

# LMH News

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# PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

**S**ilent corridors, deserted quads, wilding gardens. A locked library, an empty dining hall, an unvisited chapel. Untouched books, uncollected mail, unwalked paths.

LMH has been a ghostly place during lockdown. Yes, there have been a few dozen students here – those trapped when the shutters came down and some with nowhere they can easily call home. But even the few in College have tended to keep to their rooms and buried themselves in work. Most of the staff who keep the place fed, watered and cleaned were furloughed. In the Senior Common Room – locked in the third week of March – yellowing newspapers announcing the impending End of Freedom lay curling at the edges.

Which is not to say the College came to a standstill. Far from it: within the blink of an eye it transformed itself into a different kind of community. Tutorials carried on – but through the ether rather than across a book-strewn room in Deneke or Fyfield. Courses and reading lists were adjusted in an instant. Examinations were re-organized. Lectures followed everything else into an online realm of Zoom, Teams, Canvas and FaceTime.

It was remarkable to watch an ancient University – and a not-so-ancient College – adapt so swiftly and smoothly to the new and urgent reality. As I write, exams have been taken and the marks are trickling in. It has been a term like no other and yet we have battled through to keep the show on the road. None of it has been easy – and there's no doubt that great stresses have been placed on students, tutors and staff alike. There were some exhausted faces by the end of Trinity Term, but somehow we got there.

But "there" is an uncertain and temporary destination. Where have we got?



Again, as I write in early July, the expectation is that a face-to-face Michaelmas Term will happen – and that much of it will involve the re-opening of corridors, quads, libraries, labs and lodges. But much uncertainty lingers on. For weeks now bursars have been pacing their estates with measuring tapes calculating how many they can imagine safely accommodating, how many can safely eat, wash and sleep. Suppose two metres of separation? Or "one +" metres? Throw in a second wave or a spike or two. How many members of the community need special shielding? How can we create one-way corridors? How many sittings for lunch?

Some other leading universities – faced with such ambiguity and uncertainty – have announced they will largely continue as online communities, at least for the winter. But Oxford has decided that – if at all possible – we should be open for business. The overwhelming majority of students, staff and tutors feel the same – and so we will do all we can to make it happen.

Our teams – welfare, academic, maintenance, administration, communication and more – have done a remarkable job to keep the show on some sort of road. Tutors and students have rapidly adapted to new ways of learning and teaching. Some of the hastily-invented solutions may even turn out to be permanent. But, in the main, nearly everyone is longing to return to a world of physical and human interaction; of collegiality and conviviality; of warmth and friendship.

I haven't mentioned money. In the early weeks there were some nail-biting moments for our Treasurer, Andrew, and the College Accountant, Kelly. The truth is that the Oxford system of undergraduate tutorial education is – even at the best of times – not a functioning business model on its own.



The fact that the “poorer” colleges such as LMH can keep their heads above water is down to extras – such as the thriving Easter and summer conferences and academic programmes. But, of course, this year these evaporated overnight, leaving gaping holes in the College’s profit and loss. We can, of course, borrow and trust that, within a reasonably short period of time, some sort of “normality” returns. But these are anxious times for us financially, as well on most other fronts. We are immensely grateful to alumni who have contributed donations to help us through; at the time of writing over £130,000 has been raised. Thank you so much.

In the middle of Covid there came the terrible killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis – and the subsequent waves of protest and remembrance around the world. Oxford was not exempt from having to reflect on issues of representation, curricula and iconography.

At LMH we collaborated with our Black students and with other colleges in making statements affirming our support for the main aims of the Black Lives Matter movement. We hosted fascinating conversations with two leading thinkers about universities and race – the Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Sir Hilary Beckles, and the Associate Professor of African Politics at Oxford, Simukai Chigudu (see page 16).

We have also set up a working group to consider how to make LMH welcoming to potential students, staff and tutors from all backgrounds and to support them while at university. This dovetails with our work on the “Include” and “Support” streams of our strategy, which aim to make LMH as diverse and supportive a community as we can.

We have made real progress already. Out of 29 colleges, over three years of admissions, LMH is third for admitting Black students; fifth for Asian students; second for female students; third for state school students; and sixth for BME students; as well as being in second and fifth places on the two main metrics used to measure disadvantage.

As I write, the first honour examination result for the first cohort of our pioneering Foundation Year has just dropped. David Howard-Baker, who arrived in October 2016 as a music student, has received the happy news that he achieved First Class Honours in his Finals.

As he recounts in his article on page 26, David came here from Plymouth, where he attended his local comprehensive, the Lipson Cooperative Academy. He was not even sure about going to university when he stumbled across a notice about LMH’s intention to start a Foundation Year in Michaelmas Term 2016. On the spur of the moment – and with encouragement from a teacher – he applied.

In his four years at LMH David has blossomed as a performer, a composer and someone who is deeply interested in music in the community. He plans to combine a life of playing and making music with teaching – and it is certain he will inspire others like him to come to Oxford for many years to come.

None of this would have been possible without the generosity of so many alumni who have supported the scheme, which will soon be rolled out across both Oxford and Cambridge universities, we offer our profound gratitude. David is the first example of how an active quest for diversity of all sorts doesn’t imply a lowering of standards. [The overall standard for the first Foundation Year cohort graduating this year was a 2:1]. We hope to welcome many more like him in the future.

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We are always very pleased to hear your comments and feedback, so please do get in touch with the Development Office on the above telephone number, or by emailing [development@lmh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development@lmh.ox.ac.uk), to let us know what you think of this issue.



# STUDENT LIFE

Writing in the middle of a very unusual Trinity Term, and locked down in very different LMH, some members of the JCR give an insight as to what life has been like in College for them.



## Jake Pickering, Foundation Year student

***“Although the workload is regular and the gardens are blooming in their summer shades, the context of all this couldn’t be further from normal.”***

It’s weird thinking that we are in term time. Although the workload is regular and the gardens are blooming in their summer shades, the context of all this couldn’t be further from normal. Over the past few weeks it has felt like an extended vacation. With the lack of human contact, and the edition of limited study resources to help with examinations, it is a struggle to even be motivated to do what we need to do.

Working face to face with tutors has been one attempt of the university to keep things running normally. However, it has been interesting moving teaching online. Trialing platforms left, right and centre was the main focus for the first few weeks. We know that the challenges of digital teaching are new to many tutors and appreciate the hard work they have put in to help us. As I am a Foundation Year student studying Experimental Psychology, I haven’t got exams at the end of this term. Instead, I have been completing an online research project. As the nature of the

project would be the same if we were not in lockdown, I feel as if I haven’t missed out – unlike some other peers.

With the upcoming exams, with the few finalists here it is clear to see the stress of it. We non-finalists all feel sorry for them. The provisions for certain subjects have been unrealistic for some, and timings, although slightly longer, are even harder to adhere to with no pressure to work from peers in the exam school. Even the post-exam events aren’t happening in the same way. Especially for those expecting trashings to happen left, right and centre. It does make you wonder what is the home equivalent? Spraying silly string on yourself and jumping into the bath? It doesn’t seem to be the same really. It is also a real shame that I could be seeing people for the last time in 8<sup>th</sup> week, without a proper chance to say goodbye.





## Nina Morris-Evans, 2017 PPE

### What is it like to be living on site right now and working entirely digitally?

Life in college is very peaceful as a result of lockdown and coronavirus. The site is generally quiet, and the beautiful weather has made it a serene and special place to be during such a strange time. I don't have all that much interaction with the staff side of college, but I'm aware they're all still working behind the scenes to keep things ticking over. For example, when the water supply unfortunately cut off, we were kept in the loop and the problem was fixed very quickly given the difficult circumstances!

My routine has become very Sutherland-centric, and I often don't leave the building until an evening run when I'm done with the day's work. I live on the first floor, but use the second-floor kitchen to cook and eat, and the fourth-floor kitchen to work in (which was very kindly left unlocked for me by the scouts, despite it officially being closed down). The thing that gives me the most joy is the balcony: every morning I take my porridge and tea out onto the balcony and look out over LMH before I start revision for the day, and I am writing this account sitting out on it. It's allowed me to get fresh air and some beautiful sunshine even while I'm revising, and I feel very very grateful for it. I've been far more focussed than I normally would be during an Oxford term – I'm a massive extrovert, so when there are other people around I will inevitably want to hang out and be in

their company. The fact that there's only one other person who uses the kitchen, and we often don't cross paths, means I can spend my entire day without speaking to someone if I choose to. Very much to my surprise, I have found this really liberating, and it's allowed me to tackle finals revision in a calm and considered way, without distractions or anxieties. I've realised how protective I've come to feel over LMH and how I view it completely differently to how I do during an Oxford term.

In the evenings, when I'm done revising, I go to Port Meadow for a run, which again is totally stunning at this time of year. There are often dozens of cows and horses in my path and it feels like a massive privilege to have such a beautiful space so close. Sometimes I jump in the river and go for a little swim as well on a hot day. When I'm back at LMH I cook, something I've been spending a lot more time on than I used to. I get the locally sourced Veg Box that has continued delivering during corona, so I often make lentil dishes, roast vegetables, or stir fries with lovely fresh veg. There's a group of five of us who have decided we're a "household" within the bigger household of LMH, so I eat my dinner with them, and then we sometimes watch a film or go out for a walk. We've been learning to skateboard, which has been a huge highlight of lockdown. Oxford is beautiful at sundown, and speeding along the empty roads on a skateboard is very exhilarating!

### The highs, lows and differences compared to a normal term

Some of the highs have been the Friday night dinners I've shared with the group of five people here. I am Jewish, and was apprehensive about doing Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) without either my family, or the Oxford Jewish Society, which had played a huge role in my time in Oxford. Friday night dinner in particular was how I marked the end of the week and the beginning of a day of rest (I don't study on a Saturday). So to delineate this, I decided that every Friday I would cook for the five of us, and make it special. I've been getting very carried away making homemade hummus, baba ganoush, ratatouille, tabbouleh and curries. I've even started baking bread, with bagels being a regular feature.

Another massive high has been watching the LMH grounds blossom. The flower meadow quod is beginning to look absolutely gorgeous, and it's been lovely to track its progress, along with the huge gardens. It's very special to be able to wander around them or have a beautiful picnic spot at my fingertips.

I don't really have a low – I miss people, of course, but overall I'm aware that I have found it much easier to prepare for finals without any comparison to worry about, and I speak to my friends on the phone regularly. During term, I generally work in libraries outside of College, often leaving before 8 am for a swim at Iffley, and not getting back until after the Social Science Library shuts at 10 pm. Lockdown has really given me the opportunity to properly spend time in LMH and appreciate it as much as it deserves.

## Petra Manuel, 2019 MSc Energy Systems

### Beyond the empty streets and buildings: My life during the lockdown

These past two months have been quite challenging for me as a taught MSc student. The lockdown has not only limited my Oxford experience, which I was waiting for since 2018, but also made some academic activities more difficult to perform. However, every cloud has a silver lining. With the more tranquil circumstances given the curfew, I got to contemplate my life in general and the process of getting a seat in the Energy Systems programme in one of the best universities in the world, which I otherwise would not have been able to do with my normal, busy activities.

In a normal term, the MSc Energy Systems class has been tremendous, with a balanced combination of lectures from both academic and industrial speakers, in-class activities (such as games, presentations and group discussions) and site visits. Fortunately for my class, the teachings were concluded by the third week of March, just before the lockdown announcement. The group case study, however, was quite impacted by the pandemic: we moved to all-online communications via Microsoft





**FAR LEFT** LMH's MCR

**LEFT** The garden in summer during lockdown

Teams and Zoom. Despite this restriction, we were able to enjoy the work process and got the report done in time.

The facilities at LMH were sufficient at the least. Aside from my own room in the Cottage, the Middle Common Room provided me with a space to study and interact with other postgrad students – of course, with the social distancing measures in place. This truly supports us with a spirit of camaraderie in finishing our studies strongly, especially for those who will only stay for one academic year. Also, the vast gardens and the proximity to the University parks definitely helped, as we were able to have a walk or a jog, which I loved very much, when bored with our readings and writings. Last but not least, we were able to get better pictures of some Oxford landmarks, without the disturbances of the crowds! Truthfully, the lockdown slowed the work progress of each one of us, in particular our dissertations, and increased the complexity of the process of seeking a job or further educational opportunities. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, this lockdown gave me resilience and invigorated my belief that once we see these hardships through, we will come out stronger than ever before.

## Eugenio Graceffo, 2019 MSc Neuroscience

### What is it like to be living on site right now and working entirely digitally?

The answer to that question? It's interesting! Working on an entirely computational project was definitely not planned. My second rotation of the MSc in Neuroscience was planned to happen during Trinity Term. I was supposed to

work in Richard Wade-Martin's lab with cell culture. A very "hands-on" project. Instead, we came up with a project that could be done completely remotely. Transcriptomics! I have always been intrigued by the computational side of neuroscience, but I have been too afraid of the coding component to fully commit to a computational project. I have to say, I'm absolutely loving it! Despite everything that is going on, I feel like I was lucky enough to take advantage of the situation in a positive way. As an Oxford student, I believe this is what we are good at doing: we are faced with a problem/difficulty and we make the most of the situation.

The beginning was definitely not easy. The uncertainty of the near future, countries closing their borders, people packing and rushing back to their families, cancelled flights and death tolls. The last two weeks of March were pretty intense. I wanted to go back to Italy, but Italy back then had the highest death toll. And, of course, my family lives in northern Italy, the most affected part of the country. After my flight home was cancelled for the third time, I eventually decided to stay here at LMH. Also, the college took great care of us. The staff and everyone at LMH managed the whole situation remarkably.

After these weeks of adjustments, I got used to the routine. Zoom meetings were weird at first, now they feel just normal. Working remotely has definitely taught us that a lot of face-to-face meetings can definitely be just emails! Cutting down on commute time meant being more productive. In some cases, even too productive! Not seeing people leaving the office while focusing on a project meant that I would occasionally find myself working 10–12 hours without realizing! Being able to attend seminars without having to commute, just by clicking on

a link, has been amazing. I attended so many interesting seminars by incredible speakers that I could never have attended in person due to time and location restraints. Every time I needed a break, I'd talk a walk in our gardens, I would sit on the bench by the river and just enjoy nature at its finest. Those breaks were useful to disconnect from the media and the updates about the death tolls too. I have to be honest, at times they were overwhelming. If there was a perfect place to isolate oneself during a pandemic, that would be LMH. How lucky I am!

Isolation has also been an opportunity to socialize. Zoom nights, Netflix parties, online board game nights, Face-Tea-Time. During a conversation over Zoom with my classmates, we were amazed at how lucky we were to have such tools to stay connected during a pandemic. We compared that to pandemics that affected humanity in the previous centuries, and felt lucky.

This has been a great time to practise the piano and the flute! And what better place to do it than in our Old Library?

### The highs, lows and differences compared to a normal term

I feel like the biggest difference compared to a normal term is social events. In particular, we all miss our formals. That magic night where you could not think of work, dress up and enjoy a delicious dinner inside our majestic dining hall, together with all your friends.

Highs: socializing online, less wasting time on the commute, worldwide seminars and e-learning, following my own schedule for work

Lows: no formals, no social events "with the human touch", no punting and no gymnastics!



# NOT THE ENDING I IMAGINED

**Malala Yousafzai, 2017 PPE**

In March, I packed up a few things from my room at Oxford University—books, shoes, clothes—enough for the three-week Easter break. Months later, I am still at home with my parents.

Throughout the spring, I took classes by Zoom and final exams in my bedroom. In June, I graduated in the backyard. I returned to Oxford for only two hours, to collect my remaining belongings and move out for the last time. The bushes and lawn were overgrown. The food-delivery drivers had vanished. Everywhere on campus was quiet.

Like other 2020 graduates, this was not the ending I imagined. At the start of the academic year, I told myself I would walk every street in Oxford, take pictures of every beautiful garden, drink tea in every café, and eat in every dining hall on campus, especially the Harry Potter one at Christ Church. This was my last chance to see, hear, touch, and taste it all—and I missed it.

This felt like such a loss because education is so much more than a reading list or a syllabus. For many of us, college is our first real experience with independence. We set our own schedules—even small decisions like what to eat or how to spend a Sunday are thrilling. In my early days at Oxford, a senior student told me that university life is sleeping, studying, and socializing—and you can only pick two. I found it hard to do even two, so study and sleep were mostly sacrificed.

I attended cricket matches and college balls. I joined the Pakistan Society and the Oxford Union. Far too often, my friends convinced me to abandon my studies and go to a debating society or a pub. I don't drink, but being the only sober one in a group of students arguing over Brexit is its own fascination.

I watched Rick and Morty or The Big Bang Theory and left my assignments until the last possible minute, submitting many uncommendable essays. I stayed awake until 5 a.m. to see the sun rise over the gardens. I still haven't mastered laundry.

I listened to inspiring lectures from some of the world's greatest thinkers and



leaders. But I learned as much or more from my peers. And I am still learning every day from young people.

Like me, they step out into a reeling world—a global pandemic, an economic recession, racism, inequality, and a most uncertain future. According to researchers at UCLA, the class of 2020 may not recover from professional and financial setbacks for 10 years.

Yet we have long understood that a lot of work will fall on our shoulders. We watched while those in power failed to protect refugees and religious minorities, stop attacks on schools, ensure justice for Black and brown people, or even acknowledge that climate change exists. We have grown up knowing that the world we inherit will be broken.

In many ways, we are more prepared for the current crisis because we've had a lot of practice fighting for change. I was 11 years old when I started advocating for girls' education in Pakistan—and 15 when the Taliban tried to kill me for speaking out.

