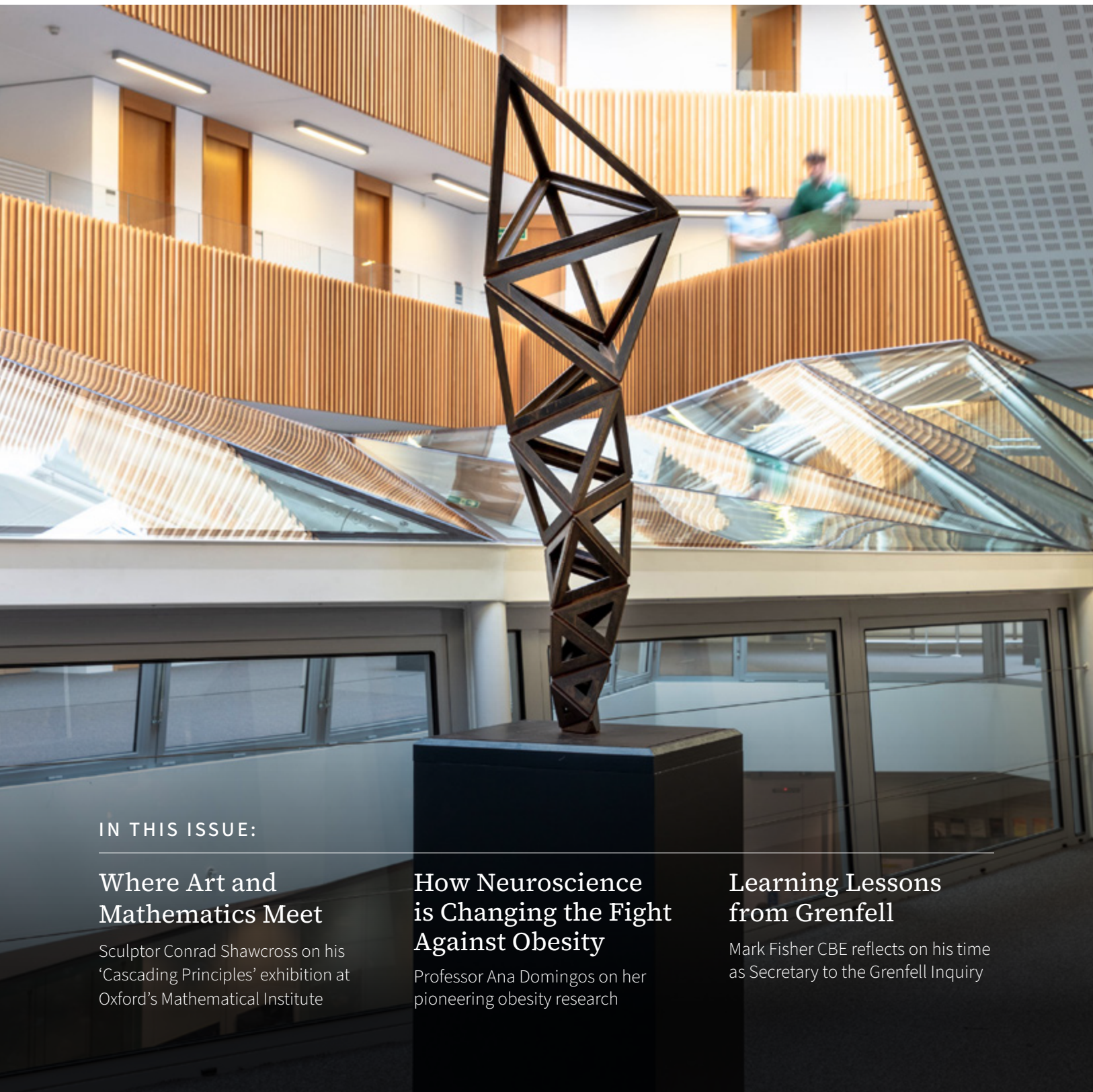


LMH NEWS

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Where Art and Mathematics Meet

Sculptor Conrad Shawcross on his 'Cascading Principles' exhibition at Oxford's Mathematical Institute

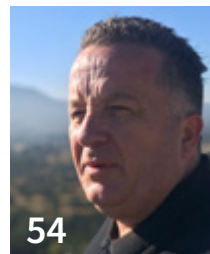
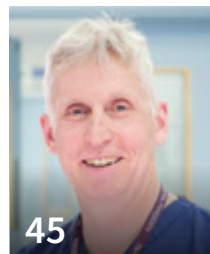
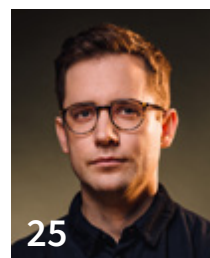
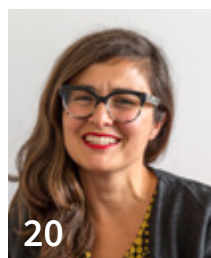
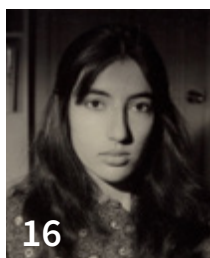
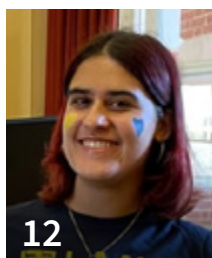
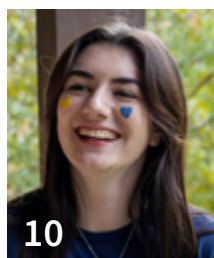
How Neuroscience is Changing the Fight Against Obesity

Professor Ana Domingos on her pioneering obesity research

Learning Lessons from Grenfell

Mark Fisher CBE reflects on his time as Secretary to the Grenfell Inquiry

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We are always very pleased to hear your comments and feedback. Please get in touch with the Development Team on the telephone number below, or by emailing development@lmh.ox.ac.uk, to let us know what you think of this issue.

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Cover image: *Paradigm (Structural)*, 2015, from Conrad Shawcross's
'Cascading Principles' exhibition. Photo by Richard Ivey.



From the Principal

Each Hilary term, I fill eighth week with 120 individual appointments — ten-minute conversations with every second-year undergraduate. This is a tradition known as Principal's Collections. When I first arrived at LMH, I was sceptical about its purpose — could such brief meetings, I wondered, be worthwhile? However, they have become one of the highlights of my year.

These meetings, at which I am joined by the Senior Tutor and subject tutors, give me a chance to hear directly from students about their experience at LMH and at Oxford, not just academically, but also personally. Each conversation brings a new perspective, a fresh insight and sometimes a surprise. One student might talk about their choice to apply to university at all; another about the challenges of integrating an Oxford workload with extracurricular interests. This year, one undergraduate walked into my office wearing a medal he'd won representing the University in a national

physics competition. I met another who spends her free time practicing the flying trapeze.

For some, Principal's Collections can be the first time they have spoken openly about a struggle. For others, it offers a chance to reflect on their progress and achievements, and to express — repeatedly — how grateful they are for the opportunities and community they've found at LMH. Overwhelmingly, I hear how much our students love the College, and how well-supported they feel not only by their tutors, but by our wider wellbeing, study skills and financial support.

As we look ahead to our 150th anniversary in 2028-29, these conversations take on even greater meaning. LMH was founded to open doors that were previously closed. Today, we remain committed to ensuring that the brightest scholars can thrive here, regardless of background and socio-economic status. Speaking with students reminds me how much that mission still matters — and how

well we are living up to it.

The College has achieved a huge amount in its 147 years, and there is much to be proud of. But we must also look ahead, seeking to create a secure financial footing not only to sustain our mission, but to expand our impact further. Many of the students I meet are directly supported by the generosity of alumni and friends of the College. They are deeply grateful for this. As we prepare to launch our 150th Anniversary Campaign, securing that support for future generations is vital.

I come out of Principal's Collections each year full of optimism for the future, having heard from so many motivated, smart, curious young people, all of whom are benefiting from the powerful tutorial teaching they receive here. They are being taught how to think for themselves, and how to engage critically with the world around them. They remind me why we work at LMH — and why the future of the College is worth investing in.

Professor Stephen Blyth

LMH Life

News highlights from around the College



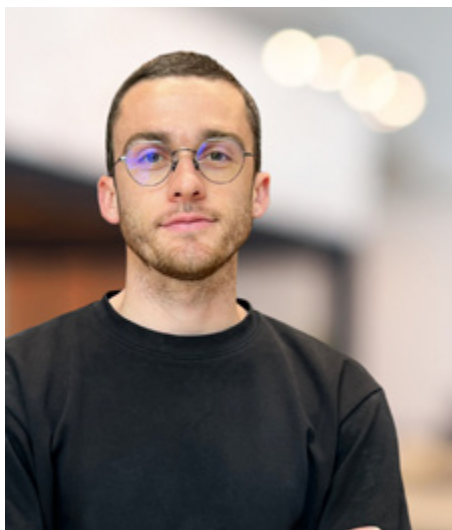
Physics Competition Success

Second-year Physicist Kiefer Lim Yi Heng (third from left above) was part of a four-person Oxford student team who came second in the PLANCKS UK & Ireland preliminaries, held at Swansea University in February. The student physics competition is sponsored by the Institute of Physics and the International Association of Physics Students. Kiefer's team qualified to take part in the finals in Barcelona this May, where they will compete against talented students from around the world.



Strong Torpids Campaign for Men's First VIII

Two LMH crews rowed in this year's Torpids, held in high river conditions during 6th Week of Hilary. The Men's First VIII bumped on two of the four days of competition, taking them from 15th on the river to 13th position, poised at the top of Division II. The Women's First VIII were unable to come back from a rocky start and finished the week in 18th place, down from their starting position of 12th, moving back down into Division II.



Chris Dobson JRF Receives Wellcome Early Career Award

Chris Dobson Junior Research Fellow in Molecular Biophysics Dr Sean Burnap has been awarded a Wellcome Early Career Award, which provides funding for early-career researchers seeking to develop their own distinct research identity.

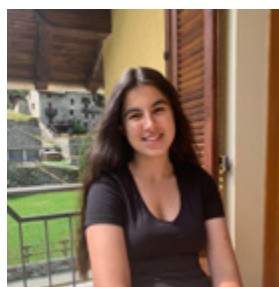
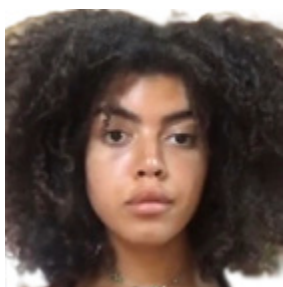
Dr Burnap's research project, entitled 'Exploring Filovirus-host interactions at single cell resolution', seeks to address challenges in understanding how enveloped viruses, such as Filoviruses (including the Ebola and Marburg viruses), interact with host cells. Filoviruses are coated with highly glycosylated glycoproteins — commonly referred to as 'spikes' — that interact with glycoproteins on host cell surfaces and organelle membranes. Glycans play a dual role in these interactions: they mediate the initial contact between virus and host and also mask viral epitopes under dense 'glycan shields' to avoid immune detection.



Daphne Jackson Medal and Prize for Daniel Cottle

DPhil student Daniel Cottle (2019, Education) was awarded the 2024 Daphne Jackson Medal and Prize by the Institute of Physics, which recognises those who have made exceptional early-career contributions to physics education. Daniel received the award for his work on improving diversity and tackling challenges related to the recruitment and retention of physics teachers. For his DPhil, Daniel is exploring how to widen access to physics by recruiting and retaining more secondary school physics teachers.

Alongside his studies at LMH, which he undertakes on a part-time basis, Daniel is Associate Professor of Physics Education at the University of Birmingham, where he works across the schools of Education and Physics & Astronomy.

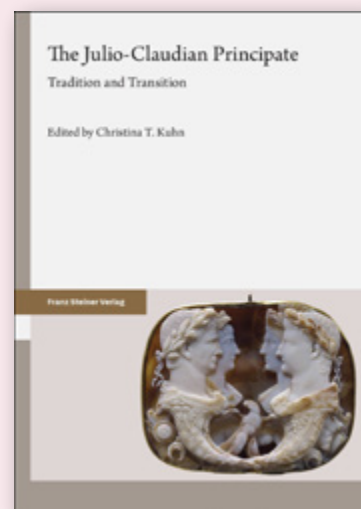


Celebrating Student Exam Success

Last academic year, several of our students were awarded departmental and University prizes for their academic performance. Those recognised included Temitayo Bandele (left), who won the Gibbs Prize for best overall performance in Fine Art across all aspects of the Final Honours School, and Sarah Arnold (centre), who achieved the second-best performance in Law across the whole University (and the highest aggregate marks in her year) and came top of her cohort for Jurisprudence, along with being awarded several other prizes. Graduate student Yuhang Wei (right) was awarded the Mathematical Sciences Dissertation Prize.

New Publication for Professor Christina Kuhn

Professor Christina Kuhn, Tutorial Fellow and Associate Professor in Ancient History, has published a new edited volume, *The Julio-Claudian Principate: Tradition and Transition*. This work focuses on one of the most fascinating periods of political change in Rome's history, exploring how Roman emperors from Augustus to Nero shaped a new vision of imperial rule that would influence the empire for centuries.



Dr Grant Tapsell Admitted as Junior Proctor

Fellow and Tutor in History, Dr Grant Tapsell (1995, History), was admitted in March as the University of Oxford's Junior Proctor for 2025-26 in a ceremony held at the Sheldonian Theatre.

The Proctors are senior officers and trustees of the University of Oxford. They oversee student matters, including discipline, and uphold the University's statutes and policies. They also play an important role in the ceremonial duties of the University.

Dr Tapsell was joined in a procession from College to the Sheldonian Theatre for his admission by the Principal and Dr Tapsell's Pro-Proctors for the year, Dr Nicholas Cole, Senior Research Fellow at Pembroke College and Dr Sophie Nicholls, Lecturer in History at LMH.

Celebrating Oxford Pakistan Programme Scholars

In Michaelmas term, Professor Stephen Blyth and the Oxford Pakistan Programme (OPP) team were joined in College by alumna and Honorary Fellow Malala Yousafzai (2017, PPE), University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor Professor Irene Tracey, and OPP supporters Suleman Raza and Hamid Ismail, for a celebration of this year's OPP scholars.

