Christ Church Matters is one way in which the Development and Alumni Office, and the Christ Church Association, attempt to keep our old members and friends in touch with the House, and with each other. We aim to give you news and views, and to ensure you are kept informed about what is going on. Thus the articles in CCM cross the centuries, the generations, and the globe.

The Dean’s message about warm welcomes and hospitality is as true now as it was back in the 1520’s when Wolsey’s first buildings were the cellars, the Hall and the kitchens. Alumni, parents, and friends are always welcome, and we would especially draw your attention to two events coming up at the end of the summer at which Hall will play centre stage.

The Association dinner on 17 September follows a day of sporting fun for families at the Sportsground, where you will be able to see for yourselves the wonderfully refurbished pavilion, the excellent state of the grounds, and the stunning Jubilee Bridge. This is the perfect occasion for all who played sport during their time here, or are interested in sports, to gather and enjoy good food, good wine and good company. Furthermore Oliver Holt (1985), Chief Sports Writer for the Mail on Sunday, has agreed to speak.

On 1 October we will be holding the first Family Gaudy for parents to experience the sort of collegiality and celebration that our alumni enjoy so much.

We hope to see you at these or other events and share with you what it means to be a member of the House.
Welcome to this new edition of Christ Church Matters. We use the word ‘matters’ in every sense here – the business we are about, what concerns us, and the essential substance and elements that compose the House. We hope you enjoy the variety and vitality of the House through these pages – all that matters from your alma mater.

I am writing this in the USA somewhere between the east coast and west coast, having been to visit alumni in New York and Washington DC – and heading out to Los Angeles and San Francisco. It is remarkable that, thousands of miles away from Christ Church, one can feel so at home with members of the House. Wherever you encounter our alumni the most striking feature of the gatherings is the warmth and affection in which the House continues to be held. This is especially true in the USA where the sterling work of the American Friends and the Association continues to do so much to sustain our common life, and invest in the future. For that, and much else besides, we are truly grateful.

As a House, we believe in showing our welcome through hospitality. Indeed, hospitality and welcoming are at the core of our very being.

Eighteen months into my Decanal I continue to marvel at the depth and breadth of Christ Church’s reach. Food features prominently in our gatherings; I have recently welcomed to lunch the Vice Chancellor of Christchurch Canterbury, New Zealand, and other guests from that city, which takes our name on account of its founding fathers.

I recently attended for drinks, canapes and cake, the 90th celebrations of the University of Reading – inaugurated by members of Christ Church in 1926. The University is now ranked globally for research and teaching within the top 2% of higher education institutions.

Earlier this year, I was invited to a dinner in London, organised by Housewomen from the 1990s, looking forward to the 40th anniversary of the admission of women. The sense of energy, achievement and pride at the dinner was immense, and one could not fail to be humbled, moved and inspired by the gathering.

Earlier in the term, we welcomed to dinner our new Vice Chancellor, Professor Louise Richardson, together with the Chancellor, Lord Patten of Barnes. As a House, we believe in showing our welcome through hospitality. Indeed, hospitality and welcoming are at the core of our very being.
An innovation in 2016 was a Chinese New Year celebration, which saw almost three dozen of our students attend dinner in the Deanery – drawn from Korea, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. We have a highly variegated student body, and the House is all the richer for it.

Great institutions of learning, it is often said, do three things: they learn together, they walk together and they eat together. Sometimes the learning and conversation that takes place over food can be as important as a seminar, tutorial or lecture.

In the intimate setting of a college – the House of learning, in this case – we discover new insights and ideas across the dining table just as much as we might encounter them in other places. When it comes to learning and formation, being together matters.

So, what matters now? We have a global reputation for our teaching and scholarship. We teach young men and women of the highest ability from every continent. Our academics push back the frontiers of knowledge in myriad ways that serve society and contribute to our understanding and wellbeing. We also influence the world in other ways that can hardly be measured. As Einstein said, ‘not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.’

Yes, Christ Church matters. Not just to us – but also to the wider world. We have enjoyed a great past, contributing much to this country, and to countries and continents far beyond. We thank all our readers, alumni, members of Christ Church, and friends, for helping to sustain us in the past and in the present – and in all our hopes and aspirations for the future, together, as members of the House.

The Very Revd Prof Martyn Percy, Dean
As the final words are being written for a new book on Christ Church’s architecture, it is interesting to ponder the ideas for new buildings that were never completed or even made it off the drawing board.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Thomas Wolsey left his college lacking in all sorts of vital elements. When the cardinal fell, there was no library, no treasury, no archive, no new accommodation for students, no tower over the stairs, and, very nearly, no chapel. Were it not for Peckwater Inn – used by Wolsey’s builders and carpenters for lodgings and workshops, and the remains of the priory that still had to be developed, the first Dean and Chapter would have found themselves in a sticky position. The income of the new Christ Church, whilst enormous compared with that of other colleges, was certainly not enough to complete what Wolsey had begun.

But they managed. A tower was built over the Hall stairs, but was apparently short-lived; the cathedral was given a new west wall and window; Peckwater received a face-lift in the early seventeenth century; and space for a library was found in the old monastic refectory. Famously, Wolsey’s proposed cloister was never completed even after a renewed push for it in Governing Body in the 1870s.

Throughout most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, once the income from estates and from commoner undergraduates allowed, most projects contemplated were completed. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, some extraordinary schemes were laid on the table for approval.
In the 1840s, Archdeacon Clerke needed an extension to his residence at the west end of the north side of the Great Quadrangle. The internal design was laid down and then a couple of possibilities for the exterior were proposed, one of which was a mock-Tudor construction, complete with heavy timber arch-braces and an elaborate twisted brick chimney. The west elevation would have overlooked St Aldate’s!

Thirty years on, Dean Liddell was busy with the restoration of the cathedral and then the construction of the Wolsey Tower. Gilbert Scott proposed reinstating the high gable roofs which originally crowned the cathedral, and George Bodley suggested that a small tower be erected over the cathedral entrance. Neither of these were quite as bizarre as designs received from some of the country’s finest architects for the Wolsey Tower. Thomas Jackson, who was becoming the go-to architect for the University, proposed a tower that would trump Magdalen’s in height at 170 feet; a strange suggestion given that the Governing Body had stipulated that the tower must not overpower either the cathedral spire or Tom Tower. Gilbert Scott, who had been responsible for the cathedral refurbishment, brought in a design that was just boring. Basil Champneys produced a confection described by the Governing Body as a ‘May-day garland’, and Thomas Deane, architect of Meadow Buildings, came up with an Italianate campanile. It was Bodley, though, who came up with the winning design, which consisted of a stone case to contain the bells, surmounted by the most extraordinary bird’s nest lantern to be rendered either in timber and lead or in copper.

But the Governing Body chickened out, citing lack of funds, and only completed the stone lower portion. Had they gone ahead, the Wolsey Tower would have been an Oxford landmark to compete with Tom.

In the 1920s, soon after the northern brewhouse (now part of Blue Boar Quad) was taken out of action, the architects Coleridge and Coleridge designed a new canonry to be created from the brewhouse and the neighbouring stables and coach-houses. It was to be a country house, in the Arts and Crafts/Lutyens mould, with servants’ quarters and a set-back service wing; a most unlikely style to sit behind Fell’s re-creation of Wolsey’s Quad and facing onto the late Victorian town hall. At the same time, conscious that new lecture room facilities were needed, the Governing Body commissioned the same architects to fashion a new JCR-cum-lecture room sitting at right-angles to the Brewhouse across the sub-dean’s garden. This was to be in a Queen Anne style, with a JCR on the ground floor, accessed by a passage through the sub-dean’s cellar, and a lecture room up a double external staircase. One can only assume that the sub-dean, the archdeacon, and the resident of Killcanon all objected to having the JCR in their back gardens!
It was not until the 1960s that another scheme was rejected. The Senior Common Room was looking to expand and the Anatomy School, now emptied of its laboratories, seemed the obvious place to go. One scheme under consideration included the Anatomy School (now the Lee Building) but also involved the construction of a modern hexagonal building sandwiched between the Lee Building and Auden Cottage linked to the existing Common Room by a galleried passage and a ‘bridge’ to the Lee Building. Mock-up photographs were made and the incongruity of the modern, particularly as seen from the Memorial Garden, was seen for what it was, and duly abandoned. The Senior Members would have to get wet to go from sherry to lunch!

Who knows what schemes will be dreamt up, and abandoned, in the future?

Pillars and pinnacles: the story of Christ Church’s buildings, will be available for purchase in the not-too-distant future.
AFCHCH President Hard at Work!

Peter S. Paine, Jr. (1957), President of the American Friends of Christ Church, led the 4th of July Parade last year on 'Belle.' The event coincided with the 250th Anniversary of the Founding of Willsboro in 1765 by Irishman William Gilliland - hence "Will's Borough."

Chemistry Research

Christ Church is delighted to report that Dr Hadia Almahli, a chemist working in pharmaceutical chemistry, is nearing the end of her very successful first year at Christ Church, working in the Department of Chemistry. Dr Almahli studied in France for her Master’s and in Paris for her PhD in Pharmaceutical Chemistry (Université de Paris XI). She returned to Syria to be a staff member in the Faculty of Pharmacy at Aleppo University.

She holds a Research Fellowship at Christ Church and is working in the Department of Chemistry as a Visiting Academic, researching the development of new molecules for anti-tuberculosis drugs. Her latest results will be presented in Japan, in July, at the International Symposium on Homogeneous Catalysis (ISHC) in Kyoto.

Christ Church, Chemistry, and the World Wars – 17 March 2017

17 March 2017 marks the centenary of the death of Dr Andrea Angel, a former Christ Church undergraduate and Chemistry Tutor who was killed in the Silvertown explosion. For his war service Angel had taken over management of the Brunner-Mond factory in Silvertown, East London, which had been requisitioned for the production of TNT. A fire broke out in the factory and Angel went in to try and rescue his workers. He was killed in the inevitable explosion. For his bravery he was posthumously awarded the Edward Medal First Class (the equivalent of the George Cross today).

To mark this anniversary, on 17 March 2017 there will be an afternoon of lectures discussing the role of Christ Church scientists, the College and Chemistry in the two World Wars.

