CELEBRATING FORTY YEARS OF WOMEN AT THE HOUSE

CCM 46
Christ Church Matters
TRINITY TERM 2021
### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior Censor</th>
<th>Women of Christ Church: Forty years on… Professor Geraldine Johnson</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cardinal Sins</td>
<td>Notes from the archives Judith Curtheys</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH AT CHRIST CHURCH</td>
<td>When mechanics meets chemistry Professor Laurence Brassart</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From Parkinson’s disease to addiction disorders Professor Stephanie Cragg</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English Law Professor Ciara Kennefick</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French Literature Professor Jennifer Yee</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women astronomers at the House Dr Leah Morabito and Dr Laura Prichard</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women Readers Dr Belinda Jack</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVING AND LEARNING AT CHRIST CHURCH</td>
<td>‘Firsts’ in the JCR Giulia da Cruz</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women in the GCR Linnea Drekhage</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access activities for women and other under-represented groups Dr Ana Hastoy</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women in the Cathedral Canon Sarah Foot</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frideswide Voices Helen Smeee</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working at the House Ms Pauline Linières-Hartley</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Librarian’s update Gabriel Sewell</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who’s heard of…? Jacqueline Thalmann</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s Rowing Anna Betteridge</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORTY YEARS OF FIRSTS</td>
<td>‘She’ll Do’ Professor Judith Pallot</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfinished business Dr Joanna Woodall</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christ Church’s first woman Organ Scholar Libby Burgess</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The first cohorts of women: Memories from the 1980s</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christ Church and 30 years in the diplomatic service Kate Smith</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brixton House and Theatre of Black Women Oluwatoyin Odunsi</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christ Church Events 2021</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

The editors of CCM 46 are Dr Anna Port and Simon Offen.

With thanks to the following for their contribution of photographs for this edition of Christ Church Matters: Micah Haynes, Emma Thompson (Diocese of Oxford), Hugh Warwick, Revd Ralph Williamson.

CCM online…

To help reduce the impact printing and mailing Christ Church Matters has on the environment, we ask subscribers to consider opting for reading the latest edition online at: [www.chch.ox.ac.uk/alumni/christ-church-matters](http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/alumni/christ-church-matters). If you are interested in supporting this initiative, please go to: [https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/alumni/communications-page](https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/alumni/communications-page).

Follow us on Twitter: @ChCh_Oxford and Instagram: christchurchoxford and join the Christ Church alumni Facebook group: [www.facebook.com/groups/ChristChurchAlum/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/ChristChurchAlum/).

Women of Christ Church
Forty years on...

Professor Geraldine Johnson,
Senior Censor, Official Student and Tutor in History of Art

On 25 June, the day of our first (and hopefully last) socially-distanced Schools Dinners, I looked out of the window of the Senior Censor’s office to see a field of women spread out across the lush green lawns of Tom Quad. Not one or two – not even 22, the number in the first cohort of women undergraduates at Christ Church 40 years ago – but over 150 women all gathered proudly together for a group photograph to mark this important anniversary. Many were students, both undergraduates and graduates, but there were also Students (in the Christ Church sense of the word), lecturers, senior researchers, post-docs, clergy, scouts, administrators from the Treasury, Academic, Development and Conference offices, and other staff from across the institution including the kitchen, Hall, SCR, Lodge, Library and Picture Gallery. Each of these women arrived with her own story – you will be able to read about some of them in the pages that follow – but it was the collective story told by the very act of gathering that was so striking.

Unlike Catherine Dammartin, whose corpse was temporarily buried in a dung heap in 1557 for daring to live within the confines of Christ Church despite being the wife of a Regius professor, today’s women know that they belong at the House, front and centre. Indeed, all the women in the group photograph and many more who were unable to attend on the day are crucial to the success of Christ Church as an internationally-renowned academic institution, a world-famous heritage site, and a diocesan Cathedral.
“The one thing we can be certain of is that they will continue to gather together – and gather strength from doing so – on the lawns, and in the lecture rooms, offices, libraries, and many other working spaces that make up the House.”