In her speech, Malala praised the OPP's efforts in empowering scholars, particularly women, and emphasised education's role in driving societal progress. She noted that, "Initiatives like the OPP have the potential to change Pakistan's future by equipping scholars with the knowledge and skills to serve their communities."

Now in its third year of awarding scholarships, the OPP is supporting 12 graduate scholars this academic year in fields as diverse as Law, Cybersecurity, Engineering, Medicine and Music.



A Whistle-stop Tour of London Law Landmarks

At the beginning of Michaelmas term, a group of LMH Law undergraduates enjoyed a field trip with their tutors to visit some of London's key legal landmarks, providing invaluable real-world context for their studies.



PPE Students Take a Tour of Oxford's Mini Factory

First and second year PPE students, accompanied by Tutors Natalie Quinn and Ruth Tarrant, had an exciting and informative tour of the BMW MINI factory in Cowley during 0th Week of Michaelmas term as part of their economics courses. The trip was a great way for PPE-ists to get to know each other a bit better, and to build strong foundations for the models of production, growth and trade that would form a key part of their studies in the year ahead.



Chapel Choir's Summer Tour to Austria

Last August, the Chapel Choir went on their annual summer tour, spending a week performing at various locations in Austria. They resided in the small alpine town of Maria Alm, nestled in the mountains near Salzburg. Performance locations included the Mirabelle Gardens in Salzburg, which famously featured in *The Sound of Music*.



British Academy Fellowship for Professor Guy Stroumsa

Professor Emeritus of the Study of the Abrahamic Religions, Professor Guy Stroumsa, has been elected as an International Fellow of the British Academy. The British Academy is the UK's national academy for the humanities and social sciences, which seeks to advance these disciplines to grow a better understanding of the world around us. Professor Stroumsa's research interests concern the religious history of the Mediterranean world and the Near East in late antiquity.


Professor Monima Chadha discusses Karma on BBC Radio 4's 'In Our Time'


Last year, Fellow and Tutor in Indian Philosophy Professor Monima Chadha featured on an episode of BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time*. In the episode, entitled 'Karma', Professor Chadha joined host Melvyn Bragg, Dr Jessica Frazier, Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and Dr Karen O'Brien-Kop, Lecturer in Asian Religions at Kings College London. Professor Chadha brought her expertise in Indian and Buddhist Philosophy to the discussion on the doctrine of Karma as developed initially among Hindus, Jains and Buddhists in India from the first millennium BCE.




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 Lady Margaret Hall

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To sign up, you will need to update your communications preferences on your Oxford Alumni account, or you can fill out our opt-in form by scanning the QR code or going to:

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Want to share your news?

We regularly publish news items on our website: www.lmh.ox.ac.uk and via our social media channels. If you have news that you would like to share with the wider College community, please contact our Head of Communications, Katie Brown, on: communications@lmh.ox.ac.uk.

Welcome to our new academics



Dr Hannie Lawlor

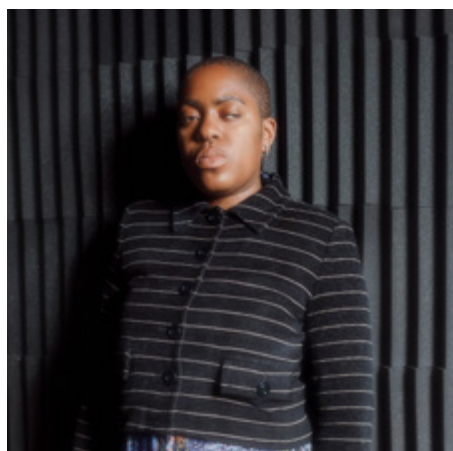
Fellow and Tutor in Spanish

Dr Hannie Lawlor (2011, Modern Languages) joined us this academic year as our new Fellow and Tutor in Spanish. She is also Associate Professor in Modern Spanish Literature and Film in the University's Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages.

Dr Lawlor completed her BA and MSt at LMH under the tutelage of Professor Marie-Chantal Killeen and Professor Xon de Ros, who inspired the interest in

women's life writing that has become her specialism. She completed her DPhil at Wolfson College and held academic posts in Oxford before moving to University College Dublin in 2022.

Dr Lawlor's research focuses on women's autobiographical practices in the twentieth- and twenty-first century. This year, she published a book, *Relational Responses to Trauma in Twenty-First-Century French and Spanish Women's Writing*, which offers new insight into what it means to write relational lives.



Onyeka Igwe

Fellow and Tutor in Fine Art

Onyeka Igwe arrived at LMH in Michaelmas term to take up her post as Fellow and Tutor in Fine Art, and she is an Associate Professor at the Ruskin School of Art.

Onyeka is an artist, writer, and researcher. Her work is aimed at the question: 'how do we live together?' — not to provide a rigid answer as such, but to pull apart the nuances of mutuality, co-existence and multiplicity. Onyeka's practice figures sensorial, spatial and counter-hegemonic ways of knowing as central to that task. She has had solo/

duo shows at locations including: Peer Gallery, London (2024), Bonington Gallery, Nottingham (2024), MoMA PS1, New York (2023), High Line, New York (2022) and Mercer Union, Toronto (2021). Her films have screened in group shows and film festivals worldwide, and she participated in the group show 'Nigeria Imaginary' in the national pavilion of Nigeria at the 60th Venice Biennial in 2024.

Onyeka is part of B.O.S.S., a sound system collective that brings together a community of queer, trans and non-binary people of colour involved in art, sound and radical activism. She is part of a curatorial and research initiative on alternative and anti-ethnographies.



Dr Grace Mallon

Clive Holmes Fellow in History

Dr Grace Mallon joined LMH in October to take up the Clive Holmes Fellowship in History, a six-year career development post created in memory of Clive Holmes, much-loved Fellow and Tutor in History from 1987 to 2011. After his death in 2022, former students, friends, and colleagues came together to fundraise for this post in his memory, ensuring that Clive's passion for teaching and research would continue to inspire future generations.

Dr Mallon, a specialist in early American history, completed her BA, MSt, and DPhil

at University College, Oxford. Her research focuses on the constitutional history of the early American republic, and she is now working to turn her doctoral thesis into a book.

Speaking about her appointment, Dr Mallon said how honoured she is to take on the role, especially given Clive's lasting influence on the field: "Although I never met Clive, he taught many of my own teachers, inspiring them in the study of American history. His legacy has influenced my own academic journey."

We are grateful to the alumni and supporters who have made this Fellowship possible.



Dr Eleanor Conole

Junior Research Fellow in Applied AI

Dr Eleanor Conole is the College's first Junior Research Fellow (JRF) in Applied AI, a post created thanks to generous donor funding. Her research explores how AI can help unravel the complexities of ageing, brain health, and the immune system.

Dr Conole was previously a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Edinburgh, where she studied the neurobiology of age-related cognitive change. She has also worked with the NHS as a phlebotomist and sleep physiologist, collaborating with clinicians on cutting-edge research.

Now at Oxford, Dr Conole is applying AI to multi-omic data, working across disciplines to deepen our understanding of brain health. She is also involved in AI research communities, including the Alan Turing Institute's Clinical AI group and the Molecular Epidemiology Group UK.

Reflecting on her new role, Dr Conole said, "This is a really exciting time to be working in AI. I'm delighted to continue my research while being linked to LMH and the amazing community in Biochemistry and Oxford's Big Data Institute. Alongside new collaborations, I hope I can also widen students' perspectives on careers in tech and science."

Dr Conole will give the annual online Wordsworth Lecture on Sunday 15th March 2026.



Hope O'Brien (left) and Nicky Bull (right)

MY LMH:

Now and Then

We introduced Biochemists **Nicky Bull** (1972) and **Hope O'Brien** (2021), asking them to compare notes on their experience of studying at LMH five decades apart. Once the introductions were complete, Nicky and Hope got stuck in.

Nicky: I'm really interested to know what the balance of female to male biochemists is at LMH these days?

Hope: Good question! In my year group, there are three girls and one guy. In the year below us, I think there are two guys, three girls, and in the year below that there are six women — there are a lot of female biochemists at LMH, which is nice.

Nicky: That's interesting, all of these cohorts are larger than mine — we were only three, and obviously we were all women...I remember when I was at LMH,

it was lecture time and lab time that you had to find a balance on.

Hope: Yeah, in the first three years we had labs around once a week. It would usually be lectures in the morning and then tutorials or classes in College in the afternoon. This year, it's 100% in the lab.

Nicky: We had lectures pretty much every morning, and on a Saturday as well. I think we had labs more often than once a week. And how about the tutorial system? We tended to be in pairs for tutorials...

Hope: Yes, that's the same. We're in

pairs, and we generally have one a week with our tutor in College.

Nicky: That sounds very similar, it's interesting that quite a lot hasn't changed. I guess that's partly down to 'if it isn't broken, don't fix it'! What are your favourite things about LMH?

Hope: The gardens — I appreciate taking a break from studying and just being able to go for a walk, which you can't necessarily do in the city centre colleges. Everyone says, 'Oh, your college is so far out,' but it's only a 15-20 minute walk into town!

Nicky: In terms of favourite places in LMH, I really enjoyed going to Chapel. It's lovely to hear now, when I come back, the wonderful Choir that the College has.

Hope: Yes, I'm in the Choir, and we also have the Chamber Choir, which performs at the end of term in 8th week. It's been lots of fun being involved in that, and we got to go to Austria on tour last year.

Nicky: Yes, I saw some pictures of that, and I've heard you sing at dinners and at Christmas. It's wonderful! When I was at LMH, it was the first time I'd joined a Choir. I don't think there was a Chapel Choir, but I joined a University Choir and I've been in choirs pretty much ever since.

“I applied during Covid, so the first time I saw LMH was moving in on my first day, which was daunting, but it turned out even better than I could have expected.”

Hope: It's tricky to balance the workload alongside trying to remain social and do extracurriculars, and it would definitely be very easy to hole yourself away in the Library 24/7! But it's worth it.

Nicky: I think it was similar for me, and it's maybe only afterwards when you're looking back that you realise how important it is to get that balance right. And towards the end of your course, there's this gradually increasing pressure of 'what next'. What sort of job are you going to go into?

Hope: I've got onto a graduate trainee patent attorney scheme; because I love the theory side of things, I thought that

the job matched me quite well. I was lucky enough to get an internship over the summer, and I just loved it — the opportunity to read science papers as a job! I'll be able to keep learning about new technology and scientific inventions at the cutting edge of the life sciences field. What about you, what did you go into?

Nicky: I got married right after I finished my degree and went to London to do a Master's in Human Nutrition at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine before going to work in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as a scientific civil servant. I was then working remotely on a research project while caring for the first three of our four children, and eventually gained my MPhil. It was before the time when you could do that sort of job from home or part-time, so I took a career break and then became a freelance proofreader, which I've been doing for around 30 years.

Hope: I'm really interested to hear about what it was like when LMH was all women.

Nicky: Well, we used to traipse into breakfast in our dressing gowns at the weekend! There were only two men we ever saw in College: the Chaplain and the Night Porter, Mr Phipps, who guarded the Lodge against people who shouldn't be there after 9pm (i.e. men!). I recently heard from an alumna a wonderful story about the two of them — apparently, after-hours, Mr Phipps spotted this gentleman from the back and went to tap him on the shoulder, realised it was the Chaplain and said: 'Oh, I'm very sorry Chaplain, I thought you were a man!'

I know that my peers had a whole range of feelings about it being all women. Some found it very repressive. I absolutely loved it, because it was like being at a girls' boarding school!

Hope: Were your tutors all female?

Nicky: In College yes, it was just Margery Ord. We went to other colleges and some of those tutors would be male, but we would still be with our tutorial partners, not partnered with students from the men's colleges. You're graduating soon, what kind of reflections do you have on your time here?

Hope: I've loved being a student ambassador, working at the Open Days and giving tours, going around town

with a sign on a stick saying 'ask me about LMH'.

Nicky: I've seen you! One of the Open Days coincides with the Alumni Weekend in September. We stay at LMH for that weekend every year, and quite often we see student tours happening. Interestingly, these days, often with parents in tow.

Hope: It's interesting, because I applied during Covid, so the first time I saw LMH was moving in on my first day, which was daunting, but it turned out even better than I could have expected. I had a virtual interview, and I ended up being quite glad that it wasn't in-person, because I think if I'd seen LMH and Oxford, I would have just fallen in love with it and felt so much more pressure. Whereas online, there wasn't as much at stake. And then I turned up and fell in love with the city!

Nicky: Likewise! I still regard it as my second home...you know, half a century on, you're home.

“We used to traipse into breakfast in our dressing gowns at the weekend! There were only two men we ever saw in College: the Chaplain and the Night Porter, Mr Phipps, who guarded the Lodge against people who shouldn't be there after 9pm.”



Dispelling Oxford Myths... *One Tour at a Time*

Student Ambassadors **Ahmad Awais** (2022, Medicine) and **Asha Davison** (2022, Classical Archaeology and Ancient History) discuss their LMH experiences, what motivated them to get involved in the College's Access and Outreach work, and the vital role it plays in altering perceptions of Oxford.

What made you decide to become Student Ambassadors?

Ahmad: Before coming to Oxford, I was quite unsure whether I'd fit in — especially as a Muslim student from a non-traditional Oxford background. I had the usual worries about not belonging or feeling out of place. But when I arrived, I was really surprised by how welcoming LMH was. The Chaplain even called me before term started to check in, my personal tutor and coursemates were great, and I quickly made good friends. It felt completely different from what I'd expected.

Having now experienced first-hand how inclusive and welcoming LMH is, I want to help dispel any misconceptions prospective students might have, particularly those who might feel hesitant about applying due to similar concerns. Being a Student Ambassador lets me do that.

Asha: During Michaelmas of my second year, I realised how much LMH had come to mean to me, and how I wanted to increase access as much as possible. Being a mixed-race state schooler, I wanted to help show that Oxford is more than the antiquated

stereotypes, and hoped that by sharing my experience, I could make the 'Oxford dream' feel more like a reality.