Further details will available in due course (www.chch.ox.ac.uk/events/all/alumni).
Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lanfranc Award

Congratulations to Dr Eeva John (née Lehtonen) the first woman admitted to Christ Church as a senior scholar in 1979, who has just been granted the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lanfranc Award for education and scholarship in the Church of England. The award recognises the work Dr John undertook in reorganising ministerial and theological education in the Church of England.

Dr John was born in Helsinki and remains a Finnish national. She received her DPhil in organic chemistry at Christ Church and later retrained as a theologian, holding posts at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, Trinity College, Bristol, before moving to Cambridge in 2014.

Tower Poetry Competition

This year’s theme of wonder for the 16th Christopher Tower Poetry competition attracted over 1,100 entrants (all born between 1997 and 2000) with many schools encouraging entrants for the first time.

At a lunchtime reception in Christ Church, Oxford on Wednesday 20 April, Ashani Lewis, from The Tiffin Girls’ School, Surrey, was awarded the £3,000 first prize for her poem ‘Flowers From The Dark’. The judges were Alan Gillis, Katherine Rundell and Peter McDonald.

The winner of the second (£1,000) prize Safah Ahmed (Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre, London) with ‘Accent’ and the third prizewinner, Sophia West (Oxford High School) won £500 with ‘The Awakening’. Their schools receive £150 each. Each of the three prizewinners are also invited to the Tower Poetry Summer School, worth approx. £750.

109 entrants (excluding the winners) from 97 schools were placed on the longlist representing most regions of the UK. You can see the winning entries on the Tower Poetry website where our talented young authors read their own poems (www.towerpoetry.org.uk), and further information on the competition and other Tower projects from info@towerpoetry.org.uk or on 01865 286591.

Flowers From The Dark

by Ashani Lewis

She is quiet,
With skin as tight as the wheeling crows:
She kneels over the dirt and grows
The roses.

Your lawn chair holds a pale absence;
A tulip dies, falls back against the fence,
And decomposes.

You watch her.
(And from her fair and unpolluted flesh)
The shadows on the windowsill – fresh
Violets
Break up the clean square of light,
And, thoughtless, obstruct the sight
Of her silence.

She grows the flowers
For you. From loam and wombs,
The pits of eyes and empty rooms,
From hipbones,
Harpoons, moons and crows: everything
dark -
Seaweed, oil, the time around stars;
And olive stones.
OUR PARISHES

The Revd Canon Edmund Newey, Sub Dean, reports on his visits to Christ Church’s parishes.

Much of my work as Sub Dean of Christ Church takes place within the curtilage: worship in the Cathedral, teaching and tours around the site, dinners in Hall, the varied round of meetings and appointments – from Chapter, meeting in the splendour of the Deanery dining room, to interviews for the Lay Clerks of the Cathedral Choir, squeezed into a corner of the diminutive Choir Parlour. Except for that most enjoyable of gatherings, the Gardens Committee, whose meetings are sometimes held in the open air, I often have to make a deliberate effort to break out of the splendid isolation of Tom Quad.

One notable exception to this is my work with Christ Church’s parishes, which takes me the length and breadth of the country. Christ Church is the patron of around eighty benefices across the whole of the Church of England, from Cornwall to Kent, Lancashire and North Yorkshire. Generally these parishes are located in parts of the country where Christ Church owns or has owned land, with particular concentrations in Oxfordshire, the Cotswolds and the high moorlands on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire. I often marvel at the beauty of the churches with which we have the privilege to be connected: attending the institution of a new Vicar on a summer’s evening in darkest Warwickshire, one feels in touch with an England refreshingly out of step with the frenetic pace of much contemporary culture.

Christ Church’s patronage of these parishes is expressed in two principal ways: first, through the financial support of the clergy who work in our parishes, and secondly by the active interest we take in their recruitment and appointment.

Through the generosity of Dr Robert South (1634-1716), a Canon of Christ Church who left his estates in Kentish Town and Caversham to the House, a fund was established with the sole purpose of supporting the incumbents of Christ Church’s livings in their daily ministry. Unlike almost all other ecclesiastical patrons, we are therefore able to offer substantial and regular financial support to the vicars and rectors of our parishes, and to invite them to a popular biennial conference at Christ Church.

We also take a significant role in the appointment of new clergy when our benefices fall vacant. In the past interviews were often conducted in Christ Church, a practice now wisely discontinued, but invariably I or one of my colleagues will be on the interview panel, helping the local and diocesan Church to discern who God is calling to work in that particular place.

The list of parishes I have visited in my two and half years here reminds me a little of the Shipping Forecast, a litany that fires the imagination with pictures of our diverse and beautiful country: Chippenham, Lund, Sutton-in-Craven, Runcorn, Great Torrington, Fairford and Down Ampney; Temple Guiting, East Garston, Goring-on-Thames, Manor Park in Slough; Steventon, Minster Lovell, Newport Pagnall, Slapton and Ivinghoe; Flore, Semley, Moggerhanger, Badsey and Cleve Prior. O brave old world, that has such places in it!

RADIO 3 CHORAL EVENSONG

On Wednesday 4 May 2016, at 3.30pm, Radio 3 Choral Evensong was broadcast live from the Cathedral, with the Cathedral Choir directed by Dr Stephen Darlington and accompanied by sub-organist, Clive Driskill-Smith. The programme included music by Byrd, Darke and Walton.
Richard Murray, Headmaster, celebrates a Christ Church Cathedral School education.

There is a great deal said about education in the press these days, mainly, of course about SATS and about local authority schools and whether they should become academies. What rarely reaches the headlines are matters of what actually makes a good and proper education. It is probably rather naïve of me to imagine that anything I might have to say about the matter should be accorded any attention by the readers of this illustrious magazine who, by definition, have received one of the finest educations in the world. Nonetheless I cannot avoid reflecting upon an aspect of education which I have seen rarely mentioned but which I think is crucial, and that is the importance to a pupil of the surroundings in which they are educated. This claim is, of course, to a degree, nebulous, but there is no question in my mind that the sensitive young minds who pass through the Foundation’s smallest part are deeply affected by the experience of being in a profoundly beautiful place such as Christ Church. Very sadly, not everyone has the opportunity to be educated in such an aesthetically pleasing place, but this fact does not detract from its truth or of the profundity of its effect.

Of course, for many of the pupils, our weekly trip to the Cathedral on Friday morning may seem run of the mill or unremarkable, but with it comes an intimate knowledge of an incomparable mediaeval building. The pervading sense of the numinous, (what greater nourisher of the spiritual can there be?), the overwhelming sense that this is a place where people have come and gone in years before, a place which puts our own age into perspective, and a place where almost every detail is pleasing, cannot but help these boys to place the world in which they live in a context, and of course the earlier they come to appreciate this and understand it, the more impact it will have.

I hope that in later life our pupils will be people who will want to improve the world in which they find themselves. I hope that in later life our pupils will be people who will want to improve the world in which they find themselves. I hope that they will be people who will not accept shoddiness, and who will not attempt to disfigure the environment in which they find themselves. Such actions are surely much harder to contemplate if one has been immersed in beauty from a young age. I believe that there is a great chance that the beauty of the music that they will have heard will give them a thirst to aspire towards building a harmonious world where, in order to achieve anything worthwhile, effort will have to be made.

I hope that in later life our pupils will be people who will want to improve the world in which they find themselves.

An environment, too, where things are well looked after and where attention is paid to detail, is an environment which teaches people that life is worth living and caring about and I feel strongly that any pupil at Christ Church Cathedral School will leave having learnt many of these things, largely by coming to know the beautiful place in which they have come to school.
The Eton Choirbook is a remarkable music manuscript and represents a compilation of about ninety sacred works, all on texts in honour of the Virgin Mary. Of these, forty-three are complete, and twenty-one remain as fragments, in some cases susceptible to reconstruction. The copying began around 1500 and had been completed four years later, a remarkable achievement. The object of the collection was to provide a repertory of liturgical works to be sung in Eton College Chapel, primarily during the afternoon office of Vespers and the evening Salve ceremony. From its foundation in the early 1440s, there were clerks (skilful at singing to various degrees) and boy choristers. In fact, by the middle of the century, there were sixteen boy choristers in the foundation, exactly the same number as we have here at Christ Church. The complexity of the works preserved in the Eton Choirbook clearly demonstrates that these singers were virtuoso performers, particularly so during the fifteen-year tenure of Robert Wylkynson, who was the instructor of choristers from 1500 to 1515.

Three composers are represented in this latest volume of Eton Choirbook recordings. Of these, by far the most significant was John Browne, who was clearly one of the most respected composers of his own time.

Last March the Cathedral Choir embarked on recording its fourth CD of music from the Eton Choirbook. Each of the other three CDs has been nominated for a Gramophone Award in the Early Music category. Dr Stephen Darlington reflects on how they have attracted the admiration of critics and scholars both in the UK and abroad.
That these Eton compositions should be so appealing to our present choir is not a surprise. After all we function in much the same way as the Eton College Chapel Choir would have functioned at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The choir is involved in the daily singing of the offices in the Cathedral and the regularity of this commitment and the skill required is not dissimilar to that of previous generations. It seems clear that the original Eton Choirbook, a copy of which can be viewed in Eton College Library, was used by the singers as an aide-mémoire. It is large enough to be seen by a group of singers, with the young boys closest to the lectern and the adults behind. But it is also clear from sources that much of the music was memorized and rehearsed in advance, exactly as we do these days. The challenge for us is to revive not only the text but also the spirit of this music which is so glorious in its variety and complexity. The project has been inspiring to all those who have been involved. When searching for a title for this latest release, a particular phrase from Horwood’s *Gaude flore virginali* stood out: ‘the sun most radiant’. I hope it is not too fanciful to suppose that the Cathedral Choir’s performances of this repertory are shedding light on a hitherto neglected repertoire, and also bring it to life through the use of a choir so similar to that of the 1500s.

The recording will be released on the Avie label in September and you will find more details on the choir’s website ([www.chchchoir.org](http://www.chchchoir.org)). I hope you enjoy listening to it.

An extended version of this article is available on the choir website: [www.chchchoir.org](http://www.chchchoir.org).