It is also telling that the JCR and GCR presidents in this anniversary year are women (Giulia da Cruz and Linnea Drexhage, respectively), while next year will see possibly the first all-woman JCR Exec, lead by in-coming President Anjali Ramanathan. We have our first-ever woman Steward (Pauline Linières-Hartley), Chaplain (Clare Hayns), Lodge Manager (Amanda Roche), SCR Manager (Ann Barrett) and Buttery & Wine Cellar Manager (Emily Robotham), and the Senior Censor, Librarian, Curator of the Picture Gallery, Archivist, Tutor for Graduates, previous Tutor for Admissions, Academic Registrar, interim Development Director, and in-coming Censor Theologie are all women as well, as are many other key members of staff.

In her essay in the present volume, Archivist Judith Curthoys tells the story of women’s contributions to Christ Church over the centuries – including the unfortunate Mrs Dammartin. But in order to find out what our engineers and astrophysicists, lawyers and literary scholars, medics and musicians, athletes and artists, and many other staff, students and alumnae are doing today, this edition of Christ Church Matters is an excellent place to start.
While it is undoubtedly right to celebrate women’s past and present contributions to Christ Church, some of the stories told in the present volume – especially in regards to the first undergraduate cohorts of women and the experiences of our first woman Student and Censor, Professor Judith Pallot, and other pioneers – suggest that such celebrations have been hard won. And there are still challenges faced by women today, as is also the case for students and staff who come to Christ Church from groups that have been historically under-represented at the House and in Oxford more generally. Christ Church does not stand still, however, and we are proud of initiatives such as commissioning a dozen new portraits of women to hang throughout the College, establishing an Equality and Diversity Committee, and organising outreach events aimed at potential women applicants in fields in which they are still significantly outnumbered by men.

In another 40 years, the first cohort of women undergraduates will be on the verge of becoming centenarians. How can we even begin to imagine what they and all the women of Christ Church will accomplish in the intervening years? The one thing we can be certain of is that they will continue to gather together – and gather strength from doing so – on the lawns, and in the lecture rooms, offices, libraries, and many other working spaces that make up the House. Being Senior Censor during this special anniversary, and being able to get to know some of today’s women of Christ Church, has been an honour, a privilege, and especially a revelation.

Below: Staff and students gathered on 25 June for a group photo with social distancing to celebrate the 40th anniversary of women undergraduates and to highlight the many contributions made by women across the institution.
Women were a force to be reckoned with at Christ Church long before the first ‘official’ one arrived in 1979. In fact, it could be argued that Christ Church wouldn’t be here at all if it were not for the conviction of one holy but doughty lady way back in the eighth century. The priory that was founded by St Frideswide became the core of this unique foundation of college and cathedral. Some of the Norman monastery buildings still survive, the Priory House being one of the oldest continuously-inhabited residences in the country.

It was in the Priory House that one of the early canons of Christ Church, Peter Martyr Vermigli had to take refuge from furious Oxford citizens in 1551. Vermigli, the Regius Professor of Divinity, was an evangelical Protestant reformer who ran up against the revival of Catholicism under Mary. The conservative locals in Oxford found him controversial but, even more alarming to them, was his attempt to bring his wife, Catherine Dammartin, into college. This was a totally new idea; Catherine, with Dean Cox’s wife, were the first two women to live within the walls of any Oxford college. The local population almost besieged Vermigli’s rooms which overlooked St Aldate’s; for his safety, the couple was moved to the cloisters, but the acrimony towards Catherine remained. She died in February 1553, and was at first buried in the cathedral, as one would expect for the wife of a canon. But this honour offended the new Catholic regime, and so, on Cardinal Pole’s orders, Catherine was exhumed and re-buried in the Dean’s dungheap. It was another five years before she was re-interred, this time with her bones buried with those of St Frideswide.

Of course, although Christ Church had more women in residence than any other college, there were never many women here until the twentieth century.
To grow up here as a young woman must have been extraordinary. Many, perhaps as a consequence, seem to have been quite formidable. Mrs Fell, for example, defied the Parliamentary authorities, and sat tight in the Deanery in spite of the troops’ efforts to remove her after the imprisonment of her husband, Samuel. After much debate and “ill language”, three of the Puritan canons were obliged to carry Mrs Fell out into the quad in her chair.