What do you enjoy most about the role?

Asha: My favourite thing is seeing the tangible difference made by our efforts — for example when I'm working at Offer Holder Day [hosted at LMH each March to give offer holders and their families an opportunity to see College and speak with staff and students], and a student comes up and says they remember me from an Open Day last year! It's lovely to see our work have an effect.

I also love taking people round on Open Days and putting my own spin on tours, sharing anecdotes, stories and tips about Oxford life.

Ahmad: I really enjoy giving tours — I love the LMH grounds and gardens, and it's always fun to share random interesting facts about College and see prospective students get excited about studying here. I also really enjoy chatting with them, whether it's answering questions, busting myths, or just talking about societies and student life, it's great to be able to help people feel more comfortable about applying.

What questions do you get asked most often by potential applicants?

Ahmad: The most common question is about workload. People assume that Oxford students — especially STEM students — are just studying 24/7. And yeah, it can feel like that sometimes, but it's always nice to reassure them that even medics get time to chill, see friends, and do societies! Another common one is about making friends and whether Oxford is socially intense. People seem relieved when they hear that there's a huge variety of societies, and that, in general, you'll find your people no matter what you're into.

Asha: The most common questions I've been asked are things like: 'What were your interviews like?'; 'Is Oxford as hard as it seems?'; 'How is the social life here?'. They have a lot of worries about workload or not being 'smart' enough to get in, and about whether they will fit in here — I try my best to combat these.

Do you feel that certain myths about Oxford still persist, and how do they compare with your experience as a student here?

Asha: Definitely! I think it's seen by some as an 'unapproachable' uni and it is often perceived as a place of torturous work and insufferable company, not helped by media exaggeration and stereotypes which could not be more different from my experience!

Ahmad: Yeah, absolutely. When I ask students what comes to mind when they think of Oxford, most still say 'posh' or 'elite', which is fair — it's how Oxford is always shown in films and TV.

While there are aspects of Oxford that might seem 'posh' at first glance, in reality, it's an incredibly diverse place.

I've met so many people from different backgrounds, including people just like me, as well as those with really unique and interesting experiences. Overall, the vast majority of people I've met here have been really genuine, and I've never felt like I didn't belong.

Why do you think the College's access and outreach work is so important?

Ahmad: LMH — and Oxford in general — has so many opportunities, both academically and personally. You're constantly surrounded by people who challenge the way you think, and you come out of here with skills and experiences that set you up for life.

The problem is, a lot of students who would thrive here don't even apply because they think Oxford isn't for them. Some of the most capable and 'Oxford-suited' people I've met come from backgrounds that people wouldn't typically associate with this place. If those students don't apply — not because they aren't good enough, but because they don't think they belong — that's a massive loss, both for them and for Oxford.

That's why access work is so important — raising awareness, breaking down barriers, and ensuring that talented students from all backgrounds feel like Oxford is a place for them.

Asha: Our access and outreach scheme is so important, because we aim to challenge the stereotypes before they even have a chance to take root in people's minds. We battle misconceptions and preconceptions, and work to make Oxford seem relatable and

attainable, putting real faces and stories to the 'Oxford Student' title.

Did you apply directly to LMH?

Asha: I actually applied to Lincoln, because they take more people for my course, but I was then interviewed and given an offer by LMH, and I couldn't be happier that I was! I have now re-applied to LMH and been given an offer to stay on for a Masters. It's such a welcoming academic and social community, and I have really been encouraged to thrive here.

Ahmad: I also didn't apply to LMH, but I'm so glad I ended up here! Now when I talk to prospective students, I always tell them to consider LMH. It's got a really friendly student community, great staff, and amazing gardens. But despite all that, most people just know it because of Malala — which, to be fair, is a decent claim to fame!

What makes LMH special for you?

Ahmad: For me, LMH stands out because it actually feels like a community. From the start, everyone — students, tutors, and staff — has been really supportive, and that makes such a difference. There's also just a nice atmosphere here. It's a great balance between being academically intense and still having space to breathe. And the gardens definitely help — it's one of the few colleges where you can actually sit outside and relax without feeling like you're in a tourist attraction.

Asha: The close-knit community of staff and students, the beautiful buildings and gardens, and the wonderful friends I've made here!



Ahmad (left) and Asha (right)

Alumni Spotlight

News highlights from our alumni community

Paweł Kotla Conducts 'Concert for Freedom'

Paweł Kotla (1996, MSt Music (Musicology)), a distinguished Polish-British conductor, arts manager, and cultural diplomacy expert, recently led the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine in a historic 'Concert of Freedom and Solidarity' in the National Philharmonic of Ukraine in Kyiv.



Ras.I Martin Features in Top 10 Future Leaders List

Former LMH Foundation Year student Ras.I Martin (2020, PPE) has been named among the Top 10 in the 2025 edition of Powerful Media's annual Future Leaders publication, which showcases 150 of the most outstanding university students of African and African Caribbean heritage in the UK.

Varaidzo (Vee) Kativhu Receives Honorary Doctorate

Varaidzo (Vee) Kativhu (2017, Classical Archaeology and Ancient History) has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Bradford in recognition of her educational activism and empowerment work. Vee is the youngest honorary degree recipient in the University of Bradford's history.



'Zone of Interest': Oscars Success for Danny Cohen

Danny Cohen (1992, English Language and Literature), was Executive Producer on *Zone of Interest*, which won two awards at the 2024 Oscars, including Best International Feature Film.

Santanu Bhattacharya Returns with Second Novel, 'Deviants'

Following the critical success of his debut novel, *One Small Voice*, Santanu Bhattacharya (2015, Master of Public Policy) has returned with his second novel, *Deviants*. Released in February — fittingly during LGBTQ+ History Month — *Deviants* is a moving exploration of identity, love, and resilience across three generations of gay men in India.



Baroness Manningham-Buller Appointed Chancellor of the Order of the Garter

Baroness Manningham-Buller (1967, English Language and Literature) was appointed last year by His Majesty King Charles III as the first female Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, the UK's oldest and most senior Order of Chivalry.



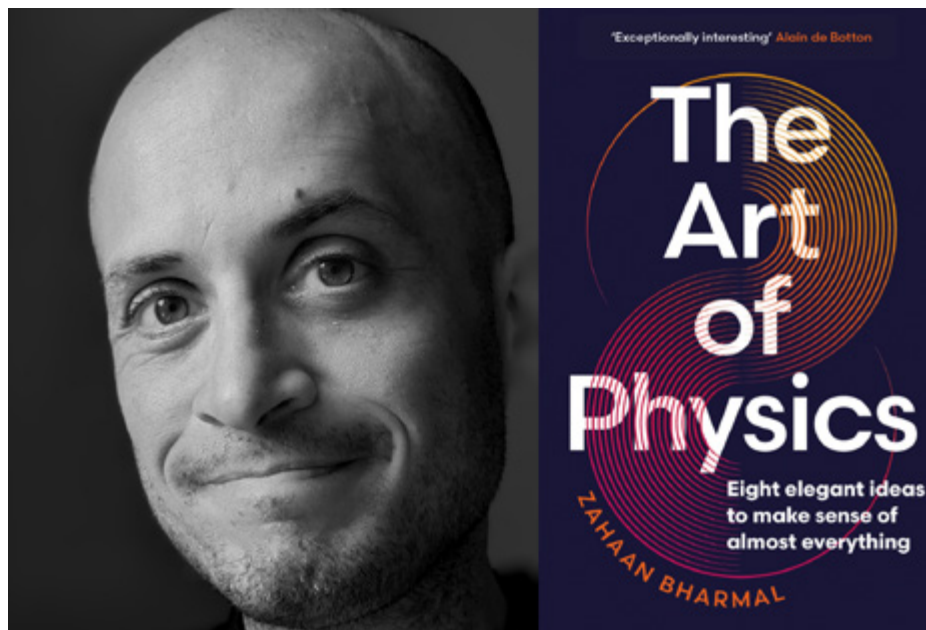
Florence I. 'Cuppy' Otedola Becomes Kings Trust International Ambassador

Florence Ifeoluwa 'Cuppy' Otedola (2021, MSc African Studies) has been appointed as a King's Trust International Ambassador by His Majesty King Charles III. The King's Trust International works with local partners around the world to deliver education, employment and enterprise programmes to empower young people.



Zahaan Bharmal Publishes Debut Book

In *The Art of Physics: Eight elegant ideas to make sense of almost everything*, Zahaan Bharmal (1996, Physics) delves into how foundational principles of physics can illuminate many aspects of human life. Zahaan argues that physics is far from an abstract science—it is a practical lens through which we can answer some of life's most compelling questions.



Want to share your news?

We regularly publish news items on our website: www.lmh.ox.ac.uk and via our social media channels. If you have news that you would like to share with the wider College community, please contact our Head of Communications, Katie Brown, on: communications@lmh.ox.ac.uk.



Benazir Bhutto: *An Enduring Legacy*

Just over fifty years since **Benazir Bhutto** (1973, PPE) matriculated at LMH, we explore her impact on Oxford and the enduring legacy she left behind. Through personal recollections from her contemporary **Victoria Schofield** (1974, Modern History) and **Professor Adeel Malik**, Academic Lead of the Oxford Pakistan Programme (OPP), we look back on Benazir's extraordinary life.

Benazir Bhutto came to Oxford in 1973, fresh from four years at Harvard, to study PPE. Born in Karachi in 1953, she was just 20 years old when she arrived at LMH. At first the Oxford system seemed strange, but gradually Benazir adapted to her new environment, and came to love Oxford. Sociable and outgoing, she made numerous friends, both in College and at the Oxford Union. Having completed her degree, she stayed on to undertake a one-year Foreign Service programme at Queen Elizabeth House, moving from LMH to St Catherine's College.

Primary among her non-curricular achievements was becoming President of the Oxford Union — the third woman in the Union's history to attain that distinction, and the first Muslim woman. After leaving Oxford she intended to enter Pakistan's Foreign Service, but within days of her return home in 1977 her life took a different and ultimately tragic trajectory. Her father, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, was deposed in a military coup, put on trial for conspiracy to murder, sentenced to death and eventually executed in April 1979. With his political colleagues under arrest, Benazir, still only 25 years old, found herself stepping into the void, embarking on a career as a politician. Many years later, when she wrote her autobiography, she prefaced one chapter with the unforgettable words, "I did not choose this life, it chose me".

For thirty years, either in office — as the first female Prime Minister of a Muslim country between 1988-1990 and 1993-96 — in opposition, or in exile, Benazir dominated Pakistan's political scene, as well as being applauded on the world stage. At a time of increased polarisation between liberalism and conservatism, her courage in speaking out against extremism was commended even by her political opponents.

As a friend since our days at LMH, I was privileged to observe her triumphs and tragedies, having first visited Pakistan while her father was under sentence of death. I returned to Pakistan frequently thereafter, including in December 1987 when Benazir married Asif Ali Zardari. I held each of her three children as babies and watched their own progression to adulthood, witnessing not only Benazir's political commitment but also her wonderful mothering, which she so evidently enjoyed. I also saw how she struggled, as so many women do, to maintain a career and a family, encouraging others to do likewise. "I do consider myself as a role model," she said in a BBC interview. And there is no doubt that because of her example, many more women in Pakistan have become politicians, lawyers, journalists and doctors.

Tragically, on 27 December 2007, she was assassinated in Rawalpindi, aged only 54, while campaigning to become Prime Minister of Pakistan for a third time. She still had so much she wanted to

achieve, especially for women in a society where, although she had lifted the glass ceiling, the majority of women remain subservient to men. To me, her death meant the loss of a friend I had known for over 30 years, ever since we had walked in each other's footsteps in the corridors of LMH. Yet, despite all she may still have wanted to accomplish, her legacy remains one of aspiration and inspiration. In her own words, "I think that the course of my career and my life have proved that a woman is like a man, a person, in her own right and that she can set her targets and achieve her goals, she can have a home, a child and a career."

Recollections from Victoria Schofield (1974, Modern History)



Victoria and Benazir in Pakistan in 1978



Adeel with Benazir Bhutto at the Dublin Summit Dinner, 2002



I never expected to share a dinner table with Benazir Bhutto. Yet there I was in the spring of 2002, a wide-eyed Rhodes Scholar from Pakistan, seated beside her at a glittering summit in Dublin. The room hummed with CEOs, Nobel laureates, and heads of state, but Benazir — exiled, stateless, yet radiating an almost regal composure — leaned toward me with genuine curiosity. “Tell me,” she said, her voice softening as the clatter of silverware faded around us, “what do you think Pakistan’s economy needs most?”

I was just a DPhil student then, my hands trembling slightly under the weight of her attention. She listened intently as I stumbled through ideas about poverty and governance, her questions sharp but never dismissive. When she asked if I’d consider joining her party — “We need young voices like yours” — I hesitated. Academia, I confessed, was my calling. She smiled, undeterred. “Then write,” she said. “Write fiercely. The world needs thinkers more than politicians.”

Two years later, I watched her command the Oxford Union, her arguments on Islam and democracy met with both applause and scepticism. Afterward, a group of us — Pakistani students, some openly critical of her politics — ambushed her in the corridor. To our surprise, she insisted on continuing the debate over coffee. “Starbucks, then!” she declared, brushing off her aide’s concerns about security.

There, amid the hiss of espresso machines and the scent of pastry, she parried our toughest questions with grace. I criticised her lecture for lacking authentic references: “Why not quote the poet-philosopher Mohammad Iqbal directly? He argued that there is no room for theocracy in Islam”. She didn’t bristle. Instead, she gave me her email. “Send me the references,” she said, “I really like your suggestion.”

“Rarely a year passed when Benazir wouldn’t visit Oxford on one pretext or another. It was a homecoming for her. It feels as if she never left Oxford.”