Dr Darlington’s connections with the House go back to 1971, when he came up as Organ Scholar under Simon Preston. Efforts are underway to raise funds to endow an organ scholarship in his name, The Stephen Darlington Organ Scholarship, to mark the enormous contribution that Dr Darlington has made to the musical and liturgical life of the House. The Scholarship forms part of the Christ Church Cathedral Music Trust, which seeks to sustain the world-class provision of choral music through ring-fenced endowment. Further details are available from the Development and Alumni Office ([development.office@chch.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development.office@chch.ox.ac.uk)).
Research in libraries does not always involve books alone. Huge and wide-ranging collections such as those housed by the library at Christ Church were conceived as much more all-inclusive than one might think to start with. Essentially eclectic in nature, apart from manuscripts, early printed books, scores, maps, photographs and various types of ephemera, Christ Church special collections also incorporate coins, scientific instruments, drawings, prints, sculpture, paintings and other, often surprising, objects like mandrakes, carved figurines and chess pieces, embroidered fire screens, a cardinal hat and an extraordinary pair of treble cornetts purchased in 1605 in readiness for a visit by King James I. It is the cornetts that this short piece aims to highlight.

The reason for this is the unusually large number of research requests focused on the instruments. As the cornetts were studied before, the fact did not take us entirely by surprise. Back in 1981, Julian Drake wrote an extensive article on the pair at Christ Church, published in volume 34 of *The Galpin Society Journal*. The author assessed the cornetts as being of special interest not only because of their association to King James’s visit, but, more importantly, because of their particularly fine workmanship and perfect condition.

Scrutinizing them closely reveals a lot of interesting details. The main body of the cornetts is made of carved wood in two halves with an expanding bore profile. The halves are glued together and then bound in black leather, decoratively tooled at the end and mid-way along the section. The unidentified maker’s mark (comprising...
stylized moth wings), has been impressed on the end and also on the leather. The mouthpiece end is reinforced with decorated silver ferrules with scalloped edges. Drake speculated on their possible foreign origin, as the instruments have a fair degree of resemblance to a pair manufactured in Verona. Suggestive of foreign origin are also the English silver mounts which fit loosely over the top ends, concealing a considerable amount of the original decorative patterning. In May 2014, the cornetts were examined again by Andrew Lamb. In his view, the Christ Church instruments could be attributed to Bassano. The maker’s mark does not provide much useful information, but specialists tend to agree on the Veronese provenance. As the instruments in Verona are among the best ever produced and are allegedly connected to the Bassano family, we proceeded to check the ones in our collection for the quality of their sound. For this, the cornetts had first to be gently acclimatised to relative humidity, a delicate job done in the Conservation Studio. Only after the reconditioning was complete could the cornetts be played again. What followed was a revelation. Their beautiful tone, full and mellow, revealed this as a pair of outstanding instruments, worthy of a maker such as Bassano.

We were not surprised therefore when, in March 2016, we received a new request. This time the pair was under the scrutiny of professional players and instrument makers. Since the Christ Church cornets are possibly the most well-known examples of surviving seventeenth century English cornets, a small team of specialists led by Sam Goble decided to evaluate the instruments and expand on the data and research done by Julian Drake. Sam’s investigations will expand on Drake’s detailed measurements by re-measuring both instruments to see if there are correlations between the internal profiles of the two. This may give us insights into the manufacturing process and tools used.

There are a number of questions relating to these two instruments that have not yet been given satisfactory answers. The ultimate aim here is to be able to create replicas of the Christ Church cornets for modern performance by discovering the true sounds and playing characteristics of the original instruments. The reproductions will be made by using only historical methods based on evidence found on originals. The plan is for these sounds to be explored through design trials as well as live concert performances. This will make research on the library special collections relevant in more ways than perhaps expected.

The two cornetts are currently on display in the Tudor Partbooks and the Music Collection exhibition open in the Upper Library, together with a rare edition of Monteverdi’s Orfeo. The pages on display show part of the celebrated monody ‘Possente spirto’, in which Orfeo sings to the accompaniment of two cornetts. The opera was premiered in 1607, so the instruments are exactly contemporary.
Filippino Lippi’s (1457/8-1504) The Wounded Centaur is for Christ Church what Paolo Uccello’s Hunt in the Forest is for the Ashmolean Museum – its most important and enigmatic early Italian panel painting. Both masterpieces came to Oxford through the same source, the Christ Church alumnus the Hon. William Thomas Horner Fox-Strangways (1795-1865).

Fox-Strangways, later fourth Earl of Ilchester, was educated at Westminster and Christ Church. He was the uncle of the ‘founder of photography’, William Henry Fox-Talbot (1800-1877), whose archive was bought by the Bodleian library in autumn 2014. Fox-Strangways joined the diplomatic service in an attempt to escape London’s social life, which he found stifling. His diplomatic duties allowed him to travel all over Europe and to pursue his two main interests botany and, to a lesser extent, art. He held posts in St Petersburg, Constantinople, Naples, The Hague, Turin, Florence, Vienna and Frankfurt. His interest in ‘picture hunting’ which he followed mainly in Florence and Naples, took a different route from that of his contemporaries, making him a pioneer in his taste for early Italian art. Fox-Strangways admired the ‘simplicity and severity of the early Florentines’. He parted with his collection during his lifetime, presenting in total thirty-seven panels to Christ Church in 1828 and 1834 and another forty to the Ashmolean in 1850.

The significance of The Wounded Centaur lies in Lippi’s emphasis on the surrounding landscape and the identification of a classical mythological subject to express it. He chose the mystic creature of a centaur, the untamed beast, half human and half horse, to convey a fable of love. The subject is loosely based on a story in Ovid’s Fasti. Chiron, the wisest of the centaurs, who lived on Mount Pelion with his family, wounds himself with the poisoned arrows of Hercules – his hoof pierced by an arrow – leaving him with an unbearable pain, so unbearable that he asks the gods to put an end to his immortality. Lippi, however, does not depict Hercules anywhere in the painting, but a small Eros or Cupid is visible in the background, holding the bow. This shifts the meaning of the subject from a Herculean one to one of love, or probably even one of caution in matters of love, warning of its unbearably painful aspects, especially when carelessly playing with it.
Details in the painting – a broken branch, parallel to the centaur’s pierced hoof; a cave in the background with a female centaur nurturing two young – show how carefully Lippi creates his images. He introduces small, apparently insignificant aspects to the scene which then turn out to give new, unthought-of facets to the story.

The back of the panel reveals an upside-down unfinished and abandoned composition in pen and ink and some blue paint. It seems to show a Triumph of Love and/or the Birth of Venus. Apart from the beautifully rendered three female figures in the centre, there is another female figure (Venus?) rising from the waters (her birth?) and another one climbing on shore. In the sky above them is a chariot pulled by a flying dragon and followed by a trumpet blowing winged creature. The panel is filled with movement – the garments float around the figures as they seem to hasten to the left, to an event that the viewer will have to imagine. The topic of the scene, like that of the wounded Centaur, has not been fully explained. But that is typical of Lippi’s work. He does not ‘just’ illustrate known stories, but combines mythological and classical ideas and texts into unique, difficult to decipher visual tableaux. (Cf. also the Picture Gallery’s two large panels of the Sibyls – female oracles of the ancient Greeks.)

For a couple of months this summer, the Picture Gallery will show The Triumph of Love (?). This is an once-in-a-lifetime chance to see it and to gain a rare insight into Lippi’s working methods. We also hope that it will help us to further decipher its meaning.

Accompanying the reversed panel is an exhibition of drawings by Filippino Lippi and his Florentine contemporaries, revealing the elegance and grace of his draughtsmanship and ascertaining that the epitaph on his tomb – “Drawing is dead now that Filippo is gone” (Morto e il disegno or che Filippo parte) – was not just a eulogy. I want to thank the Clerk of Works Department, especially Richard Morin and Nigel Middleton, for their help and ingenuity in safely turning the painting.
Professor Simon Hiscock, Student of Christ Church and Director of the Oxford Botanic Garden & Harcourt Arboretum, discusses his vision for the Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum.

I am delighted and excited to have returned to Oxford as Director of the Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum and an Ordinary Student of Christ Church. During my previous life at Oxford in the 1980s and 90s, first as an undergraduate and then as a DPhil student and Junior Research Fellow at Worcester College, I spent many happy hours exploring the gardens of Oxford and the Botanic Garden in particular, seeking out its weirdest and most unusual plants, especially orchids and aroids, which have fascinated me since I was a child. Oxford Botanic Garden has always excelled at growing the weird and unusual of the plant Kingdom as anyone who visited the garden this spring will know from the ever changing displays in the Alpine House – did you see the extraordinary ‘Dead Horse Arum’, *Helicodiceros muscivorus*, with its stinking fly-attracting inflorescences? What a beauty!

Before returning to Oxford in July 2015 I was Director of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden, a position I held from 2002. Bristol gave me the unique opportunity to direct the design and development of a new University Botanic Garden - the first of its kind in the UK for nearly 50 years. It was a hugely rewarding experience and has given me valuable insight into what a 21st century University botanic garden needs to deliver. For me this is quite straightforward – science and high calibre horticulture.

The collections must tell scientific stories about plants for education (at all levels) and engagement with the wider public, to make everyone aware of the fundamental importance of plants to all life on earth. These collections must also provide unique opportunities for research and be maintained to the highest standards of horticulture, arboriculture, and curation. Using this simple formula the Bristol Botanic Garden project has proved a resounding success. I am therefore confident that I can apply this simple set of principles to Oxford.

The Oxford Botanic Garden, founded in 1621, is the oldest in the UK and, with the Harcourt Arboretum (acquired by the University in 1962), houses a collection of over 6000 species of plants. This is an incredible resource that has the potential to be a gem in Oxford’s crown. I therefore relish the opportunity to lead the Garden’s further development and expansion as it approaches its 400th Anniversary in 2021. This will be a unique opportunity to celebrate 400 years of botany (plant sciences) at Oxford which all began at the Botanic Garden with its charismatic first keeper Jakob Bobart, mercenary soldier, practical gardener and botanist, and publican of the Greyhound Inn. Bobart planned and planted the garden during the 1640s and produced the first Oxford herbarium, now housed in Plant Sciences on South Parks Road.