In the early days, only mothers and sisters (with their maids) could be invited into chambers, and only then with permission. Laundresses were not permitted to cross the threshold of Tom gate, but had to collect and deliver linen at strictly controlled times of the day and week. “No seamstresses, stocking menders, and applewomen, or any suspicious persons of any kind [were to] be admitted into the college”. By 1660, the rules were relaxing a little; female bedmakers were permitted provided that they were over 40! But this suspicion of women in college continued into the twentieth century; the menu for the Ladies’ Night dinner in 1954 carried a quotation from the Taming of the Shrew. However, women had their uses; the choice of new curtains for the SCR was left to “Mrs Lowe and the other College Wives”.

“Cardinal Sins
the threshold of Tom gate, but had to collect and deliver linen at strictly controlled times of the day and week. “No seamstresses, stocking menders, and applewomen, or any suspicious persons of any kind [were to] be admitted into the college”. By 1660, the rules were relaxing a little; female bedmakers were permitted provided that they were over 40! But this suspicion of women in college continued into the twentieth century; the menu for the Ladies’ Night dinner in 1954 carried a quotation from the Taming of the Shrew. However, women had their uses; the choice of new curtains for the SCR was left to “Mrs Lowe and the other College Wives”.

To grow up here as a young woman must have been extraordinary. Many, perhaps as a consequence, seem to have been quite formidable. Mrs Fell, for example, defied the Parliamentary authorities, and sat tight in the Deanery in spite of the troops’ efforts to remove her after the imprisonment of her husband, Samuel. After much debate and “ill language”, three of the Puritan canons were obliged to carry Mrs Fell out into the quad in her chair.

In the early days, only mothers and sisters (with their maids) could be invited into chambers, and only then with permission. Laundresses were not permitted to cross the threshold of Tom gate, but had to collect and deliver linen at strictly controlled times of the day and week. “No seamstresses, stocking menders, and applewomen, or any suspicious persons of any kind [were to] be admitted into the college”. By 1660, the rules were relaxing a little; female bedmakers were permitted provided that they were over 40! But this suspicion of women in college continued into the twentieth century; the menu for the Ladies’ Night dinner in 1954 carried a quotation from the Taming of the Shrew. However, women had their uses; the choice of new curtains for the SCR was left to “Mrs Lowe and the other College Wives”.

To grow up here as a young woman must have been extraordinary. Many, perhaps as a consequence, seem to have been quite formidable. Mrs Fell, for example, defied the Parliamentary authorities, and sat tight in the Deanery in spite of the troops’ efforts to remove her after the imprisonment of her husband, Samuel. After much debate and “ill language”, three of the Puritan canons were obliged to carry Mrs Fell out into the quad in her chair.

In the early days, only mothers and sisters (with their maids) could be invited into chambers, and only then with permission. Laundresses were not permitted to cross the threshold of Tom gate, but had to collect and deliver linen at strictly controlled times of the day and week. “No seamstresses, stocking menders, and applewomen, or any suspicious persons of any kind [were to] be admitted into the college”. By 1660, the rules were relaxing a little; female bedmakers were permitted provided that they were over 40! But this suspicion of women in college continued into the twentieth century; the menu for the Ladies’ Night dinner in 1954 carried a quotation from the Taming of the Shrew. However, women had their uses; the choice of new curtains for the SCR was left to “Mrs Lowe and the other College Wives”.

To grow up here as a young woman must have been extraordinary. Many, perhaps as a consequence, seem to have been quite formidable. Mrs Fell, for example, defied the Parliamentary authorities, and sat tight in the Deanery in spite of the troops’ efforts to remove her after the imprisonment of her husband, Samuel. After much debate and “ill language”, three of the Puritan canons were obliged to carry Mrs Fell out into the quad in her chair.

