variety of delicious vegetarian and plant-based dishes are key. As well as working hard with the team to achieve this, Mohit is reformulating some of our Hall recipes in order to reduce their environmental impact. One of our aims is to reduce the carbon footprint of beef and lamb dishes by at least 20% by supplementing small quantities of plant-based protein while at the same time not impacting negatively on the flavour of the dishes. This is a huge project requiring more experimentation, but we have made a start!

In developing or adjusting a new recipe for Balliol there are many elements to consider. While restaurant chefs may do 10 or 20 covers of each dish in one evening, the Balliol chefs may be serving 200. The individual tasks in each recipe therefore have to be broken down into smaller sections and more time allowed for each stage. For example, just peeling the onions for a dish for 200 people might take 20 minutes; the beef short rib dish that we served at the Snell Dinner in February 2023 takes four days to prepare. If the chefs run out of time, the job could get rushed and the quality could suffer. But we can avoid this with careful planning, and the fun bit is when all the elements that have been separately prepared and sampled come together on the plate.

‘In developing a new recipe there are many elements to consider. While restaurant chefs may do 10 or 20 covers of each dish in one evening, the Balliol chefs may be serving 200.’

We’re very fortunate to have a great team of highly skilled professional chefs with a wealth of experience. There are 18 members of staff altogether, including the chefs, apprentice chef, and kitchen porters, who work in shifts. Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner to current members on a daily basis, as well as preparing dinners, means that there are many demands on their time and good team collaboration and communication are vital. Mohit and I need to ensure that the chefs have all they need, and answer any queries on techniques and help problem solve when ingredients have not been supplied. On occasions, recipes that we try are written incorrectly (some Michelin-star chefs are notorious for this!), but the brigade’s experience enables them to correct mistakes and produce delicious dishes nevertheless.

We welcome all feedback, and are delighted regularly to receive great feedback from students, Fellows and staff alike. The Development Office passes on compliments too after alumni events, and it’s always lovely to hear that Old Members have enjoyed the day and the food – it’s the icing on the cake.

Bon appétit à tous!

Triple-cooked chips and delicious insects

Professor Charles Spence (1988) explains his work as a 'gastrophysicist'

I am a gastrophysicist working at the Department of Experimental Psychology here in the University of Oxford where I have been teaching for more than a quarter of a century. It was as an undergraduate in Experimental Psychology that I first started working on the interactions between the senses, though it took a few years until I moved into the world of food and drink design. This was partly as a result of realising that the food at gastronomy conferences was simply way better than anything that you are likely to find at a regular psychology meeting.

Over the years, I have been lucky enough to work with a number of the world's top chefs on the design of multisensory tasting experiences. I was particularly fortunate to be introduced to chef Heston Blumenthal a couple of decades ago, and that has led to various fruitful collaborations. I still remember my first invitation to eat at The Fat Duck restaurant all those years ago, being told by the waitress to open wide as she inserted a spoonful of lime geleé into my mouth: that was such a powerful food experience, psychologically speaking. The last time any of us were fed like that was probably as a baby. In fact, the more you look at it, the more apparent it is just how much psychology there is in what we choose to eat and drink, and what we feel about the experience. As I like to say, the pleasures of the table reside mostly in the mind and not the mouth, and that is why the emerging science of gastrophysics is so important – the neologism reflecting a combination of gastronomy (so fine food) and psychophysics (a branch of psychology where you systematically study perception).[1]

While many of the really interesting dishes appear first at world-leading restaurants, and so can seem esoteric, exclusive, and expensive, I firmly believe that the best of the insights can potentially have implications for the delivery of healthier and more sustainable foods for the masses. I like to think of the world's top chefs as the Formula 1 of the kitchen. Just think about how Heston's triple-cooked chips have become a ubiquitous feature of gastropub menus up and down the land. Having worked in many different sectors over the years, I sense that innovation happens much quicker in the world of gastronomy than elsewhere.



'The pleasures of the table reside mostly in the mind and not the mouth, and that is why the emerging science of gastrophysics is so important.'

Together with London-based chef Jozef Youssef, we have recently been working on how to make insects more delicious, how to get young school kids to try more vegetables, how to tackle the problem of poor nutrition amongst the elderly, and also the problem of metal mouth that affects so many of those patients undergoing chemotherapy.

One Balliol connection relates to our work on the impact of the coffee cup. I have spent the last decade or so studying the impact of the coffee cup, its weight, texture, shape, materiality, and colour, on the tasting experience. According to restaurant critic William Sitwell, the first time that the diarist John Evelyn (1637) ever came across someone drinking coffee in Britain was when he saw a visiting Greek priest, Nathanial Conopios, who was on the run from Constantinople early in the 17th century, preparing the drink in Balliol College where he had been given sanctuary.[2]

My elder brother, Simon Spence (1980), who was at Balliol a decade before me, has also turned to food, in his case after a quarter-century career in the city. He now runs Worton Kitchen Garden just outside the Oxford ring road, near Cassington (https://wortonkitchengarden.com/), where he is the baker and often also the chef. It is somehow funny that we have both ended up working with food, albeit coming at it from very different angles. He blames his interest in food on our mother's terrible cooking, though I am not so sure. Anyway, we have been having lots of fun hosting late-running gastrophysics dinners out in Cassington, where the guests get to eat the multisensory science prepared with many of the delicious organic ingredients grown on site.

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[1] Spence, C. (2017). *Gastrophysics: The new science of eating*. London, UK: Viking Penguin.

[2] Sitwell, W. (2020). *The restaurant: A history of eating out*. London, UK: Simon & Schuster.



'My conclusion is that man could easily live on chowder alone.'

One of the chowders Michael enjoyed on his trip.

In search of chowder

Pathfinder Michael O'Connor (2017) describes his quest

When Queequeg and Ishmael arrive at the Try-Pots in New Bedford in *Moby Dick*, they are offered the choice of 'cod or clam' for dinner. Opting for clam, Ishmael supposes he and Queequeg are faced with the 'cheerless prospect' of a single cold clam to share between them. But when Hosea Hussey comes out of the kitchen, it's with a pot of steaming chowder:

> Oh, sweet friends! hearken to me. It was made of small juicy clams, scarcely bigger than hazel nuts, mixed with pounded ship biscuit, and salted pork cut up into little flakes; the whole enriched with butter, and plentifully seasoned with pepper and salt.

Until recently, I had never heard of chowder; I had my first chowder on the seafront in Edinburgh on a lukewarm, lightly salted day last summer. I had been primed for the taste by Melville's prose and it did not disappoint. I then read a little more about chowder and, when the opportunity arose to conduct a project as a Pathfinder, I decided to write about it.

Nobody knows where chowder comes from. Some suggest its name derives from the French *chaudière*, meaning cauldron, and it certainly has affinities with dishes such as the Breton stew *cotriade*. The Cornish *jowter* is another possible etymology. In truth, though, its history begins on the American continent. Chowder is, really, as American as apple pie.

The chowder described by Melville is a classic New England chowder of a kind which can be found across the North-East of the United States: basically a seafood soup thickened with dairy. Within New England, though, there are substantial variations. Some use butter to thicken the broth, like Hosea Hussey. Others use cream and milk. Flour may be added; the fish can be varied; spices may be thrown into the mix. Elizabeth Putnam's flamboyant recipe from her recipe book (1869) contains both nutmegs and cloves. At the time Putnam was writing, nutmeg was just becoming affordable to the American consumer due to the transplantation of nutmeg trees across the globe by the British after their seizure of the Banda islands in Indonesia from the Dutch. Similarly, the collapse of a Dutch monopoly under British pressure made cloves much cheaper as production in colonies such as Guyana and Zanzibar expanded supply. Thus, Putnam's recipe is the concrete, sensory embodiment of historical trends – the fruit of high imperialism. As for the taste: the combination of nutmeg and cloves gives the chowder a pleasing seasonal pungency. The maturity is perhaps ill-suited to what is, fundamentally, fish and potatoes souped up with bacon and slurped from a bowl.

New England chowder is only one among many regional variations. In Rhode Island, they eschew the dairy, so that the broth is thinner and more soup-like; in San Francisco it is customary to serve chowder in a bread bowl; Manhattan chowder is a tomato-containing, vegetable-laden broth which resembles its New England cousin only insofar as both are seafood

soups. There are, indeed, some who maintain that Manhattan chowder is not chowder at all. In 1939, the Maine state representative Cleveland Sleeper tried to pass a bill that would have made it illegal to describe Manhattan chowder as chowder in Maine. He failed, but the prejudice against Manhattan chowder persisted. In the Massachusetts Public Library, I found a 1948 cartoon showing the New England Senators walking out in anger after having been served Manhattan chowder at a Senate restaurant luncheon.

The earliest chowder recipe was published in the *Boston Evening Post* in 1751. It begins: 'First lay some Onions to keep the Pork from burning,/ Because in Chouder there can be no turning.' It ends by declaring 'Last Bottle of Claret, with Water eno' to smother 'em/You'll have a mess which some call Omnium gather 'em.' The genre of rhyming chowder recipes appears to have blossomed in the century thereafter. Jessup Whiteread records one in *The Steward's Handbook*, published in 1899 (although he dates the recipe to 1834). The poem begins:

> To make a good chowder
> and have it quite nice,
>
> Dispense with sweet marjoram
> parsley and spice;
>
> Mace, pepper and salt are
> now wanted alone.

As poetry, this is metrically unbalanced and unpleasantly mega-syllabic. The word 'nice' is as bland as bad blancmange. Conceptually, though, I like the genre of the rhyming recipe and I would like to see, say, Delia Smith try her hand at producing one.

I collected numerous chowder recipes in my trip, ransacking cookbooks, archives and commonplace books. I combined these recipes with those recorded in Richard Hooker's *The Book of Chowder* (1978) to produce a small compendium. Among my favourite finds was a chowder recipe in 'How to Cook Fish' (1917), a booklet produced by the Massachusetts Committee on Public Safety in the First World War as part of a campaign to persuade Americans to eat less meat at a time when there were food shortages. I like to think that the Home Front in America was at least partly powered by chowder.

Early recipes are sparse in their details. To take one example: The recipe for chowder in *The New England Economical Housekeeper* (1844) by Esther Allen Howland is a single paragraph lacking the numbered steps familiar from modern cookbooks. There are no measurements. Since chowder is a reasonably simple dish, this is no barrier for those who know roughly how much fish is enough to feed (say) five. But for the novice, it wouldn't be of much use. One of the books I read as I travelled was *Rules: A Short History of What We Live By* (2022), by Lorraine Daston, which describes the gradual complexification of recipes as one example of a changing understanding of rules. Once, rules were rough, relying on expertise. With changes such as the development of step-by-step, quantified recipes the rule went from being a guide for the already-competent to being an algorithm.