Weeks later, halfway through a research trip in Nigeria, an email arrived: “Adeel — still waiting for those quotes! — BB.” Even in midst of busy engagements, she remembered a promise made to

a junior academic. Our collaboration deepened over the years. Drafting budget speeches for her, I marvelled at her precision, the way she dissected paragraphs like a surgeon, probing every idea, and reshaping arguments with the intensity of a scholar. Her former staff later confided that no Prime Minister had ever matched her diligence: she dissected policy files late into the night, demanding clarity, chasing nuance. This was Benazir’s genius — she welcomed debate, obsessed over details, and courted young minds fiercely. Benazir was flawed, yes. Human. But in Pakistan’s fractious political milieu, where civilian leaders are quickly dismissed and discredited, Benazir remained a steadfast, brave, and engaging political actor. Above all, there was a quality about Benazir that was endearing for almost anyone she engaged with. She made everyone feel special. That is truly the hallmark of a great leader.

Her assassination in 2007 shattered more than a nation. It severed a bridge — between East and West, between Pakistan’s fractious provinces, between generations. She engaged effortlessly with people from all walks of life — celebrities, scholars, activists — who recalled their interactions with warmth. At home, she built coalitions, engaging allies and rivals alike. Abroad, she served as Pakistan’s trusted interlocutor with Western leaders and publics. A household name, she commanded access to the

highest offices in London and Washington, an invaluable asset during Pakistan's turbulent political transitions. Both a pragmatist and an idealist at heart, she navigated a complex political terrain without losing sight of her purpose: to ensure dignity, respect, and representation for ordinary Pakistanis.

In her final years, especially after 9/11, she worked to heal rifts between the Muslim world and the West. This mission anchored her 2002 Dublin summit address, her 2004 Oxford Union speech, and her final book, aptly titled *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West*.

As Pakistan became embroiled in a surge of militancy in its restive northwest, public debate favoured an iron-fisted approach to militancy. But Benazir believed in the power of electoral politics for channelling local grievances. Politics is the best tool, she would argue, to counter terrorism. Weeks before her death, against a chorus of warnings, she travelled to Peshawar and Quetta, sitting cross-legged in dust-choked villages to listen to grievances few politicians had bothered to hear.

Today, as Pakistan undergoes a seismic demographic shift, with two-thirds of its population under 30, Benazir's early bet on youth feels prophetic. Despite two truncated terms as Prime Minister — often deemed unsuccessful — Benazir sought to reinvent herself by courting young voices. Her assassination denied her that chance.

Had she lived, she would have cherished LMH's work with the Oxford Pakistan Programme (OPP): opening doors for Pakistani talent, including two scholars from her beloved Sindh this year, and partnering with its government to fund local students. Oxford and LMH were close to her heart. Rarely a year passed when Benazir wouldn't visit Oxford on one pretext or another. It was a homecoming for her. It feels as if she never left Oxford.

Today, walking the halls of LMH, I sometimes linger beneath her portraits. Her gaze — steady, faintly mischievous — seems to follow me. "Look," she whispers across the years, "look what we've built". She'd have adored the irony — that a woman once barred from Oxford's debating chambers now watches over its most hopeful experiments. Through the OPP, Benazir's dream of connecting young leaders from Pakistan with the world lives on. The OPP embodies her mission of engagement, reconciliation, and bridging divides.

Recollections from Professor Adeel Malik, Senior Research Fellow and Academic Lead of the Oxford Pakistan Programme



Adeel (left) with Benazir Bhutto (centre) and a fellow Rhodes Scholar at the Dublin Summit, 2002



Celebrating LMH's 125th Anniversary with Benazir Bhutto

"It was a great privilege to welcome Benazir Bhutto back to LMH during the year-long celebrations of the 125th anniversary of the College's foundation as the first college for women in Oxford. Benazir is a magnificent and much-missed, loved, and lamented, role model for women at Oxford. An inspiring leader, she gave an important lecture about development and democracy."

Dame Frances Lannon, Former Principal and 1969, History



How Neuroscience is Changing the *Fight Against Obesity*

In the global battle against obesity, conventional treatments have largely focused on suppressing appetite. These treatments often lower energy expenditure, in many cases leading to weight regain. **Professor Ana Domingos**, Fellow and Tutor in Medicine, spoke to us about her research group's work to pioneer an alternative approach—one that targets the body's own fat-burning mechanisms through the nervous system.

What is the focus of your laboratory's current research?

My group investigates the neurobiological basis of obesity, focusing on neurons outside the brain that regulate body weight by burning fat rather than suppressing food intake. These are sympathetic neurons [part of the sympathetic nervous system, which helps your body activate its 'fight-or-flight' response], which receive signals from the brain to control various bodily functions, including fat metabolism.

Older fat-burning obesity medications, though effective, were withdrawn due to significant cardiovascular risks and potential for abuse. These drugs acted on the brain, broadly stimulating sympathetic neurons, including those involved in cardiovascular regulation. As a result, modern weight-loss treatments have shifted towards appetite suppression, targeting brain circuits. However, reducing food intake also lowers energy expenditure, ultimately favouring weight regain.

To resolve this conundrum, my goal is to selectively manipulate sympathetic neural networks that drive fat-burning while decoupling them from cardiovascular control. This approach could pave the way for safer and more effective obesity treatments.

How might your research enhance our understanding of obesity, and what are the implications for future treatment?

Our recent article in *Nature* reveals that neuropeptide Y (NPY), produced by sympathetic neurons, plays a protective role against obesity by sustaining thermogenic fat-dipose tissue that dissipates energy as heat. While NPY has traditionally been viewed as an appetite-promoting peptide in the brain, our work demonstrates the opposite effect on body weight when NPY originates from sympathetic neurons. Specifically, it

supports the proliferation of progenitors for thermogenic adipocytes [specialised fat cells that generate heat by burning energy] (Zhu *et al.*, *Nature* 2024).

Not all obesity results from overeating. Targeting mechanisms like the one we uncovered could lead to new treatments that regulate energy expenditure independently of appetite suppression. Beyond obesity, such therapies could have implications for metabolic syndrome and even cancer. Ultimately, my lab's foundational research could contribute to safer, more sustainable, and cost-effective solutions for obesity management, improving public health and reducing the burden of obesity-related diseases.

What prompted your interest in pursuing obesity research?

Obesity is a growing epidemic, yet effective long-term anti-obesity drugs remain scarce. My interest in neuroscience began in graduate school, and my time at Rockefeller University in Jeffrey Friedman's lab — where the hormone leptin was discovered — deepened my fascination with the neural control of metabolism. This led me to explore the 'efferent arm' of leptin's action, aiming to close the neuroendocrine loop by investigating how the nervous system regulates fat burning.

My goal is to illuminate the unseen sympathetic neural networks and discover druggable mechanisms that combat obesity by increasing energy expenditure rather than simply suppressing food intake.

What are the biggest challenges and barriers facing research teams such as yours?

Scientific discovery requires sustained investment, yet funding cycles often prioritise short-term, incremental progress over bold, high-risk research. Additionally, because my group's work is highly interdisciplinary, maintaining a balance between scientific diversity and

cohesive collaboration is crucial—we must integrate a broad range of expertise without becoming siloed.

That said, I cannot complain too much! I have been fortunate to receive prestigious and substantial funding, including over €2 million from the European Research Council. More recently, I was awarded the Wellcome Trust Discovery Award, an eight-year grant totalling £3.4 million, which provides the long-term support necessary to pursue ambitious research.

“Obesity is a growing epidemic, yet effective long-term anti-obesity drugs remain scarce.”

What do you enjoy most about teaching undergraduates as a Tutor at LMH?

Teaching keeps me on my toes and open to new perspectives. A career in postgraduate research can lead to hyperspecialisation and tunnel vision, whereas undergraduates — who often read widely — approach topics with fresh eyes. Together, we challenge preconceptions and refine our understanding through the rigorous, evidence-based approach that defines Oxford's research-led education.

More than ever, in an era of misinformation, this kind of education is essential for shaping critical thinkers who can make the world a better place.

Professor Ana Domingos is Associate Professor of Neuroscience in the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics at the University of Oxford, where she leads the Domingos Laboratory. You can find out more about her research group at: www.dpag.ox.ac.uk/team/ana-domingos.



Jackie running the London Marathon on her wedding day

Ten Years *Without Limits*

How do you support yourself and others after the shock of a cancer diagnosis? If you're **Jackie Scully** (2000, English), you appear on national TV on your wedding day before taking on a series of astonishing challenges.

It's fair to say the past decade has not been quiet for Jackie Scully. During that time, she has run the London Marathon three times (including once on her wedding day [to Duncan Sloan (2000, Mathematics)] and once as part of the fastest team ever to complete a marathon in a ten-person costume, alongside Fran Walker (Sykes, 2000, Biochemistry)). She has trekked across the Sahara. She has taken part in the world's longest continuous spinning class, spending over 29 hours on a stationary gym bike. And she has conquered 24 of the Lake District's tallest peaks in a little under 48 hours.

In completing this succession of extraordinary challenges, Jackie has raised over £160,000 for charity. And perhaps the most extraordinary detail of all? The idea to begin fundraising came to her as she sat in a hospital chair in 2014, receiving chemotherapy for breast cancer.

"I basically vowed there and then to turn my situation into something positive," Jackie says with a smile. "I vowed that I would raise £100,000 for charity within the next ten years."

Finding hope through running

Jackie's cancer diagnosis came as a particular blow because it followed years of health struggles that began soon after she left LMH. "I had my pelvis rebuilt in my twenties," she says. "I left university and a few years later I was struggling to walk. I ended up needing surgery on my pelvis and had hoped that my thirties would be my decade. And then, at 32, I got breast cancer. At that stage I just felt, 'OK, either my health issues are

going to control my life or I'm going to take control.'"

Jackie began running during her cancer treatment. "It got me out into the fresh air," she says, "and it was such a good discipline, as long as you accept that some days you won't be able to do it and some days you'll start and it will be awful." She completed a 10km race, which she now describes as "one of the most amazing days of my life," and decided to begin, "attaching big, big life moments to running and seeing where it took me".

A bride on the BBC

One of the first places it took her was to the Cutty Sark, an iconic landmark on the London Marathon route, at 7.20am on the day of the race. While most runners were trying to calm their nerves and tucking into a nutritious breakfast, Jackie was getting married in a specially-made wedding dress that would later double up as her running gear.

Celebrating in this way presented a range of unusual challenges. For example, it's forbidden to take the marriage register on public transport, but all of the surrounding roads were closed in preparation for the marathon. After much negotiation, Jackie and the registrar found a way to get the book close enough to the Cutty Sark by car and then carry it on board. The ship is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which meant Jackie and Duncan needed to use a specific fine art photographer.

But, with these and other obstacles overcome, the wedding went ahead as planned, and Jackie was interviewed for the BBC by Gabby Logan, her story clearly



Climbing in the Lake District

"I'm not an athlete in any sense, but I turn up and try, and I think that's helped people turn up and try in their own lives."

striking a chord with many people lining the route. “Because of that exposure, everyone knew we were coming,” Jackie laughs. “I remember this tiny girl with a little card that she’d written that said, ‘Go bride!’ on it. She shouted at the top of her voice, ‘The bride is coming! The bride is coming!’”

Fundraising is just the beginning

As befits a former English student, Jackie has “always been a storyteller”. She realised early in her fundraising odyssey that she needed her challenges to stand out. And, as time passed, she also recognised how her story could motivate others. Dozens of people have contacted her to say she inspired them to begin exercising. And as she ran a 10km race in 2024 to mark ten years since she first covered the distance, and ten years cancer-free, 120 people across the country joined her to “run, jog, walk or crawl” 10km themselves.

Last year Jackie was nominated for a Pride of Britain Award. As part of the TV coverage, she thanked the cancer nurse who inspired her fundraising by asking her, ‘What are you doing that you would be proud to put on your gravestone?’

And that question has been Jackie’s mantra ever since. She admits now to feeling like a “minister without portfolio,”



Jackie’s 29-hour spinathon

having completed her ten-year challenge and with nothing more in the diary. But she is already planning what might come next, and in the meantime can take great satisfaction not only from the incredible sum she has raised, but from the inspiration her story has given to others.

“You never know what your actions can do to help somebody,” Jackie says. “I’m not an athlete in any sense, but I turn up and try, and I think that’s helped people turn up and try in their own lives. If that’s the legacy that I can leave for people, then I’ve done my job.”



At the Great Wall of China



Jackie and her team at the 2024 London Marathon



THE VIRTUAL WORLD'S A STAGE

What do police chases, dancing aliens and heavy artillery have to do with *Hamlet*? The answer lies in an award-winning new film by **Sam Crane** (1997 Literae Humaniores).

The history of *Hamlet* on film is as diverse as it is rich. Alongside more traditional versions by the likes of Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh, the play has been reimagined everywhere from within a media company to a rubber duck factory. And yet the recently-released *Grand Theft Hamlet*, directed by Sam Crane and his partner Pinny Grylls, still manages to break new ground.

Born during the second national

coronavirus lockdown in early 2021, the film is shot entirely within the video game *Grand Theft Auto*. It begins with in-game footage of Sam and his friend Mark Oosterveen doing the sorts of things more usually associated with *Grand Theft Auto*. Sam unsuccessfully tries to evade the police in a golf buggy before finding his way to a casino and indulging in what he describes as a little “mindless violence”.

But then a chance discovery occurs. Again trying to escape police attention,

Sam and Mark stumble upon a giant amphitheatre within the game. In real life, they are both actors but have been unable to work due to Covid restrictions. In the game, Mark takes to the stage and recites the ‘Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow’ speech from *Macbeth*, and suddenly an idea is born. Could it be possible to stage a version of *Hamlet* entirely within *Grand Theft Auto*?

More things in heaven and earth

What follows is a profound, hilarious and deeply moving exploration of the



“If you dig down into Shakespeare, so much of it is really silly and funny and messing about. And conversely, there’s actually a lot about gaming that is incredibly sophisticated, incredibly artful.”

game, the play and the time in which Sam and Mark were playing. They begin to recruit gamers as actors, and while they had to deal with some fairly unusual challenges — not least people frequently and randomly being killed during in-game rehearsals — the play begins to come together. Sam’s partner Pinny, a documentary maker, then joins the project and the idea of turning it into a film takes root.