In the early days, only mothers and sisters (with their maids) could be invited into chambers, and only then with permission. Laundresses were not permitted to cross the threshold of Tom gate, but had to collect and deliver linen at strictly controlled times of the day and week. “No seamstresses, stocking menders, and applewomen, or any suspicious persons of any kind [were to] be admitted into the college”. By 1660, the rules were relaxing a little; female bedmakers were permitted provided that they were over 40! But this suspicion of women in college continued into the twentieth century; the menu for the Ladies’ Night dinner in 1954 carried a quotation from the Taming of the Shrew. However, women had their uses; the choice of new curtains for the SCR was left to “Mrs Lowe and the other College Wives”.

To grow up here as a young woman must have been extraordinary. Many, perhaps as a consequence, seem to have been quite formidable. Mrs Fell, for example, defied the Parliamentary authorities, and sat tight in the Deanery in spite of the troops’ efforts to remove her after the imprisonment of her husband, Samuel. After much debate and “ill language”, three of the Puritan canons were obliged to carry Mrs Fell out into the quad in her chair.

In the early days, only mothers and sisters (with their maids) could be invited into chambers, and only then with permission. Laundresses were not permitted to cross the threshold of Tom gate, but had to collect and deliver linen at strictly controlled times of the day and week. “No seamstresses, stocking menders, and applewomen, or any suspicious persons of any kind [were to] be admitted into the college”. By 1660, the rules were relaxing a little; female bedmakers were permitted provided that they were over 40! But this suspicion of women in college continued into the twentieth century; the menu for the Ladies’ Night dinner in 1954 carried a quotation from the Taming of the Shrew. However, women had their uses; the choice of new curtains for the SCR was left to “Mrs Lowe and the other College Wives”. 
As the extension of Parliamentary franchise to women in 1918 pushed the University into changing the status of women students, so it was gender equality legislation in the 1970s which kick-started the admission of women to the men’s colleges. While Christ Church was one of the last colleges to go co-ed, this was in part due to the timetable set by the University designed to protect the women’s colleges from abandonment. It was a close battle in Governing Body, but the admission of women as both Junior and Senior Members of College was approved for a 1980 intake (with one lecturer jumping the gun a term or two early!). The idea of men-only colleges was finally buried in 1985 when Oriel College admitted women for the first time, and the last of the colleges founded exclusively for women admitted male students in 2008.

There were women who, although not resident at Christ Church, had a profound effect on the place: Mary Tudor helpfully topped up the endowment a bit; Elizabeth I created the Westminster Studentships; several exhibitions were provided by women including the Bostock, Holford, and Paul; and one of the first Library benefactors was Lady Burghley. Even the Meadow, one of the House’s greatest treasures, was a gift from the powerful and well-connected Lady Elizabeth Montacute.

However, it is Alice Liddell who is probably the most famous female ever to be resident in Christ Church. The fourth child of another of those redoubtable House ladies, Lorina Liddell, Alice was the inspiration for *Alice in Wonderland* and there were suggestions, had Queen Victoria been amused by the prospect, that she could have married Prince Leopold. Romantically – perhaps rather too much so for a tale of just a few of Christ Church’s proud women – the prince named his daughter Alice, and Alice named her son Leopold.