A GARDEN FOR THE 21st CENTURY
His work laid the foundations of the collections and set the scientific tone for the future.

My vision for 2021’s Anniversary is to transform Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum into a modern 21st Century University botanic garden, akin to Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum (arguably the world’s premier University Botanic Garden), by focusing on science – the Bristol formula – in the form of research, education and public engagement. Realizing this vision will require significant investment and the 400th Anniversary offers a perfect platform for a major fundraising campaign, which will be the most significant in the Garden’s history. The key capital projects of this appeal will be replacement of the dilapidated glasshouses and expansion of associated infrastructure, including new facilities for research, education, and public exhibitions. At Harcourt Arboretum we want to create an iconic environmentally sustainable visitor centre complete with café, shop and exhibition space, and to build new education and research facilities. This masterplan for the arboretum will include a thorough upgrade of the pathways to allow year round access, including disabled access. With a strong science-based focus on environmental issues and sustainability and by showcasing woodland and rural crafts, I believe we can make Harcourt Arboretum a major visitor attraction for Oxfordshire.

Ahead of these developments we are already introducing new themed collections and displays at both sites. These will tell fascinating stories about plants – their evolution, importance in the development of human civilizations (as food, medicines, fabric and building materials) and their importance in art and literature (embracing Oxford’s literary heritage). So during the summer you will see the completion of the ‘Plants that Changed the World’ display at the Botanic Garden, including a bed of gin botanicals - we have a gin tasting on June 25th as part of the Oxford Art’s Festival - and ‘Bill’s Blooms’, a literary trail focusing on plants appearing in the plays of Shakespeare. In 2017 a ‘Jurassic Forest’ and ‘Ent Trail’ (celebrating Tolkien and his works) will appear at Harcourt Arboretum. And this is just the beginning - over the next few years there will be a gradual transformation of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum and the awakening of a sleeping giant among Oxford’s world class collections.
In this edition of *Christ Church Matters*, both Tony Pastor and Martin Stitt write about their exploits into film and television. It got me thinking about one of the essential dilemmas of these mediums – do they turn their subjects into giants or make them look small? Is television a vehicle for truth or just for spin? Is film really an honest medium?

It’s a question that interests me not just because I work in television but because I think it’s acutely relevant to the time I spent at Christ Church.

I lucked in when I arrived ten years ago. I was among the final group of students fortunate enough to be taught English by the irrepressible, towering figure of Chris Butler and the swaggering, mesmerising Peter Conrad. What engaged me, gripped me, sometimes terrified me was the theatre that accompanied their teaching – there was an edge, a drama in every one of their tutorials. They got under my skin and beyond my teenage pretentiousness.

If you’ll excuse the X Factor-ism ‘I learned an awful lot about myself’. Not only were Chris and Peter great academics, they were also great teachers. They were performers in the best, most paradoxical sense of the word – larger than life but unspeakably genuine.

Although film and television may consist of smoke and mirrors, or be grossly exaggerated versions of reality, it doesn’t mean that they can’t elicit the real side of a person or get to the heart of an issue.

Christ Church is a type of theatre. There’s drama in its architecture, its personnel and its history. But perhaps this does not obscure the truth – rather, it magnifies it.
USA Alumni Weekend, April 2016
The Dean and Members of the Development Office visited the USA for the University Alumni weekend in Washington DC and enjoyed meeting Old Members at events in New York, Washington, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Cathedral Choir performance, 14 December 2015
Christ Church Cathedral Choir performed at the 30th Annual Christmas Festival at St John’s, Smith Square, London.

1966 Reunion, 18 March 2016
Old members from 1966 returned to celebrate the 50th anniversary celebration of their Matriculation.

USA Alumni Weekend, April 2016
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Board of Benefactors reception, 25 April 2016
Members of the Board of Benefactors were invited to a reception at Goldsmiths’ Hall.
PRANK’S CORNER

‘Grace Gentlemen!’ – The Orator Revealed
Graham Allatt (1967)

In response to Haydn Rawstron’s prank published in the Michaelmas edition (see CCM36), I would like to tell the victim’s side of the story!

The Hall Man (as he was known in those days) chose me to read Grace about once a week. As a chemist, my Latin had stopped at O-level but I could pronounce it correctly and make myself heard throughout the Hall.

In November 1968 I arrived at the lectern to be confronted with a different card. My Latin did not enable me to translate much of it, except that in the brief instant before I needed to begin reading I did notice the last few words “per Sanctum Cuthbertum Decanum” which I realised meant “through our Dean St Cuthbert”.

This struck me as odd to the least. However, given the Englishman’s trait of never making a fuss and anxious not to come between 300 junior members and their dinner, I decided the least bad option was to press on regardless. Serious mistake!

Halfway through dinner the Hall Man tapped me on the shoulder “the Junior Censor would like to see you after dinner, sir” – an invitation one could not refuse. I arrived at Ron Truman’s rooms to be greeted with a glass of excellent brandy. Ron was worldly and wise enough to know a fall guy when he saw one and the subsequent interview was entirely amicable.

He began by saying that he thought it was some time since I had done any Latin. I concurred. He then translated the Grace for me “may the food we eat hereafter rest only in the guts of dogs and cattle”. Ron did however mention that at the end of the grace the Dean crossed himself, presumably to try and prevent any divine retribution.

Stories abounded that the culprit was Haydn. He will be pleased to learn that another rumour around College – and probably a true one – was that the censors did not try very hard to find the culprits because the grace was in such excellent Latin.

TRUST ME, I’M A TELEVISION PRODUCER…
Tony Pastor (1990)

There was a time when television was a dirty word. Sophisticated people watched their movies at the cinema, saw their drama on the stage and enjoyed sport live inside the stadium. All of which they still do.

But the days when television was seen as a lazy alternative for the hard of thinking have gone.

Television, or rather the small screen in all its modern forms, is enjoying a golden period, thanks largely to the rise of box set dramas and the competition provided to linear broadcasters by Netflix and Amazon.

Fictional works are certainly driving this renaissance but documentary has also made a significant comeback. The Jinx and Making of a Murderer dominated water cooler conversation in the early part of 2016, while The Great British Bake Off has produced the highest viewing figures in the UK for the past two years.

In my media backwater, the production of access documentaries detailing the lives of our most famous sports stars, there has been a resurgence of interest, thanks in part to the success of long form stories such as the film Senna.

There was a time when famous sports people feared the camera probing their lives. They mistook tabloid sensationalism in the press for the modus operandi of all media.

In fact the opposite is true. Almost all public figures benefit from allowing the public to see the normality of their lives.
Most sportsmen suffer from a public perception that they bathe in a sea of entitlement, ignoring the usual rules of courtesy and social responsibility.

Last summer Wayne Rooney allowed us unfettered access to his family life, placing total trust in the production team despite having suffered more than most at the hands of the tabloid press. The result? A transformation of his reputation.

When I asked the cricketer Kevin Pietersen to wear a hidden microphone while captaining his team in a T20 match he was suspicious and nervous. ‘Why do you want to?’ he asked. I suggested it would be fascinating for cricket fans to experience the game without the noise of analysts and journalists commenting from their glass box beyond the boundary. We wanted to hear what the players really said to each other in the heat of battle.

Pietersen agreed, providing viewers with an extraordinary insight into the complexity, intensity and fabulously creative profanity of professional sport.

Recently we produced a four-part series for the American broadcaster NBC about life at an English Premier League football club. The rich and famous of English football don’t need this level of scrutiny, so gaining the trust of the players and their manager was a significant challenge. But we wore them down over weeks of filming. The same small team of four people turned up every day, respected their boundaries, pushed when appropriate and pulled back when it seemed right to do so. Our reward in the final show was the manager allowing us to record his pre match team talk in the moments before kick off.

Great access makes for great television. Trust and fairness are the values that open the door.

Tony Pastor read English at Christ Church. He is a former head of sport production at ITV and prior to this worked for the BBC. He now runs a production company making major documentaries including ‘Rooney – The Man Behind The Goals’ for BBC One and ‘Being Kevin Pietersen’ for ITV.
Both a love story and a crime story, Love/Me/Do is the dramatic feature debut of Martin Stitt and stars Rebecca Calder (*Youth*, *Clan of the Cave Bear*, *Hatfields & McCoys*) alongside Screen International Star of Tomorrow Jack Gordon (*Northern Soul*, *The Great Train Robbery*, *A Royal Night Out*).

**Martin Stitt (1986)** read Biology at Christ Church and later won a Sloan Scholarship to study for an MFA in directing from the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. His films have played at Sundance and the Venice Film Festivals and received various international awards, most notably a nomination for a British Independent Film Award. He was selected for the British Film Institute scheme ‘Guiding Lights’ where he was mentored by Oscar winning Director Sam Mendes.

**Grant Hanson-Vaux (2009)**, a recent graduate of Christ Church, also worked as an intern on the film.

When Antonia, a female investment banker, lets Max, an out of work actor into her life a world of trust and love, revenge and fulfilment ensues with frightening consequences. The film leaves you wondering if your ideal partner is the perfect accomplice.
INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN STITT

A few years ago I received an invitation from Simon Offen to come back to Christ Church and take part in a media seminar giving undergraduates an opportunity to learn about working in film and TV. It was a fascinating event including speakers who had left Christ Church and headed into careers as producers, directors and commissioners working for notable institutions such as the BBC and ITV. And then it was my turn. It was at this point I realised that my pathway into the world of independent film, precipitated by my time at Christ Church, was a little unorthodox.

When I first arrived in Tom Quad many years ago, I had no idea what I wanted to do. In truth, I felt like an impostor, half expecting the Dean to kindly tap me on the shoulder and say ‘sorry, there has been a mistake.’ Luckily he never did. But when I looked at my peer group it seemed as though everyone had a game plan mapped out and all were well on the way to achieving their dreams. For me, coming from a small town a whole new world had been opened up and there was too much I wanted to see and do. To compound the matter, a module I took on behaviour triggered an interest in survival strategies and the darker side of human nature. Why do certain individuals lack empathy? What are the best skills to survive?