Licypriya Kangujam was only seven when she challenged politicians in India for their failure to enact climate change laws. Eleven-year-old Naomi Wadler quieted a crowd of thousands at the 2018 March for Our Lives in Washington, D.C., when she urged them to remember Black girls and women affected by gun violence. After her family fled Somalia's civil war, Hamdia Ahmed spent the first seven years of her life in a refugee camp; by the time she was a teenager, she was campaigning for displaced people everywhere. And, of course, there's my friend Greta Thunberg.

I could fill every page of this magazine with the names and stories of young people, especially girls, who have sparked movements, used technology to solve a problem in their communities, created art to show the world from their perspective, and so much more. A willingness to work hard for change and the courage to believe we can achieve our goals are defining qualities of my generation.

I did not get to say goodbye to my friends at Oxford. My classmates have gone home to 140 countries around the world. But I know I will see them and the global class of 2020 again. I will see them advocating for voting rights and strengthening our democracies. I'll see them protecting our planet. I'll see them fighting racism and injustice. And they'll see me, every day for the rest of my life, working for education, equality, and women's rights.

I'm often asked to give advice to children and I tell them, "You don't have to wait to be an adult to be a leader." Young people are leading, but our world has too many problems for one generation to solve. So today my advice is for our elders: It's not too late for you to change.

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# FROM THE BURSAR

**Bart Ashton** has been a familiar face at the college for over 17 years, steering the College community as Bursar. Hilary Term 2020 was arguably one of his most challenging. Writing in May, he gives his viewpoint on seeing LMH through the current pandemic.

**M**y role as Domestic Bursar at LMH has changed significantly since 2003 but it has always involved working with different teams to provide services within a safe, supportive, facilitating and inspiring environment. We've been proud of our ability to manage change, and even innovate, but we – like many others – have just found out what delivering deep and rapid change is really like.

Until the end of Hilary Term 2020 the college was home to 490 residential students and a home from home to around 200 academic and non-academic staff. The first indications that 2020 might not be as great as we hoped came to us in January. Several commercial bookings we had in place for Chinese delegates making trips during the Spring Festival were cancelled in quick succession. That was also our first introduction to the new art of re-risk assessing everyday activities with limited information, to protect our resident population against an unknown hazard. On 11 February the hazard was given a name: COVID-19.

Our Chinese visitors gave us an early warning but the full implications of the emerging outbreak were not clear to us for another few weeks. Increasingly, conversations turned to the same topic. Committee meetings in the second half of term had new agenda items added – Health and Safety Committee, Finance Committee, and Governing Body not least. Contingency planning meetings were held in late February and early March to better understand where we would need to change our plans and look at alternative arrangements over the coming months. But, even then, the focus was on how we would manage to keep on delivering the usual services if members of our student and staff bodies were unwell. No one was predicting that Oxford's bustling streets would end up



empty and closed like Wuhan or Beijing.

Although the eighth week of Hilary Term wasn't exactly normal it was pretty close. The residential areas of the college were full; all of the staff were working, classes and tutorials continued; thousands of meals were served in Hall, including the last formal hall of the term on Friday 13 March. There were some signs of change though: we learned that two LMH students had returned to Oxford in the last few days from Japan and northern Italy. We put into place our first self-isolation regimes for them; we fielded numerous requests from students asking urgently whether they could stay in College as they couldn't now travel as planned during the Easter Vac; and the only information we were showing on our display screens around the site was about how to wash your hands properly. The first cases of COVID-19 at Oxford University were confirmed. I was asked for the first time that week "Will the University close?"...

The term dates worked well for us: over the weekend of 14/15 March several hundred students left the College, as expected, for the vacation. We were provided with a resource that has become very valuable in this new

world: space. The population density of the college was halved and reduced further as submission deadlines were rescheduled and more students headed home. It was a time of huge uncertainty and conflicting information – most of the last students to leave that week did so in a rush as borders in Europe closed and last-chance tickets were secured. Across LMH, and across universities all over the UK, students abandoned their belongings and locked up their rooms expecting to return sometime next term. By March 23 there were just around 100 students left in the college. Almost all of the conference business that had been booked with us for the break had been cancelled. There had been no cases of COVID-19 confirmed at LMH but that was more to do with the UK's testing strategy than anything else; four students had been moved into our newly formed isolation wing in Deneke after presenting with recognisable symptoms.

In contrast with this decrease in residential numbers and site activities, our internal methods for managing the situation were ramping up. Up until the end of term we had used the remaining scheduled committee meetings, along with focussed planning meetings, to manage our response. Fellows were briefed at the Governing Body meeting on 11 March and administrative and domestic heads of departments were gathered for a special meeting on 16 March. With term over, the college implemented its Emergency Response Plan. It wasn't quite as straightforward as it sounds as the framework which had been prepared a few years earlier anticipated some kind of disaster as the most likely emergency: a single event with immediate repercussions rather than a slow-growing international crisis. However, two working groups were established – one dealing with the



immediate day-to-day and operational issues and one looking at tactical and relevant policy matters, with four or five people overlapping on both. They met every few days during March and in fact are still meeting two or three times a week as I write. For the meeting of department heads on 16 March, most people were physically present, with a couple of members dialling in, which itself was a novelty. By the end of the month all meetings were being held 100% remotely online.

Over the month from 16 March to the start of Trinity Term the scale of change required of us became apparent. Many readers will have been through their own paradigm shift over the same period; I don't believe LMH is vastly different but the following are the kinds of matters that were dealt with during this period.

There was an immediate shift to home working for administrative and academic staff. The biggest group was, of course, the academic staff and the timing at the end of term helped provide an opportunity for this transition for them. Also, around three-dozen administrative staff started working remotely, often from the kitchen table on an old laptop, bringing new specific requirements and obligations for the college as an employer.

This rapid transition led to huge changes, with dozens of individual hardware, software, connectivity and security issues amazingly and relentlessly tackled by our ICT team.

Support and advice was provided to all staff in vulnerable groups, or caring for those in a vulnerable group, helping them to self-isolate and stay safe.

We reworked our services as advice changed, e.g. moving from encouraging diners in Hall to keep their distance to mandating that they take away meals and then managing low demand from much smaller resident numbers. The library, gym, boathouse and so on were all also closed. Our Librarian, James Fishwick, and his team have been working ceaselessly ever since to increase the proportion of our books available online and to source new titles to keep up with demand.

We reduced the Gardens, Estates and Lodge team to an absolute safe minimum to comply with the Stay At Home message from 23 March.

One of the hardest transitions to manage was the change in

housekeeping services offered by our scouts team: the desire to support our students; the fact that many of the team were nervous about going into personal residential spaces, cleaning bathrooms and managing rubbish; and the large size of the team set against the fact that conference events now were not taking place, and the fact that site occupancy was less than 20%. In the end we settled on a split team model that allowed those staff who were not self-isolating to come in and work with colleagues in rotation, delivering greatly reduced services in residential spaces while catching up with the backlog of rooms abandoned at the end of term.

***“We had to establish at speed new methods of communication for all of our communities – once together but now disparate.”***

The College took swift advantage of the Government's Job Retention Scheme to be able to cover the costs of all this, with over 50% of support staff “furloughed” at any one time from the end of March. There was never any question that the College would make the Chancellor's 80% up to 100% for all staff.

We had to work almost individually with our 490 students to provide visibility of our rent expectations for Trinity Term whilst having no idea whether anyone would be able to come back at all. We agreed easily enough that we would not charge students who were not resident but even then we had to make sure we gave everyone clear guidance on which days would be charged, options to terminate their agreement or hold it open in case it would be possible to return, and so on.

We had to establish at speed new methods of communication for all of our communities – once together but now disparate. We found using a combination of social media and email/newsletters easy and effective in backing up the virtual meeting platforms, committees and working groups now established.

And, of course, there was the enormous effort by our academic tutors,

and by colleagues in their departments, to flex, bend, adjust, create, schedule and deliver teaching, revision and assessment in an entirely new way. The University had already subscribed to MS TEAMS, with a new virtual learning environment – Canvas – being rolled out this year and lecture recording software established for a couple of years, but take-up and use of these and other solutions rose from somewhat niche to mainstream between February and May.

And at the same time the Academic Office team supported the local roll-out of new central platforms for assessments, and also processes for students to record particular mitigating circumstances, which were introduced and delivered for all Oxford students. The idea of remote teaching and learning across the board for all Oxford students and the introduction of a completely new set of assessment techniques would have been unthinkable just a few months before. This has really challenged some seemingly axiomatic assumptions that Oxford has about itself, and will surely have lasting consequences. But for now the students who have worked on through Trinity Term 2020 have done so bombarded with information and novel requirements but determinedly and compassionately supported by their College.

As I said, I don't believe this is a unique journey by any means, but the foregoing paragraphs highlight what have been the defining features of this whirlwind time for the college. Our feedback from students, whether they're in Norham Gardens or elsewhere, has been positive. They've appreciated that we've made sensible and timely decisions, that we've invited them to discuss their concerns with us and that even in this new environment we've been able to communicate effectively without making too much of everything.

We've already begun to imagine what we will need to do to open the college up again and have started making adjustments in the real world, as well as the virtual world, to make sure we are ready for the prevailing public health position, government guidance and general willingness to mingle in the autumn. We don't know quite how it will all look at the moment but we are determined to make sure it feels like LMH when it happens.





***"I was the Programme Scientist for space telescopes that observed the visible and ultraviolet light emitted by objects beyond our own solar system."***

**T**he year 2019 at the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) Headquarters, Washington D.C., was as exciting for me as the last 25 years had been. I arrived at NASA in 1994 as Visiting Senior Scientist, from the NASA-funded Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI), Baltimore, where I was the Optical Telescope Assembly (OTA) Scientist, responsible for analyzing and monitoring the optical performance of the Hubble Space Telescope and its science instruments. I had been enticed into joining STScI by fellow Oxonian, Colin Norman, who I met when I landed in Baltimore in 1985 with my husband and two infant sons, having traversed three continents since my DPhil in Nuclear Physics in 1976. At STScI, I started an Oxbridge collaboration with the Cantabrian Chris Burrows. I led the development of the optical simulation software for Hubble, which turned out to be instrumental in our analysis and characterization of the optical performance of the primary mirror of Hubble after its launch in 1990, and in designing the fix that restored Hubble's vision in 1992. I had also switched my research field to astronomy, publishing papers on stellar dynamics. Incidentally, 1992 was the year I became a U.S. citizen.

Though the euphoria of being a part of the team that worked on fixing Hubble in its first years will never subside, even as Hubble, in its 30<sup>th</sup> year, continues its amazing discoveries, I decided in 1994 that I wanted to be a part of the policymaking, budget and science management of NASA flight missions. At NASA Headquarters, I manage research programmes and flight missions. I was the Programme Scientist for space telescopes that observed the visible and ultraviolet light emitted by objects beyond our own solar system. The missions I managed include the iconic International Ultraviolet Explorer (IUE), the Hopkins Ultraviolet Telescope aboard the Astro-2 mission, the Far Ultraviolet Spectroscopic Explorer (FUSE), the Orbiting

# FROM OXFORD TO NASA

**Hashima Hasan** (1973 DPhil Theoretical Physics) tells us about her stellar career at NASA.



**RIGHT** Hashima and some of her NASA colleagues

**FAR RIGHT** Hashima receiving her Exceptional Performance Award in 2008

Retrievable Far and Extreme Ultraviolet Spectrometer (ORFEUS) launched on the Space Shuttle for a 14-day mission, the Extreme Ultraviolet Explorer (EUVE), and the Hubble Space Telescope. In addition to visible and ultraviolet missions, I also managed Gravity Probe – B, a mission to test two predictions of Einstein's theory of General Relativity; the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA), an airborne observatory on a modified Boeing 747 SP aircraft; and the Wide-field Infrared Spectroscopic Explorer (WISE), which surveyed the infrared sky. In 2019, I took under my wing the Nuclear Spectroscopic Telescope Array (NuSTAR), which is an X-ray telescope that is used to study collapsed stars and black holes, understand how stars explode and elements are created, and to study relativistic jets from extreme active galaxies hosting supermassive black holes, and other extreme phenomena emitting X-rays. Ground-breaking discoveries by these missions on the formation and interaction of stars, galaxies, and phenomena in the Universe can be found at <https://science.nasa.gov>.

One of the most challenging astrophysics missions at NASA, which I am currently Deputy Programme Scientist of, is the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), which is scheduled to launch from Kourou, French Guiana, in 2021. Like many of NASA's missions which are built through international partnership, JWST partners are the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). ESA is providing the launch vehicle, and the French Ariane 5, Near Infrared Spectrograph (NIRSpec), and there is a NASA-ESA partnership on the Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI). The ESA Principal Investigator for MIRI is Dr. Gillian Wright, Director of the UK Astronomy Technology Centre in Edinburgh, Scotland. She hosted a Science Working Group meeting in Edinburgh in 2019, which gave me an opportunity to visit the UK again. Although I couldn't visit Oxford, I did spend a couple of days in London



and finally visited Windsor Castle, which I had not succeeded in visiting while at Oxford! JWST is now in its final stages of testing at Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems, CA. I got an opportunity in September 2019 to view the telescope with its enormous (6.4 m) folding mirror, integrated with the spacecraft bus and the huge frame on which the sunshield (the size of a tennis court) was to be mounted.

I am also the Programme Scientist for NASA's participation in the W.M. Keck Observatory (WMKO) on top of Mauna Kea, Hawaii, which provided me with my annual visit to Waimea, though I did manage half a day on the sunny beaches of Waikaloa! The twin telescopes at WMKO enable NASA-funded scientists to advance the science from NASA flight missions, such as confirming extrasolar planets and doing follow-up observations to study their characteristics. Another exciting experience in 2019 worth mentioning is my visit, as NASA Astrophysics Education Lead, to SOFIA, with a group of teachers



who are a part of NASA's Airborne Astronomy Ambassadors Program. Flying aboard an airborne observatory and watching astronomers in action is an out-of-the-world experience.

In addition to the responsibilities mentioned above, I lead the NASA Astrophysics Archives. As we enter the era of big data management, my goal is to set the Archives on a strong path towards efficiently archiving data from NASA missions and making it publicly available with user friendly interfaces and tools. To that end, I have set up a committee of experts to review the Archives and provide NASA advice. I am also the Astrophysics Strategic Management lead at a time when the U.S. National Academy is conducting a Decadal Survey to advise NASA and the National Science Foundation on the most important astrophysics science questions these agencies should plan for. I continue to participate in managing research programmes, which include cutting edge technology development of detectors, mirrors, mirror coatings, and payloads on suborbital platforms, such as sounding rockets, balloons, cubesats.

While 2019 marked my 20 years as a NASA Civil Servant, I am not yet ready to throw in my hat. My goal is to see JWST launch, set the Archives on a strong path forward, and develop an implementation plan for NASA following the Decadal Survey. I will then be ready to spend more time with my four grandchildren and see the world with my husband, and hopefully visit Oxford once again.



**NASA's social media highlighting Hashima's work**



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*"My research agenda aims to broaden our understanding of refugeehood, in favour of concrete, just and practical solutions that centre on the self-determination of the dispossessed."*

# FROM GUERRILLA CAMPS TO LMH

**Dr Dilar Dirik joins LMH as the new Joyce Pearce JRF**



I am a political sociologist and the Joyce Pearce Junior Research Fellow, funded by Ockenden International and based at Lady Margaret Hall, in conjunction with the Refugee Studies Centre, which is part of the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford.

In my childhood, my parents and I were forced to flee Turkey to seek asylum in Germany, due to the war and the political persecution of the Kurdish people. In recent years, the Middle East region has experienced unprecedented scales of mass displacement and forced migration, even leading to episodes of genocide and irreversible historical and ecological destruction. Over the years, I have led high-profile international academic and political delegations to Syria and Iraq to raise awareness of the situation of refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in the region. My public writing on women's struggles in Kurdistan has been translated into various languages. From my own personal and academic perspective, I believe that the recurrence of such tragedies can only be tackled in a manner that is compassionate towards affected communities, but critical

towards international and local political, cultural, social and economic systems and discourses that perpetuate injustice and violence. My scholarship is in this sense strongly motivated by an activist concern for peace and social justice.

My doctoral thesis, which I submitted to the Sociology Department at the University of Cambridge in 2018, analysed Kurdish women's political subjectivity in the context of large-scale violence to understand gendered processes of self-making and political formations beyond the state project. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in guerrilla camps and self-proclaimed revolutionary communes across Kurdistan, including autonomous community-run refugee camps. Focusing on women's social and political struggles, especially in the fight against the so-called Islamic State group, I examined movements' articulations of autonomy and freedom, and how these inform communities' political imaginations. I particularly engage with non-Western feminist theories and practices of autonomy, politics, democracy, and liberation, with consideration of intersections between patriarchy,

capitalism, the state and colonialism. This research will be published in my forthcoming book *The Kurdish Women's Movement: History, Theory, Practice*, available from summer 2021.

My new research focuses on two timely issues around displacement in the Middle East region. The first project considers layers of statelessness and self-determination by focusing on autonomously-run refugee camps in the majority Kurdish regions of Iraq and Syria, and the different ways in which they relate to local self-declared self-governing institutions. What can we learn about democracy beyond the nation-state by looking at alternative practices of self-determination that challenge dominant international structures? Secondly, I am interested in women's quests for justice in the aftermath of the violence inflicted by the so-called Islamic State group. In general, I am interested in investigating the intersections between state/statelessness, knowledge, and power. My research agenda aims to broaden our understanding of refugeehood, in favour of concrete, just and practical solutions that centre on the self-determination of the dispossessed.