At the same time as Alice was growing up in the Deanery, so colleges for women students were being founded. Somerville College and Lady Margaret Hall were established in 1879 followed, a few years later, by St Hugh’s and St Hilda’s Colleges. Even though female students were sitting examinations, they were neither full members of the University nor were their achievements recognised until 1920. And it was not until 1959 when the women’s colleges were given the same status as the men’s, just two years after the permitted quota of women students was lifted (then about one sixth of the student body). As the extension of Parliamentary franchise to women in 1918 pushed the University into changing the status of women students, so it was gender equality legislation in the 1970s which kick-started the admission of women to the men’s colleges. While Christ Church was one of the last colleges to go co-ed, this was in part due to the timetable set by the University designed to protect the women’s colleges from abandonment. It was a close battle in Governing Body, but the admission of women as both Junior and Senior Members of College was approved for a 1980 intake (with one lecturer jumping the gun a term or two early!). The idea of men-only colleges was finally buried in 1985 when Oriel College admitted women for the first time, and the last of the colleges founded exclusively for women admitted male students in 2008.
What do the corrosion damage of a metal, the charging of a lithium-ion battery, and the swelling of a hydrogel in water have in common? At first sight, these are very different phenomena, involving materials with contrasted mechanical and functional properties. These phenomena however share an important common characteristic: they all involve a strong interplay between mechanics and chemistry. For example, externally-applied forces can accelerate chemical reactions occurring at the surface or in the bulk of a material. Internal stresses also affect the rate of diffusion of mobile species into the material. Conversely, changes in chemical composition alter the mechanical properties and can also induce large deformations. While the importance of chemo-mechanical couplings has been recognized for a long time, they have attracted increased interest in recent years, driven by emerging engineering applications such as materials under extreme conditions, energy storage applications and human-machine interfaces.

As an academic in the Solid Mechanics and Materials group of the Department of Engineering Science, my research focuses on the development of mathematical models that are useful to understand and predict the mechanical behaviour of materials, with an emphasis on multiphysics and multiscale approaches. I rely primarily on continuum mechanics and thermodynamics, which are relevant to describe the mechanical response of materials at macroscopic length scales. I also develop scale-bridging techniques in order to capture the key physics at the relevant lower scales. While a significant portion of my work is theoretical and requires only a pencil and a piece of paper (and a lot of coffee), computer simulations also play an important role.

**Professor Laurence Brassart**, Official Student and Tutor in Engineering

---

*Above:* Li-ion batteries operate by the cyclic insertion and extraction of lithium atoms in and out of solid electrodes, which can lead to mechanical stress and failure.

*Left and below:* Biodegradable polymer implants, such as orthopaedic fixtures and cardiovascular stents, are designed to gradually break down in water, while maintaining suitable mechanical properties during service.
in understanding how a material responds to complex mechanical and environmental solicitations.

Some of my work has focused on the chemo-mechanics of electrodes for rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. During charging or discharging of a battery cell, lithium ions are extracted from one electrode, migrate through the electrolyte and are inserted into the other electrode. Extraction or insertion of lithium induces mechanical stresses in the electrodes, which may cause fracture or morphological changes. As a matter of fact, lithiation-induced damage is a major issue in the development of high capacity batteries. For example, silicon is regarded as a promising anode material, with theoretical storage capacity about ten times higher than that of conventional graphite anodes. However, absorption of lithium into silicon causes volumetric swelling of about 300%, which in turn leads to mechanical degradation during cycles of charge and discharge, and to rapid capacity decay.

During my postdoc at Harvard University, I formulated a model coupling large, viscoplastic deformation to lithium transport in silicon anodes. The model is able to predict heterogeneous stress and strain fields that develop within the electrode during the cyclic operation of the battery. The model allowed me to identify optimal cyclic operation regimes in terms of energy storage and rate capability. I have also collaborated with an experimental team at the University of Louvain, where I used computer simulation to understand morphological changes and fracture patterns of crystalline silicon nanopillars during lithiation. More recently, I have extended the model to include a finer description of viscoplastic flow in silicon while also accounting for microstructural changes induced by the lithiation process.

Since joining Oxford in 2019, I have shifted my research activities to the area of polymers (hydrogels, elastomers, thermoplastics), which constitute a broad playground to explore a variety of chemo-mechanical phenomena. I have recently obtained a New Investigator Award from EPSRC to start a new project on the multiphysics modelling of biodegradable polymers for biomedical applications (biodegradable implants, tissue engineering, drug delivery). Developing predictive simulation tools for these materials will enable the rational design of implants with suitable mechanical and degradation properties, while reducing the need for costly trial and error experimental approaches.