After leaving Christ Church I served in the Far East with the Gurkhas and was deployed on operations with the Royal Green Jackets in Northern Ireland and Kosovo. Restless and eager to seek out new experiences I moved into International Finance for HSBC, working in Thailand, Hong Kong, India and London. Finally working out that my interests lay in the world of visual story telling, I moved into the film industry where I focused on script writing and directing. In my free time, I’ve led expeditions to the Himalayas and the Middle East for the British Exploring Society and travelled extensively around the world collecting stories on photographic assignments.

The experiences garnered and the people I’ve had the good fortune to meet during this eclectic career path have proved to be ideal fodder for the films I’ve produced, the most recent of which is Love/Me/Do.

The genesis of the idea came from a fusion of my time working in the film industry and the banking sector. What would the outcome be if a corporate banker with sociopathic tendencies were to fall in love with a narcissistic out of work actor?

So, returning to the media event. Shortly afterwards I received an email from Grant Hanson-Vaux asking if I knew of any internship opportunities in the film industry. Here was my opportunity to give back to the very place which inspired me on this journey. Grant came on board the production of Love/Me/Do early on and proved to be an invaluable part of the team.

To be honest, I still feel as though I am in the same position as when I walked into Tom quad so many years ago. There is still a big old world out there and so much I would like to see and do. So, yes I blame Christ Church for being the catalyst, and hope that others are given the opportunity to take a less than conventional career pathway. That is why, excuse the pun, Christ Church matters!

The film is currently playing the festival circuit where it has picked up a number of awards and is due for public release at the end of the year.

A trailer can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ufhbrh5YLo

Release schedules and screening updates can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/LoveMeDoTheMovie/?fref=ts
I wish I could introduce you in person to Clementine, a genocide survivor and social entrepreneur; she is the future of Rwanda. Clementine and leaders like her are solving the ongoing challenges from the horrific 1994 genocide: in her case creating livelihoods for widows, enabling them to escape their trauma for a time and earn a living hand-making beautiful jewellery.

As if that were not remarkable enough, up there with Leicester City’s improbable footballing triumph is the moment that Clementine got her initial inspiration:

‘I was watching the Premier League and I saw the Arsenal players all wearing poppies on their shirts. I asked my husband and he knew they represented remembrance. This gave me the idea to create the business making pin badges to commemorate the genocide.’

Since then Clementine’s designs have developed, creating a range unlike any African jewellery I have ever seen. You can see for yourself at www.rwandanbeauty.com. Clementine’s vision was to create products of beauty, and when she was unable to find African beads to her exacting standards, she found a source that would ship them to the widows’ cooperative for hand-assembly.

Clementine and I first met through my role as a trustee of the Rwandan ‘SURF’ genocide Survivors’ Fund which helped fund her business plan to create employment and a sustainable enterprise by making the commemorative pin badges. These bore a flaming torch of hope to mark the twentieth anniversary of the genocide in April 2014.

Times without number the pin badge has gone through the wash attached to my polo shirt, showing no fading or fraying even after eighteen months of such treatment. Resilience and quality thus proven, I resolved to help Clementine get the products to the western market, now including gorgeous necklaces with magnetic clasps and a range of bracelets.

MEET THE NEW RWANDA (AND WEAR WITH PRIDE!)

Will Goodhand (1997), a Trustee of SURF Survivors Fund

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Every April, Rwanda’s Commemoration period serves as a time of mourning and just as importantly as a reminder that such genocide must never be allowed to happen again. A crucial element of this is the stability created by such self-sufficient enterprises as Clementine’s.

Isn’t it funny, the paths that life can lead us on? When I came up to study Law at Christ Church in October 1997 I probably thought a city-slicking legal career more likely than volunteering to market jewellery made by survivors of the Rwandan genocide, fitted around a job as Innovation Director for a market research firm. Yet the serendipity of destiny is all: a little market research in my free time has helped Clementine and her makers fine tune the designs for the UK, such as using elastics in the bracelets to enable them to shape to various wrists.

I admit shame-facedly that I haven’t found such a good use for my Law degree as yet – who knows, perhaps the irresistible nature of the Rwandan Beauty concept will attract copycats for me to let my rusty intellectual property learning loose on! But to be honest, if they too are creating new livelihoods then it’s all to the good. Come along and take a look at what all the fuss is about, you won’t be disappointed: www.rwandanbeauty.com

India. What a place. 1.3 billion people, the world’s eighth largest landmass; more densely populated than the UK or Israel. A vast and ancient land first civilized in 3,000BC and a pioneer in arts, science, religion and commerce. A rich, resourceful country which for 1,850 of 2,000 years was the largest economy on earth.

Today, India is growing at the fastest global rate. Half of all Indians are under 25 and show a flair for enterprise at home and abroad. The Indian diaspora in the US is now the richest ethnic group. At NASA and Microsoft, half the staff are of Indian origin. In the UK, Indian students consistently out-perform their peers.

This is a country and a people on the march and this is why I’ve been involved in India since leaving Christ Church. I lived in Mumbai in the nineties and now New Delhi with my young family. My father worked in India and his father built airfields upcountry for Tata. I hope our children will adopt India in their own way.

The sub-continent has been calling alumni for centuries. Christ Church educated eleven Viceroys, multiple Maharajahs and countless merchant adventurers. Trevor Huddleston was Bishop of the Indian Ocean. Aubyn Trevor-Battye hunted for flowers in the Himalayas. Today, 28 old members live in India with matriculations from 1935 to 2011.
Left: The children on elephants
Bottom left: Customers at Wendy’s, Gurgaon
Below: Lodhi Gardens, New Delhi
For all that India’s appeal seems self-evident, the country attracts a commonplace prejudice. The vocabulary used to describe India tends to include words like ‘poor’, ‘dirty’, ‘colourful’, ‘crowded’, ‘overwhelming’, ‘spiritual’. In business one hears ‘disorganised’, ‘sharp’, ‘complicated’ and ‘frustrating’.

Like most national stereotypes, the words are relevant but misleading and in any case, India is a hard country to define. But in the tradition of Housemen explaining the inexplicable, here is one man’s take on India and why she matters to the House.

In summary, India is all about opportunity. The size and diversity of the country dwarfs most European cultures and, having slumped economically, India is entering a super-cycle, reemerging as a global titan. This is the equivalent of Britain in the 1800s, America in the 1920s and China in the 90s.

High single digit GDP growth, on a middle-income base of around a hundred million, has the potential to transform India and to create fortunes. This comes around once a millennium.

Of course, the India middle-class (the engine of growth) is one side of the rupee. On the other are the many hundreds of millions of largely rural poor. This is another India and its development is critical on every level and in world terms.

On the principle that fortune favours the brave, we set up shop in India based on the trading house model developed by Swire and Jardine Matheson. This business model is itself a take on so-called Chartered Companies, such as the East India Company, Hudson Bay Co and the Hollow Steel Blade Company (a curiously named lending bank).

Trading houses operate by owning rights and in the Chartered Companies these rights were often enforced monopolies. In the absence of being granted monopolies (being about a hundred years too late), our firm acquires Asia rights to popular western concepts.

Where trading companies dealt in commodities, we deal in brands. For example in India we own and operate Jamie Oliver’s restaurants and Wendy’s, the US burger chain. Where Swire and Jardine transferred goods, we transfer knowledge. In our case, the knowledge of building brands overseas.

Our founding team and key investors are all Oxford graduates. This could have been dreamt up at The Bear and while success is by no means certain, we feel that ambitious Oxford graduates should be pitting their wits in incredible India. Eleven viceroys can’t be wrong and it beats waiting for Western economies to recover.

And the opportunity is much more than trade. As a family, we’ve skied in Kashmir, swum with elephants, met monks in Sikkim, spotted tigers, learned yoga, climbed temples and been blessed by India. At the British School in Delhi, our British children are a minority in an institution with 55 nationalities. What a chance for them.

The world too is noticing India. We sat opposite the Obamas at the Republic Day parade and this year Monsieur Hollande took the salute. Mark Zuckerberg is pals with President Modi and Will and Kate have visited.

Brand India is winning back the lustre lost in the hard years after Independence. In fifteen years time, when our children graduate, people will use a different vocabulary to describe India. In these years, the opportunities will be legion and the (many) challenges well suited to those who sharpened their wits in the crucible of an Oxford tutorial.

SOME FAMOUS ALUMNI WITH INDIAN CONNECTIONS

Sir Harold Acton (1904–94) .................. RAF Intelligence in India during WWII
William Pitt Amherst (1773–1857) ............ Governor General in Bombay
Francis William Bain (1863–1940) ............ Scholar and writer of Hindu love stories
David Gore-Booth (1943–2004) ................ High Commissioner to India
Sir John Boyd (1718–1800) .................... Director of the East India Company
Sir Richard Garth (1820–1903) ................ Chief justice of Bengal
Robert Grimston (1816–1884) ............... Cricketer and chairman of the Indo-European Telegraph Company which opened up the telegraph route to India
John Loader Maffey (1877–1969) ............ Political career in the North-west Frontier province (in the Khyber, Peshawar, Afghanistan)
Pariahs: Hubris, Reputation and Organisational Crises

Matt Nixon (1986)

We live in an age of organisational scandals. Stories that have hit the headlines recently have included car makers cheating emissions tests, bankers manipulating LIBOR rates and journalists hacking into voicemail accounts.

The list of wrongdoing, incompetence and failure of governance can seem never-ending. It’s not always obvious what has really gone wrong but there is no disguising the widespread impact on many stakeholders, and the catastrophic loss of trust and sense of anger that results.

The popular picture of widespread criminality, immorality and incompetence often painted in the public narrative is usually at odds with the complex reality of life in such businesses. Nevertheless, there has been real wrongdoing and very few crises are entirely undeserved.

This book explores what has been going on here and why more and more organisations may be headed towards pariah status. Pariahs: Hubris, Reputation and Organisational Crises, examines how certain conditions lead to the crises that can destroy famous organisations.

Many businesses survive severe crises, only to limp on without ever achieving any catharsis to purge them of guilt but with reputations deeply wounded and with significant groups of stakeholders implacably opposed to them. They never achieve forgiveness, don’t learn the deeper lessons, make only superficial changes and thus are potentially doomed to repeat the cycle of failure, albeit under ‘new management’.

The book suggests some practical ways to inoculate organisations against hubris, as well as observing how some that have suffered deep-seated crises achieve catharsis and become acceptable again.