Although Washington where I began my trip is not well known for its chowders, Trader Joe's there had some very good clam chowders available. Later, I sampled a wider range; I had chowder at a lobster shack on the Connecticut shoreline and consumed Caribbean clam chowder flavoured with rum in Boulder, Colorado. Chowder is usually tailored to the seafood in the local area, but in the Mid-West, where the sea is a continent away, corn chowders are common. New England clam chowder is often made with quahogs, a variety of hard-shelled clam, but chowder can be made with all kinds of seafood. It can also be eaten at all kinds of times. At the Try-Pots, there's 'chowder for breakfast, chowder for lunch, chowder for dinner'. Inspired by this, I attempted a triple-chowder diet one day in New York. For breakfast, I had Manhattan chowder in Chelsea market. For lunch, I had a New England chowder. For dinner, I ate at a place near the toe of Manhattan where they served a cider-enriched Rhode Island chowder. My conclusion is that man could easily live on chowder alone.

As I progressed through my trip, I started making chowders. I tested out a couple of the 19th-century recipes I'd come across, including Elizabeth Putnam's. I also made chowders with Pathfinder hosts I was staying with. Near Victoria, on Vancouver Island, my hosts and I made a thick chowder with Pacific clams and leeks, using smoked onions instead of bacon; in Portland, we made a chowder that ended up being thick and elastic as a risotto. We made liberal use of liquid smoke as a substitute for bacon, which worked spectacularly well.

The best chowder I've had, though, wasn't in the US: it remains the one I ate in Edinburgh. But this is most likely because the first experience is always the best.



Pathfinder host Michele Gamburd (1987) with a bowl of New England clam chowder that she and Michael cooked together.

The William Westerman Pathfinders awards to North America fund Balliol students to travel to the USA and Canada each summer, staying with Old Members of the College.

From Oxford to ice cream

How does one of our very own Balliol MPhil graduates go from debating politics to mixing award-winning pistachio ice cream globally? Paul Kaliszewski (2005), sometimes better known during his Oxford days as 'PPK', tells his story



Paul Kaliszewski with his fwip machine

What is fwip (www.fwip.com)? In short, it is the 'nespresso of ice cream' for businesses. We've flipped the $100 billion ice cream industry on its cone by inventing the world's smallest gelateria (ice cream parlour for aficionados) to allow any type of business to sell the highest-quality gelato, sorbets, frozen yogurt and vegan desserts – solving space constraint, investment cost and product-quality control issues along the way. Like nespresso. We've actually gone a step further by creating a 'FoodTech' business model whereby all of our patent-pending Portobello machines around the world are 'connected', meaning we can tell where they are, what is being sold, at what time and so on. Our frozen 'pods', delivered through a 'software-like recurring revenue' business model in Silicon Valley speak, tick the sustainability box with 100% recyclability and zero wastage with a two-year shelf life – an industry standard unrivalled by even the likes of Nestlé and Unilever. From there you have the effect of 'data' from which you can make wiser decisions, optimise sales, change marketing strategies and balance stock and inventory control. The missing ingredient? George. We haven't quite been able to sign up George Clooney, yet.

Founding fwip and running the company as the CEO for the last 10 years has been my greatest privilege, and challenge. I can proudly say, whilst feeling old at the same time, that we survived the last financial crisis. Equally, we found a way to pivot and thrive throughout the pandemic, circumvent the global supply chain failures, walk a never-ending tightrope with Brexit and now battle inflation and recessionary risks. Every day, the

'If there's one takeaway after over a decade, it's that all good things take time and the level of perseverance required cannot be underestimated.'



Paul Kaliszewski

winds of global turbulence push us away from the promised land (IPO, Trade Sale, Household Name) and we have to fight our way back. If anything, the story will become a 'part two' to Angela Duckworth's famous Ted Talk 'Grit' and subsequent book by the same title. If there's one takeaway after over a decade, it's that all good things take time and the level of perseverance required cannot be underestimated.

Headquartered in central London, we have over 60 full-time employees, each one an honour to have but also a big responsibility. Operationally, our new 30,000-square-foot central operations and logistics hub opened at the beginning of last year. We now operate out of the heart of Poland – a positive but forced move to address Brexit complexity and China manufacturing logistical challenges and become more 'glocal', while the powers that be make up their minds on container prices, trade tariffs and legal paperwork for crossing borders with goods again. Covid brought its own complexity with closed borders and strained relations with China; closer to home we're fighting similar fires where half of our factory workers at Poland's third biggest ice cream factory have returned to their Ukrainian homeland to fight for their country in the war against Russia. A common thread in all of this? My MPhil thesis title: 'Polish Foreign Policy towards Ukraine as a Measure of Security against Russia' – perhaps more relevant now than ever.

Today, with over 2,000 fwip gelaterias installed across the UK and Germany, where we have another office in Munich, *Lederhosen* as optional office attire, fwip can be found in countless corporate sites across London (UBS, Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs, LinkedIn, to name a few), heritage sites and museums across the country as well as cafés, restaurants, parks, hospitals and university campuses up and down the country. We're even part of the team's offering at Wolverhampton Wanderers (don't blame their league table position on us!) and can be found in the Bayern Munich Fan Club – when it comes to ice cream, we don't discriminate. Everyone deserves to 'make their moment' with fwip.

What's next? Mudslide, tidal wave and probably lava. We haven't had those yet. As we continue to grow, I guess part of being at the head of the organisational chart totem pole is to cheerlead eternal optimism while always preparing for the worst. That's what has kept me sane, kept us alive and ready for battle. If you have a great family, a strong team, a good mentor, investors who believe, it all helps. The goal for fwip in 2023 and beyond? To triple our installed base of fwip gelaterias and enter another 10 international markets, so that those reading this can enjoy a fwip on the streets of Melbourne or the beaches of Miami on one of their next holidays. As for the ultimate goal? To make fwip as ubiquitous a brand as the one started by another Polish entrepreneur 100 years ago – Häagen Dazs.

Back to battle – cone in hand!



Bix cheeses from Nettlebed Creamery

The ups and downs of cheesemaking

Rose Grimond (1997) reflects on her award-winning business

I started Nettlebed Creamery in 2015. We make three organic cheeses and kefir, and (depending on the season) ice cream and butter. We have a mould-ripened, soft triple-cream cheese called Bix; a semi-soft, washed-rind square cheesed called Highmoor; and a semi-hard large cheese aged in hay called Witheridge – all named after local villages.

I remember the milk round at university and oddly it didn't feature any career opportunities in cheesemaking – an oversight perhaps. Maybe the future will include a Goldman Sachs Lacto-fermentation Graduate Trainee Scheme. I doubt it. Cheesemaking is not really an obvious career choice for anyone. It's certainly a surprise for me to find that I am now dedicated to artisan cheesemaking. At Balliol I was chiefly interested in drama and had great times in the Arnold & Brackenbury Society.

'Throughout the Creamery's evolution we have tended to climb one or two ladder rungs before sliding down a very long snake.'

After Balliol I enrolled in a postgraduate drama course in New York. I then worked at the *New Statesman* and *The Economist* before moving into working with ex-offenders. My first foray into food was a business called Orkney Rose, based around a stall at Borough Market. After moving out of London in 2010 to an organic dairy farm, I founded Nettlebed Creamery.

I often use the analogy of snakes and ladders when talking about cheesemaking (or indeed starting any business). Throughout the Creamery's evolution we have tended to climb one or two rungs before sliding down a very long snake. Notable snakes have included getting a positive test for TB in our dairy herd. At the time we were making unpasteurised cheese and when we got the call we had to throw out all the cheese from that day and suspend

work until we had found a pasteuriser – something that is not very easy to come by. It was just before Christmas and we made no sales. That pales in comparison, though, with an infestation of a rogue mould that entered the building and smothered all the cheese in blue – totally innocuous as a microbe but cosmetically spoiling. Again, it was just before Christmas but this time we endeavoured to keep making cheese thinking that our endeavours to beat it were successful. The cheeses seemed uninfected until they were eight days old when the mould became visible to the human eye when it sporulated. We gave thousands of cheeses to the Oxford Food Bank, as they were good to eat but rejected by retailers. It was an expensive lesson in how humans are ineffective when battling microbes, though not as expensive as Covid.

In amongst the tribulations there have been moments of great joy and satisfaction. I am very proud to be employing offenders who are serving at our local prison, HMP Huntercombe. They come out on day release and work extremely hard, and it is always bittersweet when their sentences expire and they return to their homes: we miss them hugely. Another is the small hospitality business I started in March 2021. Taking overweight or underweight Highmoor (our washed rind cheese) and offcuts of Witheridge (our semi-hard tomme-style cheese), slicing them and putting them between two pieces of white bread, and then pressing them in a hot griddle



Rose Grimond

'Cheesemaking is not really an obvious career choice for anyone. It's certainly a surprise for me to find that I am now dedicated to artisan cheesemaking.'