**Left:** Top view of a nanopillar after lithiation, showing anisotropic swelling and fracture.

**Far left:** Silicon nanopillars before lithiation.

**Above:** Numerical simulation of anisotropic growth and heterogeneous stresses in a silicon nanopillar during lithiation.
We use the latest advances in molecular tools to interrogate these mechanisms in the healthy brain and to understand disruption in models of disease. By using fibre optics to activate excitable channels that have been biologically engineered to be sensitive to flashes of light, we can control activity in specific types of cells to pinpoint those that critically control dopamine release. For example, we have found that nerve cells that release acetylcholine, the brain’s natural form of nicotine, strongly shape dopamine transmission, and we are developing a related patent application for new treatments for dopamine disorders. In addition, these optical approaches to illuminate brain networks are shedding light on novel roles for non-neuronal cells within the brain. Besides nerve cells, there are other types of brain cells, including star-shaped cells aptly named astrocytes. We have started work on a new project – funded largely by the Medical Research Council – to address the fundamentally important questions of whether and how astrocytes control dopamine function. This project could transform our understanding about astrocytes and how dopamine function is controlled in health and disease. We hope that our work will illuminate new avenues for drug discovery for Parkinson’s disease as well as the many other dopamine-related disorders.

The brain neurochemical dopamine is vitally important for our voluntary actions and motivation. Dopamine regulates our every action, from getting out of bed in the morning, to how hard we work, and choose our play. Without dopamine we develop Parkinson’s disease and cannot move. Too much dopamine leads to disorders of unwanted movements, tics, and to addiction disorders of all types, from addiction to drugs and to behaviours including gambling. Contrary to popular belief, dopamine is not the brain’s agent of pleasure. Rather, dopamine alerts the brain that something we perceive as rewarding has either happened unexpectedly, or didn’t happen when expected, or might yet happen if we select the correct action! In other words, dopamine transmits information about the predictability of gaining rewards, to energise and motivate our actions so that we choose and ultimately learn gainful behaviours.

“...This project could transform our understanding about astrocytes and how dopamine function is controlled in health and disease.”

But how are these dopamine signals instructed and controlled? If we understood the nuts and bolts of how dopamine signalling is controlled by the brain, we could better rescue problems in brain disorders. Research in my lab, based in the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics, is uncovering the mechanisms that govern dopamine signalling and how they go awry in disease. Dopamine neurons release dopamine from output cables that are among the most complex formed by any type of neuron in the brain. They branch thousands of times to form giant tree-like arbours that release dopamine on to target cells. These arbours provide a major strategic point for gating and driving dopamine release. We are discovering that dopamine neuron arbours are endowed with a rich repertoire of signalling molecules and receptors for other transmitters. Other types of brain cells communicate through these receptors to regulate dopamine transmission.
My research tries to understand how and why English law developed its rules relating to promises and property. Often, the fruits of this thinking can also be applied to substantiate critiques of the current law and so my research is also concerned with what English law could and should be. Naturally, history plays an important role in this sort of research. Unwinding the threads of the fabric of English law leads to exciting interdisciplinary challenges since law is not, and never has been, a closed system isolated from ideas in other fields of knowledge and cultural, social, political and economic forces. One of my most surprising findings was the close relationship between English contract law in the nineteenth century and the development of the mathematics of probability in the previous one. My article on this question won the Selden Society’s David Yale Prize 2019 – a major award in legal history.

Comparison with French law is also a major feature of my research. Law is rather unusual in being a body of knowledge which is tied to a particular place: ‘what is true on one side of the Pyrenees is false on the other’ as Blaise Pascal shrewdly observed. Comparing, say, chemistry in India and Ireland would be unlikely to lead to any meaningful insights about that subject. Yet law is, as Edward Coke explained, ‘artificial reason’ and so there is no universal yardstick by which any particular rule or concept can be measured. In addition law, like language, can be influenced by concepts from other places. It is this last feature which I examine in my research on English law. France has been the most significant source of legal ideas in England; indeed, for many centuries a form of French was the principal language in which English law was expressed in case reports and legal literature. The influence of French law in England has been most pronounced in the areas which interest me – promises and property – yet its significance has, for various reasons, not been given the attention which it deserves. Looking at the English materials from this angle yields many important insights about English law and legal development more generally. One is that some features of English law which appear illogical or difficult to justify can be explained by their background in French law, their original context, which has been misunderstood or overlooked entirely. I have recently published an article in this vein on servitudes (i.e. a particular type of property which includes rights of way). I am currently working on a separate article which argues that the inauspicious origins and subsequent sorry fate in France of a particular rule imported into England – and which has always been problematic there too – is one reason for which it should not be part of English law today. This last point is an example of how my research often has implications for the current law too: human laws, unlike, say, the laws of physics, can be changed – deliberately.