Matt Nixon, Pariahs: Hubris, Reputation and Organisational Crises, is published by Libri at £20 in paperback

No Other Way: Oxfordshire and the Spanish Civil War 1936–39

Chris Farman, Valery Rose and Liz Woolley

This year marks the eightieth anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict between the elected Socialist Republican government of Spain and invading rightwing forces led by General Franco. For the next three years British newspapers carried almost daily reports of the plight of the Spanish people. In Oxford there was a university-wide campaign to raise awareness of the conflict and encourage Oxonian volunteers – ‘Town’ and ‘Gown’ – to serve under the Republican flag.

Farman, Rose and Woolley have produced a concise account of the conflict (there is no shortage of more extended histories) together with the stories of those from Oxford city and county known to have volunteered either to take arms or to serve as ambulance drivers and medical orderlies with the Republican forces.

Diligent research among published and unpublished sources produced the names of 31 such volunteers. These included factory workers, farm labourers, journalists and nurses. Few, if any, of their names are likely to be already known to readers, and perhaps the greatest merit of this book is after this considerable elapse of time to provide a permanent record of their stories.

A couple of the names are likely to be familiar: Eric Arthur Blair, now universally known as George Orwell, and his wife Eileen get into the Oxfordshire contingent by virtue of his earlier residence and schooling in the county, and her status as a St. Hugh’s graduate; Orwell’s Homage to Catalonia provided one source for this book, as for other accounts of the war.

Graduate and undergraduate volunteers came from a spread of colleges; Ruskin was prominent in pro Republican activity in Oxford. Of the older colleges, ten provided at least one volunteer apiece; Christ Church is known to have provided two, as did Magdalen (all four were Etonians). One of
The Business Ethics Twin-Track: Combining Controls and Culture to Minimise Reputational Risk

Steve Giles (1976)

Damage to reputation through inappropriate conduct is a significant risk today for all businesses. It is crucial that this risk is well managed if success over the long term is to be achieved.

In this book, Steve Giles provides a roadmap for directors and managers. A practical business book, this unique guide focuses on real-world examples and advice rather than theory and it offers guidance on implementing cultural change through the mechanism of a hypothetical consultancy project.

A chartered accountant with over 20 years of experience of advising directors on business issues concerning governance, risk and compliance, Steve Giles is an independent consultant and the author of the highly successful Managing Fraud Risk: A Practical Guide for Directors and Managers.

The Road From Egypt

John Wright (1954)

Like so much of John Wright’s work, this is an extraordinary book. Constructed on what seem at first to be haphazard lines – a mere chance collection of items – it reveals itself to be a glorious patchwork quilt carefully assembled from pieces of every sort, colour and texture of material which together present a coherent and compelling picture.

A great many of the pieces come directly from his own experience, others come from sources as widely separated as Julian of Norwich (d. 1416), George Frederic Handel (d. 1759) and John Stott (d. 2011). Readers will notice the minimal amount of information about context – the lack, sometimes, even of attribution. This is a strength, not a weakness. It forces us to think only about the spiritual content and challenges set out on the page.

Agnostics will notice an absence of apologetics. There is an assumption that the reader will accept what is presented as consistent with their own framework of belief, but the material is its own apologetic. The great variety and detail of the experiences here will speak compellingly to many, even to those who are on the edge of faith.

Rodney Elton

Chris Farman, Valery Rose and Liz Woolley, No Other way, is published by The Oxford International Brigade Memorial Committee at £5 in paperback
My book cannot compete with the literary heavyweights whose works are reviewed in these columns. It is an essentially light-hearted commentary on the life of an MP, juggling political ambition with domestic responsibilities.

I was elected to the House of Commons in February 1974 and retired from it in 2015. I am grateful to the electorate of Ealing Acton and North West Hampshire for their patience. Roughly half my time was on my party’s front bench and half on the backbenches, depending on how much of an irritant I was when freed of collective responsibility and how much value I was able to add when in Government. My portfolios covered health, housing, planning, tax, transport and, finally, I was what is referred to as a “Usual Channel” – Leader of the House of Commons and then Government Chief Whip.

We had three young children when first elected, with a fourth joining us in 1975. Those early years, with a majority in Acton of 808, all night sittings, and a Government with a precarious majority were politically exciting, but domestically disruptive. Domesticity was further challenged by the arrival of red boxes in 1979 when my Party won and I was made a Minister. Relative serenity was established in 1986, when Margaret Thatcher returned me to the backbenches for not being “One of Us”, leaving me free to oppose the Poll Tax.

I then wrote some articles for the Guardian. The Editor of my local paper, the Ealing and Acton Gazette, thought he detected some literary potential and asked me to write a weekly column. There was mutual agreement that it would not be party political. It suited him because, had it become so, the two other MPs in the borough would have demanded equal space and the appetite for a political diet amongst his readers was small. It suited me because I took the view that my voters knew I was a politician, but they weren’t sure I was a human being.

In 1997, after the abolition of my Ealing Acton constituency and my party’s loss of office, I migrated to North West Hampshire. The Editor of the Andover Advertiser generously extended his hospitality to my column, where it appeared fortnightly from the end of 1999 until October 2012. The book ends with some pieces I wrote when I was Chief Whip that were never published and a handful of pieces I wrote after I left office for the fourth time in 2014, and returned to the Backbenches.

There are passing references to my time at Christ Church, where many of my contemporaries also ended up in Parliament – though most of them went to the House of Lords, without the inconvenience of contact with the electorate. My first elected office was Food Member at the JCR, scouring the comments book for suggestions that could be shared with the Steward and the Head Cook.

Matthew Parris was good enough to say the book is ‘light-hearted, sharp-witted, guaranteed to draw a smile and often a snort of laughter, these pieces reveal a politician who is also a human being.’

George Young, ‘I’m Keeping Young: The Everyday Life of an MP’, is available at £12 in paperback.
The rowing season started very strongly with the recruiting of over 70 novices who competed in the Oliver Wyman Christ Church Regatta in Michaelmas. All the top boats made it to the final day races, with the Women’s A placed 4th out of over 50 boats. The returning senior rowers also successfully competed in Isis Winter League races throughout both Michaelmas and Hilary Term.

Bad weather and poor conditions meant much training was mainly land based for Torpids. For the men M3 was particularly successful, placed in the top 5 crews in rowing on and remaining at 10th in Division VI. M2 had a catastrophe, dropping from 2nd in Division III to 5th in Division IV, whilst M1 dropped from 4th to 6th in Division I. In contrast, the women’s crews triumphed: W1 moved up from 8th to 4th in Division I, securing blades and bumping bookies favourite’s Univ on Friday. W2 moved up from 10th to 5th in Division V, also securing blades.

As the fastest collegiate women’s crew in Oxford, W1 also qualified to compete at this year’s Henley Boat Races, beating Jesus, Cambridge by four lengths. The win proved that determination and dedication is the key to success in rowing.

Summer Eights was again a mixed bag but there were many successes of which to be proud. The women’s success in Torpids encouraged over 12 enthusiastic novices to join the Boat Club, and all rowed, including an entirely novice W3. Furthermore all the women’s boats had novice coxes. W3 successfully rowed on, but were unlucky to be bumped every day. W2 had an excellent campaign going up 3 places in Div IV, just missing their blades on the last day. W1 faced a tough task at the top end of Div I, and finished up 1 place at 4th.

The men had difficulties putting out an M3 but great efforts are being made with our novice recruitment in Michaelmas. M2 had a high proportion of novice rowers and also a novice cox, and so did very well to only drop two places to 5th in Div III, the highlight being a bump on New M2 on Saturday. M1 unfortunately did not gain the Headship, but maintained their place as second on the river, holding off Pembroke very strongly and gaining on Oriel each day. We are very hopeful that next year will see the Headship return to Christ Church, which would be a fitting celebration for the 200th anniversary of the Boat Club.
“A Hounslow girl is a young British Muslim girl with hoop earrings and a hijab - and she’s probably on her phone. It’s like an Essex girl or Chelsea girl, but it’s only really known within the Asian community.”

The Diary of a Hounslow Girl is the debut play of 22-year-old writer and performer Ambreen Razia. The play is not about radicalisation or Syria. Ambreen set out to write a universal, female coming-of-age story. “Muslim girls go through hormonally what every other teenager goes through. They wear a hijab and go to mosque but they still get interested in sex and drugs.” Funny and bold, the play is not without its provocation, and challenges audiences to think afresh on many issues they thought they knew about. “It puts the audience to the test” says Ambreen. It has been produced by Ovalhouse theatre - currently in the middle of preparations to move down the road to a new South London home in Brixton.

Becky Brewis (2007) is a freelance writer, editor and illustrator currently studying at the Royal Drawing School.

Above: Ambreen Razia in role as a Hounslow Girl

Giving theatre practitioners the chance to tell stories that fall outside the mainstream is what Ovalhouse has always done and it is what it will continue to do as it moves to Brixton...
Having been part of the theatre’s drama company for 18-25 year-olds, Ambreen put her play forward for an Ovalhouse scheme designed to support young artists to bridge the gap between youth arts participation and professional arts practice. Gaining a place on the programme gave her the chance to develop her play with staging and funding support, and it was shown as a first draft at Ovalhouse in May 2015. The theatre was filled to the roof, with people waiting at the box office for returns. Encouraged by the responses to the play, Ovalhouse supported Ambreen to apply for the prestigious Black Theatre Live award – funding for a professional production to tour nationally. And so it has been that through May and June this year Diary of a Hounslow Girl has toured from Dorset to Northumberland, to 17 different theatres.

It’s been a huge leg up and in recognition of the role Ovalhouse played in launching her as a playwright Ambreen made one of her opening week performances a benefit for the theatre’s fundraising campaign. “I’d perform for free for Ovalhouse every night if they asked me to” she says.

Giving theatre practitioners the chance to tell stories that fall outside the mainstream is what Ovalhouse has always done and it is what it will continue to do as it moves to Brixton - into a brand new building with two studio theatres and seven rehearsal spaces. Not long after being set up by Christ Church graduates as a soup kitchen in the 1930s, Ovalhouse became a boys club and ever since then the college’s philanthropic mission has had youth at its centre, meeting the changing needs of its south London community as a youth theatre since the sixties.