# LMH AND THE REFUGEE TALES PROJECT

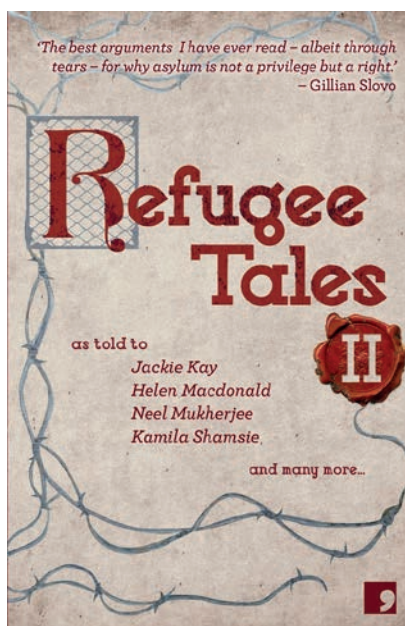
**Helen Barr, Vice-Principal and Fellow and Tutor in English, tells of a project with many LMH connections.**

**1** 5 February 2020 was one of the wettest and bleakest days of the year. Bad luck, then, that this was the day that the *Refugee Tales* Project scheduled a walk in Oxford. Or was it?

The aim of the *Refugee Tales* Project is to end the truly hostile environment in the UK, which detains asylum seekers indefinitely. The UK is the only European country (we just about remain European) that enforces such a policy.

Since 2015, the *Refugee Tales* Project has organised a large-scale walk every summer in solidarity with refugees, asylum seekers and people who have been held in immigration detention. Taking inspiration from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, established writers collaborate with migrants, those who have experienced the UK asylum system, and people with lived experience of detention to share tales during evening events. The tales are published by Comma Press. The collaboration between the voiced and the voiceless exposes what indefinite detention means. As the project walks it creates a space in which the language of welcome replaces the language of hostility. See: <https://www.refugeetales.org/>

This vital project might have escaped my notice except that one of our former English students (2014 Miles Chandler) wanted to work on these tales for an undergraduate dissertation on 21<sup>st</sup>-century responses to Chaucer. Miles was so inspirational that I kept abreast of the new *Refugee Tales* volumes and wrote an article about it (which can be found online here: <https://online.ucpress.edu/jmw/article/1/1/79/51032/Stories-of-the-New-GeographyThe-Refugee-Tales>). When I gave a lunchtime talk on 'Re-Negotiating the Language of Borders' on the *Refugee Tales* 2019 walk, I was



***"Detainees, asylum seekers, Oxford students and residents, and many supporters from disparate regions, sat and chatted, over tea and cake."***

delighted to meet up with two LMH alumnae who read English in 1979.

The LMH connections go further. The founders of the project are Anna Pincus and David Herd. David's daughter, Lily, has just completed her degree in Classics and English at LMH (2020). Our Honorary Fellow Marina Warner (1964 Modern Languages) wrote "The Mother's Tale", which is published in Volume II of *The Refugee Tales*, and in the same volume, our new Visiting Fellow, Kamila Shamsie, wrote "The Lover's

Tale". My LMH and English colleague, Sophie Ratcliffe, included the *Refugee Tales* in an inaugural English Faculty course (2019) called "Writing Lives".

So here we come back to 15 February 2020. Over 80 drenched people dumped a random collection of shoes and clothing in the stairwell to Talbot Hall after their nine-mile walk in solidarity along muddy canal paths and through soggy meadows. Detainees, asylum seekers, Oxford students and residents, and many supporters from disparate regions, sat and chatted, over tea and cake. We almost got dry. Miles, Lily, and our JRF in Refugee Studies, Dilar Dirik, talked with each other, and made many new friends from amongst all those present. Many of our company would never have dreamt they would ever set foot in the UK, let alone in a panelled, tapestried room in an Oxford college.

As I read some poetry, Edward Talbot's portrait looked me in the eye. I imagined a Harry Potter moment when the portraits come alive from their frames. Although Lavinia's portrait is not in Talbot Hall, I had a vision of both of them escaping their borders to join us in a space of welcome they created together.

The July 2020 walk happened online as a result of "lockdown". A written version of Kamila Shamsie's talk streamed on 3 July can be accessed here: [https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jul/04/the-uk-once-welcomed-refugees-now-we-detain-them-indefinitely-it-must-end?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jul/04/the-uk-once-welcomed-refugees-now-we-detain-them-indefinitely-it-must-end?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

Chaucer's pilgrims never quite reach their goal of Canterbury Cathedral. Their last recorded appearance is somewhere in a forest. It is my sincerest hope that these new tales end differently: that seeking asylum does not continue as a sentence with no full stop



# ALUMNA IN THE SPOTLIGHT

**Cynthia Hass** (2019) has just completed her MBA degree at the Saïd Business School. She now joins our alumni network of over 7,500 LMHers throughout the world. Cynthia writes about her involvement in The Girls Track, a project that aims to teach girls about science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, and she talks about what the future now holds for her having finished her degree at LMH.



## The Girls Track

In 2015, I helped start the Dell Girls Track, a three-day conference hosted and sponsored by Dell Computers, teaching girls about STEM education and giving them the opportunity to start a business, while also helping local entrepreneurs get access to resources they needed.

The girls pitched to investors, created marketing plans and even had the opportunity to design mock apps and websites. At the end of it, they pitched to Dell executives and had the chance to win devices, prizes and funding for their ideas.

## How it Started

At the time the Girls Track was started, I was a Youth Innovation Advisor for Dell, where we had the opportunity to pitch to Dell's leadership team on how to engage more young people in STEM.

We came up with several ideas – more diverse posters in classrooms, a better curriculum, you name it. But there was one idea that was itching inside of me, but I was too afraid to say it.

As I made my way back to the hotel I got together with another youth advisor. We chatted for a bit then something in my chest made me want to say something.

"Hey, can I ask you something?" I abruptly asked.

I told her how I was glad to have this opportunity, but I couldn't help but to think about all the people in the world who don't get the chance to come to events like this. I wondered, what if we gave more girls, especially those from more diverse backgrounds, this opportunity?

"You have to pitch that." That's how we engage girls, I remember her saying.

I stayed up till 3 am that night writing the idea out. Later that morning, we pitched it.

By July 2015, we were on the ground running in Berlin, partnering with organizations like the Girl Scouts and Seventeen Magazine. I remember taking calls on the road, and at markets, before remote work was commonplace.

## Workshops

There were a variety of workshops the girls attended, with a number of speakers and an extensive curriculum. We had entrepreneurs like Mikaila Ulmer from Me & The Bees not only teaching but also participating.

In addition, because the Track was a part of Dell's larger women's network that consists of 500 really incredible





women entrepreneurs and guests, we got to pick from a selection of speakers and talent to teach the girls; sometimes this included individuals like the CEO of the Girl Scouts, Anna Maria Chávez, to actor and environmentalist Adrian Grenier. The Track was designed so the girls could hear from experts in the industry, from engineers to journalists, ultimately showing the process of how an idea goes from inception and creation to distribution and marketing.

### Why it matters

We started in Berlin, and eventually made our way to South Africa, Singapore, Canada and the US. When you look at the women in tech, science and business today, we are still underrepresented, and to add to that, women of color are especially left behind.

But in order to have strong women, we have to ensure we have resilient girls. In order to ensure we have more women in leadership positions, we have to ensure more girls feel empowered from a young age, that they are given the opportunities to create, learn and to make mistakes, to learn, to grow and to keep paving their way. That's how the Girls Track was built and it's something I stand by today.

It's why I chose to study at Oxford versus any other business school, because the Saïd School cares about change, our teaching is focused on systems change.

### On my personal journey and transition

We saw girls who went from shy and too afraid to speak to booming on stage,

confident and pitching an entire new company in three days. It was amazing, and an incredible journey to watch.

I eventually left the Girls Track to start an impact agency, helping other brands build out their corporate responsibility, then I decided to take a leap, travel for a year and then found my way to Oxford, doing an MBA, and to a place that believes in the power of women and girls at its core, LMH. My passion for girls' education and women's empowerment was the reason I chose the college and it will be the reason I continue to engage with it even after school.

### What I'm working on now

As I wrap up my MBA I'm still passionate about diversity and helping people get access to opportunities. For this, I've started Project Mira, a platform to encourage and help get more diverse

voices and women in media, starting with content. You can find us here: <https://projectmira.org>

### Parting words

As I look back, I am reminded: never underestimate the itching you have inside, the power to lead and the will to do good, it will ultimately take you to where you are meant to be.



Our First Girls Track in 2015 (which, yes, included boys)



# AFTER RHODES

In the wake of the global protests over the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota many organisations and institutions took the opportunity to reflect on issues of race and justice. LMH has set up a working party to consider how the College can play its part in creating a more open and representative experience of education in Oxford. Many other faculties and colleges have done the same.

**W**e also organised two public conversations with leading Black intellectuals, Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies and a historian of slavery [HB]; and Simukai Chigudu, Associate Professor of African Politics and Fellow of St Antony's College [SC]. Both were moderated by our Principal, Alan Rusbridger. The virtual talks were very well attended; with the permission of our speakers they were recorded and links can be found on the LMH website (<https://tinyurl.com/y9sqltxf>). Here we look at some key takeaway points from these conversations.



Sir Hilary Beckles (top left) and Simukai Chigudu (top right) in conversation with the Principal



## On the Rhodes Must Hall (RMF) movement to remove a statue of Cecil Rhodes from Oriel College.

**HB:** "You have to understand how these symbols impact upon the descendants of victims [of slavery and colonial oppression]. I cannot imagine that if the Nazis had won the second world war, and they had colonised Britain and taken over Britain, which was their intention...there would continue to be a resistance of the British people. But the British people in this psychological and actual resistance, would have to go to university with statues of Hitler outside of the library.

Bear in mind that the law that made slavery possible, all the laws, the jurisprudence, that made slavery a legal institution, that jurisprudence came out of universities. said to my

colleagues at Oxford, "Now, each time black students walk around and see Rhodes, they see here is a man who is responsible for the genocide against my people. Here is a man who has committed crimes against humanity. Here is the man who has extracted the wealth from my community, to take my land and my resources and brought to England for empowerment. And therefore, here is a university that has his back, and not our back. We are students, and academics, and professors, and administrations here at Oxford. But Oxford has the back of the Apartheid criminals, the extractors and exploiters of wealth and colonisation. And my university does not have my back, and I am here as a student, as a professor".

**SC:** "Growing up in Zimbabwe Rhodes for me was both a kind of a symbol of a deep and painful history of structural and systemic racism and colonialism... but also he was more than a symbol. He was a historical actor that helped

set and train this pattern of colonialism that I'm describing, and a phenomenal degree of expropriation, exploitation of labour and expropriation of wealth from Southern Africa... And it just struck me as very, very bizarre that the arguments for keeping the statue in place really knew nothing about Rhodes's history and really downplayed the brutality of his colonialism and expropriation, and totally erased and hid from view the stories of African labour and life that had been, lost under the aegis of Cecil John Rhodes. This is not a kind of contemporary reading of that particular history. I mean, people fought actual wars against Rhodes. So, to say that he was opposed in his time, I mean, that's manifestly true in Southern Africa. So even if this was a normal artefact of the British empire, we would still have legitimate cause to ask that Oxford university is not simply a reflection of empire.

It's also a reflection of being ostensibly a cosmopolitan institute of

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***“Let’s pick a subject, let’s say history. Most of the history faculty is predominantly made up of historians of Britain...You’ve taught for your whole career, and you’ve never really had to think much about Black Britain, let alone histories from outside the North Atlantic world.”***

learning, and it owes a specific debt to the parts of the world where its estate had been built either through colonialism or slavery. So, I think in both senses, whether it’s internal to Britain or whether it’s part of this wider global history, we would be right to question the place of Rhodes.

For some people, the Rhodes statue and the pride of place it holds can be one that feels like quite an affront, and an affront that might be experienced in a psychic sense, if you like. For me, personally, it’s less about feeling personally injured, or feeling an assault on, say, my mental health. I’ve lived in, and I’ve been learning how to survive amongst White people for a long time. So I’ve kind of adopted. It’s more a sense of thinking about the values that my institution holds, and to what extent those values can be more critically self-reflexive and encouraged to accommodate, not only the kind of wider, more diverse demographic, but can be representative of the fact that I can be here and have a voice.”

## On Curriculum

**SC:** “Let’s pick a subject, let’s say history. Most of the history faculty is predominantly made up of historians of Britain...You’ve taught for your whole career, and you’ve never really had to think much about Black Britain, let alone histories from outside the North Atlantic world. It’s really hard to introduce widespread curriculum review without at the same time thinking about the models of teaching and the makeup of the faculty. So I think that that’s one issue.

I think another issue has got to do with what we come to understand as canonical, so an idea about what are the classics. This is particularly true in disciplines like philosophy, history,

literature, and others in the humanities, but also within the social sciences. What do we think are the key things that people need to know?

If that canon over-represents, say, white authors, British authors, or authors of a European tradition, that means that other forms of knowledge are marginalised. And then that gets reproduced because they’re not seen to be having an important influential role in shaping thinking within those subjects.

African politics occupies a marginal space within the PPE curriculum. It’s a kind of option course that you can take, and is really run by two of my colleagues who are in the politics department and they’re doctoral students. So you would need to have a real shift within how PPE is taught to say that like, “Well, if we want to have an introduction to politics, there’s actually stuff that we can learn about state formation, democracy, representation, liberalism, and so on, that comes from Africa or from Latin America or wherever else.” But that’s not how we organise our teaching. So I think there are just so many different paradigm shifts that would need to occur in order to hasten the speed of curriculum transformation.

I think in parts of the US, this form of reckoning has happened because of the debates that have been there around African-American representation, which has pushed some of these issues further.

But my sense is that Oxford is quite a self-referential place, which means that the looking elsewhere and thinking more widely doesn’t happen as much as it should”.

## On Inclusion

**SC:** “Some of the challenges around achieving this are internal to the university. They have to do with the highly

decentralised model of the university, with each college being a self-governing unit, and each programme recruiting individually. And if you have an institution which is overwhelmingly White, which is overwhelmingly represented by certain class background, and in some cases even by particular geographic regions of the country, the tendency towards reproduction, selecting students in that same image, kind of increases.

One can’t lay all of the blame at Oxford’s feet. A big part of it is a larger indictment about the forms of socioeconomic inequality that exists in Britain more generally, such that by the time you get to higher education, there’s a lot of path dependency that is set in place already.

There’s a fallacy that one of the reasons why the pool of people who ends up here is not as diverse as it should be, has something to do with talent or ability.

We’re reproducing this idea that widening access is somehow to compromise on standards. I don’t think that that is an evidence-based claim, nor do I think it does a deep enough job of understanding what forms of talent exist amongst young people throughout the country and how it might express itself”.

## On History

**HB:** Understand that I was born on the island of Barbados, which was the site of Britain’s first slave society...built the world’s first slave system, an economy built entirely on enslaved labour. And Britain was the first country therefore to legalise the concept that black people are not human beings, but are property, chattel and real estate”.



# "THIS LOCKDOWN ISN'T EASY"

The Rev'd Andrew Foreshew-Cain joined LMH as our new Chaplain in Michaelmas Term 2019. Here he reflects on an uneasy first year.

**A**ndrew was ordained nearly 30 years ago and most recently was Vicar of St Mary with All Souls, Kilburn and St James, West Hampstead. He previously lived in Oxford from 1994 to 1998, when he was Domestic Chaplain to the then Bishop of Oxford.

In this article written in April, during the midst of lockdown from his home in the Derbyshire countryside, he shares some thoughts.



Whilst I lived in central London the background noise to my life was the incessant hum of cars, planes, people and every early spring the screaming of foxes late at night in the garden. As with all constant noises I soon blocked most of it out, apart from the foxes, whose midnight rutting disturbed many a night. I still have good friends close to where I used to live and in our phone calls as we sit out this period of isolation together and apart I have been constantly struck by the sheer volume of birdsong coming from all around them. Even out here in the deepest countryside I don't think it is as loud. There have been times when I have asked them to repeat something because their words have been lost in the joyful caccophany. Perhaps the birds of London are revelling in both the spring and the new-found experience of hearing themselves and their near neighbours for the first time in generations.

E. E. Cummings wrote a beautiful poem on birdsong and what we might learn from it.

*may my heart always be open to little  
birds who are the secrets of living  
whatever they sing is better than to know  
and if men should not hear them men  
are old*

*may my mind stroll about hungry  
and fearless and thirsty and supple  
and even if it's sunday may i be wrong  
for whenever men are right they are not  
young*

*and may myself do nothing usefully  
and love yourself so more than truly  
there's never been quite such a fool who  
could fail  
pulling all the sky over him with one smile*

Many of us are caught up in the lockdown and find ourselves bereft of the usual background noise of life that usually surrounds us. It is a challenge, and I know from my conversations with students and staff alike that it can be disorientating and even distressing. We often define ourselves by what we do, what we have planned and what we expect to come next. Alongside the enforced separations from those we love and those who support us we are also experiencing a profound uncertainty about both this moment and the future. Every encounter contains in it an element of concern for our own health and those around us. The shape of next week, next month, next year is uncertain and everyone is wondering, perhaps fearfully, about the shape of the new world that will emerge from this hiatus, and perhaps breach, in our previous normality.

It is Holy Week at the moment, and as a Christian I cannot help think that this uncertainty, this grief and fear with no certain conclusion is the closest I have ever been to the experience of the disciples during this week of their lives. They would have known fear, they would have been looking around uncertainly at those around them, wondering if, where and when the betrayal would come, and once the blow had fallen they would have had no idea about what came next. In all our celebrations of Good Friday we know that Easter is coming. They did not, or at the very most they could have had only the barest intimation of the meaning of that first Easter morning. I am appreciating in new ways the power of Holy Week and its message of hope.

E. E. Cummings' poem urges us to consider being open to the message of the little birds, the ones we haven't noticed properly for years, whose wisdom is "better than to know". He points us to every precious, minute treasure of life, which usually pass us by because we are so busy with the larger, noisier things.

This lockdown isn't easy, it isn't comfortable and under it all lies more than a little fear, and a deep uncertainty that is changing our world and will change all of us. There's no getting away from it. I have found it helpful to reframe the words I use about this experience – I am not in lockdown, I am staying safe, we are staying safe. If there is any good to come out of these days, and there will be, and there already is, then it will come as we reframe the experience, and use it to listen, to appreciate the small things, to rediscover joy and as we "do nothing usefully" to love both those around us and ourselves "more truly".