Comparative law and history are very much complementary methodologies. Indeed, the great historian Frederick William Maitland said that one cannot even begin to know one system without looking at others. That has been my experience. I was not, originally, a comparative lawyer or a legal historian; adopting both mantels was necessary in order to understand the English law which I was exploring. It has been an exhilarating intellectual journey so far and there is much yet to uncover!
My research is mostly on nineteenth-century literature in French although – following the grand Oxford tradition of teaching outside one’s comfort zone – I teach on works written between the middle ages and the present. My main research focus to date has been on the links between colonialism and literature, with related interests in the representation of racial difference and exoticism. My third book, *The Colonial Comedy: Imperialism in the French Realist Novel*, was published with Oxford University Press in 2016. Unlike some of my earlier research, which focused on nineteenth-century colonial discourse, *The Colonial Comedy* makes a case for the impact of colonialism on writings by some of the most canonical authors of the period (Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant). Since it is always useful to have someone interesting to argue with, I think of this book as an argumentative conversation with Edward Said, whose view of Orientalism as a monolithic discourse doesn’t leave much space for parody and irony. There is a whole nineteenth-century literary tradition, which I call ‘Critical Orientalism’, that essentially pokes fun at Orientalist delusions. Given this self-deprecating and sceptical tendency of much French literature in the period, I also argue against overly simplistic conceptions of literary realism. My favourite chapter is on sugar and the slave trade (‘The Real Cost of Sugar: Ethics, the Slave Trade, and the Colonies’). I enjoyed coming up with a pragmatic definition of literary realism for the introduction (not as easy a feat as one might think) and an overview of the twentieth-century debate opposing ‘realism’ and ‘modernism’ for the conclusion.

In the last few years I have also co-edited a special issue of *French Studies* on ‘A Postcolonial Nineteenth-Century’ (72:2, April 2018), with Charles Forsdick. At the moment on Baudelaire’s response to a Chinese art object. One of my current projects examines the figure of the Oriental despot, from the vast painting *The Death of Sardanapalus* by Eugène Delacroix to Balzac and Baudelaire. I am also interested in material objects in literature, and I have a rather eccentric small project to mark the bicentenary of the birth of Flaubert (December 1821): I have funding from TORCH (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities) to commission the Oxford Cake Shop in the Covered Market to make a real-life version of Madame Bovary’s wedding cake.

There will be a blog in case you want to follow the updates: [https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/article/making-madame-bovary-wedding-cake-micro-fund-project-announcement](https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/article/making-madame-bovary-wedding-cake-micro-fund-project-announcement)
The famous astronomer Carl Sagan wrote the science-fiction novel *Contact*, featuring Eleanor Arroway as a radio astronomer. I was first introduced to her through the movie adaptation of the novel, and immediately identified with the character – here was someone who was curious about the Universe, had a passion for science, and wasn’t going to give up to get what she wanted. Today, I am a UKRI Future Leaders Fellow and Assistant Professor in Astronomy at Durham University, where I use radio telescopes, like Eleanor’s character, to study how super-massive black holes influence the galaxies in which they live (unlike Eleanor I’m not searching for extraterrestrial life).

My time as a Hintze Fellow and the Millard and Lee Alexander Fellow at Christ Church (2017 – 2019) has helped me achieve my goals, supported also by a grant from the Christ Church Research Centre. During this time, I developed new techniques to perform high resolution imaging with the Low Frequency Array, a pan-European radio telescope, which helps reveal how powerful radio jets launched from super-massive black holes interact with their host galaxies (see Figure). These techniques will be published, along with ~10 scientific studies using them, in a forthcoming collection of papers in the *Astronomy & Astrophysics* journal. Next on the horizon is my Future Leaders Fellowship project – the first high-resolution radio survey of the entire northern sky using the Low Frequency Array.