Nowhere has the community changed so markedly in south London in recent years than in Brixton, where fast-tracked gentrification has turned the market into a ‘village’ and social housing into luxury flats. Now is a good time for the only theatre in the country with its roots in participatory work to be moving to the area. And it has already made inroads: two successful ‘I Am Your Neighbour’ festivals have enabled up and coming artists to create theatre in and around the markets and housing estates, and last year saw collaboration with the recently-opened Black Cultural Archives. Jobs and employment will be further supported as the new theatre site is set to convert a well-loved ex-housing cooperative building into a workspace for up to 22 arts organisations. When it sets up shop in Brixton, Ovalhouse will be bringing many new writers, actors and directors and some countercultural spirit back to an area that has always been known for it.

HOW TO DONATE

To enable Ovalhouse to support more success stories in a new theatre in Brixton you can donate in the following ways:

ONLINE: MyDonate
https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/ovalhousetheatre

BACS: Account Name: Ovalhouse Capital Campaign
Account: 80371793 Sort Code: 20 80 57

CHEQUE: Cheques made payable to Ovalhouse Capital Campaign
c/o Katie Milton , Development Director – Capital Campaign.
Ovalhouse, 52-54 Kennington Oval, London SE11 5SW

A GALA DINNER

There will be a Gala Dinner, in aid of Ovalhouse, to be held at the May Fair Hotel on the 29 September 2016. For more information please see back page.
Hannah Wilbourne, Access and Outreach Officer explains why it has been an exciting year for access and outreach at Christ Church, with many successes to celebrate.

We are very proud as partners in IntoUniversity Oxford South East (“IU”), a local learning centre in Blackbird Leys. This project has been made possible by the generous gift from Anthony Ling (1984), which has enabled us to fund the centre for 5 years from its launch in 2014. The centre works to tackle educational disadvantage, through after school academic support and mentoring, alongside programmes for primary and secondary school groups. They have already had a significant impact, with 74% (36) of their first cohort progressing to higher education, compared to a local rate of progression to higher education in Blackbird Leys of 7.5%. In this coming academic year the centre will be at full capacity, with about 900 children participating in IU’s activities. It is wonderful to see this impact at an individual level, as IU students become more confident academically and more excited about their future opportunities.

Christ Church members have had a huge impact on the work of the centre as Academic Support Tutors, Mentors, and volunteers for events. We have particularly enjoyed their ‘graduation’ days, where IU students visit us to celebrate their week finding out about university. The IU students with forthcoming exams came to visit us at Easter for revision days, with our members and staff helping them prepare. They have also held events to explore university courses, for example Medicine Week in February, which I took part in by demonstrating a heart dissection – my work is never dull!

We have an interesting challenge in tackling misconceptions about the College, and further encouraging applicants from the state sector, who, while they have the same success rate here as across the University, apply to us in smaller numbers. One way we intend to achieve this is to expand our Student Ambassador scheme to give prospective applicants as much contact with Christ Church students as we can, as their friendly enthusiasm brings their experience of the College to life. We also have a whole range of access initiatives that run from day to day, with school groups visiting us for taster days and events, and talks and workshops given in schools. A highlight has been our Application Preparation Day, which helps potential students feel more comfortable and confident with the application process. We have also produced a series of online resources for students and teachers, particularly to reach out to those in more remote areas who are unable to visit us to receive our support directly. We are excited about our new projects, both through our work with IntoUniversity and with our link schools in Norfolk, Suffolk and Barnet, and look forward to supporting students in raising their aspirations.

Below: IU students explore life at university
...he had made an important contribution to the struggle against Axis intelligence, impressing many colleagues by his ingenuity and determination and annoying some of his superiors by his irreverence.

HUGH TREVOR-ROPER: INTELLIGENCE OFFICER AND HISTORIAN

Edward Harrison (1972) explains how Hugh Trevor-Roper came to write The Last Days of Hitler, a classic of contemporary history which won its author fame in Britain, the United States, and beyond.

As the Second World War drew to a close in summer 1945, Hugh Trevor-Roper was expecting to draw a line under his six years in British Intelligence and return to academic life, where he had enjoyed outstanding success as an undergraduate at Christ Church and a research fellow at Merton. During the war he had made an important contribution to the struggle against Axis intelligence, impressing many colleagues by his ingenuity and determination and annoying some of his superiors by his irreverence. Trevor-Roper had no intention of remaining in secret service permanently and was elected to a research lectureship at Christ Church in June 1945 in the expectation he would take up his post at the beginning of the Michaelmas term. But he did not return to Oxford full time in autumn 1945. Instead he embarked on a special mission as an intelligence officer which he completed with spectacular results. Later his special work would lead to a book which gave him an international reputation as a historian.

In September 1945 Brigadier Dick White, head of Counter-Intelligence in the British Zone of Germany, requested Trevor-Roper to assemble and review the evidence relating to the death
Then the army adjutant led Trevor-Roper back to his home and in the garden dug up a bottle containing the will. The discovery of the copies of Hitler’s testament was a considerable achievement for Anglo-American Intelligence and a personal triumph for Trevor-Roper. Once again he had solved the problem at astonishing speed, in a crowded three weeks.

In January 1946 Trevor-Roper did return to Oxford full time and began teaching History at Christ Church. Dick White now suggested he write about Hitler’s end, and Trevor-Roper eagerly followed the suggestion. In composing his book he drew not only on the interrogations carried out by himself and other officers but also on a wide range of intelligence documents, captured diaries, and published sources. He wrote the first draft by hand at a furious tempo. In late February in the midst of teaching he sometimes wrote three thousand words per day, and two-thirds of the book was done in less than a month. Certainly there were many later changes, as the evocative manuscript in Christ Church Archive shows. But The Last Days of Hitler is one of those rare books which was written very quickly but with incomparable style. The main text of The Last Days was finished by 22 May 1946. The following month Trevor-Roper was ratified by the Governing Body of Christ Church as a Student and Tutor in Modern History. When his book was eventually published in March 1947 it brought Trevor-Roper not only financial reward but international fame. He had made an extraordinary transition from peace to war. In the space of nine months Trevor-Roper had solved the mystery of Hitler’s death, discovered two copies of his will hidden at opposite ends of Germany, and during the intervals of teaching composed a classic of contemporary history. Now he could develop his unique historical abilities to the full as an Official Student of Christ Church.

He was a skilful and purposeful interrogator, adept at probing witnesses and separating what they had actually seen from what they had merely heard.

Soon after finishing his report Trevor-Roper was asked to investigate a new problem concerning Hitler’s wills. One copy had surfaced in the British Zone, but there were probably other copies which it was essential to find. Trevor-Roper returned to Germany in mid-December 1945. With American help he tracked down the custodian of one missing copy to a remote Bavarian village and arrested him in the early hours of the morning. Trevor-Roper suspected the other copy was in the possession of Hitler’s army adjutant, a British prisoner, but this man had resisted obstinately during previous interrogations and vehemently denied holding documents. He was eventually broken down by an appeal to reason, which convinced him of the futility of further resistance.

The Soviet dictator Josef Stalin was deliberately concealing evidence of Hitler’s suicide and was stirring up trouble by stoking rumours that the Fuehrer was still alive. White wanted Trevor-Roper to produce a report which would bring clarity to a murky and potentially dangerous issue. No one wanted Hitler to pop up again suddenly like Napoleon. White was also a History graduate from Christ Church and predicted that Trevor-Roper’s research could be ‘a work of some considerable historic interest.’

Thirty-one years of age and full of energy, Trevor-Roper set to work with a will. The British and American occupation authorities in Germany helped him to find witnesses to the events in Hitler’s Bunker and also provided other evidence such as diaries. Trevor-Roper travelled to and fro across Germany, interrogating a series of witnesses with relentless questioning. He was a skilful and purposeful interrogator, adept at probing witnesses and separating what they had actually seen from what they had merely heard. Among those he questioned were Hitler’s armaments minister, Albert Speer, and his doctor, Theodor Morell. Within six weeks Trevor-Roper produced a definitive report showing beyond all reasonable doubt that Hitler had killed himself in his Bunker. It was a remarkable personal achievement, and it was done at an impressive tempo.

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JOHN MALCHAIR AND CHRIST CHURCH

Bernard Richards (1963).....John Malchair has the reputation of being an accurate observer, but Bernard Richards demonstrates that liberties were taken with the position of the sun one winter dawn.

John Malchair (1730-1812) was an excellent depicter of the Oxford scene during the latter part of the eighteenth century. When he died Jackson's Oxford Journal wrote: ‘His great collection of drawings (from nature and of his own pencil), ancient music, and a few original paintings, will be highly appreciated by the true lovers of the polite arts.’ And indeed they have been. In 1998 an exhibition was on view at the Ashmolean, with an accompanying catalogue by Colin Harrison, Susana Wollenberg and Julian Munby. One of the most intriguing watercolour drawings in the exhibition was ‘Christ Church from St Aldate’s’ (1787). It shows a brilliant pair of sunbeams coming from behind one of the subsidiary towers of the Great Tom Tower. Colin Harrison is very enthusiastic about it, and says that it ‘has no parallels in contemporary painting,’ adding ‘Indeed, it was not until J.M.W. Turner began his explorations of similar phenomena in the 1840s that such experiments were repeated.’ I would quarrel slightly with Harrison here, because Turner’s ‘experiments’ began earlier than the 1840s. A parallel image to Malchair’s is Turner’s famous view Mortlake Terrace: the Seat of William Moffat, Esq. Summer Evening (National Gallery of Art Washington, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1827), in which the sun is so strong that it obliterates the edges of the terrace.

Malchair was very interested in natural phenomena, and was a friend of the Savilian Professor of Astronomy, Thomas Hornby (1733-1810). Of the particular effect of light in the drawing he writes: ‘Wonderfull effects are observable when the objects are between the sunn and spectator, but they are so little known that few would subscribe to the truth of them, were they ever so well represented.’ I have always believed that Malchair’s drawing
recorded an actual place at an actual time of day, with specific lighting effects and this year for the first time I decided to look into it.