Birdsong is about life, it is about preparing the nest, raising the next generation, it is a defiant celebration of life against the challenge of life. The Resurrection proclaims that death is not the final answer, and that, as Psalm 30 reminds us, "joy comes in the morning". I am looking forward to hearing that birdsong again in the gardens of LMH, and celebrating the ongoing life of our community.



John Cairns



John Cairns

***"This lockdown isn't easy, it isn't comfortable and under it all lies more than a little fear, and a deep uncertainty that is changing our world and will change all of us."***



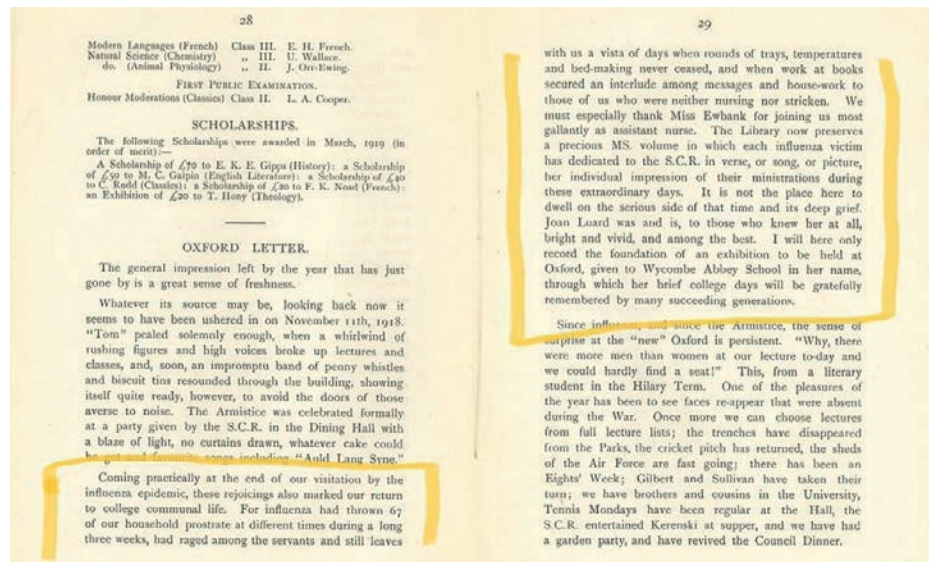
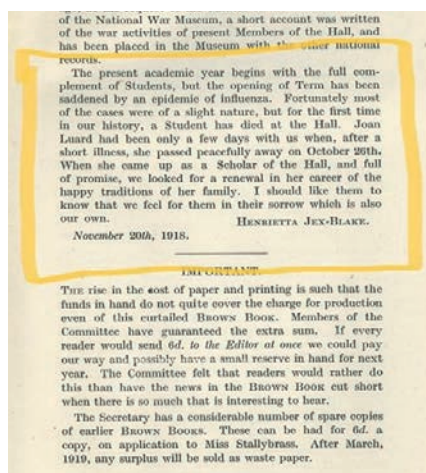
# LMH AND THE PANDEMIC – 100 YEARS ON

The Principal takes a look back through the Archives and considers how LMH coped with the first pandemic 100 years ago.

I was thinking about what it must have been like to be at LMH during the last great global pandemic – which lasted for much of 1918 and 1919.

Two sources of material provide fascinating glimpses – the Brown Book, and the Fritillary, a magazine with brief reports on life at the then women-only colleges of Oxford.

In November 1918 – nine days after the Armistice marking the end of WW1 – the then-Principal, Henrietta Jex-Blake, wrote a short report on life at LMH. It recorded that, for the first time in LMH's history (it was then about 40 years old) an undergraduate had died. Her name was Joan Luard, and she had only been in residence for a brief period. She is buried in Birch, Essex. She is recorded by Jex-Blake as having died on 26 October 1918 (though the Fritillary dates it as 26 April 1918).



A year later the Brown Book carries an Oxford Letter which speaks of the Armistice having coincided with "the end of our visitation by the influenza epidemic."

It records that "Influenza had thrown 67 of our household prostrate at different times during a long three weeks, had raged among the servants and still leaves us with a vista of days when rounds of trays, temperatures and bed-making never ceased and when work at books secured an interlude among the messages and house-work to those of us who were neither nursing nor stricken."

The Anne Harpin (our College Nurse) of those times was called Miss Ewbank. Interestingly, all those who came through created a special volume (and

gave it to the Library) "in verse, song or picture" recording their individual impressions of their "ministrations during these extraordinary days."

Again, the writer remembers Joan Luard – "bright and vivid and among the best".

The 1918 book talks about the war effort – including flax-pulling and clerical work – and notes that the nation's food supply had been further increased by a colony of rabbits, which was housed at the back of Pritchett's shed.

But the note adds: "Unfortunately the Hall has become so intimate with the rabbits that it is only when it is let to strangers that anyone can bear to consider them as food".

***"Finally, with all the domestic staff and 28 students in bed at the same time, Miss Spens succumbed. In this particular building only, Miss Lodge and four students escaped the disease."***

Anyone wondering about whether the disruption due to COVID-19 is unprecedented will note from the Fritillary that "owing to influenza there has been only one normal week or term." There were no sporting activities. The Essay Club (!) managed only one meeting.

A year later, the magazine recorded it was "very pleasant to see the College resuming its normal aspect."

"Last, and not least, the rabbits have ceased to be looked on as a potential emergency ration and are now the pets of the College."

A vivid glimpse of life at Oxford during this period is also contained in Vera's Brittain's *The Women at Oxford: A Fragment of History* (1960).

It records: "Life at Oxford had now become grim and dreary. The older dons had aged visibly: the students worked doggedly with the sole purpose of getting away as soon as possible. At this moment of extreme dejection, the world-wide influenza epidemic, which claimed more victims than the total casualties of the battlefields, smote the women's colleges with the rest of Oxford."

"Doctors worked to the point of exhaustion and beyond; civilian nurses were virtually non-existent. Volunteers able to remain on their feet went around the poorer parts of the city, improvising as best as they could. In her book, *Terms and Vacations*, Eleanor Lodge compares their experiences to those of the Great Plague.

"Of the women's colleges Lady Margaret Hall perhaps suffered the most severely, though all four were drastically smitten. At Lady Margaret Hall one student died; the sick overwhelmed the small sanatorium and finally had to be cared for in the Hall itself. Miss Jex-Blake, a skilful nurse, supervised the nursing and herself took charge of many students."

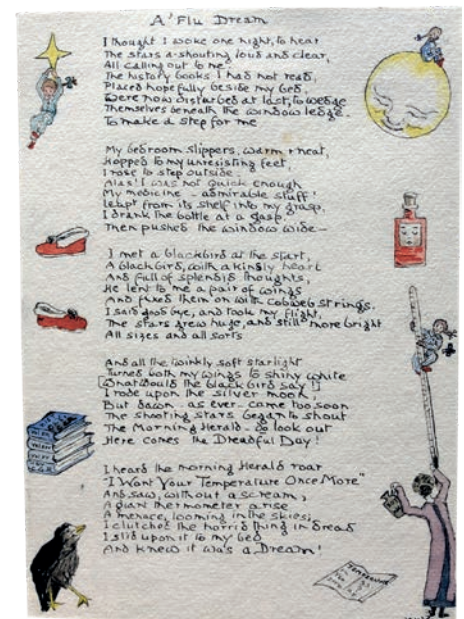
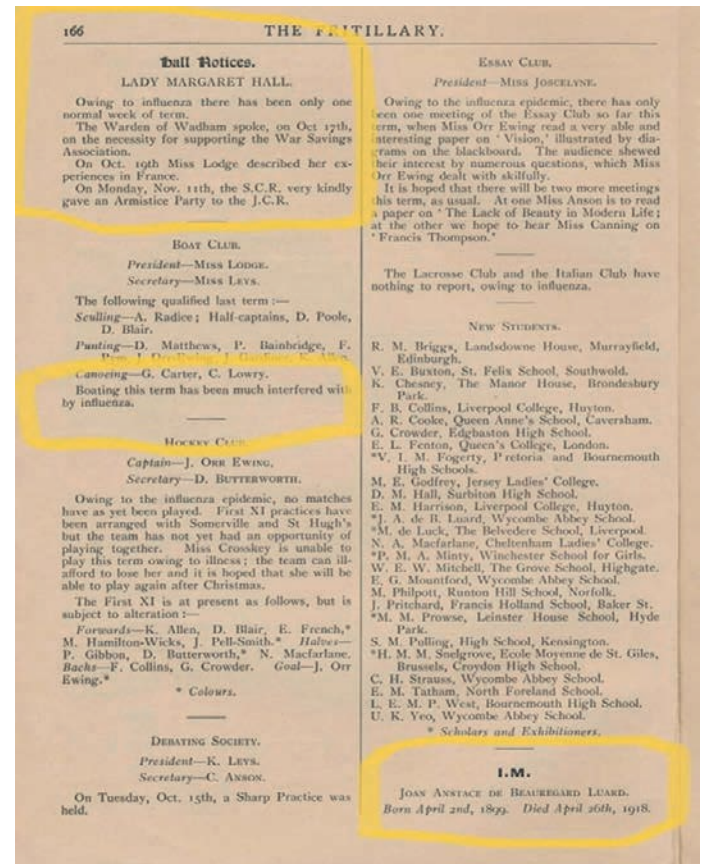
"In the old hall Eleanor Lodge and the English tutor, Janet Spens, nursed the invalids unaided. Finally, with all the domestic staff and 28 students in bed at the same time, Miss Spens succumbed. In this particular building only, Miss Lodge and four students escaped the disease"

We were able to find the beautiful book made by JCR members to thank the SCR members for nursing them through the 1918 flu pandemic. It was presented to the Tutors in January 1919. Each JCR member composed something in prose or verse, or presented an artwork.

One poem – A 'flu Dream – was by Una Katharine Yeo (1898–2001), who was reading English. She later [as Katharine Moore] became a prolific author – including books about Kipling, Queen Victoria, and maiden aunts.

Her Guardian obituary recorded that "from 1918–21, she had three blissful years at Lady Margaret Hall, inspired by teachers such as Janet Spens, the Elizabethan scholar, Walter Raleigh, first Oxford professor of English literature, and Gilbert Murray, regius professor of Greek." She was 103 when she died.

So there you have a glimpse of how LMH fared during the pandemic of almost 100 years ago. We still have wonderful students, staff and tutors. And a rabbit...





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*"Of all the diseases I've worked on, COVID-19 has concerned me the most, and will undoubtedly have the largest impact on the world."*



## AT THE FOREFRONT: NEIL FERGUSON

**Neil Ferguson** (1987 Physics) is an epidemiologist whose modelling helped to shape the UK's COVID-19 lockdown strategy.

**P**reviously part of the Government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage), Ferguson teaches at the Faculty of Medicine at Imperial College London, where he is also Vice-Dean for Academic Development. His research aims to improve understanding of the epidemiological factors and population processes shaping infectious disease spread in human and animal populations.

We had chance to pose a few questions to Neil to better understand the man behind the media.

**What sort of schoolboy were you?**

I was always fairly academic, but until I was a teenager I wasn't great at concentrating and often therefore got into trouble. Getting into computer programming helped with that and improved my academic performance. Socially, I was slightly "alternative". Somewhere between goth and hippy (it was mid-Wales in the 80s).

**How did you end up at LMH?**

It was my mum's college (Kathleen Ferguson, née Jepson) in the 60s.

**Who was your most memorable Tutor?**

A hard question to answer, but the one I have stayed in touch with has been David Andrews, who has always been very kind and supportive.

**Which was your favourite bit of College?**

The gardens, especially down to the river.

**What did you do for fun at Oxford?**

Being out in town. Music and drinking at the Bullingdon Arms, hanging out in the Eagle and Child...

**What was the most valuable lesson Oxford taught you?**

To challenge orthodoxy and not feel limited by disciplinary boundaries.

**Why were you drawn to epidemiology?**

That was later – after my DPhil in Theoretical Physics. Wanting to apply my maths/physics skills to something with a more immediate impact on wellbeing. Plus, happenstance – I attended an inspiring talk by Lord Robert May while I was a DPhil student.

**Can you recommend one book about science for a general reader?**

I don't read science books to relax! I tend to read either the Economist, the Guardian or fiction. For those interested in how epidemics spread, I hear that *The Rules of Contagion* by Adam Kucharski is good, but I can't claim to have read it, alas.

**You've studied many different diseases, including BSE/vCJD, Foot and Mouth, Swine flu, Zika, Ebola and COVID-19. Which was most alarming?**

Of all the diseases I've worked on, COVID-19 has concerned me the most (as I said on Channel 4 back in mid-February), and will undoubtedly have the largest impact on the world – both in terms of health and the economy.

**Which was the most difficult to "solve"?**

Different diseases pose different challenges. The truly new ones (SARS, COVID-19) are in some ways the hardest, because we know so little when the epidemic starts. Everything needs to be inferred from often limited and patchy data.

**How do you relax?**

Good question. Right now, not a lot! But generally, via exercise (calisthenics and running), theatre/ballet or just hanging out with friends and family.

**Desert island disc?**

One?! Eight would be hard enough. Picking fairly randomly from my top 50, "Shipbuilding" by Elvis Costello.



## Professor David Andrews, Emeritus Fellow, recalls his time as Professor Ferguson's Tutor.

Neil arrived at LMH in 1987, reading Physics. One of his tutors at the time, Dr Alan Flowers, has written that Neil was a very courteous, modest and hardworking student, who was a pleasure to teach.

I myself arrived at LMH as a Physics tutor in 1989. By then, Neil was in his third year as an undergraduate, mostly specialising in advanced topics. However, I had the pleasure (and challenge!) of taking him for some Finals revision tutorials in Trinity Term 1990. He was one of the best Physics students that I taught during my 24 years at LMH and, as expected, obtained a very high First.

I recall Neil giving an impressive, and very technical, talk on Black Holes and Hawking Radiation to the assembled LMH Tutors and undergraduates.

Neil went on to do an excellent DPhil with Dr John Wheeler in the Theoretical Physics department. He moved to Linacre College for his DPhil, but did some tutorials for us at LMH. Years later I found that photocopies of his model answers to finals questions were still circulating amongst our undergraduates, so I appropriated a copy for my own use!

Following his DPhil Neil decided to change his research area to the modelling of epidemics. He joined Professor Roy Anderson's group in the Zoology Department at Oxford, and then moved to Imperial College in 2000. In 2002 he was awarded the OBE for his work on the 2001 Foot and Mouth disease outbreak.

I encountered Neil again around 2005, through a mutual friend. We invited him back to LMH to give the Heron-Allen Lecture in 2006, when he gave a fascinating talk on planning for pandemics.



# COLLEGE FINANCES IN A PANDEMIC

Treasurer **Andrew Macdonald** gives us a first-hand take on managing the college financially through the first few months of the pandemic. The outlook was grim, but he reports that there are a few green shoots starting to reappear now.

**T**he College's conference team was the first department to see trouble ahead. Conference customers began cancelling from early February and messages to overseas universities about summer courses were left answered. College staff were due to travel to Beijing in early March to sell our new Summer Academic Programmes but were suddenly advised not to come because of the virus.

Conference income at LMH has grown fivefold over the last decade and now brings in approximately £2.5m per year.

By the end of Hilary Term, the College was fully embroiled in the national meltdown. As is normal at the end of term, everyone was also exhausted and patience was at a premium. Once all the students had gone, we were desperate to regroup and survey the wreckage. It was clear there would be no residential or catering income in Trinity term; even academic income was disappearing, with the prospect of no face-to-face teaching at all in the months ahead.

Peak panic was probably that first week of the Easter vac. There were some rather frightening red figures appearing on our hastily assembled College cash flow forecast.

The Domestic Bursar and the HR Manager quickly got the College onto the Job Retention Scheme. All our furloughed and non-furloughed staff were incredibly understanding and accommodating. We had offers of help from everyone. The College Accountant and her team had scrambled from the office carrying the right equipment to keep the bank accounts operating. At least we could pay the staff at the end of the month.

LMH is managed cautiously. We have business interruption insurance



***"We are confidently prepared for the worst and considerably less anxious than we were about the future."***

and free cash reserves to cope with all manner of disasters. Despite this, no one had seriously considered how nearly every component of the College's £14m of income could be simultaneously affected by the pandemic.

In the background, the stock market had fallen by a third. In monetary terms, the College is almost as dependent on its endowment as it is on its conference business. We normally draw down just under £2m of income per year.

The College's active and very experienced Investment Committee were fortunately on the case throughout this turbulent period, selling down some of our more exposed positions and carefully monitoring our asset allocations. They even ring-fenced a large cash fund which

I could have called upon in an emergency.

There are a few silver linings in our current financial predicament. One is that LMH did not follow many other colleges in Oxford and take out an enormous bond to refinance our £12m of debt and embark on another large building project. Another silver lining is that the £44m endowment was positioned defensively as the markets began to tumble. Although it is too early to tell, the value of our endowment has held up comparatively well.

The turning point was just before 0<sup>th</sup> week of Trinity Term, when we were reminded that the College has many friends and supporters. Barclays Bank stepped in with a debt repayment holiday and then generously agreed to fund our worst-case scenario. This forecast was a truly doom-laden prediction from the school of "prepare for the worst and hope for the best". The Fellows on our Finance Committee had sensibly advised that we take this approach.

Then other richer Colleges offered help and advice to their poorer neighbours. The intercollegiate contributions scheme is presently being repurposed to provide support.

The Development Team and various alumni rallied round. Barclays Bank had specifically asked about alumni support when considering our situation.