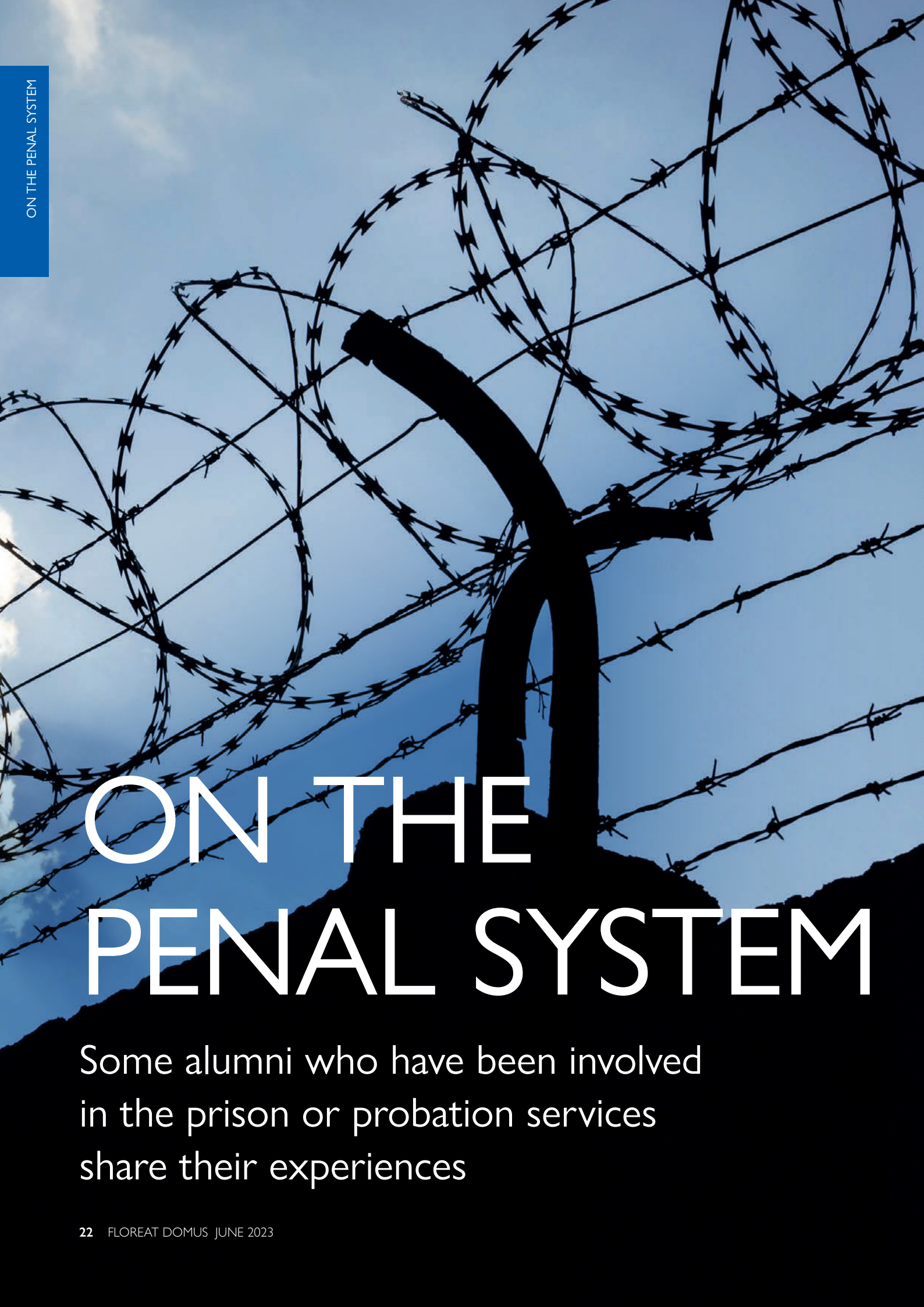
'We have won many awards and we sell far and wide, but it is truly those I work with who make the day worthwhile.'

stationed in a shipping container in a Dutch barn here on site, we launched The Cheese Shed. It has proved very popular. On the second day it opened, the actor Tom Hanks dropped in. Turns out everyone loves melted cheese.

We have many loyal customers, for whom we try to pepper the year with events such as dog shows, tastings and pairings, and special events such as craft and education mornings for children. Most of all I am continuously buoyed by the people I work with – a very special team indeed. On one occasion a customer came to our shop to buy some cheese for the weekend and suddenly had a heart attack. Taking it in turns to deliver CPR, the people working that day were able to save his life. We have won many awards and we sell far and wide, but it is truly those I work with who make the day worthwhile.

The last time I visited Balliol, for an alumni event, I had a very interesting discussion about farming and the environment. Being organic is very important to me and I can sincerely stand up for everything that organic dairy farming does to contribute to environmental responsibility and carbon sequestration, while providing nutrition from the local countryside. We are doing some great work with South Oxfordshire Farmers' Market in Oxford, as well as Sustainable Food and Farming Working Group at OxCan (Oxford Climate Alumni Network) and Good Food Oxfordshire, to help promote sustainable business practices.

I have Balliol to thank for many things. And although I would not have thought that a degree in English stands you in good stead for making cheese, I think the exploration of great literature puts you in an improved position from which to tackle cheesemaking's (or life's) game of snakes and ladders.



ON THE PENAL SYSTEM

Some alumni who have been involved in the prison or probation services share their experiences

josefkubes / stock.Adobe.com

Reflections on the probation service

Robin Brennan (1978) looks back after a long career

Did Darren survive? No one could live 30 more years of a life like that, drinking from one benefit cheque to another, thieving between times. His arms I particularly remember, grooved and slashed from repeated self-harm: but he turned up, cooperated with efforts to stabilise his alcoholism, listened to ideas about how he could make things different, thought about retaining his flat. In one of his fits of despair he gave me a rat in a cardboard box and legged it from my office, threatening (again) to end it all. I was touched by this gesture of trust (though I doubt the rat had seen the inside of a pet shop). Keen to give it back, I found I could run faster than he could and so continued the conversation.

Winston, a black adolescent with learning difficulties, had ended up in a working men's hostel where he was bullied remorselessly by older white men. Taunted beyond endurance, he hit one with a lump hammer and was convicted of malicious wounding. I went to court to support a proposal that he be put on probation. He took up a huge amount of the next two years, shambling into my office more or less daily to share pie-in-the-sky ideas of being a racing driver or a yacht designer. Prison would have killed him. As it is, I am completely confident that there is a 50-something Winston out there somewhere, perhaps working, with a place of his own and no further convictions.

I doubt if these characters from my early working life in the 1980s would be seen in a latter-day probation office, or have individual attention from qualified officers. Probation now supervises all offenders on release from prison and resources are more and more stretched. The development of the concept of 'risk of harm' has meant an increasingly targeted approach. Qualified probation officers tend increasingly to deal with sex offenders and the seriously violent, often with a view more to control and treat rather than 'advise, assist and befriend', the classic statutory duty from the original Probation of Offenders Act 1907. But there are benefits, particularly the development of close working relationships with police, prisons, mental health workers and others under MAPPA (the multi-agency public protection arrangements), and more recently the 'personality disorder pathway', a joint approach between the Ministry of Justice and Department of Health to address the needs of the many offenders who are disordered without being formally mentally ill.



Robin Brennan

'What remains critical is the capacity of staff to show warmth and empathy to those they supervise while managing them positively.'

Structurally, the probation service has changed from myriad local services run by 'probation and after-care committees' – one of the last public bodies recognisable to Trollope, as someone once described them – through other incarnations, including the disastrous Grayling reforms of 2014, where two-thirds of the service was contracted out, to howls of despair from anyone with a clue (and disastrous inspection findings). Being absorbed into the UK Civil Service was an improvement; but what has disappointed me has been the inability (or unwillingness) of top managers to explain the difficulty of the work and to defend operational staff when things go wrong. Being overseen by the great and the good at local level had its drawbacks, but the old committees were a *cordon sanitaire* between operational staff and ministers looking for someone to blame.

No job is without its tribulations. What remains critical, and where the satisfaction lies, is the 'golden thread' of probation work: the capacity of staff to show warmth and empathy to those they supervise while setting appropriate boundaries and managing them positively.

Robin Brennan joined the probation service the year after leaving Balliol in 1981. He qualified as a probation officer at Barnett House in Oxford in 1986. He retired as head of probation for Surrey in 2021.

‘These books melt walls’

Judith Gardom (1980) describes her research on prisoners’ experiences of reading for pleasure

These books melt walls
wherever that book takes you
you’re nowhere else
and you’re travelling through Bree
and it’s raining
you can feel the mud under your feet
feel the fear in their hearts
as they run from despair
to more despair.

See the perspective of life through
other people’s eyes
in their position
the journeys they went through
the rigours that it took
true to life
I’ve travelled the world
I’ve travelled the universe
truth in the
figments of imagination.

Ian

This poem is distilled from the words of a life-sentenced prisoner whom I interviewed for my research on prisoners’ experiences of reading for pleasure. I’m about to finish a PhD at Cambridge University’s Institute of Criminology, in which I argue for the importance of relational qualities in reading in prison. I discuss the role of books in interpersonal relationships inside prison and with family, and the phenomenology of relational dynamics between readers and books in the process of reading itself.

How does someone whose undergraduate degree was in Philosophy and Theology come to be doing a social sciences doctorate 40 years later? In my final year at Balliol I made weekly visits to a therapeutic prison, HMP Grendon, alongside a University Chaplain, attending group therapy sessions. It was a chance to


Bernard Piette
Judith Gardom

get out of Oxford and experience a very different world, and I began to consider applying to work with the prison service. As things turned out, I spent many years teaching philosophy and theology, including two periods in Zimbabwe, while continuing to take an interest in the intersections between education, imprisonment and mental health. Eventually, I did a Master’s in Politics, Development and Democratic Education and wrote my dissertation on the work of Open Book, an Access project run by,

‘For most of the men I interviewed reading had become a new, or newly important, way of spending time, and a new source of interest and pleasure.’

and for, people with experiences of addiction, mental health problems, homelessness and prison who were pursuing adult education. Inspired by their life narratives, I applied for ESRC research funding for a qualitative study of the reading practices and experiences of men in prison.

Prison life in the UK consists of too much time locked up and too little to do, and recent periods of lockdown have exacerbated the problems of inactivity combined with either isolation or, more often, cramped cell-sharing. The prison population in England and Wales is made up overwhelmingly of those least likely to engage habitually in book reading, due to difficulties with literacy, negative experiences of education, and cultural unfamiliarity with reading for pleasure. In 2014 the then Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, controversially linked prisoners’ access to books to the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme, through which prisoners can, for example, pay for in-cell TV. The public response, led by the Howard League for Penal Reform, showed the depth of feeling about the importance of books in prison.

I found that for most of the men I interviewed reading had become a new, or newly important, way of spending time, and a new source of interest and pleasure. Most had been excluded from school or left without qualifications, and some had only learned to read while in prison. They had turned to books because of the lack of alternative activities, the technological deprivations of prison (there is generally no internet access) and the painfulness of prison time. Reading was referred to as a form of ‘Bird Killer’: a way of making time pass in prison, alongside drugs and excessive sleeping.

The limited existing research on reading in prison relates to prison



Tom Carter

'Knowledge through the Window of Glass', award-winning ceramic, Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice.

reading groups, and therefore is almost exclusively concerned with literary fiction. I was interested in what was read from personal inclination, and I found that individual preferences were often shaped by conversations, shared cultures and mutual influence among prisoners. There was a degree of consensus about what constituted a 'good book' in prison – a long series, a compelling biography, true crime, 'urban' fiction, self-help literature and a wide range of individual non-fiction interests – and that you could identify a 'right good book' by its battered appearance. For some, reading was also a way of sustaining or renewing links with family outside, as conversations about books offered a way of connecting over something other than the limited and monotonous prison regime or the life outside that they were no longer part of.

'Reading offered quasi-interpersonal encounters in which prisoners found a sense of security, meaning, identity, and future possibility.'