“We began to think about ways to capture the visuals of the world of the game — because it is such a beautiful world — and to ask whether it could be captured in more meditative, contemplative ways, alongside the more hectic and chaotic gaming experience,” Sam says. When the actors eventually do perform the full play in the game, scenes take place everywhere from a yacht to a blimp flying high above cloud level. “There are huge opportunities to do stuff in this world that you couldn’t do in real life,” he adds, “so we wanted to make the most of that.”

The approach brings unexpected levels of pathos to the play, which are heightened as Mark discusses in-game how lockdown has left him isolated and without purpose. The film becomes a social document, and staging the play becomes a way for everyone involved to navigate their very real personal and professional struggles.

“*Hamlet* is obviously an existential play, and that fits with the moment we were living in and personally how I was thinking about the world,” Sam says. “But the way that merged with the digital world in the game also taught me about the play and what I was going through at the time.”

“*Hamlet* has this dualistic view of the world,” he adds, “which is

really encapsulated in the ‘What a piece of work is a man’ speech. He sees the incredible beauty and the wondrousness of the world at the same time as the horrific brutality of it all. And that’s something the game does so well. It’s this incredibly detailed, stunningly beautiful, very sophisticated world, and yet at any moment someone can come down and blow you up with a rocket-propelled grenade.”

From LMH to GTH

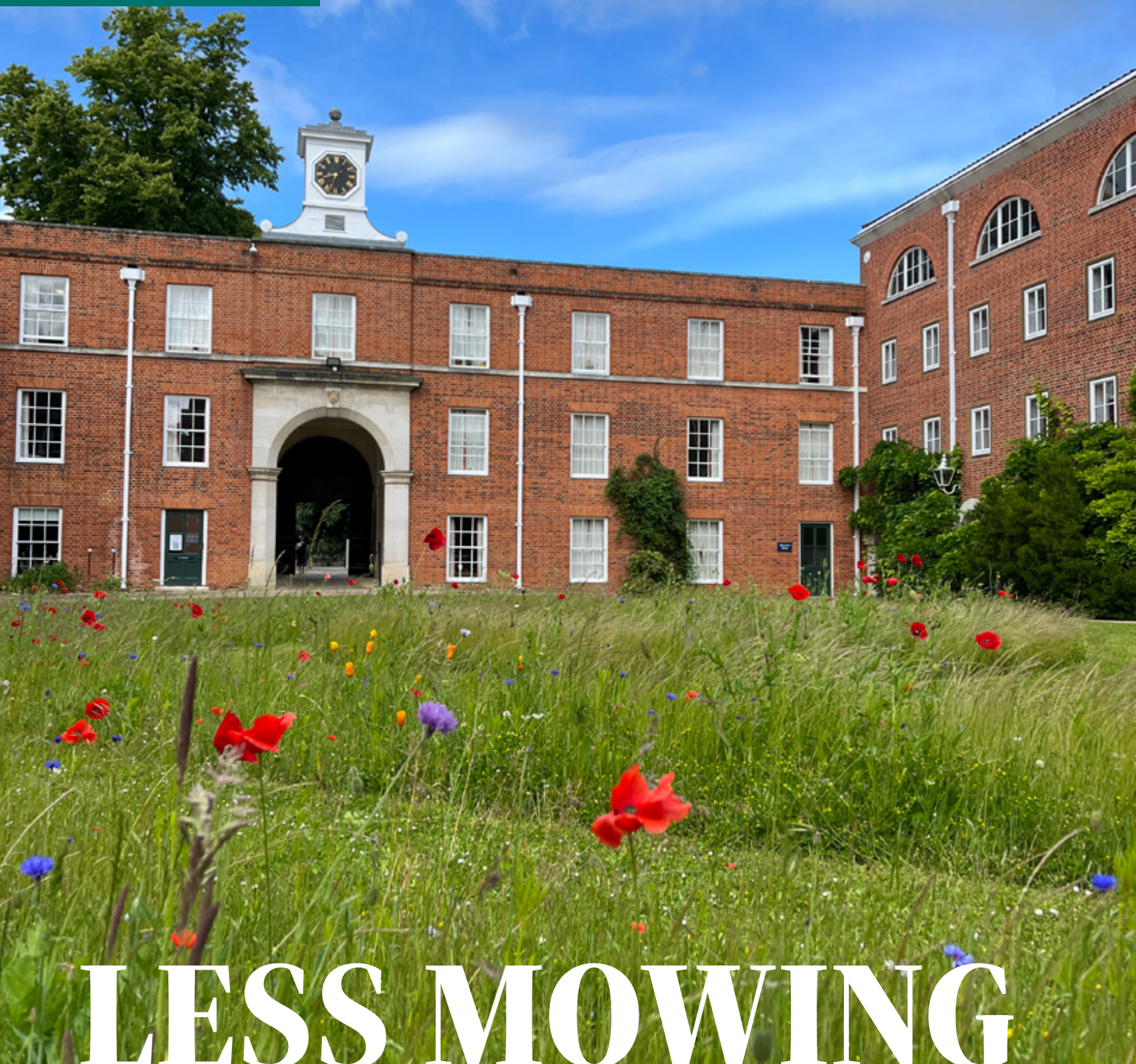
That contrast also makes the film laugh-out-loud funny. Where else can audiences see an alien suddenly drop from the sky and start dancing during *Hamlet* and Laertes’ climactic duel? And it also serves to fulfil one of Sam’s ambitions for the film — that it should encourage people to rethink and recontextualise both gaming and *Hamlet* itself. “If you dig down into Shakespeare, so much of it is really silly and funny and messing about,” he smiles, “and conversely, there’s actually a lot about gaming that is incredibly sophisticated, incredibly artful.”

Grand Theft Hamlet has been rapturously reviewed and won multiple awards, and for Sam and Pinny it also represents a “full circle moment”. The couple met when Sam was at LMH and Pinny at Hertford College, and Sam was playing *Hamlet* in a University production. Three decades on, Sam is now *Hamlet* once again — though where once he worried about completing essays alongside his rehearsals, now he simply needs to get through rehearsals without getting gunned down. As Polonius might well have put it, ‘though this be madness, yet there is method in’t’.

Grand Theft Hamlet is available to stream at **mubi.com**



“GTA is this incredibly detailed, stunningly beautiful world, and yet at any moment someone can come down and blow you up with a rocket-propelled grenade.”



LESS MOWING

More Growing

Nestled between the Thames and Oxford's University Parks, LMH enjoys a uniquely lush, green setting. Our rich tapestry of lawns, trees, water and meadows are home to an impressive array of flora and fauna. We're working hard to preserve our natural spaces, creating a safe haven for native species.



Jenny Rose Carey Head Gardener Oakley Loudon and his team have been working with members of the Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration Project to develop a long-term plan to revitalise the College's wild spaces. The Thames Valley team, who support meadow conservation across Oxfordshire, have been especially impressed with the condition and diversity of our meadows. Of all the colleges they've worked with, we apparently stand out for our impressive biodiversity and the variety found in our many smaller meadows. This is partly thanks to our naturally diverse site, and partly due to a strategic move to create smaller meadows all around College, using traditional meadow management to encourage diversity specific to our location.

Over the last few years, Oakley and his team have introduced several new meadow areas, including the grassy stretch alongside the Library. They also plan to reduce the mown areas around the Hockey Pitch, with a larger cutback every three years to align with the Summer Ball. These initiatives help reduce mowing time, freeing up the gardeners to work on other projects, while enhancing vital habitats.

One of the most eye-catching

examples of our evolving landscape is the wildflower spiral in Talbot Quad. Once managed through a conventional cycle of chemical spraying and reseeding, the spiral is now transitioning to a more natural and ecologically sensitive model. Last year, the garden team allowed flowers to go to seed naturally, encouraging a self-sustaining meadow to emerge. Gone are the days of bare soil and re-sown grass; instead, a layered and living meadow is taking shape.

This shift has brought a host of benefits: no chemical interventions, fewer signs of artificial disruption, and the visual delight of planted bulbs subtly erupting through the grass in harmony with the seasons. The result is not only more sustainable — it's more beautiful, too.

With baseline biodiversity data now in hand, we are well-positioned to monitor the impact of these initiatives. The ultimate goal? A thriving, resilient ecosystem in the heart of Oxford that reflects our commitment to the ecologically-friendly management of our beautiful estate.

To keep up to date with the latest garden developments, please visit our website:
www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/gardens.





GATHERING

Lessons from Grenfell

As Secretary to the Grenfell Inquiry, **Mark Fisher CBE** (1980, PPE) was determined to ensure not only that it ran smoothly, but most importantly that families' voices were heard.

On the Friday after the Grenfell Tower disaster in June 2017, when fire tore through the Kensington residential block and 72 people tragically lost their lives, Mark Fisher and his wife Helen took their regular journey out of London to Warrington to visit family. The route took them directly past Grenfell. "The tower was still smouldering, it was visceral," Mark recalls. "You could feel it, and I

remember thinking, 'How on earth could this have happened in the 21st century United Kingdom?'"

Just days later, Mark would be asked to lead the Inquiry team charged with finding answers to that very question. "The then-Prime Minister, Theresa May, had decided there would be a public inquiry, and when the then-Cabinet Secretary, the late Jeremy Heywood, asked me if I would be Secretary to the Inquiry, he said he wanted somebody

who understood how to engage communities, which had links to my experience."

From LMH to the Civil Service

Mark came up to LMH in 1980, initially reading Theology before switching to PPE. "LMH was a wonderful place," he recalls, "very warm and supportive and an enjoyable place to be a student. And what is nice is that you do find LMH folk dotted around your world for the rest of your life."



Editorial credit: Guy William / Shutterstock.com



“Homes are meant to be places of safety and security. These sorts of things simply should not happen.”

After graduating, Mark was fast-tracked into the Civil Service and took on a range of positions in the Department for Work and Pensions. Prior to the Grenfell Inquiry, he was Director of the Office for Civil Society at the Cabinet Office, where his responsibilities spanned social action, support for charities, and youth policy. But when the invitation came to join forces with Sir Martin Moore Bick, who had agreed to chair the Grenfell Inquiry, his first and only instinct was to accept.

Building trust

Mark describes the Inquiry’s early days as being like, “Setting up a new business from scratch. We had to find solicitors, barristers, premises, a team. We had no Wi-Fi initially, so we were operating out of a single room in the Royal Courts of Justice using dongles. Then as soon as we announced ourselves, every phone in the room started ringing at once. It was like a scene from *The West Wing*.”

The key focus was on being

“scrupulously independent”. As Mark explains, “There were 300 different organisations involved in the tragedy in some way — the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the Government, the builders, emergency services, cladding manufacturers, and so on. You’re essentially running a quasi-judicial process, so you have to be utterly independent.”

Another crucial element was working effectively and sensitively with affected



“This was ultimately a process in which families, the government and the commercial interests were all parties, and you had to play a legally straight bat between all of them.”

families. “That was fundamentally important. Homes are meant to be places of safety and security. These sorts of things simply should not happen. And I remember in the first week or so going to North Kensington to meet representatives of the families with Sir Martin.

“At that point there was no reason on earth why people should trust anybody. The residents had raised safety concerns during the refurbishment of Grenfell. They could see the shoddy workmanship. So there were layers of distrust between the families and the Council, which were then hugely amplified by what happened. But the families’ trust was fundamental. They had to come to understand that we were impartial and were going to get to the truth.”

Starting by listening

An integral part of that process — and one that Mark believes has set a precedent for future public inquiries — was beginning with commemorative hearings where families could describe the lives of the 72 people who died. Mark acknowledges mistakes were made in the Inquiry — not least the decision to initially hold it in Holborn rather than closer to Grenfell (it was later moved to Paddington). But he believes focusing upfront on lived experiences was invaluable.

The publication of Phase 1 of the report was another important moment, Mark believes. It included a detailed narrative of the disaster and contained criticism of how various organisations responded. “At the launch you could feel the relief from families in the room,” he says, “because there was a sense of, ‘Yes, OK, this Inquiry is going to call it as it was’”.

Even so, Mark did come in for censure from the Grenfell United group, who at times accused him of ‘indifference’. “When you’re engaging with the families,” he says in response, “every word you say matters, and sometimes that was difficult

to get exactly right.

“I think there were times when we didn’t get the engagement with families quite right and that might well have come across as indifference. But it was actually that we were always trying to strike the right balance between the interests and needs of the families and the fact that this was ultimately a process in which families, the government and the commercial interests were all parties, and you had to play a legally straight bat between all of them.”

“The residents had raised safety concerns during the refurbishment of Grenfell. They could see the shoddy workmanship.”

Learnings for the NHS

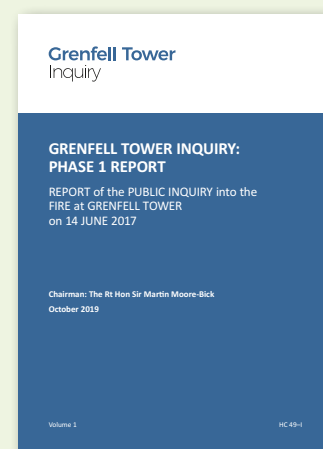
It was, unsurprisingly, an all-encompassing role. The wellbeing of Mark’s own team was paramount, with training given to help people manage the psychological impact of hearing such traumatic testimonies. Additional challenges were also created by the Covid pandemic, which forced the Inquiry to move online midway through.

But Mark talks positively about the changes that will come about as a result of the Inquiry. In February of this year, the government accepted its findings in full and set out plans to act on all 58 recommendations. These include sweeping reforms to construction and

fire safety rules, new regulations on construction product safety and better protections for social tenants.

Mark has taken what he learned from the Inquiry into his current role as Chief Executive of the NHS in Greater Manchester. “I have made it a priority to increase the freedom to speak up,” he says. “Whether you are a nurse, doctor or administrative officer, you should be able to speak up without fear. That builds on key questions from the Inquiry: ‘Why was it that so many organisations didn’t do the right thing when there were people in those organisations calling out problems? Why was that allowed to happen?’”

And, while plans for the future of the Grenfell Tower site are still debated, the landmark also remains a physical presence in Mark’s life. “I do still drive past it,” he nods. “I still think what an awful tragedy it was, but it was also a privilege to be part of a team that has at least attempted to help right this great wrong.”