So, as we reach the end of Trinity Term, there appear to be a few green shoots. LMH has got through its initial cash flow concerns and is now concentrating on minimising its operating deficit. We are fortunate to have received so much support over the last few months. We are confidently prepared for the worst and considerably less anxious than we were about the future.

# FOUNDATION YEAR UPDATE

LMH has been changing lives since 1879. In September 2016, we launched a ground-breaking four-year pilot and became the first Oxford college to offer a Foundation Year. **Jacob Farrelly-Holmes**, from this year's cohort, tells of his experience.

**2**019-20 saw the fourth cohort of that pilot programme come up to LMH. At the same time that cohort completed their first year, some of our original cohort of 2016-17 completed their undergraduate degrees at LMH.

We are thrilled that the programme will run for 2020-21 and 2021-22, as Oxford now prepares to take up a programme based on ours.

The Foundation Year aims to open the doors of LMH to students who would not normally have the opportunity to apply for an Oxford degree directly from school. It recognises that socio-economic factors can place obstacles in the path of students' school achievement, and it will provide educational and personal support in a stand-alone year in College, enabling students to achieve their academic potential.

**Jacob Farrelly-Holmes, a Foundation Year student from 2019-20 studying for English, shares his experience of this year's course.**

My LMH Foundation Year experience has been unlike anything I could've imagined. I imagined Oxford to be an inherently exclusionary place, with places reserved for people I never thought I'd know, let alone be counted among. Oxford seemed so intimidating to me, a feeling that only grew as the months passed before I arrived. The Foundation Year has shown me that I needn't have worried. Everybody at LMH is so warm and friendly that the imposter's syndrome soon wore off, and I felt as though I deserved to be there just as much as everybody else. My Foundation Year cohort massively helped with this. Living away from home for the first time, I



**Jacob (front centre) with his Foundation Year cohort**

found it particularly reassuring that there were 10 other people who were just as nervous, anxious and daunted as I was.

It also helped that I found my work so enjoyable. I have always loved studying English, but my tutorials made me fall in love with my subject all over again. Though I didn't realise it, the sense of acceptance and encouragement from my tutors gave me a much needed confidence boost that has allowed me to think and write much more freely and openly than I would've otherwise, and to grow, both as a student and as a person.

The rudely-timed coronavirus pandemic initially left me worried about the rest of my year at Oxford. I think my sense of belonging had, in part, been tied to actually living in Oxford. Now, being forced to write essays from my

bedroom rather than the LMH library, I was worried that I would lose the sense of self-assurance I had begun to feel. Thankfully, this didn't happen. As it turns out, encouragement over Zoom is no less gratifying, and criticism is no less motivating. Looking towards the next three years, I particularly look forward to immersing myself in the subject I love, and practising social distance with someone other than my mum.

***"I have always loved studying English, but my tutorials made me fall in love with my subject all over again."***



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# FOUNDATION YEAR: FROM START TO FINISH

**David Howard-Baker** was a student in the first Foundation Year cohort at LMH. This year he graduated from his undergraduate degree in Music with a first-class degree, and has taken time to reflect on his experience and learnings.



I first came to Lady Margaret Hall aged 17 on the UNIQ summer school at the University of Oxford. I remember sitting in the gardens viewing a beautiful willow tree with its leaves draping over the river – still my favourite spot in the gardens five years later. I wanted this to be my home. It felt so right. However, I did not believe this reality was possible given my education and background. 17-year old me could never imagine I would be studying music at my dream university, let alone graduating with a first-class degree.

I took all my GCSEs and A levels with undiagnosed dyslexia combined with overwhelming family circumstances. My dad became very unwell during sixth form which took a massive toll on my motivation and wellbeing. Having music lessons was limited by my family's financial situation, meaning I had no choice but to be self-driven in developing myself as a musician and composer.

My school had limited resources and I grew up in a deprived area of Plymouth. However, this did not stop a few of my teachers going above and beyond. My music teacher, Mr Twyman, was a role model throughout my secondary education. As well as nurturing me as a musician and scholar, he encouraged my personal development, promoting resilience, perseverance and passion.

I did not apply for university in year 13, having no confidence I could achieve the grades needed for Russell Group Universities. I applied for the Foundation Year with no expectations, was interviewed and gained a place. Within the space of one month, I went from having no university place to being part of the first 10 students chosen for this revolutionary pilot scheme. It would not be an understatement to say this changed my life. I was the second person in the history of my school to secure a place at Oxford. I had never been so scared and yet so excited, in my entire life. I had achieved very unconventional grades for Oxford standards – A\*CC. Having received an A\* in music, my place was confirmed at Lady Margaret Hall. On the first day, Alan Rusbridger told us frankly that we were the “guinea-pigs”, testing the hypothesis: can students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds thrive at Oxford?

The Foundation Year bridged the gap between A levels and undergraduate study. This bridge compensated for disadvantage, providing students with a fairer chance of making a competitive application and excelling on the undergraduate course. I received an academic foundation in music while honing my general study skills, scholarly

writing, debating and public speaking – collectively this helped me overcome the dreaded imposter syndrome which many Oxford undergrads like myself feel from day one. The year was more than just an academic foundation; it started a journey of enormous personal development, consisting of strategic studying, resilience, self-care and navigating friendships and relationships. The transition into first year was eye opening. I assumed the Foundation Year might give me an advantage. Yet I was surprised that many other music students already had this academic preparation. The foundation year had levelled out the playing field. This put my background and disadvantages into perspective – the foundation year truly had been crucial in enabling me to compete with most my cohort.

One highlight of my degree was my 8000-word research project on community music and music therapy in relation to autism and severe disabilities. I was captivated by music's potential as a therapeutic tool; I achieved 76 in this module, my highest mark. I developed enormously as a musician, playing in the college orchestra and Jazz band, singing in the chapel choir and gigging with a rock band. I had compositions performed by renowned musicians, including an orchestral work performed by the Oxford Philharmonic.

My priority during finals was self-care, balance and routine – my average working day in the lead up to finals was rarely more than 4–6 hours. I had a daily practice of yoga, meditation, running and – most importantly – finding short moments to see friends. This 'little and often' approach worked for studying, as well as rest and self-care. I always imagined that only students who worked endless 14-hour days would get a first. I discovered that prioritising my happiness combined with balanced working days was the true key to success – or at least it was for me.

I also had the pleasure of meeting three more generations of Foundation Year students, many of whom are my closest friends and whose stories continue to inspire me to this day. Achieving a first-class degree is only one of many successes across the Foundation Year. Vee Kativhu, who was one of my peers in the first cohort, is an education activist with a focus on



**David at his Foundation Year graduation ceremony in 2017, pictured with his family**

BAME empowerment, particularly when accessing top universities. Vee has a thriving YouTube channel with over 150k subscribers which drives her initiative. She has a Ted Talk, spoke on panel discussions and has made a significant contribution to the discussion on racial inequality in relation to educational disadvantage. Ahmed Jeyte, part of the 2018–19 cohort, in the last couple months has raised over £4,000 for the Haringey Play Association, an incredible initiative that improves the quality of play experiences for children from deprived backgrounds in Tottenham. This was a response to an incident where an undercover police officer followed and stopped him for questioning, treating him with unwarranted suspicion.

My white privilege means that although I can comment on class discrepancy in access to university, my experience does not represent that of the BAME community. However, I cannot write on university access without discussing racial prejudice – both are inextricably bound. Racism, manifesting as anything from mass-institutional to micro-aggressions to unconscious

bias, only increases the barriers for BAME young people applying for or attending Russell Group Universities. The BAME students in my cohort (and those that didn't get the opportunity we did) inevitably have more layers of disadvantage. Dismantling systematic racism and improving university access are two sides of the same coin. The inspirational young people above along with many others across the foundation year are testaments to the talent out there. Both leading universities and young people are missing out. I asked Vee Kativhu how we can begin addressing systematic racism and improving university access:

"It's really important for institutions such as Oxford to be honest about their journey with dismantling systematic racism. It's not going to be an easy journey but it's a necessary one that requires constant effort and work. Students need to know that they will be attending a university that cares about them and thus is doing the work (dismantling systemic racism) to show that. Black students, for example, need to see themselves represented in these spaces and know that the tools to accommodate them are in place and that Oxford is ready to not only get these students in, but also keep them in. Schemes such as the foundation year speak volumes to students from underrepresented and underprivileged backgrounds. They show that Oxford wants to continue making changes for the better and that they are putting practical steps in place to accommodate the students who need the support and encouragement the most. It shows that they recognise that talent resides in all parts of the country and that they are ready to do what it takes to unlock the student's potential, like they did with me."

The Foundation Year has been an essential move towards equality. It demonstrates that Russell Group Universities are missing out on students whose grades and applications are compromised by circumstances outside their control. Most importantly, talented young people from underrepresented and underprivileged backgrounds deserve to study at leading universities. If universities truly want the best and brightest to maintain academic excellence, then contextualising student performance is vital.



# MODERN HENGE

Following our visit in 2019 to **Tim Ashton's** (2005 Jurisprudence) family farm, Soulton Hall in Shropshire, he writes with an update on his latest project.

**W**e are, somewhat accidentally, preparing to build a new henge monument at my family farm, and LMH is helping. Some context and explanation is justified around these statements.

The College was kind enough to let me have a few pages of the 2017 Brown Book to explain an intention I then had to build a new long barrow. In the intervening time, we have brought this Neo-Neolithic structure into being. Members of the College visited last autumn to have a look at it and also to consider aspects of no-till or regenerative agriculture. Though at the time of writing the new barrow is not quite finished, we expect to complete it in 2020.

I am sincerely glad of the chance in this piece to thank people in the College community their support to, and encouragement of, me in this work. It is now accepted, even becoming mainstream, having been on BBC *Countryfile*, and various other media, as well as being repeated in a number of communities and in an Architecture Foundation exhibition – but back in 2017 it was a little maverick and felt quite a vulnerable pathway to begin to tread. The practical support I had from people connected to LMH made an important difference.

Working on this unusual structure, only the second of its type for 5,500 years, has been a huge privilege. Few of us ever get to consciously work on a new structure that expects to endure and be in use for generations, and to combine that with making a setting where tough things can be faced, support found, and people of all faiths and none engage with tolerance and a natural parity of respect for their different views. Allied to this, I have had a close view of the extraordinary skill of the masons involved in the task, and the beauty of what results. They have even let me participate



Inside the barrow

as a very junior apprentice/willing tractor-based delivery driver of stone.

Now, building these monuments involves surpassingly careful and detailed thought in surprising directions ranging from astrophysics, to engineering, to communications, to spirituality or mindfulness (words I am instinctively uncomfortable with, but I cannot find

any better ones), to craftsmanship, to sociology and beyond; as well as much more soil that you realise.

My work as a farmer confines me to a tractor cab for hours at a time, especially at planting times. I do not know how many LMH people get to do field work on farms, but the discipline and quietness of it, linked to being in nature and trying



***"Working on this unusual structure, only the second of its type for 5,500 years, has been a huge privilege."***

**Artist's impression of proposed Soultan Henge by Shropshire Artist Jo Haldon**

to relate to your place in it, and to work with it as harmoniously as possible, is something I enjoy, and which helps me to think.

Four years of monument building going on in the landscape we farm led me to consider the problem of how to source the several hundreds of tons of soil we still needed, and towards an elegant solution, which was supported by the archaeology of Prehistory, but that would also let us gently say something thoughtful and would tether the monument to the twenty-first century.

We are going to need about 400 tons of soil. That is going to leave a hole somewhere, and that is a literally, but narrowly, creative thing to do. The builders of the first monuments encountered this issue too, and their example shows that, in some places, they began to communicate something with that effort by making causewayed enclosures, which in time became henge monuments.

If you apply this thinking to our setting in the twenty-first century, while knowing that the new barrow monument has worked well because it is quite simple, and it points to truth (the rising sun on midsummer's day) and then leaves respectful people to consider that truth's meaning alongside others, it is not long before you find yourself back in Oxford,

connecting with a physics professor, asking how a twenty-first century henge with standing stones might capture modern physics, say something interesting, and belong properly to now. And that is what has happened.

Two years ago I began talking to Professor Todd Huffman, Fellow and Tutor in Physics at LMH, about these ideas. We agreed that the proposed monument needed to respect the first builders and develop their practices and ideas. Antony Gormley has called the monuments and art of Prehistory a high-five through time, and that was the boisterous but respectful spirit in which we agreed to approach this work.

Professor Huffman is a particle physicist who works at CERN, and this leads naturally enough to quantum mechanics as a thing to express in the standing stones. A deepening realisation that quantum effects are made routine use of in biological processes (enzyme activity, photosynthesis, sense of smell, bird migrations have all been linked to the use of quantum effects) and are therefore embedded in life itself relate this back to the barrow's task as a monument, but also ground the monument in the twenty-first century.

We are planning to represent this knowledge by making a megalithic

representation of Young's Double Slit experiment; it will be a poetic abstraction, but it will open up conversations about the observer effect and particle/wave duality. Which is not a conventional thing to be invited to do in a rural field, but we hope it will be done in a way that many people will feel able to relate to, and will open up that sort of inquiry to people who would not normally engage with it. It feels like a thing that, had they known of it, the Bronze Age builders of monuments would have certainly found interesting and would have recorded in their monuments – and thus is a worthy tribute to them. The plan is to get the sun at local noon on the equinoxes to show this effect. It is a nice coincidence that Thomas Young helped to decode the hieroglyphs of the Ancient Egyptians, a culture which built monuments to ideas which we can still enjoy today.

Todd and I also wanted to point at something in the heavens that is novel knowledge, and that will ideally be true as an observation for a very long time. We settled fairly quickly on Cygnus X-1, which is a black hole in a binary system with a star which can be seen in the constellation of Cygnus. It is over 6,000 light years away. Human knowledge of blackholes is recent, but would have surely interested ancient astronomers. It also invites you to wonder at the universe's sheer scale: 6,000 light years is a very long way away, but it is also in our back yard at the scale of the universe. And yet, if you shine a light through the hole in the stone in the new henge at this black hole, you will transmit light to it that will arrive around AD 8,200. Quite a thought.

I am very grateful for the support of Todd and of others in helping me with this and I hope very much it is an intriguing and useful effort, which gets people to think, and to wonder, and to share both of those activities together.



**Tim speaking to guests at our visit to his farm in October 2019**





# WILD LMH







The pandemic has affected the LMH gardens in different ways, perhaps bringing new and unexpected life to them. Deer have been spotted roaming the Deneke Lawn, and wild honey bees have moved in to a recently-installed natural bee hive. Butterflies have been fluttering playfully and the Norham Gardens neighbourhood cats are enjoying new places to hide out.

At the height of lockdown, only one of our wonderful Gardening Team – usually five strong – was coming in to

college twice a week for absolutely necessary watering and maintenance. As restrictions lifted, we have been able to see two of the Team back three days a week each, as they are rotated on the Government Job Retention Scheme. The main focus has been on watering and mowing, with a carefully considered plan to ensure the gardens can get back to what they were.

Head Gardener Kate describes the gardens as “scruffy and wild, yet pretty, with a meadow field”. We hope you enjoy these pictures shared by the Team throughout the recent months.



The Gardening Team (taken in June 2018)





# IN CONVERSATION AT LMH

Oxford is a place of conversation, and over the past academic year LMH has hosted many conversations. Usually the Simpkins Lee Theatre would be full with audience members listening intently, ready to pose questions to our speakers; more recently we have adapted and taken our conversations online, through Zoom, where the chat function fills up fast. We hope that this will be able to continue in the future.

TOP ROW Neal Ascherson, Elif Shafak, Lady Hale, Claire Tomalin, Emily Wilson  
SECOND ROW Martin Prendergast, Joris Luyendijk, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Jess Cartner-Morley  
THIRD ROW Sam Gyimah, Greta Thunberg and LMH students, Gary Lineker  
BOTTOM ROW Kamila Shamsie, Lord Sumption

**W**e have had the pleasure of hearing so many speak about their careers and lives, to name a few: author and journalist Claire Tomalin; Martin Prendergast, Director of Development and Public Affairs at RADA; Elif Shafak, award-winning British-Turkish novelist; former Member of Parliament Sam Gyimah; Emily Wilson, Editor of New Scientist Magazine; Jess Cartner-Morley, Associate Fashion Editor at the Guardian; Joris Luyendijk, writer and anthropologist; journalist Neal Ascherson; and Lord Sumption, author, historian and former judge.

LMH is also proud to have an active Visiting Fellowship programme. Visiting Fellows are people drawn from a variety of backgrounds, callings and professions. They form a bridge

between our own academic community and the worlds they inhabit and represent.

Some of our newly-elected Visiting Fellows from this academic year have also joined the LMH community for exclusive talks throughout the year, including Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director of the Young Vic, Lady Hale, Former President of the Supreme Court, author Kamila Shamsie, and Gary Linekar, sports broadcaster.

We were most honoured that in February, Greta Thunberg, the climate and environmental activist and TIME's Person of The year 2019, paid a visit to LMH, where she found time to talk to some of our students about science, voting, the limits of protest, divestment, real zero versus net zero, and so much more.



### **On 15 May Sir Jeremy Farrar, Director of the Wellcome Trust, spoke to the LMH community.**

Before joining Wellcome in October 2013, Jeremy was Director of the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit in Vietnam for 18 years. His research interests were infectious diseases and global health, with a focus on emerging infections. A leading epidemiologist, he has been thinking about diseases, viruses and pandemics for most of his career. And now he sits on the government's Sage group of scientists offering advice (not always taken) on how to navigate the unprecedented crisis we currently face. He talked frankly about how science and politics interact, and about the billions needed to find medical solutions.

This is an abridged transcript of Sir Jeremy's Zoom conversation with the Principal, in which they were joined by many LMH students, staff and alumni.

**Alan Rusbridger (AR):** I'm really interested in what you think science is able to do in a crisis like this, what are the limitations of the science? Can you talk a bit about the limits of science and the limits of modelling?