In order to analyse and communicate large quantities of interview data I developed a method of 'poetic distillation' that highlights the most intense and important aspects of prisoners' experiences, using their own words. What emerged was the centrality of the relational and even interpersonal qualities in the experience of reading itself: recognition, identification, a sense of acceptance and an inner dialogue. In prison environments much is at stake in interpersonal dealings with both staff and inmates, and everyday encounters can be unpredictable and threatening. Reading offered quasi-interpersonal encounters in which prisoners found a sense of security, meaning, identity, and future possibility.

A book doesn't do
the one thing everyone does
and that's judge you
it just says
'look
here I am
read me'
it makes you part of it
not saying 'you're bad
you've done this'
just
'come with me'.

Ian

My research findings reinforce arguments for access to prison libraries and for greater institutional support for their use. Many prisons run reading groups, but there is sometimes a gap between the assumptions of group leaders, who come from particular kinds of reading cultures (similar to my own), and prisoners' own needs, assumptions and backgrounds. As an exploratory study in an under-researched area, my research opens up lines of inquiry into the role of reading for pleasure in informal self- and peer-education in prison, and in prisoner mental health. I hope to discover whether and how women prisoners' reading practices and experiences differ from men's, and to develop further the method of poetic distillation.

Criminology has been described as a 'rendezvous' subject that benefits from insights from law, psychology, sociology, philosophy and other disciplines, and I have been able to draw on my 'home' disciplines, as well as life experience, in pursuing my longstanding interest in life behind bars. I have been very fortunate to be able to take my research at a slow pace, while spending time with three new grandchildren and using periods of lockdown for writing. I've been able to take part in collaborative prisons research projects with Cambridge's Prisons Research Centre, including an evaluation of reading aloud groups in 'Psychologically Informed Planned Environments' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-evaluation-of-shared-reading-in-pipes). This kind of research requires personal and professional skills that I feel I have only begun to develop, with the help of exceptional supervisors and colleagues: like reading itself, research in prisons turns out to be a fundamentally relational activity.

Singing in prisons

Mike Morris (1962) describes his experiences with Liberty Choir

Every Monday afternoon finds me and a group of volunteers assembling at the gatehouse to a prison, HMP Coldingley, near Woking. We show our ID and troop through the first of seven locked gates and doors, led by our music director and key holder. Finally, we are in the prison's events room. We set out chairs in a circle. Our professional accompanist rigs up the keyboard.

Then the guys start arriving. Each one is clapped in and gets a hug. There is a lot of laughter and banter. For them, choir is a welcome break – a chance to talk to ordinary people from the outside world and escape from their boring week. They are not young, mainly in their thirties and forties. The prison is category C (low security) and mostly they are on long sentences. We don't ask what they are in for.

When everyone has arrived, the session begins. First, we all call out our names in turn. This is an important icebreaker, although both inmates and volunteers have been coming for months. We know each other well.

'For them, choir is a welcome break – a chance to talk to ordinary people from the outside world and escape from their boring week.'

Then we do a 'song circle'. This is a form of musical Chinese whispers. The music director gives a musical phrase to one of us. We pass it on to our neighbour in the circle. Round it goes. She hands out more phrases until the room has filled with sound.

Then we rearrange the chairs in rows and the singing begins. Some classical – we did Vivaldi's 'Gloria' in three-part harmony when we gave a concert for family and friends. We do songs from shows, gospel and pop songs. 'Down by the Riverside' and 'Broadway' are two favourites – all sung with dance moves.

Sometimes, as the two-hour session comes to an end, our accompanist gives a short recital. He is a talented clarinet player and deputises in orchestras when he is not working with the choir. One of the guys is a talented musician. He pulls out his violin and joins in. Many of the volunteers are women and sometimes the session ends with dancing. Then there are more hugs and we watch them all disappear back into the prison.

We are all members of Liberty Choir, a new charity which has grown out of MJ's Choirs, a group of community

choirs started by MJ Paranzino, a fireball of an American singer with the ambition to get singers into every prison in England. 'Graduate' singers from the prisons are encouraged to stay in touch when they get out.

During lockdown, of course, we couldn't go in. Instead, we were asked to write to the guys. I was given a few names and started writing weekly letters. Most didn't reply and with others after a while my letters were returned – my pen pals had either left or moved to other prisons. Except for one. Steve became a regular correspondent. In fact, our letters didn't stop after lockdown and we are still writing to each other. His letters are vivid and interesting. Steve is in his sixties and has been in and out of prisons in three countries all his life. I have never met him because he has never been in the prisons where I have sung. What do I write about? Anything and everything. People sometimes say, 'Surely it's upsetting when you are banged up to have news about the outside world. Doesn't it make the guys resentful?' My experience with Steve is quite the opposite. He loves to hear what I have been up to. He loves getting postcards from holidays. We argue about politics and TV programmes – he watches a lot of TV. Steve is a talented artist and illustrated his envelopes with witty cartoons.

'I got involved with Liberty Choir with some pompous wish to 'give something back'. In reality, it's I who have benefited.'

I got involved with Liberty Choir with some pompous wish to 'give something back'. In reality, it's I who have benefited: I am the one who has had my retirement enriched and enlivened.



Volunteers outside HMP Coldingley. Mike Morris is second from the left.

Transforming US prisons

Michele Deitch (1983) describes her career in prison reform

Some of my Oxford classmates may remember spending occasional Friday nights, at my suggestion, attending a 'social' at Grendon Prison, where they mixed with the residents, many of whom were convicted of very serious crimes, in a vaguely normal social setting with snacks and lemonade. Anticipating their visits may have been unsettling, but my classmates returned to Holywell Manor surprised by the candour and insightful conversations they had had with the men in the prison, and by how comfortable they felt there. Each came away with a changed notion of those whom we lock up in prison and how we should treat them. In short, they started seeing the men as individual human beings, rather than as an indistinguishable – and easily dismissable – group of people saddled with the label of 'prisoner'.

Those visits arose because I conducted the research for my Master's thesis at Grendon, a therapeutic community prison known for its innovative approach to prison governance, for providing group therapy, and for having a safer and more humane environment than typical British prisons. I studied the psychological and physical harms of incarceration and a range of innovations to reduce those harms and make prison safer. What I learned helped inform my career working on prison reform efforts in various capacities in the United States.

Early experience

After Oxford, and after completing my law degree, one of my first jobs was as a court-appointed monitor of conditions in Texas prisons. The federal court set up the office as a remedial measure in a class action lawsuit (known as *Ruiz v. Estelle*) challenging horrific, crowded, and brutal conditions that violated the constitutional prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. I routinely inspected prisons, talked with staff and incarcerated people, identified ongoing problems, and wrote reports to the court with recommended changes. I learned not only about correctional management and human dynamics in an institutional environment but also about the difficulty of organisational change.

Next I worked with the Texas Legislature as a criminal justice policy adviser to address the policy failures that allowed so many people to be sent to prison and to be housed under such awful conditions. I got to see 'how the sausage was made'. Sadly, I witnessed how politics can overcome sensible policy decisions, and watched as mass incarceration in Texas exploded. The US incarcerates more people than any other country in the world (almost 2 million), and has the world's highest incarceration rate. Texas has the largest prison system in the country.



Birzer Photo Inc

'I believe that how we operate our country's prisons speaks volumes about who we want to be as a nation, and that our own humanity is at stake in the choices we make.'

Michele Deitch

'Through my research, writing, and advocacy, I've helped build a movement that has seen a number of correctional oversight entities created.'

Improving conditions

In the following years, I served as a consultant to justice system agencies all over the country seeking to reduce the use of incarceration in their jurisdictions and to improve conditions of confinement. During that time, I drafted the American Bar Association's Standards on the Treatment of Prisoners and developed a particular expertise in issues related to independent oversight of prisons.

Unlike the UK and Western Europe, the US doesn't have systems for monitoring and inspecting conditions in prisons, such as HM Inspectorate of Prisons. Our places of confinement lack transparency, which creates risks for everyone who lives or works behind bars and limits public awareness of harms caused by severe overcrowding, extreme violence, and overuse of solitary confinement. We have traditionally relied on the courts to address concerns, but that is after harm has occurred rather than as a preventive measure; also, legal remedies can only be used to bring those facilities up to minimal levels of compliance with constitutional requirements. By the mid-nineties, new federal laws had made it harder to bring lawsuits and for judges to exercise long-term oversight over conditions. Most US prisons thus operate with relative impunity.

Much of my work over the last two decades has focused on efforts to establish independent oversight bodies for prisons across the US, and to familiarise lawmakers and advocates with this concept and its benefits. Through my research, writing, and advocacy on this subject, I've helped build a movement that has now seen a number of correctional oversight entities created and many more in the works. Those oversight bodies are a critical element in any effort to ensure transparency and accountability for safe and humane conditions of confinement.

Changing policy

I now teach law and public policy at the University of Texas at Austin, where I work with postgraduate students on criminal justice and juvenile justice projects designed to have a policy impact. These projects include reports about youth who are tried and sentenced as adults; strategies for addressing violence in youth prisons; Covid deaths behind bars; and the harms of basic living conditions in prisons relating to sleep practices, hygiene, and clothing; along with projects to identify and profile all correctional oversight bodies that exist in the US. Our work has generated significant media attention and public awareness of these issues and has led to some important policy changes.

While in academia, I've kept one foot in the real world through my collaborative work with policymakers, corrections officials, and advocates on behalf of people in prison. I've even been an expert witness in a couple of extradition cases from the UK to Texas, one of which resulted in a Scottish judge's refusal to extradite because of human rights violations in Texas prisons – the first time to our knowledge that a court has refused to extradite to the US on the basis of prison conditions. It is a sad reflection of how far we have to go in making our prisons in Texas live up to international human rights standards.

Two years ago, a colleague and I launched the Prison and Jail Innovation Lab (PJIL) at the university. PJIL is a national policy resource centre working to transform the way we treat people in prisons and to improve correctional oversight. PJIL's work builds on the expertise we have acquired over many years of work in this field, and having a small team of staff and student researchers allows us to scale up our work and have an even greater impact. We work closely with policymakers around the country to design correctional oversight bodies; we are drafting jail standards in collaboration with state officials in two states; we developed a roadmap for designing and operating a gender-responsive women's jail; we serve as a resource to the media; and testify before legislative bodies – to name but a few of our projects. We have just returned from a visit to Uruguay, of all places, where the US Embassy invited us to provide guidance to Uruguayan government leaders about ways to reduce prison crowding through alternatives to incarceration.