More information about the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, as well as the published report, can be found at: www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk.



Where Art and *Mathematics Meet*

As a member of The Ruskin School of Art, **Conrad Shawcross** (1996, Fine Art) spent his time at LMH building connections across colleges and disciplines. As his 'Cascading Principles' exhibition at Oxford's Mathematical Institute comes to an end, he explains how this peripatetic time continues to influence his artistic practice.



Main (left): In the foreground: *Formation Study IV (Prevailing Wind)*, 2018
In the windows: *Beacons*, (he15D6), (om15D7), (mo15D8), (eh15D9), 2021

Above: *Paradigm Chamfer (Structural)*, 2015

Anyone who has taken the short walk from LMH through University Parks and into the Mathematical Institute recently will have ended their journey surrounded by Conrad Shawcross's beguiling sculptural works. His 'Cascading Principles' exhibition, curated by Fatoş Üstek, has been running in the institute since 2022, bringing together nearly 40 works that all explore — as the exhibition's subtitle explains — geometry, philosophy and interference.

Rather than being collected in a single exhibition space, the works are placed throughout the building, enabling visitors

to encounter and engage with them as they study, and discuss themes over a coffee. Walk into the entrance hall and you're immediately faced with *Schism* on one side — a large black polyhedral form, made up of twenty tetrahedrons torn apart by the geometry's inability to evenly tessellate. Flanking this are two *Lattice cubes* — a bright white geometric explosion, designed to suggest the Big Bang. Walk downstairs to the café and you can enjoy lunch alongside *Paradigms*, two ascendant forms made up of spiralling tetrahedrons, each one larger than the one below.

Discovering Oxford's appeal

The institute seems a fitting location for

an artist whose work has always crossed multiple disciplines, and who loved Oxford for the breadth of opportunities it provided — even if he was initially unsure whether the city would be able to fuel his creative ambitions.

"I had a typical 18-year-old attitude," admits Conrad who, in 2016, would go on to become the youngest living artist to be elected to the Royal Academy aged 36. "I was worried that Oxford wasn't the capital and that the Ruskin wasn't Central St Martin's and that I needed to be in London to be a really important artist. But then I arrived and the first term was revelatory. I completely forgot all that prejudice and snobbery and had the

most incredible time.”

Students at the Ruskin School of Art are embedded in colleges across Oxford. While Conrad lived, dined and socialised at LMH, he studied on the Bullingdon Road and had more opportunities than many students to build links with other colleges. “I think the Ruskin has got a really interesting, unique and slightly uneasy position,” Conrad says, “because it’s slightly out of the mould of other subjects that exist in a more traditional framework. Its artists are spread across the University and they tend to be these idiosyncratic people who learn to question things and not necessarily answer things. It also meant that by the end of the first term I’d gone to almost every college in the city, which wasn’t the case for many students at LMH.

“And I loved the fact my work was and continues to be very influenced by being surrounded by all these other subjects,” he continues. “My friends weren’t only artists from the Ruskin. I was hanging out with poets and writers and scientists, and going to lectures in those subjects was encouraged and considered very

important. It wasn’t an art school that was just about making art or making in-jokes about art history. You were surrounded by the history of ideas.”

“If everyone sees the same thing you probably haven’t created something that interesting.”

The search for meaning

Conrad believes he also studied at the Ruskin at an auspicious time. “Brian Catling was the Head of Sculpture and he was this amazing, larger-than-life performance artist, very inspiring and evocative and nuanced and unconventional. Stephen Farthing was the Head of Painting. We were very lucky

to be there at that time.”

He recalls lectures that strayed far from what might be expected — for example exploring the location of the soul in relation to scientific discoveries and the tension between church and state. Conrad also valued being able to nurture what he describes as, “the deep pleasure of looking at pattern and geometry and seeing meaning within it,” which has continued to run through the core of his work ever since.

“We all long for patterns and we all long for solutions,” he says, warming to the topic, “but sometimes they’re not there. A scientist might spend their whole life looking for a pattern in something but it doesn’t exist. We’ve spent hundreds of years studying the solar system thinking we’d find the grand design, but actually it’s caused by a series of catastrophic events and it’s totally random.”

With the ‘Cascading Principles’ exhibition, one of the great pleasures for Conrad has been seeing how scholars from different disciplines identify different patterns and meanings in the work. “I love that all these augmented



Schism (Black Oak), 2022

minds find things that I never would,” he says. “If everyone sees the same thing you probably haven’t created something that interesting, but when people see something different, it’s poetic.”

A library for the future

Conrad continued a family tradition by coming to LMH, following in the footsteps of his mother, writer and cultural historian Marina Warner, who studied Modern Languages from 1964. And as ‘Cascading Principles’ comes to an end, one of his next projects will involve finding a very different kind of pattern.

Together, Conrad and Marina are attempting to catalogue her vast book collection. Their plan is then to select a few thousand titles to display in a pavilion Conrad is designing and which they hope will be open to the public. If his work so far is anything to go by, the pavilion will be more than just a worthy tribute — to them both. It will also be another way to bring cross-cutting genres and ideas together, continuing the approach that was encouraged so effectively at the Ruskin and LMH almost 30 years ago.



‘Cascading Principles’ runs at the Mathematical Institute until 30th June. Conrad will join the Principal for a live ‘In Conversation’ at our Alumni Garden Party on Saturday 28th June. Find out more and book tickets at: www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/events.



Plosion 1 (Yellow) Large, 2013
All pictures taken by Richard Ivey.



Working Towards a *More Equitable Oxford*

Former Foundation Year student **Danial Hussain** (2021, PPE) used his time as Oxford Student Union President (2023-24) to compile the College Disparities Report, highlighting stark differences in cost and student experience at the University's richest and poorest colleges. We spoke to Danial about what motivated him to publish the report, and how it has been received.

“ I was never really supposed to be at Oxford, and that was one of the reasons why I did the College Disparities report,” Danial reflects. His Oxford journey began with rejection. “I originally applied to St Anne’s and got rejected after the interview. The feedback was that the tutors saw potential in me, but it was the first interview of any kind I’d ever had, and I completely clammed up,” he recalls. His teacher encouraged him to keep going, “She said: ‘You’re going to have something that none of these kids who got accepted the first time will have, and that’s resilience’, and that’s always stayed with me.” It was the LMH Foundation Year that gave Danial a second chance. “I’m so proud of being at this college and so grateful for everything they’ve given me”, he says.

“There’s a 33% difference in rent between the poorest and richest colleges – almost £1,400 per year.”

The idea for the College Disparities Report took root early on. Danial remembers, “It was actually the previous Principal, Alan Rusbridger, who told me to run [for SU President]. And we had the idea for the College Disparities Campaign together.” Before the report could be compiled, there was a huge amount of data to gather. “I spoke to lots of JCR and MCR Presidents, sent out a massive survey, scoured college accounts, FOI’d rent data, and used the Wayback Machine to look at archival information,” recalls Danial.

Some disparities presented in the report are stark. “There’s a 33% difference in rent between the poorest and richest colleges — almost £1,400 per year. Some richer colleges also subsidise rent for students from less wealthy backgrounds, but poorer colleges aren’t able to do the same.” Furthermore, financial pressures

often fall hardest on students just above the scholarship threshold. Danial explains, “If, for example, your income is just above the threshold to qualify for scholarships, but not high enough that your parents can actually support you, you fall into this gap where thousands of pounds in rent differences has a massive impact.”

Student rent is not the only area affected; the report also highlights a divergence in the availability of hardship funds and bursaries at different colleges. With around 33% of successful applicants receiving an offer from a college they didn’t apply to, this can lead to what the report refers to as a ‘lottery system’ determining what level of support students may receive.

Academic outcomes can also be shaped by these disparities, explains Danial. “We found that richer colleges performed better in the Norrington Table, and there was a correlation between college wealth and academic results. Students at richer colleges can perhaps go abroad, take extra courses, study, or attend events during the vacations. Meanwhile, others have to work, which then affects their academic performance.”

The report proposed a new funding model. As Danial puts it, “At the moment, poorer colleges apply for grants or loans through the College Contribution Scheme. This prevents long-term planning and meaningful endowment growth.” The report recommended a more sustainable approach, providing a consistent and predictable amount of money to allow poorer colleges to plan ahead.

Danial is heartened by the response from around Oxford. “The University and colleges recognised publicly that this is a really serious issue that we need to address.” A committee has been set up to examine some of the issues raised in the report, and Danial is cautiously optimistic. “I appreciate things take time, but I do think the report has had an impact.”

For Danial, this work is personal. “I have always believed in positive liberty — giving people opportunities to realise their full potential. The support given to young people from non-traditional backgrounds trying to get to Oxford is amazing, but their circumstances don’t change with an offer, so neither should that level of support.”

“I hope people see the impact of access initiatives. I would proudly consider myself a product of these initiatives – it’s genuinely changed my life.”

Danial is excited about life after graduation. “I’ll be joining the Good Growth Foundation, a think tank advocating for economic policies that boost growth while reducing inequality, responding to the UK’s ‘lost decade’ of stagnation,” he says. Danial has also been busy developing a start-up that applies social contact theory and AI to improve workplace collaboration, which recently won first place and £15,000 of funding through Oxford’s largest start-up competition.

As he prepares to leave Oxford, Danial is reflecting on his experience here. “It has changed the trajectory of everything I could do and will do. From acorns grow trees, and I hope people see the impact of access initiatives. I would proudly consider myself a product of these initiatives — it’s genuinely changed my life.”



Find out more about the College Disparities Campaign at:
www.collegedisparities.com

The Power of *Inclusive Communications*

In her role as Director of Brand, Marketing and Communications at the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), **Charlotte Jackson** (2003, English) drives campaigns to make physical and digital spaces more accessible for people with sight loss. Charlotte explains how she came to find herself working for the RNIB, and why the work they are doing is so vital.

If social media
accessibility
features were
dog breeds*



*Not in association with Crufts



rnib • Follow



rnib • Paws up if you've ever wondered what dog breeds would be if they were social media accessibility features! 🐾 We've got you.

[Image Description: Image 1 "If social media accessibility features were dog breeds, what would they be?" A small disclaimer at the bottom says, "Not in association with Crufts". On the right side, there's a scruffy brown dog with wide, startled eyes, slightly bared teeth, and a bit of an awkward expression—almost as if it's just heard something shocking. Its scruffy fur and facial expression might remind some people of comedian Bill Bailey!"]

Image 2: The background is a bold pink, and each card has a cute dog photo with a matching description. Below are the four cards in detail.

Top left card: "Alt text would be a Labrador Retriever." A happy, golden Labrador Retriever winks at the camera. The text explains that alt text is reliable, friendly, and helps everyone see what's going on.

Top right card: "Captions would be a Border Collie." A black and white Border Collie tilts its head, looking super alert. The text describes captions as quick, intelligent, and always on top of what's being said.

Bottom left card: "Camel case would be an Afghan Hound." A



120 likes

10 March

The RNIB uses playful, engaging social media posts to educate people about online accessibility best practice

I wasn't convinced Oxford would be for me — I wasn't sure what to expect or whether I'd fit in. I'd definitely never heard of a tute, bop or pidge before! But I loved my time at Oxford and LMH, and soaked up the opportunities and experiences it offered — from the academic challenge to the opportunity to try many new things and make a tonne of memories with a brilliant and supportive friendship group.

Leaving LMH, I wanted to pursue a career that utilised my writing and editorial skills and thought journalism might be a good route. It's tricky to get into, so I took an admin role at a magazine company, which led to my first editorial role on a brand-new wedding magazine. We were a tiny team and it was a monthly title, so it was a great way to rapidly gain all-round editorial experience — and came with great perks in the form of free cake and cosmetics!

Moving to London, I found a job as editor of a member's magazine, creating health information for a charity. It was the first time I'd experienced readers actually writing in (we made up letters in the wedding magazine!) — and it was immensely satisfying to see the impact our work was having. Readers asked questions, shared experiences, and challenged views. I travelled and interviewed people, hearing their stories and finding platforms to share those stories with a wider audience. I felt that I'd found a career that really motivated me.

Since then, I've worked in marketing and communications roles in various health and disability charities. I use bold storytelling, aiming to drive social change and to create accessible, inclusive communications that ensure everyone can get the information and support they need to manage their health and participate equally.

My current role is Director of Brand, Marketing and Communications at RNIB, the UK's leading sight loss charity. We work with blind and partially-sighted people to create content and experiences that change perceptions, break down barriers, educate and support. All driving our mission — to build a world where there are no barriers to people with sight loss.

Inclusive communications

Accessible communications are

something most sighted people take for granted. For blind and partially-sighted people, however, they are the difference between being able to access and enjoy the same TV programmes, films and social media posts as sighted friends and relatives, or not. It means being able to read a letter from a medical consultant or your own bank statement, without the need for friends and family to read sensitive information, or to cast your vote at the polling station independently and in private.

“We work with government, brands, advertisers, designers — and educate the public — to change society so that we can all become confident in designing and building things that are inclusive, by default.”

The reality is that society is not built with blind and partially-sighted people in mind. Everyday tasks, that could be made accessible for the two million people living with sight loss in the UK, involve barriers that result in people being unable to access content or even their own information without assistance.

At RNIB we work with government, brands, advertisers, designers — and educate the public — to change society so that we can all become confident in designing and building things that are inclusive, by default.

Our current projects include:

- Ensuring adverts, films and TV programmes have audio description, so those with sight loss can enjoy content without having to rely on others to describe what's happening on screen.
- Campaigning to uphold people's democratic rights, and for polling stations to have audio and tactile devices available for blind and partially-sighted people to exercise their right to a secret vote.
- Educating businesses and the public to ensure that digital content on websites and social media is created accessibly, and uses features like alt text to describe visual content (which is vital for screen-reading software).

There's a lot of work still needed to make society completely accessible for blind and partially-sighted people in the UK, but it's an ambition we won't let lie until we've achieved it.



Find out more about how you can shape accessible communications in your professional or personal social media spaces on the RNIB website: www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss.