**Jeremy Farrar (JF):** When you're dealing with these events like now, one of the greatest challenges is you're just dealing with total uncertainty. The uncertainty is obviously greater at the start and, you hope, gets less as you go forward. What science can't give you is certainty about where we are and where we're going. That is incredibly difficult for many people to handle. On a personal level, I've actually always really enjoyed working in uncertainty because I think it's a really interesting place to be, but it does not suit everybody. That is a very, almost unholy, alliance in some ways because you can't just base policy on hard science, particularly when that science is uncertain. Yet you can't wait until the science is certain just to make policy. In that grey zone between the unholy alliance, you've got some really tough things to do. Coming into this now, and I've been transparent about it serving on the Sage Committee, advising government, and then seeing how that advice is either taken or not, and then trying to inform policy, that's a very complex and difficult relationship.

**AR:** Can you talk a bit about the communication of all of the science as well? You're having conversations with advisors and with politicians, but then there's a huge piece of this, which is trying to talk about very complex science in very blunt and easily understood terms. There's lots of people who at the moment feel really quite confused.

**JF:** I think this has not happened yet, I hope it will happen in the coming days or weeks at most. It seems to me that the crucial element is transparency. Everybody accepts, especially in a period like we're going through today, you're going to make mistakes. That's inevitable, I'm afraid. You're trying to make the fewest mistakes you can and you're trying to make the smallest number of mistakes that have the biggest impact and avoid the really bad outcomes. But you'll get a lot of those things wrong and the ability to respond, and adapt, and be agile about that, that's really important. Through that complexity, I think at the heart of it is transparency.



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***"If you overreact, it will be criticised. If you underreact, you'll be criticised. You just have to have a thick skin about that, but the worst thing to do is underreact."***

At the end of the day, this is the governed and the governing. During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, this was absolutely brought to the fore, but it's happening in the UK and Europe now. People may not like what you're saying, but at least if they can see how you're making those decisions and you're honest about it, and you're honest enough to say we got it wrong, then I think transparency is the way forward. I think unfortunately over the last few weeks and months that hasn't always been sufficient, there isn't now sufficient transparency about why certain difficult decisions are made and without really people understanding how those decisions were reached.

**AR:** What do you think stands between transparency and politics?

**JF:** I think a lot of it is driven by fear. It's driven by still not having an appreciation that transparency is actually a route to better decision making. I think it's not clear that by being transparent, you'll be more trusted, even when you get it wrong.

**AR:** Can you give us a flavour of what it's like to be a scientist in the room with policymakers and politicians?

**JF:** What is I think really important, and again the opacity of this doesn't help, but Sage has two formal meetings a week and then ad hoc meetings on the side of that, currently, of course, by Zoom or whatever. In that room are then, I don't know, 40 or 50 people who are fed information from about another 200 people who sit on subgroups of it, who are doing the detailed work. And of that 40 or 50 people, there are probably about 10 of us that are outside government and independent, and then a large group of civil servants from the department of health, education, whatever else.

And then, of course, it's been in the press, people from No. 10 and other

ministries are sitting in to observe. And in my experience, and I'm not making any comment here about my own political views, but I would say I actually wish that those policy advisers from government had attended more meetings. Because one of the challenges of Sage is that it is a scientific group that advises and, of course, rightly or wrongly, it doesn't make the decisions on policy. And there's a gap there. And the better that gap can be filled, so that advice goes directly into policy, in my view that would be better.

If you get behind the curve at any point, it's incredibly difficult to catch up at any later date. And I think that is the lesson that will be learned in future inquiries: the crucial phase in this epidemic was the last week or so of January and the weeks of February. The decisions that were made were absolutely critical to what happened. And actually, the fact that those decisions were not right, frankly, are why we've subsequently gone on to have an epidemic that at least to some degree could have been avoided.

The critical thing in epidemics is to be decisive and courageous because you're more likely to be blamed for overreacting. And frankly, in the last 20 years, whether it's SARS or a pandemic, there's been a lot of complaints about people overreacting. That's just the nature of public health. If you overreact, it will be criticised. If you underreact, you'll be criticised. You just have to have a thick skin about that, but the worst thing to do is underreact.

And if I pointed at one difference, let's say, between Korea, Germany, and the UK, it would be that those critical five or six weeks are when Germany, for different reasons, reacted more boldly and more courageously, in my view, and Britain was slow to react.

**AR:** Is this something that you think as a human species we're just going to have to live with for years?

**JF:** Yes. I think it's an animal virus, it comes from a bat and it went through

something between a bat and a human, and that's really important. We mustn't forget that because we've got to work out where it all came from, but this is now a human infection. What we've witnessed over the last three or four months is the emergence of it, now, a true, brand new, novel human infection. SARS was a new human infection but it died away. HIV was the new human infection probably from the 1930s or so. We're witnessing the emergence of a brand-new human infection, which is now endemic in the human population, and it's not going to disappear. This will now be part of the infectious cycle that humanity has to live with. And we're either going to have to completely change the way we live, with some degree of physical distancing forever. And the current restrictions that we're all living through and struggling with, they do nothing to address the root cause. They reduce the peak of an epidemic, they protect and they do undoubtedly save a lot of lives at huge social health, wellbeing, and economic costs. But they are a plaster over a problem, because as soon as you lift those restrictions, things will bounce back.

And I can't think of any biological or social reason why we won't face rebounds and second waves of this infection. So, the only exit from this, if you like, is the production of interventions that actually totally reduce the risk of that. And ultimately, that means diagnostics, treatment and vaccines, as with most other infectious diseases. And then, an appreciation of what society is going to look like when we come to emerge from this.

**AR:** So, with your other hat on of giving out a great deal of money as part of the Wellcome Trust, you were quoted recently saying you thought this was a \$8 billion question, that it's going to need a scientific intervention of that order of magnitude, to get the vaccine and the tracking and the tracing and the things that genuinely can deal with this?

**JF:** So, the world economy at the moment is losing about US\$350 to US\$400 billion a month. The implications of that for the medium term, after a period in the UK of 10 years of austerity, they are massive and the long-term economic consequences of this are only just being appreciated at the moment. The highest unemployment rate in the United States since the Great Depression. What is it, 60% or 70% of the British workforce actually, essentially being nationalised at the moment, with salaries paid by central government. The economic costs of this are profound, and will probably last close to a generation. What you would need to get us out of this, if treatments and vaccines are going to work, is \$8 billion is needed catalytically. And the European Commission played an absolutely fantastic role in bringing together the pledging conference and will get close to that \$8 billion, but that is the catalyst to get to a vaccine.

If you then want to vaccinate 7 billion people or close to it, you're going to need much closer to \$30 or \$40 billion over the course of the next year or two to take a vaccine to vaccination and make sure that everybody in the world that needs it, which is essentially everybody, can get it free at the point of delivery, which is the underlying principle. But if you put \$40 million against the probably \$350 to \$400 billion a month, it would probably be the greatest investment humanity had ever made. But that's what you're going to need because all of that's got to happen at risk.

Normally, what you'd do is you do the science, you'd stop, you'd think about it, you'd pause, you might then do the phase two testing, you might then build a factory to manufacture it. You'd then think, "How on earth are we going to distribute that?" You haven't got the time to do that, so you've got to do it all at once. And you've got to think right the way through from start to finish. So, although the Oxford group has done a fantastic job, there is, for example, a glass shortage in the world at the moment, there isn't enough glass to put a vaccine into glass vials. There's a syringe shortage. So, if we had to inject the vaccine, we wouldn't have enough syringes in the world. And then, finally, you've got a horrible geopolitical structure of the world at the

moment, which means you're in grave danger of going into something akin to vaccine nationalism, where each country will have to look after itself in national stupidity, really, without thinking of the need to take a global perspective. So, putting all that together politically and scientifically is a huge challenge.

**Audience question:** Can you talk about the Global Southern developing countries, is it going to be inevitably more of a poverty and economic crisis going forward there?

**JF:** I think if you look in Rio, in Sao Paolo at the moment, and Peru and Ecuador, so middle- and some low-income countries there, you're seeing the devastation of, particularly in informal settlements around major city centres where hygiene and density of population is such a big issue. My own view is that actually Africa is not yet at the start of this epidemic. For a number of reasons, population density, movement of people, diagnostic capacity. A younger population may partially protect, and also potentially some degree of temperature and humidity and other, which may be a positive impact in parts of Africa. But I would not be sanguine that the continent of Africa isn't still yet to go through what would be a devastating health impact.

I am not as sanguine that South Africa has managed to control this, given how infectious the virus is, given how dense some of their population centres are, and how stretched their healthcare system is. I think it's too early to be sure what the impact in... Africa is going to be, and in South Asia, indeed in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal. But I think what you're seeing in Central and South America is I think a harbinger of what we're going to see in Africa, but just delayed.

**Audience question:** What impact do you think COVID-19 will have on the funding for the prevention of other major diseases such as malaria, HIV, and TB? Do you think an increase in deaths from these diseases can be prevented?

**JF:** Go to Ebola in West Africa. 11,000 people died of Ebola in West Africa over that two-year period. A huge number more died of malaria, TB, and HIV over

and above those that would tragically normally die as a result of that epidemic because people didn't want to go to hospitals. They didn't want to go to clinics. A number of healthcare workers died, services dropped off, and the rest of it. At the moment, the normal number of people coming for TB screening and treatment in at least half a dozen countries in sub-Saharan Africa has dropped off by more than 80%. Now the disease has not disappeared, so one assumes that that 80% that are not coming for any screening or treatment are now spreading that disease in the community. As a result, you're going to see inevitably upswing in TB and probably HIV as a direct result.

The good news is that the Global Fund replenishment was last year, and that replenishment was successful. The Global Fund is continuing to play a critical role in TB, HIV, and malaria around the world. Gavi, the Global Alliance for Vaccines replenishment is this year hosted by the UK on I think 4 June. It is absolutely critical that any money coming into COVID is not at the expense of money going into Gavi. Gavi's probably been one of the best investments the world's ever made. Its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday is this year. It's absolutely critical that they are completely funded as normal and that money is not stolen for COVID for Gavi-type work.

In the long run, again, you have to be optimistic because if you're not, you shouldn't be in this sort of work. In the end I think this could be the catalyst tragically that proves to people just how vulnerable we all are, but how small the world is. Unless we get real about investing in public health, we are going to face these repeatedly because the 21<sup>st</sup> century is going to be the century of epidemic diseases. We've got to invest in public health, we've got to invest in prevention, and we've got to invest in the research that allows us to address the issues of those three pandemics, but more beyond that. What sort of world do we want for the future? Sometimes, tragically, you need a horrible crisis like this to focus people's minds.





# THE SCIENCE OF OBESITY

A collaborative research team from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, co-led by LMH's Fellow and Tutor in Medicine **Ana Domingos**, have developed a new weight-loss amphetamine that could potentially avoid the harmful side-effects of traditional treatments.

Obesity is a major health issue across the world and is implicated in many serious health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Despite being officially declared a chronic disease, there are very few long-lasting and cost-effective treatments for obesity. Historically, amphetamine (AMPH) class drugs have been some of the most popular anti-obesity drugs to be prescribed and are widely considered to be the most effective, while also being among the cheapest to produce. They work in the brain to reduce appetite and increase locomotion or stamina. However, these drugs are also known to strongly activate the sympathetic nervous system, the peripheral part of the nervous system that is known to accelerate the heart rate, constrict blood vessels and raise blood pressure. Consequently, as well as being addictive, they can present side-effects such as a dangerously increased heart rate and hypertension.

A research team led by Associate Professor Ana Domingos and Dr Gonalo Bernardes, from the University of Cambridge, suspected that the cardiac side-effects of amphetamines could originate in the brain. If this was the case, they hypothesized that if they could design a drug that did not pass the blood–brain barrier, they could avoid these unwanted outcomes, while perhaps retaining an anti-obesity action. In a new paper published in *Cell Metabolism*, the team have shown that the cardiac side-effects of AMPH do indeed originate in the brain, and they have presented a modified amphetamine that does not enter the brain, while avoiding its known side-effects.

To prove their hypothesis, working with researchers in Portugal, the team attached polyethylene glycol (PEG) polymer chains to amphetamine, in a process known as PEGylation. PEGylation is often used to mask a drug from the body's immune system, or to increase the hydrodynamic size (size



***“The newly designed drug has several advantages over traditional amphetamine treatments for weight loss. Because it does not pass the blood–brain barrier, it is not addictive and it also does not affect cardiovascular function, thus avoiding the negative side-effects that amphetamines can cause.”***

in solution) of molecules. Through this process, they created a larger, PEGylated amphetamine, which they dubbed PEGyAMPH. Because of its larger size, PEGyAMPH cannot penetrate the blood–brain barrier, and the team showed that it is indeed absent in the brains of mice treated with PEGyAMPH, which did not show suppressed feeding or increased locomotion. The lack of behavioural effects presented further confirmation that the PEGyAMPH did not cross the blood–brain barrier.

The team then used different drug delivery routes to confirm that the cardiovascular effects of amphetamines are not caused peripherally, but rather centrally, originating from the brain. Neither compound, if directly delivered onto the brain, induces cardiovascular side effects. Conversely, and unlike amphetamine, these noxious side-effects are gone if the brain-sparing PEGyAMPH is delivered systemically.

They also found that the activation of peripheral sympathetic neurons, which receive signals from the brain, is required for centrally-acting amphetamines to be effective in stimulating lipolysis and promoting weight loss. It can be determined that the anti-obesity effect of an amphetamine treatment is not as effective in the absence of an intact sympathetic nervous system, despite its behavioural effects on appetite and locomotion.

PEGyAMPH can still favour the activation of sympathetic neurons and increase peripheral sympathetic output onto adipose tissues. The researchers have consequently coined the compound *sympathofacilitator*, to distinguish it from its chemical predecessor, which is infamously termed *sympathomimetic*. They showed that the effect of PEGyAMPH is mainly mediated by the  $\beta_2$ -adrenoceptor (ADRB2), which they show facilitates the activation of peripheral sympathetic neurons. These neurons were previously shown by Professor Domingos’ team to make fat to burn if they are triggered by descending signals from the brain. The researchers then demonstrated that PEGyAMPH protected mice against obesity despite the absence of behavioural effects, such as decreased appetite and increased locomotor activity.

PEGyAMPH increased sympathetic-stimulated fat breakdown in the body, via a cellular process named lipolysis. It also increased thermogenesis, the process of heat production, which burns calories stored in fat. Importantly, although PEGyAMPH raises thermogenesis, unlike unmodified amphetamines, it does not cause higher core body temperature, because it has a different action on peripheral vasculature, and therefore on thermoregulation. Amphetamine is a vasoconstrictor, whereas PEGyAMPH promotes vasodilation via smooth muscle relaxation, allowing for higher heat-dissipation, which normalizes core body temperature. Thus, the novel drug functions as an energy sink, whereby generation of heat is directly coupled to its dissipation. Professor Domingos said: “this is like turning on the heat and leaving the windows open during the winter: you’ll see your gas bill go up!”

The newly designed drug has several advantages over traditional amphetamine treatments for weight loss. Because it does not pass the blood–brain barrier, PEGyAMPH is not addictive and it also does not affect cardiovascular function, thus avoiding the negative side-effects that amphetamines can cause. Moreover, it also improved blood glucose levels in mice by increasing sensitivity to insulin, thus preventing hyperinsulinemia, a condition that precedes the development of type 2 diabetes. Hence, PEGyAMPH reduces obesity with a size-effect comparable to that of AMPH, yet with a distinct mechanism in that it spares effects relating to brain action, overriding caloric intake by increasing energy expenditure.

While PEGyAMPH is currently only validated pre-clinically and is therefore still in the experimental stages, this new weight-loss drug brings hope for a safer and more cost-effective treatment than those that are currently available.

*This article was originally published by the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics, in conjunction with Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência (IGC).*





# RURAL DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

**Professor Robin Harding, Fellow of Politics and Associate Professor of Government, released his important and path-breaking book *Rural Democracy* in February. He shares his key insights here.**

**H**ow have African rulers responded to the introduction of democratic electoral competition? The prevailing narrative of democracy in Africa is pretty grim, and, as ever, where there's smoke there's fire; elections in many African countries are often marred by violence, fraud, corruption and ethnic conflict. But while these unfortunate practices may be widespread this story is incomplete, because there is more to democracy in Africa than violence and vote-rigging. In *Rural Democracy* I argue that African rulers have also responded to the introduction of electoral competition by seeking to win votes through the provision and distribution of public goods and services.

That is not to suggest that democracy is a panacea, nor that it is good for everyone. Democracy everywhere creates winners and losers, and the central claim in *Rural Democracy* is that across Africa the winners tend to be found in the countryside. This claim follows from a straightforward argument: in predominantly rural countries the introduction of competitive elections leads governments to implement pro-rural policies, in order to win the votes of the rural majority. As a result, across much of Africa the benefits of democratic electoral competition have accrued primarily in terms of rural development.

This claim is supported by an array of quantitative and qualitative evidence, the key findings of which are as follows:

Urbanites across Africa are less likely to support incumbents than are rural residents, all else being equal. They are also less likely to be satisfied with democracy, a measure which is closely

related to incumbent support and less sensitive to issues of response bias. Evidence for this comes from analysis of public opinion data across 28 countries, over multiple survey rounds. Leveraging variation in urbanization across countries and over time, I am able to show that the extent of urban incumbent hostility reduces with urbanization, as expected by the theoretical argument. What we also see is that urbanites are less likely to be satisfied with government performance on key issues (job creation and poverty reduction) than are rural residents. This goes some way towards supporting the theorized mechanism, that urban dissatisfaction stems from the pursuit of pro-rural policies by African rulers who seek to win the votes of the rural majority.