The work ahead

Today, I continue to draw on – and be motivated by – the lessons I learned through my research at Oxford: first, we lock up far too many people, for far too long, and we disproportionately imprison people of colour; second, prison is a terrible place that deeply harms everyone who experiences it; third, treating people humanely and with respect for their dignity is essential; and fourth, transparency is critical for safety behind bars. I hope we can work towards a future in which we no longer rely on incarceration as a means to address our nation's social problems. Until then, I will continue to seek ways to reduce the harms of imprisonment through improved health and safety measures.

Dostoyevsky famously said that 'the degree of civilisation in a society can be found by entering its prisons.' I could not agree more. I believe that how we operate our country's prisons speaks volumes about who we want to be as a nation, and that our own humanity is at stake in the choices we make.



Team Balliol with the Hull team and Jeremy Paxman after the final.

How Team Balliol Won Christmas University Challenge

Martin Edwards (1974) recalls an unforgettable experience

University Challenge is an iconic TV programme that has fascinated me ever since I was a small boy. In those days, the presenter was Bamber Gascoigne, erudite yet charming and gentle. I enjoy quizzes and after I was offered a place at Balliol to read Jurisprudence, I was glad to watch the College team reach the final. Balliol were also runners-up in the very first competition, way back in 1963, and when contestants were sought for the next series of matches, I couldn't resist the temptation to take the test. Alas, my score wasn't good enough to get me into the team.

So that was that, an ambition unfulfilled. I kept watching the show, which Bamber presented – on ITV – until 1987. Seven years later, the BBC revived it, with Jeremy Paxman asking questions. Jeremy has a well-merited reputation as a formidable interrogator, with a style as different from Bamber's as you could imagine. Once again I found myself hooked. There have been 52 series along with numerous spin-offs and I haven't missed many of them. Nor am I alone in my enthusiasm; it remains one of the most popular shows on BBC 2 and there's even been a spin-off book and film, David Nicholls' *Starter for Ten*.

Fast forward to the late summer of 2022. I'd just arrived in Italy for a short holiday and when I logged on to the hotel Wi-Fi, I found an email from the director of *University Challenge*, asking whether I'd like to take part in this year's Christmas series. *Christmas University Challenge* has been running since 2011 and teams comprise 'notable alumni' (Jeremy's term is 'old codgers').

Was this the chance of a lifetime or simply an opportunity to embarrass myself, not least in the eyes of my children, alumni of Balliol and Lincoln colleges respectively, whose own general knowledge leaves me in awe? I decided it was both and that life was simply too short to worry about making a fool of myself on the telly. So I said yes and was promptly invited to become team captain.

Eventually, I was given the names of the other team members. Although I'd never met any of them, it was clear that these *were* people of distinction. Elizabeth Kiss (1983), a specialist in moral and political philosophy, is the Warden of Rhodes House and a Fellow of Balliol. Andrew Copson (1999) is the Chief Executive of Humanists UK and Martin O'Neill (1993) is a professor of philosophy at York University. Curiously, three of us were taught by the late, great Jo Raz (Fellow and Tutor in Law 1972–1985, Professor of

Philosophy of Law, Oxford, Professorial Fellow, Balliol, 1985–2006, and Emeritus Fellow 2006–2022).

As is well known, Jeremy Paxman is stepping down from the show. Parkinson's has taken its toll, and a few days before our first-round match took place, his documentary *Putting Up with Parkinson's* was screened. It was poignant and reinforced what I'd already realised: that it was a privilege to be able to take part in his very last series.

The evening before the match, Elizabeth and her husband Jeff Holzgrefe (1983) (they met at Balliol as graduates) and I had a convivial dinner together, but other pressing commitments meant Andrew and Martin weren't able to make it until we reached the green room. Not much time for a team talk, then. However, we did agree a strategy.

The key to success in *University Challenge* is speed. This applies in two situations, most obviously when answering starter questions. Buzz in too quickly and you risk a five-point penalty and leaving the field clear for your opponents. But it's a risk worth taking, as long as you have some idea of the answer. I wanted each of us to feel we had 'permission' to make mistakes. However, a less forgivable mistake – especially for a captain – is to dither when conferring over bonuses. Consultation is vital, but it shouldn't become a lengthy debate. Whether we got an answer right or wrong, we must forget about it at once and apply our minds to the next question.

Our first match was against SOAS. We'd been told that Christmas series questions tend to be easier than those in the student series, but that because this year was Jeremy's swansong, the question-setters had decided to give us tougher questions. I was nervous enough before this was mentioned, let alone when we were in the studio and the theme music began to play …

'Buzz in too quickly and you risk a five-point penalty. But it's a risk worth taking.'

We didn't get off to the best start, incurring five-point penalties and falling some way behind. Suffice to say that I was hopeless with the starters, but dynamic buzzing from Martin and Andrew saw us through. Andrew was justifiably dismayed when an apparently correct answer of his was ruled out, but we got over that hiccup and won the match, though it never felt as comfortable as the winning margin might suggest.

The Christmas series is shown over a fortnight, Monday to Friday each week, and involves 14 teams and 7 heats. Only the four highest-scoring winners reach the semi-finals. We didn't know if our score (155) would be enough, but so it proved. A week later, Team Balliol reconvened in Media City, a strange area of Salford which is like something out of *Blade Runner*.

The semi pitted us against Exeter College, Oxford, captained by Reeta Chakrabarti. They were a formidable force. Once again our opponents raced into the lead. This time I knew the answers to several starter questions, but wasn't aggressive enough with that wretched buzzer. At least I got my spellings right! We also had a setback when a correct answer by Andrew was ruled out because one of our opponents responded after Andrew's name was called by voiceover Roger Tilling. Fortunately, the other Martin was in great form and after catching Exeter up, we were able to pull away to win by an even wider margin than before.

There was only time for a quick coffee before the final, against a convivial and gracious Hull team captained by the actor Sian Reese-Williams. This game felt different from the first two, perhaps because I was finally getting over my nerves. For once I managed to begin well with a starter question and this time we never fell behind. We felt our win was a proper team effort, with all four members making significant contributions.

We toasted Jeremy with champagne and were also privileged to be invited to an emotional backstage party where the production team honoured his contribution to the programme over so many years. I was amused when he told me, in his characteristically wry way, that as a crime novelist I was one of the few people to have made good use of a law degree.

What a day! The overriding feeling was of delight mingled with disbelief. To take part was a joy, to become series champions was the icing on the cake.

After the party, we enjoyed a celebratory cocktail with Sian, who later joined us for dinner. Elizabeth, Andrew, and Martin proved to be wonderful companions as well as team mates. To share this strange but exciting occasion with such delightful people was a huge pleasure.

So for me, the experience was utterly unforgettable. Not, in other words, like some of the answers to Jeremy's questions …



Screenshot of the Christmas University Challenge final.

Services to health

Rosie Ward (2020) met former head of the National Health Service Lord Stevens (1984 and Honorary Fellow)

The NHS has been an invaluable part of British national life since it was founded in 1948 but the organisation has particularly come into the spotlight in the last few years because of the Covid-19 pandemic. I recently had the privilege of interviewing Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of the NHS for seven years from 2014 to 2021 and now an independent peer in the House of Lords.

Simon Stevens was born in Birmingham, attended a state comprehensive school in Berkshire, and studied PPE at Balliol from 1984 to 1987. The eighties were, of course, a time of great political upheaval, and Balliol certainly played its part. The JCR debated sanctions against apartheid South Africa and hosted striking miners' families from Mardy colliery – all in the shadow of what turned out to be the endgame of the Cold War. Stevens describes Oxford in the eighties as intellectually stimulating and ideologically diverse: an opportunity that he feels incredibly grateful to have experienced. He is a defender of the academic value of studying PPE for its scope and interdisciplinarity, which is severely lacking in much of British undergraduate education. Stevens was also an active participant in both College and University life, including as Oxford Union President and cox for the Balliol women's first VIII.

After graduating, Stevens went to work in Guyana in South America and then began his health career, earning an MBA from Glasgow's Strathclyde University and a Harkness Fellowship at Columbia University and New York City Health Department. As well as the NHS – he joined the graduate training scheme in 1988 and then worked in management roles in hospitals around the country – he worked internationally including in the US, Africa and Brazil, and on an EU-funded programme on the Malawi/Mozambique border. He also spent seven years at the centre of UK government, first as policy adviser to successive Secretaries of State, and then as senior policy adviser to Prime Minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street.

'Stevens argues that while staying true to its founding principle of care according to need, the NHS needs to continue to change if it is to be "future proofed".'

His unusual combination of public, private and government sector expertise led to his being headhunted as head of the NHS in 2014 following a worldwide search. In his seven years leading what is Europe's largest employer he worked with three prime ministers and four chancellors, while having to respond to the worst pandemic in a century. As CEO, he had responsibility for a budget of £153 billion. Under his stewardship, the NHS invested in innovative modern technology, including gene therapy to diagnose rare genetic diseases in children, and launched an international research partnership on early cancer diagnosis using advanced blood tests. Additionally, NHS research pioneered the development of AI machine learning in healthcare screening.

Looking ahead, Stevens argues that while staying true to its founding principle of care according to need, the NHS needs to continue to change if it is to be 'future proofed'. He explains that our growing and ageing population means that there is both an epidemiological and an economic imperative to move away from a system based on late diagnosis and 'fix and mend', to one with more preventive and integrated care. This in turn necessitates the NHS working much more closely with community services, local government and the third sector. In return, Stevens argues, the NHS can be a contributor to the economic success of the UK, including by tackling health-related labour market shortages and through partnerships with the vibrant UK life sciences sector.

However, for at least the last decade, and arguably much longer, the NHS has been under considerable financial strain. Day-to-day UK health spending was 18% less per person than in the EU14 throughout the period 2010–2019, and matching German spending per head would have meant a huge 39% increase. As a result, the NHS has been handicapped by fewer clinical staff and older facilities, something that Stevens regularly pointed out both in private and in public – eventually winning the support of then Prime Minister Theresa May – and subsequently Boris Johnson to begin to address it.

Those difficulties added greatly to the challenge for the NHS when in early 2020 the Covid pandemic struck. Stevens recalls how scary and uncertain a time that was for the country as a whole and for the NHS in particular. By March hospitals in countries such as China and Italy were being overrun, with patients dying for lack of intensive care. When the disease spread to the UK, the NHS found itself under unprecedented pressure, and Stevens emphasises the extraordinary

commitment, selflessness and flexibility of NHS staff. For him, another aspect of the response that stands out is the speed of medical innovation, in which Oxford University played an internationally prominent role. Treatments for Covid such as dexamethasone were trialled at extraordinary speed, and new vaccines were developed and rolled out faster than at any time in human history – an achievement marked by the NHS being the first health system in the world to administer the Pfizer–BioNTech vaccine in December 2020, followed shortly by the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

Having steered it through the pandemic, Stevens stood down from the NHS in summer 2021, two years later than he had originally intended. Perhaps uniquely for an NHS chief executive, on the announcement of his departure he received plaudits for his aforementioned work from the medical royal colleges, patients' charities, and both the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader.