Laying the Groundwork *for Childhood Lead Screening*

A new UK-wide study, co-led by **Professor Frank DiTraglia**, Fellow and Tutor in Economics, is taking aim at one of the country's overlooked public health risks: lead exposure in children. Through their Elevated Childhood Lead Interagency Prevalence Study (ECLIPS), Professor DiTraglia and his colleagues hope to pave the way for a new national lead screening programme.

Professor DiTraglia and his colleagues are seeking to change how the UK monitors and responds to childhood lead exposure.

With funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Professor DiTraglia and his collaborators have launched the Elevated Childhood Lead Interagency Prevalence Study (ECLIPS), a new initiative to pilot a home-based blood test which could form the basis of a new national screening programme.

In spite of widespread understanding of the risks associated with lead, the UK currently has no routine screening programme for children. The ECLIPS project aims to change that. "We know that lead is extremely harmful to the developing central nervous systems of young children," Professor DiTraglia explains. "But there's no recent representative data to help policymakers understand the scope of childhood lead exposure in the UK. I'm excited to be working with an amazing team to pilot what we hope will eventually develop into a nationwide screening programme."

The pilot project, which launched at the beginning of this year in Leeds, was one of only 36 studies selected for UKRI funding from nearly 900 applications in that funding round. With its focus on ease of use, community participation, and

real-world policy implications, the study hopes to address a longstanding public health gap.

"Recent work in the economics literature suggests that even low levels of lead exposure cause lower test scores and behavioural problems that can have long-term effects."

Why lead exposure still matters

Lead is toxic even in minuscule amounts, and its effects are particularly damaging to children. Once widely used in paint, petrol, and plumbing, lead can still be found in our day-to-day environment — permeating the air, water, soil, household dust, and even food.

With some of the oldest housing stock in Europe, the UK remains especially vulnerable. A 2022 study by the UK Health and Security Agency found that a third of recorded lead poisoning cases occurred in the country's most deprived areas, with nearly half of those affected living in rented homes.

An estimated 200,000 children in the UK have elevated lead levels in their blood. Poisoning occurs when the metal accumulates in the brain — a risk that's especially grave for young children, whose developing bodies and nervous systems are more susceptible to long-term harm.

"Some recent work in the economics literature suggests that even low levels of lead exposure cause lower test scores and behavioural problems that can have long-term effects," says Professor DiTraglia. Studies also link childhood lead exposure to an increased risk of antisocial behaviour and lower lifetime earnings.

Yet many, perhaps most, cases go unnoticed. In the UK, blood testing is only carried out when a doctor suspects exposure — often when symptoms are already present. Experts warn that this reactive approach misses many children who may be affected but show no obvious signs. "Lead exposure causes serious harm well below the level at which clear symptoms appear," Professor

DiTraglia explains. “To understand the scale of the problem and craft an effective public health response, we need up-to-date data on blood lead levels for a representative sample of kids.”

The cost of this inaction is steep. Estimates suggest that lead exposure costs the UK economy around £6.8 billion each year — through its toll on education, healthcare, and long-term productivity. Professor DiTraglia and his colleagues are working to change that, championing a more proactive and accessible approach to identifying children at risk.

“Lead exposure causes serious harm well below the level at which clear symptoms appear.”

A new approach to screening

The ECLIPS team is developing and testing a finger-prick blood test that families can use at home. The method is designed to be simple and non-invasive: a few drops of blood collected with a small device, then sent to a laboratory for analysis. This approach avoids the need for clinical appointments and is intended to be more accessible to families — particularly those in communities where access to or trust in official healthcare channels may be limited.

“Our goal is to make lead screening as easy and stress-free as possible,” says Professor DiTraglia. “We’re testing a method that families can use at home without needing a doctor’s appointment or a blood draw from a vein, which can be stressful for young children.”

The pilot study will also gather environmental samples — such as household dust and garden soil — to identify possible sources of lead exposure. Participating families will complete questionnaires about their housing, lifestyle, and any barriers they face to participating in the study. This holistic approach aims not only to measure exposure, but to better understand how and why it occurs.

Learning from communities

The ECLIPS team are placing a strong emphasis on collaboration and community engagement. The project brings together researchers from a wide range of disciplines and institutions, including Oxford, Warwick, Northumbria, and Bristol, alongside community partners and public health professionals. This collaboration is spearheaded by Professor Jane Entwistle of Northumbria University, whose work focuses on environmental pathways of lead exposure.

By working with a dedicated community advisory group, local health workers, and families from diverse backgrounds, the research team is aiming to ensure the study reflects real-world needs and concerns.

“We’re exploring different ways to reach people and encourage them to take part,” explains Professor DiTraglia. “This will include partnering with trusted community organisations, experimenting with small incentives for participation and different outreach messages, and ultimately learning from feedback provided by families who participated in the study. The better we understand people’s concerns, the more effective we can be.”

Impacting public health

The ECLIPS project is designed to inform future public health policy, and by the end of its two-year pilot the team hopes to have developed a practical, evidence-based protocol for a national screening programme. In addition to gathering data on children’s blood lead levels, the study will produce insights into what encourages or discourages participation, and how to design screening programmes that are inclusive and representative.

“We already know how to prevent lead exposure,” Professor DiTraglia stresses. “The challenge is measuring the scale of the problem in the UK and finding out which communities are most affected. Screening is the crucial first step.”

Beyond lead, the methodology being developed could also be used to monitor other environmental pollutants or conditions that require blood testing — particularly in communities that might not otherwise engage with healthcare services.

“We’re designing ECLIPS to learn as much as possible that could be relevant

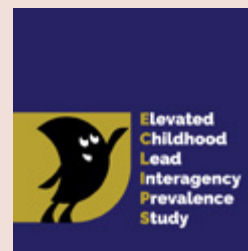
for other, similar efforts,” says Professor DiTraglia. “Making testing easier and more accessible doesn’t just help with lead — it could be part of how we think about public health more generally.”

“We already know how to prevent lead exposure. The challenge is measuring the scale of the problem in the UK and finding out which communities are most affected.”

Moving towards prevention

Although still in its early stages, the ECLIPS project represents a significant effort to improve how the UK addresses a long-standing environmental health issue. By focusing on early detection, community input, and practical policy tools, the team hopes to take meaningful steps toward reducing preventable harm.

“We’re doing this so that children can grow up healthier and with fewer hidden risks in their environment,” says Professor DiTraglia. “If we can identify the problem earlier and act on it, the benefits — for families, for communities, and for society as a whole — could be considerable.”



You can find out more about the ECLIPS project at:
www.lead safefutures.org



Surgery on the *Limit*

Professor Andrew Hayes (1983, Medicine) is part of the only surgical team in the UK to offer Isolated Limb Perfusion. He explains why this pioneering cancer treatment is so valuable — and so rare.

There is a moment in the Channel 4 series *Super Surgeons* that fleetingly suggests the level of pressure even the most experienced physicians sometimes face. Professor Andrew Hayes is reaching a critical point during Isolated Limb Perfusion surgery. As he attempts to insert a cannula tube into an artery just a few millimetres wide, one of his colleagues makes a barely perceptible sound. Andrew's sudden and instinctive response — 'Shush!' — reflects the level of jeopardy he is facing. Cause the

slightest damage to the artery, and his patient could lose his arm. When Andrew quietly utters 'Success' a few seconds later, signalling that the cannula is in place, it seems as though everyone in the theatre collectively releases their breath.

As a Consultant General Surgeon and Surgical Oncologist at The Royal Marsden Hospital in London, Andrew is part of the only team in the UK to offer Isolated Limb Perfusion (ILP). This cutting-edge technique involves, in Andrew's words, "giving a turbocharged dose of chemotherapy to save a patient's

arm and also hopefully save their life".

Andrew operates on sarcomas — rare types of tumours that can form anywhere in the body but often occur in the arms or legs. These cancers are usually treated successfully by surgery that can preserve the limb, but occasionally that isn't the case and, sometimes, amputation has to be offered when other standard treatments are not possible or have failed. It is in those circumstances that Andrew seeks to "push the boundaries of what can be done," by using ILP to potentially save the limb from amputation.



The technique involves attaching one cannula to a vein in the arm and another cannula to an artery, then connecting these tubes to a pump that circulates oxygenated blood around the arm. A tourniquet is then attached to the arm, isolating it from the rest of the body, so a high dose of chemotherapy can be injected into the limb but does not enter the rest of the body. It would be potentially fatal if such a strong dose reached the major organs, but as the arm is now isolated and has its own circulation, the chemotherapy is contained and the sarcomas can be precisely targeted.

The challenge of pushing boundaries

So why is this pioneering technique only available in the UK at The Royal Marsden? “Firstly, the technique itself is not one you can be taught easily,” Andrew says. “It’s different to learning keyhole surgery, for example, which will be practiced in every hospital in the UK and there will be various courses and mentorship programmes you can do to

learn the technique. With ILP you have to learn it independently, or from one of very few existing ILP teams, sometimes in different countries. When I was learning, I had to fly over to Rotterdam on a number of occasions, because it is an ILP centre, and spend several days operating with the team there.

“It is a highly technical process, and if it goes wrong it can be potentially catastrophic.”

“And if you want to set up a new service,” he adds, “it’s a whole team that needs to travel to somewhere

like Rotterdam to learn. You need a perfusionist to run the machine that circulates the blood. You need a nuclear medicine team to monitor the drugs. At The Royal Marsden, we have built up a wealth of expertise, but that takes a great deal of time and expense. When one of my Australian surgical trainees returned home to set up an ILP team in Melbourne after learning the technique from me, we trained his whole team on their first case via a 4-hour overnight zoom call while they operated in Australia.”

Andrew says it took him years to build up to the courage to begin doing ILPs, especially in the arms of patients where the blood vessels are extremely delicate. “It is a highly technical process, and if it goes wrong it can be potentially catastrophic for the patient,” he says. But continuing to push boundaries is a huge motivation, potentially leading to new options for patients who thought there were none remaining.

“When things are not going well, you need to be 100% focused. It’s not emotion at that point. It’s total focus, and a lot of adrenaline.”

Focus, perfection and asking for help

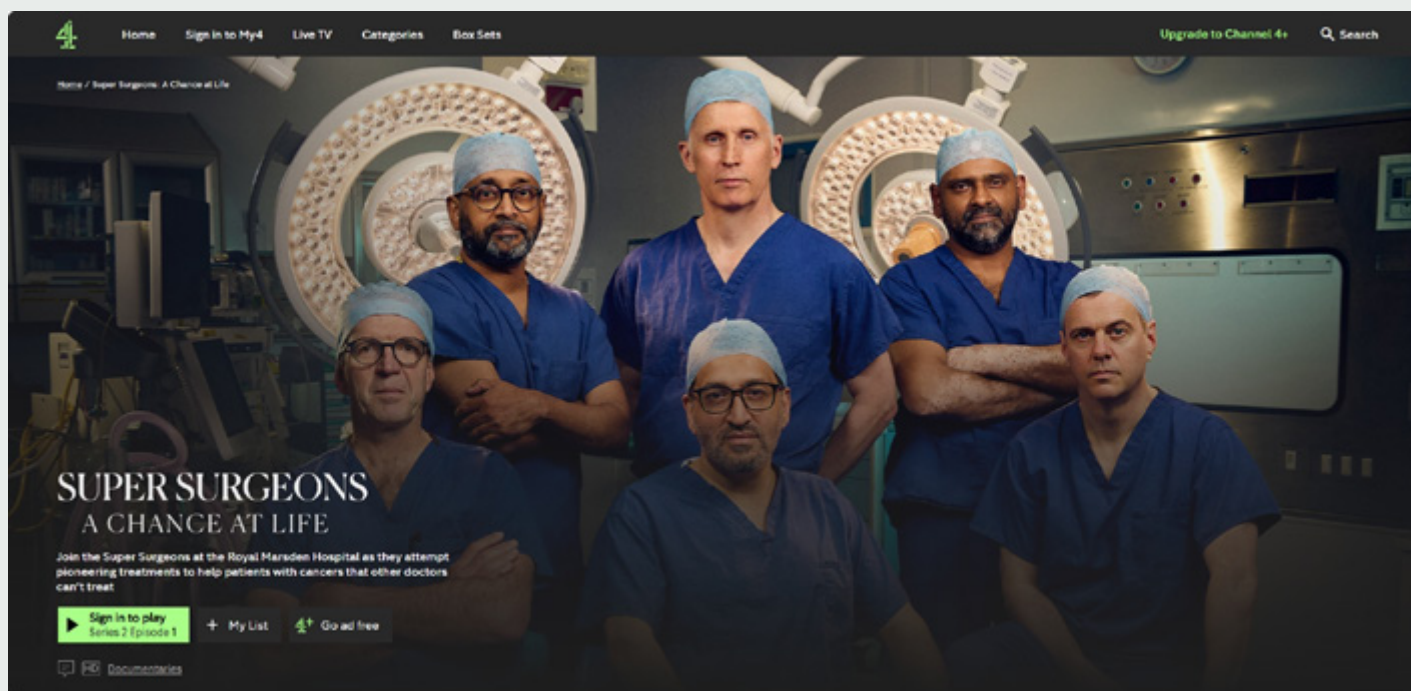
Andrew is rueful when the moment of him shushing his colleagues on the Channel 4 show is mentioned. “Yes, my family commented on that too,” he smiles. Can he describe the atmosphere in theatre at times like that? “Well, I think this is true of all operations, not just ILP,” he says. “At moments of pressure,

things are quite tense. But actually, in most operations, you should be pretty comfortable. You should be calm and collected. When things are going well, I can teach junior doctors and describe what is happening. But you cannot do that when things are not going well. You need to be 100% focused. It’s not emotion at that point. It’s total focus, and a lot of adrenaline.”

During his time at The Royal Marsden, Andrew has been instrumental in introducing a culture of asking for help, which he says is still not as common as it should be within the NHS. “In fact, we arrange our operating lists such that we are often operating in side-by-side theatres,” he explains. “We have a culture of saying, if you need someone, they are on hand. I don’t only do ILP surgery, of course, and I’d say 80% of my operations are straightforward. But 20% I would say are right on the edge, incredibly challenging, and we’ve set up a structure within that which encourages everyone to ask for help — whether you’re the

senior person or there to learn.”