The introduction of electoral competition across Africa has led to improvements in key health and education outcomes, but only for those in rural areas. In particular, it has precipitated reductions in rural infant mortality rates, and an increase in primary school enrolment for children in rural areas. But democratic elections have had no such positive effects for urbanites. These findings are evidenced by analysis of individual-level data from surveys across 27 countries, which again shows that the effects are conditional on, and decrease in a context of, urbanization. This provides further and more direct support for the argument that African rulers pursue pro-rural policies to win the votes of the rural majority.

Voters in Africa condition their support on the provision of public goods. While this may seem obvious to some, existing work on the determinants of voter

choice in African elections has focussed predominantly on issues of clientelism and ethnic voting. Analysis of data on two types of goods, education and roads, provides robust evidence that voters in Ghana do in fact condition their electoral support on the provision of public goods. Demonstrating this lends crucial support to the book's theoretical argument, because if voters in Africa do not engage in this type of evaluative voting, at least in part, there would be little reason to think that politicians should implement pro-rural policies in order to win rural votes.

Rural democracy is not new, nor is it the result of temporally-contextual factors. The very dynamics expected by the theoretical argument played out in Botswana during the immediate post-independence period. Qualitative historical evidence shows that, despite its dominant position, the ruling Botswana Democratic Party responded strongly to losses of rural support with a major programme of rural development policies implemented in the early 1970s. Interestingly, cabinet minutes document an explicit policy of prioritizing rural development projects that were both highly visible and likely to be completed prior to the next election, suggesting a strong role for electoral incentives. Importantly, this demonstrates that the link between electoral competition and pro-rural development is not simply the result of contemporaneous external forces, such as donor conditionality, that may have prevailed in the 1990s and 2000s.

Taken together, this body of evidence provides reasons to be optimistic about the operation of electoral accountability in Africa. African governments are responding to the accountability structures provided by electoral competition; in that sense, democracy in Africa is working.

*This article was originally published by [democracyinafrica.org](http://democracyinafrica.org).*

*"The network will offer valuable opportunities to start new dialogues about women's musical contributions across a range of geographical contexts."*

# ACADEMIC PROFILE

We are delighted that **Dr Joe Davies**, Lecturer in Music, has been awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellowship from the European Commission, with joint affiliation at Maynooth University and the University of California, Irvine (2021–2024).



The project, "Rethinking Widowhood: Women, Loss, and Liberation in Nineteenth-Century Musical Culture", centres on women's experience of widowhood in musical cultures of the long nineteenth century (c. 1800–1914). At the core of the research lies a desire to rethink the ways in which widowhood served as a catalyst for musical and artistic creativity; and to reconsider the reception and legacy of women whose contributions have been overshadowed by the men in their lives. In pursuing these aims, the project takes widowhood as an impetus for establishing a new kind of historiography that restores women's individual agency and artistic integrity to the discourse on nineteenth-century music.

Central research questions include: how might we contextualize the intersections between loss, memory and renewal in the experience of widowhood? To what extent did personal interaction and different genres of life writing (diaries, letters, memoirs) influence how women such as Clara Schumann, Cosima Wagner and Amy Beach conceived of widowhood? What were the implications for their social and legal status? And in what ways did these widows cultivate artistic agency through their corporeal and intellectual engagement with music – whether in

terms of composition, performance or the curation of their husbands' legacies? In addressing these questions, Dr Davies hopes the project will not only open up fresh ways of historicizing women's self-fashioning within the musical sphere, but will also provide a model for future research on widowhood and female creativity across a range of art forms.

As part of the project's dissemination activities, Dr Davies will inaugurate an interdisciplinary research network, "Women in Music: Global Perspectives". Bringing together an international cohort of scholars and practitioners from the UK, Canada, Ireland and the USA, this initiative will serve as a platform for hosting conferences, guest lectures and workshops, together with a recital series featuring music by women composers. Through these activities, which will be geared towards a wide audience, the network will offer valuable opportunities to start new dialogues about women's musical contributions across a range of geographical contexts, and to hear performances of music that has long been neglected.

Dr Davies says, "I express gratitude to my colleagues and students at Lady Margaret Hall and the Faculty of Music for creating a stimulating environment in which to develop this project. Sincere thanks are extended especially

to Professor Gascia Ouzounian and Professor Susan Wollenberg, for their support throughout the application process and for their inspiration more generally. I am delighted to be taking up this fellowship and very much look forward to embarking on collaborations with scholars in Oxford, Ireland and the USA."

## About Joe Davies

Joe Davies completed his DPhil in Music at the University of Oxford, with a full scholarship from the British Arts and Humanities Research Council. At present, he holds a Lectureship in Music at LMH, together with an Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship at Maynooth University. Dr Davies specializes in the aesthetics and cultural history of nineteenth-century music, particularly that of German-speaking lands. His research is motivated by a curiosity about the relationships between music and its aesthetic, social and cultural contexts.





## NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

by James Fishwick

# HOOT HOOT, HOOT HOOT



Tawny Graves

In 2019, LMH alumna Erin Hughes (2009 Fine Art) contacted Allan Doig, her former LMH tutor. Since graduating from LMH, Erin had been doing extensive work with collages – originally focussing on depictions of interiors and modern life, particularly using ersatz materials and fake marble laminates. However, after moving to a remote hillside in mid-Wales, she has been turning more towards natural landscapes and birds, using hand-marbled paper to create images imitating inlaid stone Pietre Dure creations.

She was inspired to contact Allan Doig with an update on her work after she had read, in the 2019 Brown Book, an article on our book binding exhibition, having particularly admired the pictures of marbled papers from that display. Allan immediately saw the exciting potential for an art installation in LMH Library, to tie in with our book displays, and put us in touch.

Visiting LMH and looking at some books from the Briggs Room, Erin was drawn to our second edition of *British Ornithology* (London: Graves,

1821), written and illustrated by George Graves. She was fascinated by the plates depicting owls, wanting to explore how caricatured and deadpan the drawing style is, particularly for the depiction of such symbolically intelligent and ethereal creatures. Their expressions are comparable to the contemporary comedy trope of looking directly at the camera, breaking the fourth wall. They are deeply serious, but also quite preposterous due to their facial discs making them look almost cartoon-like, and their stereoscopic forward-facing eyes humanising them, as compared to many birds.

Erin decided to set each of Graves' owls against a repeating backdrop of a simple landscape drawn from a Pietre Dure image, emphasizing their staged compositions. She hand-marbled all the paper, using a variety of styles – as well as natural marbles, she also used a loose *nonpareil* marble pattern to recreate the effect of the owl feathers. This technique is traditionally used on end papers and book bindings, further locating the work within the Library context.



The finished installation spans four corners of the Library, with the owls holding the space with their curious expressions. They have been placed on cupboard doors, again tying the installation into the Pietre Dure tradition, which was often used for cabinet door inlays. When you first enter the Library they grab your attention, brightening the whole space (several visitors have remarked that they thought they were images on back-lit flatscreens). However, it is only when you study them up close that you begin to see all the details, and the different textures of marble, getting the full experience. The labour-intensive, hand-made collage process creates an image that deeply rewards an active and close look.

The exhibition opened in September 2019, for the annual Oxford Open Doors day (when many colleges and spaces in Oxford put on free exhibitions or displays, and encourage visitors). Erin also returned to the college in Michaelmas 2019 to talk to our Fine Arts students about her life as an artist and the creation of the works. In Hilary Term, we changed our rare books exhibition to focus on images of flora and fauna, to tie-in with them. If you would like to visit the Library in the (we hope!) near future when it is back open and safe to do so, to see the installation and the exhibition, please do contact [librarian@lmh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:librarian@lmh.ox.ac.uk) to arrange it. To see more of Erin Hughes' work, visit <http://www.erinlaurahughes.com/> or her instagram handle here: @erin.l.hughes

## About Erin

After completing her BA in Fine Art at LMH and the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Erin spent four years living and working in Berlin. She graduated with an MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art, London in 2018. Whilst in Berlin she co-founded Cypher Space, which later led to co-founding Cypher Billboard in London, and she also curates Contemporary Collaborations at Robert Young Antiques in London. Recent exhibitions include; *Surface Matters*, Take Courage Gallery, London 2020; *Adazzel*, JGM Gallery, London, 2020; *Autumn Show*, Minerva Arts Centre, Llanidloes, 2019; *Bounds*, Skelf.org.uk, 2019; *A Raw Garden*, Fitzrovia Gallery, 2019, *Hidden*, Mid-Wales Arts Centre, 2019; *FAKERS*, Thames-Side Studios Gallery, London 2018; *Paper Cuts*, Saatchi Gallery, London, 2018; *Floored*, Glass Cloud Gallery, 2018; *Home Me 3*, Cypher Billboard, London 2017; *Mud, Tokyo and Swimming*, presented by imlabor, Park Tower Hall Gallery1, Tokyo, 2017



TOP A close-up of Snowy Hoot

ABOVE Tawny Hoot





Archivist **Olly Mahony** has been listening back through the sound recordings held in the Archives – paving the way for a new project.



H.C. D. E.H. Jamison R. Mc Carcheon  
E.C Lodge 1913/14 J. Spens

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

## A SECRET DISCUSSION WITH MISS WORDSWORTH AND NIGHTTIME STUDY IN TALBOT HALL

In the summer of 1970, Evelyn Jamison sat down in her living room, an early cassette recorder running on the table, and recalled to a friend her first meeting with Miss Wordsworth as a keen prospective student in June 1898:

*"Miss Wordsworth was staying with her brother, the Bishop of Salisbury, at Lambeth...Miss Wordsworth asked me to go and see her there, my mother went there with me...and we talked. I had a higher certificate... [and]...I'd got the French...Miss Wordsworth said she'd have me and then she drew my mother into her bedroom and shut the door. Later on my mother was terribly amused."*

Jamison continued that her mother had been asked by Wordsworth if she

had anything more to tell her about her daughter:

*"My mother said she couldn't think of anything! I suppose she [Wordsworth] meant whether I had any evil propensities of any sort!"*

The Principal's faith in the young candidate was more than repaid. Jamison went on to become Tutor, Fellow and Vice-Principal of the Hall (1907–1937) and was a leading medieval historian specialising on the Normans in Sicily.

This lovely story is just one of many gleaned from sound recordings held in the Archives. A number of recordings also cover key events in our history; one of the most important recordings we hold comes from a BBC audio reel.

It is a copy of the BBC Radio Oxford programme "The Apple of Discord" from July 1978, which interviews members of the College, from the Principal Sally Chilver to the students themselves, about the decision to admit men.

Ultimately, these recordings bring out the personalities of the interviewees and give wonderful insights into Hall life not recorded in the official record.

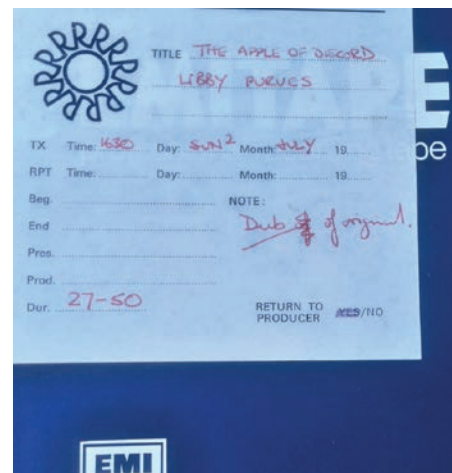
In February 2020 I visited Ashsted in Surrey to interview Margaret Clarke (Scott Cree 1938). In her sitting room Margaret talked warmly about her French Tutors and working patterns:

*"Rhoda Sutherland was wonderful on every subject...My other French Tutor was M.G Skipworth, she was the Vice-Principal...my room was right opposite her front door. In practice it meant I spent a lot of time just talking to the people queuing up waiting to see her! We used to work in Talbot Hall during the night. There was a fire place at either end of Talbot Hall and always a bucket full of coal."*

The technology recording the interviews has changed but the unique insights that oral testimonies offer to the historical record is undiminished. With the Lady Margaret Hall Alumni Association (LMHA) currently undertaking an oral history project that is gathering new recordings, these are exciting times for the Archives as we preserve alumni recollections for future generations.

Once all our recordings are migrated onto the computer in the preservation WAV format, I shall be listing them and exploring ways to make them accessible for enjoyment and research; for they are all a unique and personal record of our rich past.

***"These are exciting times for the Archives as we preserve alumni recollections for future generations... they are all a unique and personal record of our rich past."***



A BBC audio reel from 1978

## AN ORAL HISTORY OF LMH

We are very pleased to report that the LMHA has recently set up a project team to manage a compilation of oral history interviews. The aim of the project is to create an archive of interviews with our alumni, students, Fellows and staff, adding context and texture to the rich breadth of historical documents already held in the College Archives.

Last year, Anne Baker (1934 PPE), Oxford's oldest alumna at 105, was interviewed as part of our marking 140 years since the first students walked through the doors at LMH. Anne's rich commentary yielded through this interview prompted the idea that the creation of an oral history would be a great enhancement to the College Archives.

We are extremely grateful to members of the LMHA for taking this forward: Cindy Bull, Alison Gomm, Harriet Kemp, Emma Neale and Sophie Stead.

At the time of writing, the Project Team are moving their focus towards conducting online interviews, and are very much looking forward to meeting more alumni in person when circumstances allow.



Anne Baker (1934 PPE)

To find out more please contact the Development Office, on [development@lmh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development@lmh.ox.ac.uk) or 01865 274362.



# FEMINIST ART HISTORIAN GRISELDA POLLOCK

## HOLBERG LAUREATE 2020

**Griselda Pollock** (1967 Modern History) has been awarded the Holberg Prize for 2020. The Holberg Prize is the Nobel Prize-equivalent for arts and humanities, theology and social sciences. Griselda is the first art historian to be awarded the prize. The funds will support her research and foster the field of feminist art history and cultural studies. Griselda told LMH, "It is a wonderful award for the field, acknowledging the intellectual legitimacy of feminism and art history as a subject." She is not the first LMH alumna to win the prestigious prize; Marina Warner (1964 Modern Languages) was the 2015 holder.

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This article was originally published by the University of Leeds Press Office, where Griselda is currently Professor of Social and Critical Histories of Art at the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies.

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**O**n 5 March, the Holberg Prize Committee at the University of Bergen announced the winner of the 2020 Holberg Prize, Professor Griselda Pollock. The prize was set up by the Norwegian government and was first awarded in 2004, to Julia Kristeva. The annual award honours outstanding scholars for work in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, law and theology, either within one of these fields or through interdisciplinary work. Other laureates have included Jurgen Habermas, Natalie Zemon Davis, Frederic Jameson and Paul Gilroy. The prize is named after the Danish-Norwegian writer and academic Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754). It is regarded as the Nobel Prize for these areas of expertise.

In announcing the award, the prize committee noted that "Professor Griselda Pollock ... is the foremost feminist art historian working today. ... Since the 1970s, she has been teaching and publishing in a field in which she is not only a renowned authority, but which she helped create."

Griselda Pollock stresses that the key purpose of her work is to "analyse and resist the injuries of class, race, gender, sexuality as they are inflicted through images and cultural forms such as media, cinema, art, literature and academic thought." She states: "I have spent more than 40 years creating new concepts with which to challenge art

***“Her work, however, extends well beyond art history. She has always also focussed on cinema studies, being a leading scholar on Chantal Akerman’s work, Hollywood cinema and on the cinema and myth of Marilyn Monroe.”***

history’s white, patriarchal structure, and to produce ways of thinking about art, its images, its practices, its effects that are not about admiration of selective greatness. Instead, I seek understanding of the *work that art does* as representation and show how representations shape ideas about the world and who we are in it.”

Her publications are many, including *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology*, co-authored with Roszika Parker in 1981, a radical critique of the art history discipline and its shocking obliteration of women as artists from that history. The book is now regarded as a classic, and will be re-launched this year by Bloomsbury and will appear in French and Spanish translations. It should be essential reading for art historians and those writing about art. Her major monographs include *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (1988), *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (1999), *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive* (2007), *After-affects / After-Images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation* (2013). She has written extensively on Mary Cassatt, Edgar Degas, Eugene Manet, Lee Krasner and, critically, on Van Gogh, as well on Mary Kelly, Bracha L. Ettinger, and Louise Bourgeois amongst many other contemporary artists.

Her work, however, extends well beyond art history. She has always also focussed on cinema studies, being a leading scholar on Chantal Akerman’s work, Hollywood cinema and on the cinema and myth of Marilyn Monroe. In 1985, she established a Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds and helped to found the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Leeds in 1995. In 2001, she became the founding director of the originally AHRC-funded, Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History (CentreCATH), a transdisciplinary project led by the trio of art history, fine art and cultural studies under the critical rubrics of gender, class, sexuality, post-colonial and queer theory.

In addition to her many monographs, edited collections and articles on art history focussing on “feminist, queer, and postcolonial interventions in art’s histories”, and cultural theory, she has analysed the complex formation of the cultural memory of the Holocaust/Shoah and, in a related field, the study of the “concentrationary universe”, which was distinct from the that of the genocidal extermination camps. With her Leeds colleague Max Silverman, she directed a five-year research programme, *Concentrationary Memory: The Politics of Representation*, that produced a series of books: *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance* (2013); *Concentrationary Imaginaries: Tracing*

*Totalitarian Violence in Popular Culture* (2015); *Concentrationary Art: Jean Cayrol, the Lazarean and the Everyday in Post-War Film, Literature, Music and the Visual Arts* (2019); the first book, *Concentrationary Cinema Aesthetics and Political Resistance in Night and Fog* (1955) by *Alain Resnais* (2011), was awarded the 2011 Kraszna-Krausz Prize for best book on the moving image.

In 2018, she combined her work on trauma and aesthetic transformation with her study of the cultural memory of the Holocaust and work on women modernist artists to produce the first art historical monograph on a German Jewish artist, who was murdered aged 26 in Auschwitz, after completing in one year a monumental modernist work composed of music, image and text, comprising 784 paintings. Titled *Charlotte Salomon and the Theatre of Memory* (Yale) the book offers a radically new analysis of one of the most complex products of German Jewish modernity and the crisis of fascism.