Stevens was nominated for a life peerage as an independent crossbench member of the House of Lords, where he has continued to speak out on health and other public policy. He secured amendments to the Health and Care Act 2022 on mental health and other areas, and has since spoken on topics as varied as air pollution, economic crime and kleptocracy, science cooperation, and academic freedom and free speech. When I asked what's next for him, Stevens told me he will continue to work on issues to which he feels he can contribute in and outside Parliament, while also spending time with his partner and two children. He is also a keen offshore sailor. Having just sailed the Drake Passage to Antarctica, he is looking forward to spending more time at sea!



Roger Harris Photography

'In his seven years leading what is Europe's largest employer he worked with three prime ministers and four chancellors, while having to respond to the worst pandemic in a century.'

Simon Stevens

Supporting cocoa-growing communities

Naa Odoley Ntodi (2018) describes her work with Cocoa360

Akwaaba! Since returning from a journey to America with a Pathfinders award, I have been working as a Development Fellow for Cocoa360, a non-profit based in Ghana and founded in 2017. Cocoa360 is pioneering a self-sustaining, community financing model called 'Farm-for-Impact' (FFI), where proceeds from community farms are leveraged to support educational and health infrastructure. Cocoa was first developed as a crop in Mesoamerica, and the development of its use from a bitter beverage used in religious ceremonies to a sinfully sweet treat has been accompanied by a geographic shift in production. Now Ghana is the world's second-largest exporter of cocoa, generating $2bn USD in annual revenues. However, the approximately 1.6 million farmers in 1,300 cocoa-growing communities (CCs) nationwide each earn less than $0.50 USD a day – living with limited access to healthcare and education.

'There are currently more girls without access to education and more healthcare expenses than there are community cocoa revenues to fund them.'

As a Development Fellow, my role is to grow and maintain Cocoa360's funding sources through grant prospecting, writing and reporting. In addition, I assist the Research Fellows in building a research framework around the FFI development model. Why the need for external funding despite this professed circular economic paradigm? Cocoa farms typically produce their peak yields between 6 and 20 years of age. Hence, as we wait for the farms to mature there are currently more girls without access to education and more healthcare expenses than there are community cocoa revenues to fund them.

Throughout my degree, I enjoyed getting involved in access and outreach work, particularly Balliol's Chemistry Taster Days. So, when my friend Megan A. Zhan Yamoah (2020) introduced me to Cocoa360 as an opportunity to engage in international education development I readily applied. Cocoa360 publishes literature on development in agrarian and extractive industry-based societies and the chance to develop my social science research skills particularly appealed to me.

In November 2022 I had the privilege of visiting the tuition-free Tarkwa Breman Girls' School (TBGS), Community Clinic and Library, which serves the eponymous village and eight surrounding CCs and is primarily funded by revenues from the TB Community Cocoa Farms, supported by Cocoa360. With 270 girls enrolled, the school is tackling the educational gender disparity prevalent within communities with limited resources. A recent UNESCO report (October 2022) acknowledged 'the inconsistent delivery of education across [Ghana]… with public schools in disadvantaged and rural areas bearing the brunt of weak provision'. By providing free accommodation and healthcare for teachers, Cocoa360 provides sufficient incentive to teach in rural areas of the country. Additionally, TBGS delivers a health equity curriculum (developed by Vanderbilt University) which intends to improve health outcomes through education, particularly as the girls share their knowledge at home.



Naa Odoley with farmers at the Tarkwa Breman Community Cocoa Farm.



Cocoa 360/Bismark Acquah

Naa Odoley with students at the Tarkwa Breman Girls' School.

My journey to Tarkwa Breman involved a seven-hour bus ride from Ghana's capital Accra (typically eight hours, but the driver had no intention of missing even a minute of the Ghana *vs* South Korea World Cup match) to the nearest town, Bogoso. A subsequent two-hour drive into the village, coupled with the absence of internet/telephone service save for on the large hill on which the Cocoa360 office is situated, was a stark reminder of the imperative for community-sustained health and educational infrastructure. Prior to the construction of the Tarkwa Breman Community Clinic, residents were powerless in the face of time-sensitive emergency health incidents. The clinic has treated over 14,000 patients since its launch, seen over 5,000 malaria cases, and delivered over 100 babies. Our goal over the next four years is to scale our FFI model into 20 new partner community clinics (CCs) in Ghana and reach 100,000 more cocoa farmers, with the eventual aim of expanding to cash-crop-based societies worldwide.

'By providing free accommodation and healthcare for teachers, Cocoa360 provides sufficient incentive to teach in rural areas of the country.'

As a result of its cooperative mode of operation, particularly at the governance level, Cocoa360 was quickly alerted to the contamination of a water well in the CC Nkrandadieso and funded the construction of a new well. Nkrandadieso's previous well was polluted as a result of gold-ore mining activity outside permitted territories. Such illegal mining is driven by the demand for gold used in components of electronic goods and is especially ravaging rural, agrarian regions. Cocoa360 is also aiming to increase international visibility on this matter, and my time at Tarkwa Breman showed me the importance of partnering and communicating with the recipients of development efforts in order to best serve their needs.

This position has nurtured my passion for international development and education policy, and as I join the Boston Consulting Group as an associate, I am very excited to be getting involved in the firm's Social Impact and Sustainability work to further hone my skills. Today, Ghana. Tomorrow, the World (Bank).

The writer's life

Three Balliol crime or thriller writers tell their tale



Martin Walker (1966)

Martin Walker has published one of his 'Bruno' novels featuring a French country policeman, set in the Périgord region and known as the Dordogne Mysteries, every year since 2008. The first in the series was *Bruno, Chief of Police* (now called *Death in Dordogne*); the latest, *A Chateau Under Siege*, is the 16th. The books have been translated into 18 languages and sold more than 6 million copies worldwide. He has also written short stories about Bruno and associated cookbooks about the food and wine of Périgord. A former foreign correspondent in the USSR, USA, Europe and Africa for the *Guardian*, he has written non-fiction too, including histories of the Cold War and 20th-century USA and studies of Gorbachev and Clinton.

How did you come to write crime novels or thrillers?

We were a pair of foreign correspondents with two young children, and my wife, Julia, sensibly said we should have at least one permanent place the kids could call home. After many visits to chums in the Périgord, she found a house there and I became increasingly fascinated with the prehistory of the region and its cave paintings. At the same time, I was interviewing the decreasing number of Resistance survivors from the Second World War, and combined these two themes in a novel, *The Caves of Périgord* (2002). The more time we spent in the Périgord, the more I was enchanted by the food and wine, the history and culture and the local people. It is a very beguiling place.

Please describe the hero/es in your novels and the inspiration for them

Through a neighbour known to all as 'The Baron' (although he isn't) I was taken to the local rugby and tennis clubs, and made many friends, including a noted hunter and cook, a former soldier who spent his spare time teaching local kids to play sports and was also our town policeman, hired by the mayor. Pierrot, as he is known, became a good friend and the inspiration for my character, Bruno. The other men in my stories, J-J the senior detective, the mayor, the doctor, the Baron – all were inspired by real people. But not the women. I wouldn't dare base a character on a real woman – they are far too mysterious and baffling.

What broadly would you say your novels are about?

They are really about the Périgord itself: its castles and archaeology; its traditional Occitan language and its pivotal role in the 100 Years War with the English; its extraordinary food and wine, the truffles and foie gras and the syrupy Monbazillac; the home of so many of the troubadours, and so many heresies. The Cathars were here and persecuted in the 13th century, the same fate that befell the Protestants in the 16th century. It is a rebellious sort of place with a healthy disrespect for Paris.

Where do your plots come from?

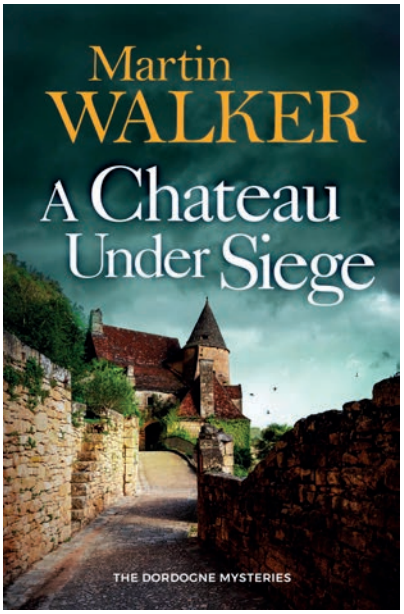
The plots usually begin with something from history, like the fate of the Banque de France reserves that the Resistance took from a train ambush at Neuvic in July 1944, or the photo of a skull that my friend Raymond kept on his fridge door, a reminder of a case he was never able to solve. Or the way the local folk singers and troubadours rallied to support Catalan independence, or the experience of friends running a cookery school and others with a riding school.

What do you enjoy about life as a crime writer?

I enjoy researching and celebrating the Périgord, and given that this is a poor region I'm delighted that Bruno's mysteries and the two Bruno cookbooks and the *Bruno's Périgord* coffee table book have attracted so many foreign tourists, and I'm proud of the gold medal the French government awarded me for my services to tourism. I also enjoy book tours. Writing can be a lonely business and it's grand to meet the readers, particularly in different countries, since Bruno is now published in 18 languages. I also enjoy promoting the wines of Bergerac, giving speeches and tastings at international wine fairs. The biggest challenge is how to manage Bruno's love life, since he always falls for independent and career-minded women, while hoping to find one who would be happy to settle down and raise a family with.

What aspect of your work as a crime writer are you most proud of?

As the 'Ambassador of Perigord', I am called on to help promote the cave paintings of Lascaux with the travelling exhibition, and to give talks and demonstrations at wine and food festivals around the world, which is great fun and I have seen it making a real difference to the exports of Bergerac wine to the US, Japan and Germany. Best of all was to be invited to sing on the stage of the Berlin national opera house, as part of their jazz week, after their scouts heard me singing Kurt Weill and Jacques Brel at various literary events.