Sharing his knowledge reminds him fondly of his time studying Medicine under Alison Brading at LMH, he says, when a small, tight-knit group of students were constantly encouraged to be interested and excited and analytical. And does Andrew’s teaching style now reflect Alison’s? “Well, I’m more of a pain in the neck to my students than Alison was with me!” he laughs. “I believe everything has to be to the best possible standard. I know this can make me a pain. But I think that’s how it has to be in an operating theatre. I will train everyone to operate to the highest possible standard, because what we are doing is too important for that not to be the case.”



You can watch Andrew and his colleagues at The Royal Marsden in Channel 4’s *Super Surgeons: A Chance at Life*, available to stream at: www.channel4.com/programmes/super-surgeons-a-chance-at-life.

LMH Voices

Our Oral History Project

The Oral History Project is in its fifth year, with over 100 interviews recorded and stored in the Archives, thanks to the work of our team of alumni volunteers. Here is a brief glimpse of some of the recollections gathered so far.

“Coming from the USA, I really wanted the Oxford experience so I think I probably leaned heavier into the MCR than a lot of students who either lived in or lived close by. [...] I ended up being the Wine and Spirits Coordinator in the MCR [...] there were 100 members [...] but there’s really, like, a core of 20 who were there all the time. And I got to be really good friends with them.”

Jeremiah Dancy
(2008, DPhil History)



Mark (centre) with Aline Fairweather (left) and David Gregory (right)

“I had interviews with Wilma [Crowther, Zoology Tutor] and with Marjorie Ord, who was the Biochemistry Tutor. [...] I can’t actually remember the specific questions, but [...] one stood out, which was ‘why does a cow have 4 legs but a milking stool only three?’. I do remember the telegram. You know, Lady Margaret Hall offers exhibition stop.”

Mark Hanley-Browne (1979, Zoology)

“I got first class honours at Bombay University and then I came [to LMH]. But in those days, there were no flights. So, we all went by boat [...] the boat was full of Indian students going to England — it takes about 17 days.”

Sujata Manohar (1954, PPE)





"I've got lots of strong women in my life, and I think going to LMH, even though it was a mixed-sex College at that point [...] you felt the history and you were told the history and it's a huge part of the College. [...] I always sort of felt empowered by having followed in the footsteps of these women that [...] at the time were breaking [with] so much convention.

Eve Bennett
(2018, Modern Languages)



"In my day [Mr Phipps] would [...] stalk the corridors at night, listening out for male voices. And once the male voices were there legitimately, I'm not sure what he had to do!"

Georgina Ferry
(1973, Experimental Psychology)



"I [had] a very nice pair [of rooms] — you got a bedroom and sitting room. And we had a bucket of coal every other day, brought up by the porters. [...] You had a bath every other day. There was a rota that went up on the wall and I don't remember whether you signed up or whether it was done for us [...] but certainly you [...] could only go when it was your day on the list."

Cathy Avent (1939, English)



Cathy (right) with Emma Clark

"I do remember we did a rent strike at one point where we [...] did a 'sit-in' in the quad. [...] But now, obviously, looking back, we had a fraction of the debts of what current students have. [...] I paid off my student loan fairly soon after I started working. But now you've got those debts hanging over you for years. It's a very different world."

Cathy Newman (1992, English)

If you would like to suggest someone you think should be interviewed as part of this project, please get in touch with the Deputy Development Director, Carrie Scott, on: carrie.scott@lmh.ox.ac.uk.



From the Director of Development

The last year has seen significant progress in turning initial ideas for celebrating our 150th anniversary in 2028-29 into some firm plans. It suddenly feels as though this important milestone is approaching rapidly, and it is exciting!

Steering groups and working parties have been established in College to ensure we involve our whole community in the planning, and our Governing Body are taking great interest in contributing to and overseeing these developments.

Thank you to everyone who has already offered ideas and support by participating in our Volunteer Network. Our group of Oral History Project volunteers have so far recorded over 100 voices and are now starting to transcribe conversations in preparation for making them more widely accessible. Another exciting development this year has been the foundation of an Editorial Board, made up of Fellows, staff and alumni, to oversee work on a commemorative coffee table book, to be published in 2028. Please keep an eye out for further opportunities to get involved in our anniversary celebrations as our plans progress.

I am also very grateful to the group of alumni and donors who have had significant input in helping us finalise our 150th anniversary fundraising campaign, which will launch officially at our Garden Party in June 2026.

The beauty of LMH is in its tight knit and supportive community. With only 10,000 alumni, our former students share something rare and special — we hope you will join us and keep that community alive and thriving.

The team and I look forward to working with you in celebration of our special college. Please contact us at: development@lmh.ox.ac.uk with any thoughts or questions.

Alumni Events

Our Year in Review

During the last year, we have hosted almost 40 events in College, in London and overseas, welcoming over 1,700 alumni and guests. Thank you for your support in making our events a success and a joy to deliver. We hope to see you again soon!



Founders and Benefactors, February 2025



Alumni Garden Party, June 2024



Leavers' Event, May 2024



Recent Alumni Social, November 2024



City Networking Event, March 2025



LMH Local: Romania, September 2024



2016-2017 MA Ceremony and Reunion, March 2025



Alumni Carol Service, December 2024



Principal's Summer Lunch, June 2024

Dates for your diary

If you would like to join us at a future event, take a look at the events listing on the back cover of this publication, or visit our website:
www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events.



FROM THE ARCHIVES:

The Daisy and the New Hall

Archivist **Oliver Mahoney** explores the provenance of LMH's original daisy crest, revealing where glimpses of it can still be seen around College and in our Archives.

Writing in 1912, our founding Principal Elizabeth Wordsworth (1840-1932) recalled the deliberations that took place when trying to settle on a symbol and motto for the recently-founded Hall. A couple of years after the College's foundation in 1878, she was visited by her parents in Oxford. She remembered how the symbol of the daisy

was agreed upon in discussion with her family and colleagues:

"Our Hall motto was a joint affair. The daisies, of course, were inevitable; and while two or three of us were standing over the dining room fire discussing the subject, I said I should like something to express the idea of springing up from the earth and looking up to the sun."

This idea of the flower signifying a new beginning and forward progress in the early decades of women's education was

a significant one in Oxford. The fritillary or 'snakeshead' flower that grows in the water meadows along the Thames gave its name to a student newspaper which ran from 1892-1931. This unique and fascinating journal contained articles, essays, poems and reports penned by students at LMH, St Hilda's, St Hugh's, Somerville and The Society of Home Students (later St Anne's). The daisy, as well as being the early LMH emblem, was likewise the name of a LMH student



“This idea of the flower signifying a new beginning and forward progress in the early decades of women’s education was a significant one in Oxford.”



publication which ran in the 1890s, copies of which are held in the Library’s special collections.

In 1928, to mark the Hall’s Jubilee, the crest was changed to the shield we know today, recognising key individuals linked to our foundation: Bishop Edward Talbot, Elizabeth Wordsworth and the College’s namesake, Lady Margaret Beaufort. The original daisy emblem continues to make its presence felt in our historic collections. The covers of early volumes of *The*

Brown Book bear its image, and early student group photographs show the students on the steps of the Wordsworth Building, sitting beneath the stone carved daisies that adorn the lintels above the doors. This placement was no accident; Elizabeth Wordsworth wrote how she intended for them to catch the earliest rays of the morning sun, signifying the optimism and drive of our first Principal and early students.

Digitised copies of *The Fritillary* can be viewed at:
www.firstwomenatoxford.ox.ac.uk/joint-publications.
 More information about student magazine *The Daisy* can be found at: www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/about-lmh/lmh-objects/daisy.

5 Minutes With...

Andrew Williams

Visiting Students are an important part of our undergraduate community, and the numbers who join us are growing year-on-year. We caught up with Director of Visiting Students **Andrew Williams** to find out more about our Visiting Student programme.

Tell us about your role

A large part of my job involves encouraging our Visiting Students to make the most of their time here with us. I'm constantly urging them to embrace fully the broad range of academic, social, cultural, intellectual and personal opportunities available at Oxford. I also assist them in navigating the academic and cultural differences between their home countries and Oxford, helping them grow and develop as individuals. Another key aspect of my role is to coordinate the tutorials for many of the Visiting Students. This is something I particularly enjoy, as it gives me the opportunity to work with colleagues across the College to ensure our students are placed with the best possible tutors.

How has the College's Visiting Student programme evolved?

Since joining LMH in 2021, I have seen the programme grow. Through various recruitment trips, we've expanded our network of partner institutions, thus reducing our reliance on larger groups coming from a small number of US universities. This expansion has allowed for a more diverse group of Visiting Students to join us here in Oxford, enriching the experience for everyone involved.

What do you think Visiting Students bring to life at the College?

The students bring an incredible level of enthusiasm, which is truly inspiring to witness. For many, studying at Oxford represents the fulfilment of a lifelong

dream and they are committed to making the most of the opportunity. They dive into collegiate life, taking full advantage of everything LMH has to offer. I think the degree-seeking students also benefit from the chance to interact with such a diverse group of peers, as it allows them to engage with perspectives and experiences they might not otherwise encounter.

What do Visiting Students appreciate most about being here?

The most frequent feedback I receive from Visiting Students is their appreciation for the welcoming community they find here. They are genuinely grateful for the support available to them, and are often delighted by how well they are integrated into the College. They also mention repeatedly how much they enjoy the tutorial system, especially its impact on their intellectual and academic growth, and how much they will miss its unique challenges when they return home.

What do you find most fulfilling about your role?

Being part of a team that facilitates life-changing experiences for young people, and getting to interact with them throughout their Visiting Student journey. It's a privilege to witness the growth of our students and to contribute to their transformative time at Oxford. On a more personal note, as I walk through the beautiful LMH gardens, I'm very pleased and happy to work in such a stunning environment!



Visiting Students at LMH

- 60+ Visiting Students per year
- 124 Visiting Student applications in 2024-25 year
- Visiting Student numbers have grown by 100% in the past 10 years
- 1/3 of Visiting Students join for whole academic year
- 2/3 of Visiting Students join for one to two terms



LMH IS FOR LIFE

By giving to LMH today, you are contributing to tomorrow. Be part of our continuing story: leaving a legacy costs nothing today, but will make a huge difference to the next generation

“I fell in love with LMH on my first visit and studying for my masters was a dream come true. When I had unexpected financial struggles, College gave me both financial and moral support. I will be forever grateful for this and as soon as I started working again, I set up a monthly gift and included LMH in my will so that future students could have access to the support that meant so much to me.”

Hannah Spens-Black
(2012, MSc African Studies)

What will your legacy be?

To find out more about leaving a legacy to LMH, please contact Carrie Scott at:

carrie.scott@lmh.ox.ac.uk

or by calling: **+44 (0)1865 611024**.



Events Calendar 2025-26

Please find below our upcoming programme of events. Additional events are being planned all the time, and the most up-to-date list and booking information can be found on the website at: www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events. You will be notified of events by email, so please ensure your details are up to date.

We will also post updates via Facebook (**LMHOxford**), Instagram (**@LMHOxford**) and LinkedIn. Please contact the Development Team on: (0) +44 1865 274362 if you have any questions or require booking assistance.

May 2025

Summer Vllls Dinner

Saturday 31st May

Drinks 7.30pm; dinner 8pm. Black Tie (Boat Club blazers encouraged).

June 2025

Principal's Summer Lunch

(by invitation)

Saturday 28th June

For Wordsworth, Talbot & Principal's Circles and Volunteer Network members.

Alumni Garden Party

Saturday 28th June

Featuring an 'In Conversation' with sculptor Conrad Shawcross (1996, Fine Art). Afternoon tea; live music; storytelling for children; art exhibition; garden games and more. Gardens open 2pm; ends 5pm.

September 2025

Pre-1960 Reunion Lunch

Saturday 20th September

Reunion lunch followed by afternoon tea in the Gardens. From 11am to 5pm.

1965 - 60th Anniversary Reunion Lunch

Saturday 20th September

Anniversary reunion lunch followed by afternoon tea in the Gardens. From 11am to 5pm.

1975 - 50th Anniversary Reunion Lunch

Saturday 20th September

Anniversary reunion lunch followed by afternoon tea in the Gardens. From 11am to 5pm.

Gaudy for 1984 - 1988 (Dinner)

Saturday 20th September

Tea in the gardens, drinks reception and dinner, followed by an 80s disco. Gardens open from 3pm; ends 11.30pm. B&B accommodation available.

October 2025

Beaufort Circle Lunch (by invitation)

Saturday 18th October

For Legacy donors.

November 2025

New Alumni Event

November (tbc)

Music event in London for new alumni up to 10 years out.

Principal's Michaelmas Round Table (by invitation)

Saturday 15th November

Online event for Principal's Circle members.

December 2025

Alumni Christmas Carols

Friday 5th December

Carol concert in the Chapel.

February 2026

Founders & Benefactors Dinner (by invitation)

Friday 6th February

A celebration of the College and its benefactors.

London Alumni City Networking Event

Thursday 26th February

Informal London drinks.

March 2026

Online Wordsworth Lecture

Sunday 15th March

Delivered by Dr Eleanor Conole, Junior Research Fellow in Applied AI, exploring how AI can help unravel the complexities of aging, brain health, and the immune system.

MA & Reunion Dinner for 2018

Saturday 21st March

When is your Gaudy?

Saturday 19th September 2026

- Pre-1960 Reunion Lunch
- 1966 - 60th Anniversary Reunion Lunch
- 1976 - 50th Anniversary Reunion Lunch
- Gaudy for 1997-2001 (Dinner)

Saturday 18th September 2027 (provisional date)

- Pre-1960 Reunion Lunch
- 1967 - 60th Anniversary Reunion Lunch
- 1977 - 50th Anniversary Reunion Lunch
- Gaudy for 2002-2006 Gaudy (Dinner)

For more information and bookings, please contact us by email: development@lmh.ox.ac.uk or by telephone: +44 (0) 1865 274362