In addition to this extensive body of work, Griselda has been a key figure in the School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies for 43 years. There she developed many of their innovative undergraduate and master’s programmes, including the Social History of Art and a unique graduate programme in Feminism and the Visual Arts. She supervised 70 PhD students, many of whom now occupy prestigious posts across the world. Although now in the process of “retiring”, her work rate continues undiminished, with at least four major publishing projects currently underway.

Hazel Genn, Chair of the Holberg Committee, described Professor Pollock as “a beacon for generations of art and cultural historians.”



**Griselda in her LMH days, as part of the University Challenge Team**



# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR?

As the COVID-19 pandemic gained speed in the UK, we took a decision in early March to postpone an exciting new event planned for the alumni calendar. We are delighted to have six LMH alumni lined up to join us for this discussion; each will talk about their own experiences in setting up their businesses, and will think about the larger connotations of "entrepreneurship".

We look forward to bringing this back to you when it's safe and sensible to do so, but in the meantime we spent some time talking to the panel to get to know them more and to find out how their companies are reacting to these difficult times.



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***"For me, the single and unique reason to start a company is in order to solve a problem that one has identified."***

## **Nadia Crandall** 1974 English

Nadia Crandall is an entrepreneur and investor in early-stage businesses. She has recently founded Capshore Partners, whose principal business is short-term collateralised lending to small and medium enterprises. In 2011, Nadia co-founded Harvard Business Angels of London (HBSA). HBSA has built a portfolio with a value exceeding £200m, with around 20% of companies showing superior to exceptional growth. Nadia manages her own holdings of early-stage impact businesses, with interests in medical technology, education and renewable energy, and is actively engaged with several businesses in an advisory and non-executive capacity. She has also given her time as a mentor for the Said Global Entrepreneur Challenge and the Althea-Imperial Program.

### **What was the inspiration for your company?**

For me, the single and unique reason to start a company is in order to solve a problem that one has identified. In the case of my most recent venture, Capshore Partners, the

problem was the Great Financial Crisis of 2008 that left many banks in difficulties, sometimes insolvent, and always under pressure to repair their loan to asset ratios. For any business, particularly SMEs, borrowing became fraught with problems. Capshore Partners identified an opportunity and a niche in collateralised short-term lending, especially non-conforming loans that the banks were now turning away from.

### **What is your vision going forward?**

I work with a loose network of other lenders. My goal would be to formalise this and generate more capacity so that the business can grow more rapidly.

### **What challenges has the current pandemic brought and how are you overcoming them?**

The portfolio has been mostly stable, although we have made provision for some possible losses where a business has had to suspend its operations or is struggling to collect accounts receivable. Much will depend on government policies for easing the lockdown globally, and how they strike the balance between protecting lives and protecting livelihoods.



**Isabella West**  
2011 Economics and Management

After leaving LMH Isabella went straight into a strategy consultancy role at L.E.K. Consulting. A career shift saw her becoming a self-employed consultant. One of her clients was Selfridges Group: Isabella worked in the global strategy team – advising senior management on future retail trends. During that project Isabella began to read about the rise of rental fashion in the USA, which subsequently led to her launching Hirestreet.

**What was the inspiration for your company?**

Growing up with two sisters who both love fashion, you could say I first started running a non-paid, non-consensual rental service from a very young age! This continued during my time at LMH: I have always loved getting dressed up, and had invested in a rather extensive collection of dresses before arriving at university. During my time at College, my room would often be full of girls trying on outfits for their next crew-date or formal. I used to love seeing the confident, happy feeling they got when they found an outfit they loved. Fast-forward five years, I was working for Selfridges as a Strategy Consultant,

one of my projects was focussed on the “Future of fashion”, I remember looking at the data coming out of the US about how fast rental was growing in North America and thinking – “This is what I need to do.”

**And what is the vision going forward?**

We launched Hirestreet with a focus on occasion wear items, because our market research told us that’s what customers were most likely to buy and wear once. In the last two years we have grown our customer base, focussing on building loyalty – i.e. shifting customers’ behaviours so rental is their go-to solution for occasion-wear outfits. This September we will be introducing our work-wear and outer-wear ranges. This is just the start of expanding into different rental categories. Once we have the inventory and stock base to meet our demand, we would like to introduce a subscription service – where renters pay a monthly fee to have access to a revolving wardrobe! In more visionary terms, we would love to be more of a household name, and involved in the big discussions about the future of the fashion industry.

**What challenges has the current pandemic bought and how are you overcoming them?**

Lockdown has been a bit of a journey for us. Initially we closed our warehouse, and moved the head office team to working from home. We saw demand fall off a cliff (we are an events-based business), and at the same time, the customer service team were working frantically to cancel, refund and re-arrange existing orders. The beginning was hard, no-one builds a business to put it into hibernation, so I think just figuring out the new landscape and trying to keep the team positive and motivated was the first challenge. Fast-forward 10 weeks, we have actually managed to push a lot of our tech and data forwards, which has been great. As soon as we got the go-ahead to re-open the warehouse (in a socially distant way), we launched a Try On Service, so customers can use the downtime to trial items that they want to hire for future events, and we have also built a re-sale site for ex-hired stock, called Hirestreet pre-Loved.

**Nicholas Burke**  
1987 Chemistry

Nick has a background in investment banking and project finance. In 2015 he was one of four angel investors in Aerofoil Energy, a technology start-up in the energy efficiency space, which now has clients including Sainsbury’s, M&S, Asda and Tesco. As Commercial Director Nick now oversees the company’s growth strategy, investor relations and marketing.

**What was the inspiration for your company?**

We established Aerofoil Energy in 2013 to promote technology to improve the energy efficiency of supermarket refrigeration. The food retailing industry in the UK accounts for about 3% of the country’s total electrical energy consumption. More than half of the energy required to run supermarkets and convenience stores is used to power the cold chain. The open-fronted multi-deck cabinet is the chief consumer and tends to be the most common type of fridge you’ll see in a UK store. Hence, there was significant scope for energy savings and associated CO<sub>2</sub> reductions by tackling inefficiencies in these cabinets.

**And what is the vision going forward?**

So far, we have installed 1.5 million Aerofoils in 4,000 supermarkets, convenience stores and food-to-go outlets. This includes the UK’s largest retailers, such as Tesco, Sainsbury’s, Asda, M&S, Coop, Boots and WHSmith. Together, they are saving 150 million kg CO<sub>2</sub> emissions each year, and this figure will increase as more grocers adopt Aerofoils going forward. Indeed,





the next phase of our strategy is to roll out the technology across major retailers in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia, and we are currently engaged in store trials across all these regions.

Innovation remains a key part of our business, and we have developed further technology to enhance the energy and temperature performance of commercial fridges. In 2017, we set ourselves the objective of making an open-fronted multi-deck fridge perform as well as one with a glass door. Impossible as this might seem, we've succeeded through a combination of new technology and aerodynamic design modifications that manufacturers can apply to new cabinets. We expect these to start appearing in supermarkets in the near future.

#### **What challenges has the current pandemic brought and how are you overcoming them?**

Our head office is based in Cheshire and houses our operations and logistics team, whilst some of our management and Board members are located in the south. So we've been used to working together remotely for some time. Our transition

to home-working has, thankfully, been relatively straightforward. All of our products are manufactured in the UK within 40 miles of our head office. Although our suppliers have all been affected by the pandemic, our proximity and long-standing relationships with them have kept our respective businesses functioning without too much interruption. Relying on overseas manufacturing would, I fear, have had far more serious consequences.

Whilst our clients, the supermarkets, have continued to trade throughout the crisis they too have faced significant challenges, especially in the initial stages of the pandemic when there was widespread panic-buying. Even though things have since calmed down, the way of working for each of us has changed dramatically. We have had to write a completely new set of RAMS (Risk

***"Even though things have since calmed down, the way of working for each of us has changed dramatically."***

Assessment and Method Statements) for any work we conduct in stores under the "new normal". Interestingly, the application of Aerofoils as an alternative to glass doors on fridges has, in effect, removed a high-frequency touch point for shoppers, which is one of many considerations that retailers are now having to address.

Aside from the profound impact of the pandemic itself, we are aware of the risk that it detracts from the global agenda on climate change, which remains another major threat to society in the medium-to-long term. Our business is helping retailers to work towards their individual climate change targets, for example Sainsbury's 'Net Zero' and Walmart's 'Project Gigaton'. We hope, therefore, that pressure to follow through on these commitments is maintained, be it through legislation or consumer choice.



**Paul Bennett**  
2011 PPE

Following a year out after finals, Paul was offered a job at Amazon and he consequently spent three highly enjoyable years helping them launch new internal start-ups. Whilst at Amazon, Paul started working on Perchpeek with a friend as they were consistently frustrated by the home renting process. They scratched a beta product together, and now PerchPeek is an AI rental marketplace, reimagining the way tenants find and move into properties,

using cutting-edge technology to automatically match tenants to the most relevant properties, saving time and money for tenants, landlords and agents.

#### **What was the inspiration for your company?**

Have you ever tried to move home before? Great, then you know why we started PerchPeek! It's stressful, time-consuming and still unbelievably fragmented as a process. After I left LMH, I took the tried and tested road to London, and finding a place to live sucked. Hours searching, heaps of phone calls and a few dodgy estate agents – that first move had a bit of everything! Following this personal trauma, my co-founders and I set about building a platform that guided people through every stage of moving, from searching through to settling in.

#### **And what is the vision going forward?**

Increasingly, we're focussed on becoming a global platform for people relocating. As people seek new experiences and have more freedom to work flexibly, we believe

a higher proportion of people will want to work abroad. To this end, we're focussing on scaling internationally as quickly as possible, so that wherever you're moving, you can count on PerchPeek to guide you through the process.

#### **What challenges has the current pandemic brought and how are you overcoming them?**

As you can imagine, when there's a near global travel ban, not many people are moving internationally! One of the things we did to adapt to this was use the quieter period operationally to focus on launching as many countries as possible so that even if fewer people were moving in every market, when you combine them together it makes up for that deficit. To this end, since March, we've launched in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain, Luxembourg and the US – with more to come! From a start-up perspective, the drying up of funding meant we also had to take stock of our accounts and look to save money where possible – for example we've got rid of our office...

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## Tim Ewington

### 1987 Modern History

After working in advertising, media and publishing, Tim discovered new product development and worked creating magazines and relaunching radio stations for Emap in the 90s, before setting up a development consultancy for media companies. Then Tim launched the UK's first high-quality, free magazine business with Mike Soutar (you may have come across him as one of Sugar's assistants on *The Apprentice*). The magazines were *Stylist* and *Shortlist*, with a million copies distributed a week. Now Tim is about to launch a direct-to-consumer fashion brand, *aethel*, as an experiment in manufacturing top-quality knitwear in the UK, and is also working on a big data project with the UK newspaper industry.

#### What was the inspiration for your company?

I grew up in a Yorkshire town with three mills at its heart. One of them was Dawson's and Joseph Dawson, the 19<sup>th</sup>



century founder, created the modern cashmere industry by inventing the machine that separates fine cashmere hairs from the rest. Previously this was done by hand. I wrote my O level history project about him.

During the 1980s the industry collapsed and the mills closed or shrank dramatically. I always wondered if things could be reinvented in some way.

As an experiment, my wife and I launched *aethel*, a tiny cashmere knitwear

business making modern knitwear in the UK from fine, Loro Piana Italian yarn.

#### And what is the vision going forward?

Design and make more jumpers and sell them direct to customers via the internet.

#### What challenges has the current pandemic brought and how are you overcoming them?

All our yarn comes from Loro Piana in northern Italy. The factory has been closed for three months so we haven't been able to make any new stock.

Our London-based knitters are also open again but production is slower due to social distancing.

We have decided to be patient, accept that the business will be quiet for several months and then relaunch in the autumn. We didn't want to compromise on our principles and use lower-quality yarn or knit outside the UK.

We will have a flow of new designs beginning again in August. We're hoping for a cold winter.



## Chris Robson

### 1983 Modern History

Chris is a serial entrepreneur and CEO, with 20 years' experience of building fast-growth, multinational companies and products, from £0 to £50m turnover. He built and floated digital agency, Syzygy, on the German Stock Exchange and co-founded Ink Publishing, the world's largest publisher of inflight media. He was CEO of Edengene, the strategy and innovation consultancy. He was a founder of market research technology company, The Distilleries, and educational technology company, Propagator. He is now building health

technology company, Living With, which owns Squeazy, the UK's top-paid medical app, and which has seven products in the NHS. Chris is the author of *Confessions of an Entrepreneur*, published by Pearson.

#### What was the inspiration for your company?

We started Living With because we could see the need for a more joined up relationship between doctors and patients. We could see the need for continuous care outside of the GP surgery or clinic or hospital.

Our experience living with conditions comes from first-hand knowledge. I have lived with ulcerative colitis for 30 years and have direct experience of the terrifying unpredictability of autoimmune diseases.

#### And what is the vision going forward?

A world where any clinician can make a smart medical app in less than an hour, to support any patient with any condition so that they can lead more predictable and healthier lives.

You don't need to be a large healthcare provider to have your own digital tools; we are providing healthcare

professionals with the ability to build their own digital service in the quickest and most efficient way.

And in the end the patient benefits the most, because they get the personalised apps that they need to improve their outcomes. A key part of our vision is to help patients lead more predictable lives, so we are using aggregated and anonymised data to generate insights to enable clinicians to make evidence-based decisions. We are building smart algorithms to recommend personalised treatment plans using artificial intelligence.

This will enable clinicians to intervene in real-time to prevent further condition deterioration and to optimise individual treatment. We want to help every clinician to be able to provide the best personalised care to each and every patient.

#### What challenges has the current pandemic brought and how are you overcoming them?

There has been a tremendous increase in interest in health technology, but also delays across every type of healthcare provider in projects and purchasing.



*"I feel lucky to be surrounded by passionate forward-thinking individuals who are striving to make real change."*

**Tom Hughes** joined the college in August 2019 as Digital Media Officer. Now, more than ever, in this digital age his work is proving invaluable.



# COMMUNICATIONS @ LMH

**L**MH has thousands of followers on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Our YouTube channel, website and Student Room account are also viewed by thousands of people.

We use these various sites to help the College. To encourage students to apply to our undergraduate courses, postgraduate courses, foundation year, visiting students programme and summer schools. We share stories about our students, academics and alumni covering their research and achievements. We share important information and events with students, staff and applicants throughout the year.

In order to do this we have to create a

host of digital elements, such as videos, photography, graphics, web pages and digital signage. This is how I spend a lot of my time, with a camera in hand or editing content on my laptop.

This year we have found ourselves in lockdown and many of the videos we have created have shown themselves to be more valuable than ever. These include: a student tour of LMH, student Snapchat takeovers showing their experiences on a variety of courses, mock interviews and a webinar on the application process. Young people are still able to learn about the College and what we have to offer without physically visiting us. They are able to get insights

into how they can get a place at Oxford.

A lot of my time is also spent planning digital campaigns and ideas, then reviewing their success after they have been shared. We try our best to keep an eye on what our competitors are up to in higher education and what is trending in online spheres. This informs our plans for new content. Google Analytics and social media sites allow us to review how many people have watched and engaged with the content we have produced. This helps us to further understand what is effective, though change is fast-paced in the digital world.

A great part of my job is that I get to spend a lot of time with our talented



**Tom's colleagues, Head of Communications Jo Murray, and Outreach Officer Marrium Khan**



students. We have many student ambassadors who are keen to help in terms of outreach and promotion of the College. They feature in videos, photos and written pieces, helping to show the positive, inclusive experience we have to offer students here at LMH. The students often contribute fantastic ideas for content themselves, having first-hand insight into what it is like being an Oxford applicant. Some of our students are social media influencers themselves, with huge followings. A recent video collaboration between LMH and Modern Languages student Eve Bennett had around 30,000 views on YouTube. Working together with these students helps us reach larger audiences than we would working alone. They are also an authentic voice when it comes to explaining what it is like being a LMH student right now. We are also greatly appreciative of the work our tutors have done in helping with digital outreach which promotes the academic excellence of the College.

Another highlight within my role is the opportunity to work with my manager Jo Murray, who has fantastic communications experience, and our inspiring Senior Outreach Officer, Marrium Khan. Both come up with creative ideas and help me realise my own. As a team it's a privilege to help LMH lead the way in digital outreach and communication. I feel lucky to be surrounded by passionate forward-thinking individuals who are striving to make real change.

It's the people that make the place. That is definitely the case at LMH. In

my job I also get to work with people in lots of different departments. I worked with HR this year to highlight our success in achieving Investors in People Gold. I worked with the Gardening Team to help promote events that encouraged students to make the most of our beautiful gardens. I worked with the Visiting Students team to create a promotional video to encourage applications. I worked with the Study Skills Centre to help promote the fantastic services they offer Oxford students. I love being able to work with the different departments throughout the College to help support the fantastic work they do. And it helps that they are all so friendly.

One of the easiest parts of my job is taking visually aesthetic photos

and videos at LMH. That's because it is a beautiful place. The buildings and the gardens provide fantastic backdrops. It would be more difficult to take a bad photo in our Library, Dining Hall, Simpkins Lee Theatre and Quads than a nice one. Each season also has something to offer. Flowers coming through in the spring, the tree opposite the Wordsworth building that turns a beautiful burnt orange in autumn. The decorations that go up around Christmas in the Chapel and the Dining Hall, students punting in the summertime. When I first arrived at LMH for my interview I was amazed, I had never seen a place like it. I feel lucky that my job has allowed me to get out and explore the College all year round.



**Some of the digital projects Tom has worked on, including Virtual Open Days, videos on College life and student Q & As**