Martin Edwards (1974)

As well as his seven Liverpool mysteries, eight Lake District Mysteries and four Golden Age mysteries, most recently *Blackstone Fell*, Martin Edwards has written short stories, edited crime anthologies and written extensively about crime fiction, most recently in his history of the genre, *The Life of Crime* (2022). He is President of the Detection Club, consultant to the British Library's Crime Classics, and former Chair of the Crime Writers Association (CWA). In 2020 he was awarded the CWA Diamond Dagger, the highest honour in UK crime writing, for a career 'marked by sustained excellence' and for making 'a significant contribution to the genre'.

Other awards he has received include the CWA Short Story Dagger, the CWA Margery Allingham Prize, a CWA Red Herring and the CWA Dagger in the Library, awarded by UK librarians for his body of work. He has been shortlisted for the Theakston's Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year and the Lakeland Book of the Year, and won the Poirot award 'for his outstanding contribution to the crime genre'. *The Golden Age of Murder* (2015) won the Edgar, Agatha, H.R.F. Keating and Macavity awards, while *The Story of Classic Crime in 100 Books* (2017) also won the Macavity and was nominated for four other awards.

How did you come to write crime novels?

At the tender age of eight, I discovered Agatha Christie and from that moment on I became a keen reader of crime fiction – and I also wanted to write mysteries myself. My parents didn't know anything about the writing life but they had a shrewd idea that it was tough to make a living, so they urged me to get a 'proper job'. After years of debate, I agreed to train as a solicitor, and I was lucky enough to get into Balliol to read Jurisprudence. But my burning ambition was always to write crime novels. I remember discussing this with my tutors, and Jo Raz (Fellow and Tutor in Law 1972–1985, Professor of Philosophy of Law, Oxford, Professorial Fellow, Balliol, 1985–2006, and Emeritus Fellow 2006–2022), who possessed perhaps the most brilliant mind I've ever encountered, was especially encouraging. Fortunately, I enjoyed my law degree and I've also enjoyed being a solicitor, which is why at the moment I'm still a part-time consultant. But even before my first novel was published in 1991 (by which time I'd published several legal books) I was in my own mind first and foremost a crime writer. That has never changed.

Please describe the hero/es in your novels and the inspiration for them

My first series starred Harry Devlin, who was (like me) a Liverpool solicitor, although his life was – thankfully – very different from mine. My second series, which is continuing, is set in the Lake District, and features a cold case detective, Hannah Scarlett, and a recovering Oxford academic, the historian Daniel Kind. My latest series features the mysterious and ruthless Rachel Savernake who is fascinated by bizarre mysteries, and the journalist Jacob Flint; these books are set in the 1930s and draw on my enduring fascination with Golden Age detective fiction (that is, written between the wars or in the style of that period).

What broadly would you say your novels are about?

The three key ingredients are people, place, and plot. So the settings are always important, while exploration of character and society is central to each story. The Devlin books examine the evolution of modern Liverpool, the Lakes books deal with the pressures of English rural life in the 21st century and the Rachel Savernake books seek to combine the ingenious plotting of the 1930s with examination of larger themes such as eugenics, social class,



and the psychology of crime. The themes are in the background, because I don't want them to get in the way of an entertaining story, but they are there.

Where do your plots come from and can you tell us about your writing process?

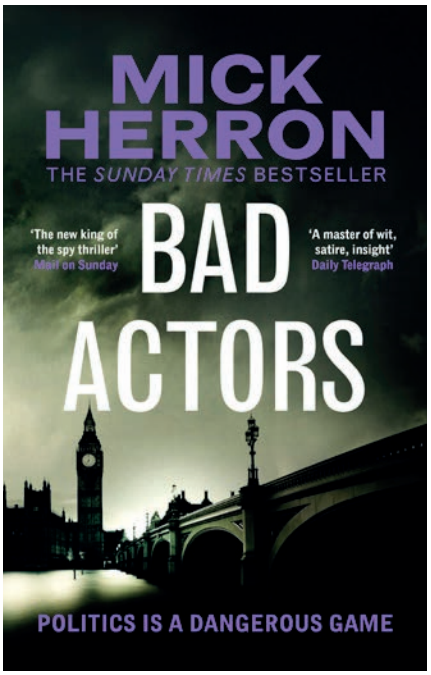
I write whenever I get a chance, straight on to a PC. I do tons of research, trying to get small details right, and I revise constantly, although you have to let go eventually. Plot ideas can be found everywhere. All you need is a vivid imagination that enables you to turn something ordinary into something intriguing. I once published a short story about Balliol's Jowett (Master 1870–1893) playing detective, and later I adapted the story (minus Jowett, I'm afraid) into an interactive murder mystery event for library users.

What do you enjoy about life as a crime writer and what is the biggest challenge for you?

The crime writing community has lived up to all my youthful hopes and dreams. Writing has taken me around the world to amazing places, meeting wonderful people. The biggest challenge is finding enough time to tackle everything I'd like to do.

What aspect of your work as a crime writer are you most proud of?

I've been lucky to win various awards and naturally that's gratifying but small personal things count for at least as much. The other day, a school librarian from Devon told me the pupils had voted my very first novel, written long before they were born, their favourite of the month. Such signs that the books have a bit of lasting merit are hugely rewarding – and keep me motivated.



Mick Herron (1981)

Mick Herron is best known for his Slough House thriller series, featuring a group of MI5 agents who have been exiled from the mainstream for various offences and their leader, Jackson Lamb. The first was *Slow Horses* (2010), described by the *Daily Telegraph* as one of 'the 20 greatest spy novels of all time'. Apple TV+ launched an adaptation of *Slow Horses* in 2022, starring Gary Oldman and Kristin Scott Thomas, and later that year an adaptation of *Dead Lions* (2013), the second in the series, for which he won a Crime Writers Association Gold Dagger. He has been shortlisted with the novels for eight Crime Writers Association Dagger awards, winning twice, and he won Theakston Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year 2022, having been shortlisted for that award five times. He is also the author of the Zoë Boehm detective series and other novels, novellas and short stories.

How did you come to write crime novels or thrillers?

Well, I had to write something. And the structure of the crime novel – specifically, in my case, the thriller – demands an ending. It took me a while to discover this, but if you attempt to write a novel without having an ending in mind, the process can be unrewarding. Having a framework is useful for the amateur. It's equally useful, it turns out, for the veteran.

Please describe the hero/es in your novels and the inspiration for them

I write about failures and incompetents. Those characters closest to my heart are probably self-portraits, to some degree, while those whom I abhor are frequently drawn from public life.

What broadly would you say your novels are about?

As I'm writing spy novels, betrayal looms large. Because they're set in contemporary Britain, so does governmental malfeasance.

Where do your plots come from and can you tell us anything about your writing process?

Plotting's tricky to describe, as the initial impulse towards writing a novel usually occurs on a subconscious level. I'm more apt to begin by deciding what shape a novel would be if charted on a graph than by settling on a storyline. My triggers tend to be verbal, though one book, *Joe Country* (2019), began with an image (a character lying under a tree in a snow-covered field). Plotting that book was all about getting that character to that tree in that weather. The most recent novel, *Bad Actors* (2022), began with the title, which meant that much of the book's language revolved around cinematic/dramatic imagery. This in turn, somewhat to my surprise, determined the structure.

As for the process, the first draft is art (splashing words on to the page); the second and all subsequent drafts are craft (this paragraph doesn't work because that sentence is too long etc.). Craft is more important, obviously.

What do you enjoy about life as a crime writer and what is the biggest challenge for you?

Short of being a professional jazz musician – and I may have left this a little late, as I play no instrument – I doubt I'd find fulfilment in any other field of endeavour. And crime writers are a clubbable bunch, whose company I much enjoy. But standing up in public and banging on about myself – that was a tricky learning curve.

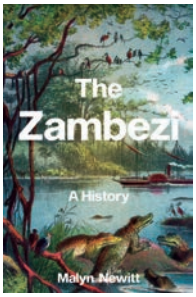

Mikael Buck

What aspect of your work as a crime/ thriller writer are you most proud of?

All of my books are in print. Once, that would have seemed a modest ambition, but after 20 years as a published author, I'm aware of how lucky I am to be able to write that sentence.

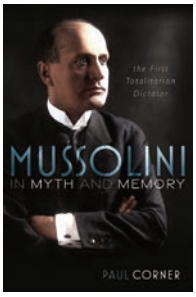
Bookshelf

Professor Malyn Newitt (1958)
The Zambezi: A History
Hurst, 2022



Malyn Newitt traces the history of the people who have lived along the Zambezi: the fourth-longest river in Africa and one of the continent's principal arteries of movement, migration, conquest and commerce. In telling the stories of the different societies that have lived along it, he quotes rarely used Portuguese sources that throw light on the culture of the river peoples and uses hitherto unused manuscript material that illustrates aspects of Portuguese and British colonial rule. He also describes how the Zambezi became a war zone during the 'Scramble for Africa' – the struggle for independence and the civil wars that followed – and developments that have impacted the ecology of the region.

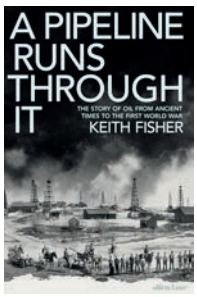
Professor Paul Corner (1967)
Mussolini in Myth and Memory: The First Totalitarian Dictator
Oxford University Press, 2022



While in present-day Italy and elsewhere Mussolini, the first totalitarian dictator, is remembered as a strong, decisive leader and people now speak of the 'many good things' done by his regime, Paul Corner argues against this rehabilitation, documenting the inefficiencies, corruption, and violence of his highly repressive regime and exploding the myths of Fascist good government. Placing Mussolini firmly in the company of Hitler, Stalin, Franco and other dictators, he also confronts the nostalgia for dictatorial rule evident today in many European countries, and shows how a memory of the past, formed through reliance on illusion and myth, can affect the politics of the present.

'Timely, balanced, succinctly argued and thoroughly convincing' – *Financial Times*

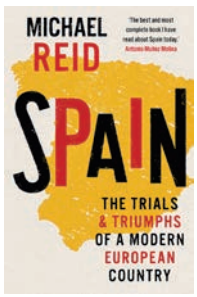
Keith Fisher (1985)
A Pipeline Runs Through It: The Story of Oil from Ancient Times to the First World War
Allen Lane, 2022



Petroleum has always been used by humans, for example as an adhesive by Neanderthals, as a waterproofing agent in Noah's Ark and as a weapon during the Crusades. Its eventual extraction from the earth in vast quantities transformed light, heat and power. This book looks at the social, economic, political and geopolitical forces involved in our transition to the modern oil age – from the pre-industrial history of petroleum through to large-scale production in the mid-19th century and the development of a dominant, fully fledged oil industry by the early 20th century – and how the rise of oil has shaped the modern world.