The experience was shocking, almost like being told that Santa Claus does not exist. The truth is that the scene Malchair depicts could never have occurred. I have always assumed that the drawing was done on the morning of 21 December, or 22, at the time of the winter solstice. It’s obviously a winter scene, because the sun is low in the sky, and the horse’s breath is visible in the frosty air. This year (2015) the sun disdained to shine (to quote Richard III) on the morning of 21 or 22 December, but on 23 December there was brilliant sunshine.

But there is a problem. If you stand where Malchair stood the sun is not that low, even on or about December 21\textsuperscript{st}. At around 9.15 the sun rises behind the balustrade on the left (below). By about 10.20 it emerges from the right side of Tom Tower (below), but much higher up than in the drawing.

It is only possible to get the effect Malchair draws by standing much closer to the tower, near the junction with Pembroke Street (above), but then one does not get the whole view of St. Aldate’s which Malchair shows in his drawing.

And there is another problem: I don’t think you can see such strong sunbeams when looking directly into the sun. Malchair could have seen such beams, perhaps, but there would need to have been a good deal of smoke and dust in the air. I suspect that what he did was do a careful drawing of St. Aldate’s and Christ Church (not that careful, though, because as Harrison notes the framing of the domestic buildings ‘would have been impossible’). And then he added the sunbeams from memory. But not a precise memory. So that the picture is not what it seems: a reliable record of a natural appearance at a definite time and place. This also seems to have been the way Turner produced his painting of Mortlake Terrace, because in the preliminary sketches the curious dazzling sunlight effect is not there. Neither is the dog nor the barge.

The whole experience was disappointing and disillusioning. But there was one benefit. By concentrating on the buildings I caught a very rare appearance, that only occurs for two or three days close to the Winter Solstice; that just before 10.20 the sun shines through the louvres in the tower. I have never noticed it before.
And I don’t suppose many people have. I was reminded of the lines in Gerard Manley Hopkins’s lovely poem about the recondite appearances in Oxford: that for those with a sharp enough eye a startling caught vision will be ‘the one peculiar of their pleased eye.’ No need to travel to Stonehenge to see something special and unusual.

The photograph below was taken on 28 December 2015 at about 10.30 a.m. On the back of Malchair’s drawing is inscribed ‘27 – 1787 – 10/’ It’s not clear what this means. But perhaps ‘27’ is the 27th of the month. In which case it must be December, since in the 10th month, October, the sun would be much too high. In 2015, 27 December was overcast, so it was necessary to take the photograph on the 28th. When the sun was very slightly higher, but not by much. This photograph is taken from more or less the same place where Malchair was standing, and it is clear that the sun is very much higher than in his drawing.

Bernard Richards was a Research Lecturer of Christ Church from 1963 to 1968, and a Fellow in English at Brasenose College from 1972 to 1996. He is currently an Emeritus Fellow at Brasenose College. He has published on Henry James, John Ruskin and Victorian Poetry.

It is impossible to imagine a life without books and reading. When I was just five or six, my parents used to joke that they knew I had fallen asleep when they heard two thumps on the ceiling; the first was my book falling off the bed, and the second was me following the book onto the floor! Unlike so many of today’s children, I was blessed with schools that had good libraries. I began with Orlando, the marmalade cat, Teddy Edward’s adventures, and the wonders that were opened up in the various Ladybird series. Then, like most girls, I worked my way through stacks of Enid Blyton, especially Mallory Towers and the historical novels of Jean Plaidy before finding myself, in mid-teens, with a very serious-minded boyfriend. Suddenly, I was propelled into a completely new arena with Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Solzhenitsyn, Tolstoy, and Sholokov (he was ‘into’ Russian literature in a big way!). Before I was sixteen, I had read, in a desperate need to impress, all three volumes of the Gulag Archipelago and War and Peace. Both the boyfriend and the showing-off passed reasonably quickly, and I began to find my own way with the help of an inspirational English teacher who encouraged a passion for Thomas Hardy and Jane Austen. We were pushed to read widely around our chosen A-level subjects, and to discover new interests; extra classes during the sixth form included archaeology, genetics, politics, practical chemistry, Russian and Spanish. I have never lost that desire to find out a little bit about a lot of things.

Working at Christ Church has only made this easier. Studying for various courses, it has been a privilege to be able to study early books on subjects as diverse as woodland management, agriculture, the progresses of Elizabeth I, exploration, and architecture. But it is not just for my academic work; during a year working as Library Manager, ordering new books for undergraduates and re-shelving borrowed books, fresh topics are constantly brought to my attention. A selection of OUP’s Very Short Introductions will be accompanying me on every holiday. And then there is the staff book club which pushes me to tackle genres which I would never usually touch, like science fiction. One that immediately springs to mind is Cryptonomicon by Neal Stephenson, a story that flits backwards and forwards between the 2nd World War.
and the 1990s. The first chapters are littered with very complex equations, and the non-mathematically-minded reader could easily panic (this one certainly did) but it is an ingenious story, beginning in Bletchley Park, based firmly in fact. So little time, so many books!

Greek language textbooks abound as I try to progress my conversation beyond merely ordering an ouzo. History and travel books predominate, often with a Grecophile tendency. One firm favourite which shows the signs of constant re-reading is William Dalrymple’s *From the Holy Mountain*. Devouring this one evening while covering the late shift in the Library, Professor Chadwick walked in and, in his magisterial but most gentlemanly manner, asked what I was reading. I showed him the cover and, trying a trifle too hard, commented that I wished I knew more about John Moschos, the seventh-century monk in whose footsteps Dalrymple was travelling. The Dean Emeritus gave me a severe look and in that wonderfully sonorous voice asked ‘But have you not read my article in the *Journal of Theological Studies*?’ Never have I moved so fast to the periodicals shelves; the paper (from volume 25, 1974) has been folded carefully beside the book ever since.

Other well-thumbed volumes include anything by Patrick Leigh Fermor, particularly his *Roumeli* and *Mani*. Timothy Ware’s Penguin introduction to the Orthodox church is falling to pieces, and stands *almost* alongside a dilapidated copy of Rackham and Moody’s *The making of the Cretan landscape*. (I confess to a Poirot-esque obsession with order and size.)

Detective fiction is probably my favourite way to relax with Ian Rankin’s Inspector Rebus novels top of the hit parade. Highlights of the series for me include *Knots and Crosses*, *The Falls*, and *Naming of the dead*. But there are also the Inspector Montalbano stories, set in a Sicily that does not reflect the travel brochures. It is a cliché, I know, but the heat really does rise off the page. A less well-known character, back to my beloved Greece, is Hermes Diaktoros, who may be the Greek god in modern form, and wears, with his designer suits, immaculately white but incongruous plimsolls. Seven novels - by Anne Zouroudi - deal with the seven deadly sins with solutions to crimes and misfortunes that are anything but conventional.

Anything set in the Mediterranean inevitably includes much about food, even if only as a backdrop. But come back to England and try Nigel Slater’s *Toast*, which will send you down memory lane after *Marie Rose sauce* and *Black Forest gateau* or *Enjoy!* by ‘Fat Lady’ Jennifer Paterson. Both can thrill with the joy of a well-turned phrase and cause a rumbly tummy at the same time – what better book can there be? ■
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Event booking forms are available to download at www.chch.ox.ac.uk/events/all/alumni

SEPTEMBER

16-18 September
OXFORD UNIVERSITY ALUMNI WEEKEND
Oxford

17 September
CHRIST CHURCH ASSOCIATION SPORTS DINNER & AGM
Christ Church

18 September
1546 SOCIETY LUNCH
Christ Church

29 September
2000–2002 GAUDY
Christ Church

OCTOBER

1 October
PARENTS’ GAUDY
Christ Church

2 October
FAMILY PROGRAMME TEA
Christ Church

NOVEMBER

29 November
YEAR REP DINNER
National Liberal Club, London

27 November
FAMILY CHRISTMAS RECEPTION
Christ Church

DECEMBER

8 December
VARSITY RUGBY MATCH
Twickenham

12 December
ST JOHN’S, SMITH SQUARE
London

PILLARS AND PINNACLES, OR BRICKS AND MORTAR …?
Judith Curthoys

Pevsner famously pronounced that a bicycle shed was a building but a church was architecture. Needless to say, scholars have contradicted him, and a new book — following on from The Cardinal’s College (2012) — will aim to follow in the footsteps of those gainsayers and show that the buildings of Christ Church, built with care for both design and function, whether grand or humble, or even mundane, have much to tell about the history of the site and the institutions that have occupied it. In the main, Christ Church’s buildings are splendid: a visitor in the mid-seventeenth century commented that “it is more like some fine castle, or great palace than a College”. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the already-grand site was enhanced by ever-more imposing structures, and in the twentieth by buildings of a more functional, but still interesting, nature. Although there were three, often long, principal building phases: the mid-sixteenth century, the late seventeenth and entire eighteenth centuries, and the second half of the nineteenth, there can barely have been a year throughout Christ Church’s five centuries when there was no scaffolding at all. After Wolsey, the main periods of construction were initiated or carried through by the three ‘builder deans’: John Fell, Henry Aldrich, and Henry Liddell. At whatever date, the struggle to provide for the changing needs of academics and residents whilst honouring the history and beauty of Christ Church has been constant.

The final touches are just being made to the text of this new volume which will begin, briefly, with the site before it was taken over by Thomas Wolsey. The following chapters will be chronological but each building will be followed through from beginning to the present day in one place. Hopefully, this will mean that you can discover everything about your favourite places without having to resort constantly to the index!

Although there is much on the architecture of our wonderful site, the book will also cover the debates and decision-making surrounding each building or phase of building, and the people involved with design and construction. Illustrations will be many and varied: new photographs, old maps and plans, engravings and paintings – many of which are from the archive here.

At the moment, the book does not have a title or a definite publication date, but keep your eyes peeled for announcements!
Ovalhouse Patrons
Pierce Brosnan OBE, Paulette Randall MBE,
Sanjeev Bhaskar, Jenny Sealey MBE
& The Ovalhouse Development Board

Present

Curtain Up

A Gala Dinner
In Aid of The
Brand New Ovalhouse Theatre

The May Fair Hotel
September 29th 2016
7:00PM

Tickets £200 per person
£2000 Table of 10
To book your place
louise.cremin@ovalhouse.com
020 7620 7272

Sponsored by The May Fair Hotel
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