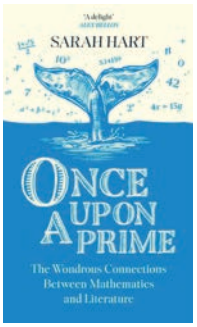
'Wonderfully detailed and colourful' – *Daily Telegraph*

Michael Reid (1970)
Spain: The Trials and Triumphs of a Modern European Country
Yale University Press, 2023



Spain's transition to democracy after Franco's long dictatorship was widely hailed as a success, ushering in three decades of progress and prosperity, yet over the past decade its political consensus has been under severe strain – no government has had a majority since 2015. In his account of modern Spain, Michael Reid overturns the stereotypical view of Spain as a country haunted by its Francoist past. From Catalan separatism and the indignados movement to the Spanish economy's overdependence on tourism and small business, Spain's challenges can often seem unique. But he emphasises the many pressures Spain faces in common with its European neighbours – such as austerity, populism and increasing polarisation – as well as exploring the history behind its contemporary political turbulence.

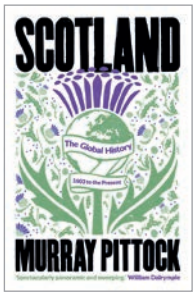
Professor Sarah Hart (1993)
Once Upon a Prime: The Wondrous Connections between Mathematics and Literature
HarperCollins, 2023



Sarah Hart shows the myriad connections between maths and literature, and how understanding those connections can enhance our enjoyment of both. *Moby-Dick*, for instance, is full of sophisticated geometry; James Joyce's novels are chequered with mathematical references; *Jurassic Park* is undergirded by fractal patterns. In a narrative that ranges from sonnets to fairytales to experimental French literature, she reveals new layers of beauty and wonder, and shows how maths and literature are complementary parts of the same quest: to understand human life and our place in the universe.

'A hugely entertaining and well-written tour of the links between math and literature. Hart's lightness of touch and passion for both subjects make this book a delight to read' – Alex Bellos

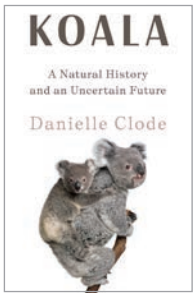
Professor Murray Pittock (1983)
Scotland: The Global History: 1603 to the present
Yale University Press, 2022



In this wide-ranging account, Murray Pittock examines the place of Scotland in the world. His exploration includes Scotland and Empire; the rise of nationalism; the pressures on the country from an increasingly monolithic understanding of 'Britishness'; and the profound changes Scotland and its diaspora have undergone, from the Thirty Years' War to Jacobite risings and today's ongoing independence debates. Conveying the diversity of Scotland's history and how, after the country disappeared from the map as an independent state, it continued to build a global brand, he shows that the story of Scotland is one of innovation, exploration, resistance and global consequence.

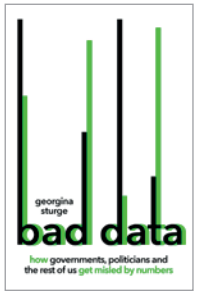
'A vivid account of Scottish endeavours in politics, science, literature, art and economics' – *The Guardian*

Danielle Clode (1990)
Koala: A Natural History and Uncertain Future
W.W. Norton, 2023



When a bushfire threatened the koalas that regularly appeared in Australian biologist Danielle Clode's backyard, she realised that there was a lot to learn about these animals. She embarked on a journey through evolutionary biology, natural history and ecology to understand where they had come from and what their future holds. Starting with fossils of ancient giant koalas, she explores why this species is the lone survivor of a once diverse family of Australian marsupials. She investigates their endearing characters and their physiology, from pouches to the gut bacteria that bonds them to a few particular gum-tree species. And, since koalas are in serious danger from human environmental destruction and wildfires, she reflects on how we can protect them and the trees they depend on.

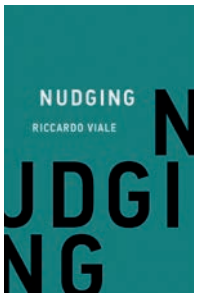
Georgina Sturge (2008)
Bad Data: How Governments, Politicians and the Rest of Us Get Misled by Numbers
The Bridge Street Press, 2022



Politicians make decisions and declarations every day that rely on official data. But should all statistics be trusted? House of Commons Library statistician Georgina Sturge draws back the curtain on how governments have been led astray by figures littered with inconsistency, guesswork and uncertainty. Stories include: how a businessman's bright idea caused half a million people to go missing from UK migration statistics; why it is possible for two politicians to disagree over whether poverty has gone up or down, using the same numbers, and both be right; and how policies such as ID cards failed to live up to their promise because they were based on shaky data. She also suggests how – once we understand the story behind the numbers – we can make more informed choices about who to trust, and when.

'Essential reading … An incisive and urgently needed book' – Tim Harford

Professor Riccardo Viale (1984)
Nudging
The MIT Press, 2022



'Nudging', the concept of using behavioural mechanisms to encourage people to make certain choices – not just programmes that provide information and incentives but through nudges such as automatic enrolment in a pension plan – is also known as 'libertarian paternalism'. Riccardo Viale explores its evolution and proposes new approaches that would empower citizens without manipulating their preferences or exploiting their biases. He discusses the work of Simon Gigerenzer, Kahneman and Tversky that laid the foundation of behavioural economics; describes how policy makers have sought to help people avoid bad decisions; offers examples of effective nudging; and considers how to nudge the nudgers. He also explains how we can tell good nudges from bad nudges.

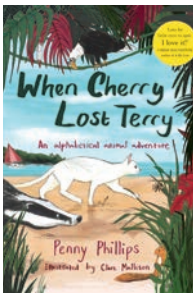
David Edmonds
Parfit: A Philosopher and His Mission to Save Morality
Princeton University Press, 2023



The ideas of Derek Parfit (1961) have shaped the way philosophers think about things that affect us all: equality, altruism, what we owe to future generations, and even what it means to be a person. In *Parfit*, David Edmonds presents the first biography of an intriguing, obsessive, and eccentric genius, connecting his work and life and offering a clear introduction to his profound and challenging ideas.

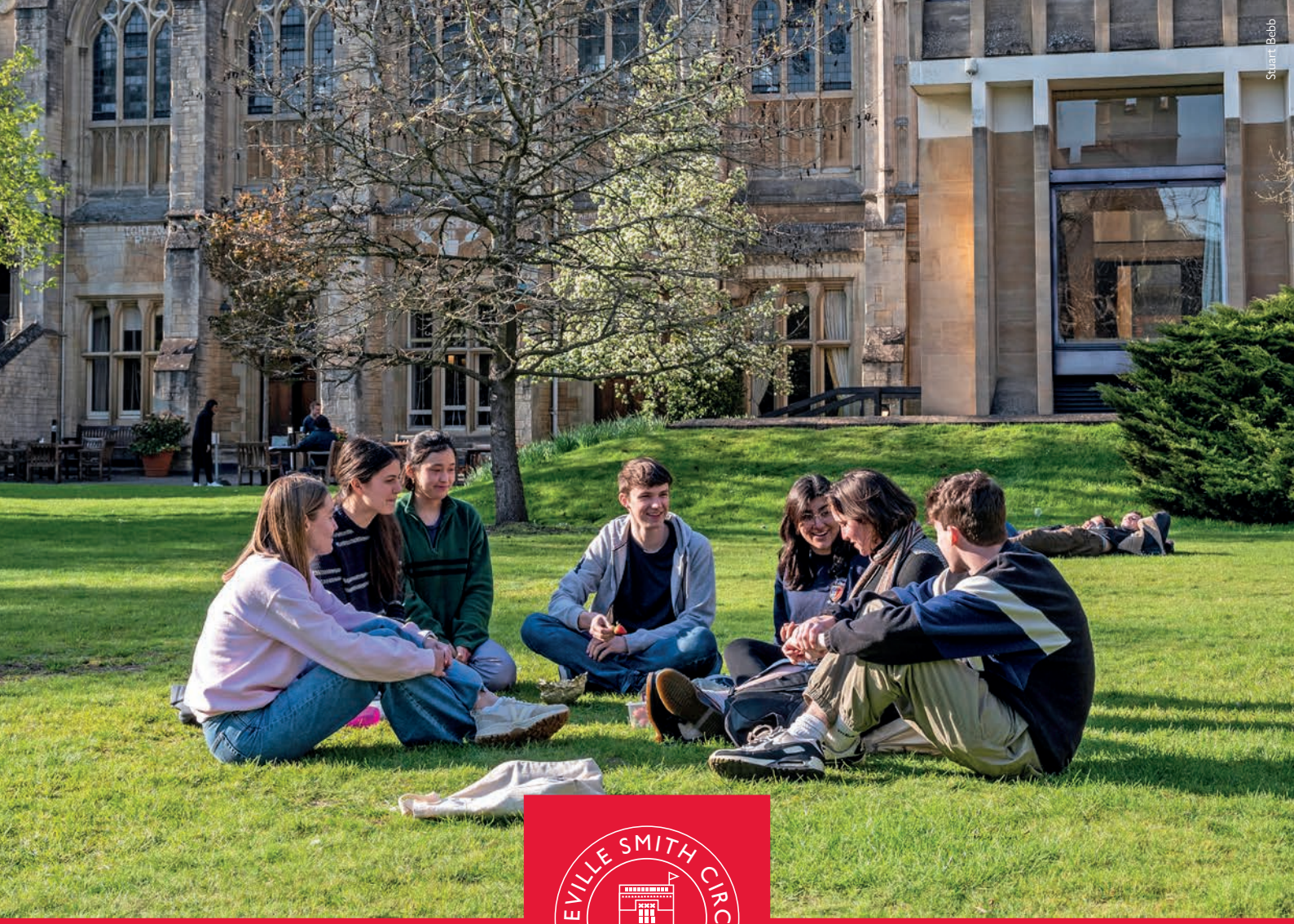
'A delight-filled, page-turning romp through the life and thought of one of the world's greatest moral philosophers – completely unknown to most but with ideas that could change the way we think about ourselves and the future of humanity' – Professor Ruth Chang (1984)

Penny Phillips (1979)
When Cherry Lost Terry
Old Street Publishing, 2022



Here's how the author describes her children's picture book:

When Cherry lost
Terry one day,
Where was he?
Could anyone say?
Asleep in a tree?
Or down by the sea?
He couldn't be TOO far away.
The animals searched high and low,
Unsure what to do, where to go.
Would Terry appear?
The story is here …
Just read it – and then you will know!



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