“I am a UKRI Future Leaders Fellow and Assistant Professor in Astronomy at Durham University, where I use radio telescopes … to study how super-massive black holes influence the galaxies in which they live…”

The standard processing of data from the Low Frequency Array uses only the radio antennas in the Netherlands, while the new techniques are capable of handling data from all European antennas, providing a bigger effective ‘lens’ that improves the resolution by a factor of 20. This allows us to resolve the jets launched from the super-massive black hole at the centre of this galaxy.
Distant galaxies can provide clues as to how the Universe evolved from the Big Bang through to complex life on Earth. As the first Hintze Scholar and a DPhil student at Christ Church, I investigated galaxy clusters, the largest structures in the Cosmos. I have been a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, since completing my DPhil in 2018. My research has focused on searching for an elusive population of galaxies that can tell us about the conditions of the early Universe during its last major transformation: the Epoch of Reionization. I was recently appointed to a Staff Scientist position at STScI and I will be working to support the Hubble Space Telescope.

I am passionate about increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in astronomy and academia. I organised events for the Oxford Women in Physics Society during my DPhil, and, in my year-long term as President of the Graduate Common Room, I worked for the inclusion of all students, supporting the running of race awareness and sexual consent workshops, and organised for the LGBTQ flag flown for the first time at Christ Church. I have continued this advocacy at STScI and have written two papers on enhancing conference participation in order to make the field more diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

The Hubble Space Telescope (often referred to as HST or Hubble) is a space telescope that was launched into low Earth orbit in 1990 and remains in operation. It was not the first space telescope, but it is one of the largest and most versatile, renowned both as a vital research tool and as a public relations boon for astronomy. Image using elements courtesy of NASA.

“*My research has focused on searching for an elusive population of galaxies that can tell us about the conditions of the early Universe...*”

Dr Laura Prichard, Hintze Scholar, 2014-2018
Women Readers

Dr Belinda Jack
Official Student and Tutor in French

The writer Doris Lessing, who grew up in colonial Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), makes the point very clearly: ‘With a library you are free,’ she writes, ‘not confined by temporary political climates’. For Lessing, who saw South Africa’s apartheid regime as an ideology which denied freedom to the majority, access to books is the most fundamental human right. The library, she writes, ‘is the most democratic of institutions because no-one – but no-one at all – can tell you what to read and when and how’.

Attempts to censor women’s reading in this country came to an end only quite recently. In the obscenity trial in 1960 of D.H.Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover, published by Penguin Books, the chief prosecutor, Mervyn Griffith-Jones, asked if the novel was the kind of book ‘you would wish your wife or servant to read?’ Implicit in his question was the suggestion that reading can encourage transgressive behaviour. Penguin won and millions of copies sold. This idea of the corruptible power of reading was long promulgated in writings – and also in paintings. Antoine Wiertz’s is one of the funniest. Entitled simply the Woman Reader of Novels (1853), it shows a naked woman lying on her back reading a novel, while a horned figure in the shadows beside her, the Devil, pushes more volumes towards her to speed her on her way to perdition. Fortunately, George Eliot’s view won out. But in many parts of the world Wiertz’s still prevails.

George Eliot’s novel, Adam Bede (1859), is arguably as much about Hetty Sorrel as it is about the eponymous hero.

And George Eliot was the pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans. It is a story by a woman about a woman. It is also a story about the power of the novel. At the heart of the novel is a love triangle: Adam, a decent local craftsman, loves the lowly Hetty, who in turn falls for the opportunistic Arthur, the local squire’s grandson. Hetty is seduced. Adam discovers the lovers and he and Arthur fight. Arthur agrees to leave the district and Hetty agrees to marry Adam. But before the nuptials she discovers that she is pregnant and sets out to find Arthur. She fails, but stays away on account of her shame. She is delivered of the baby by a sympathetic woman whom she encounters and then abandons the baby in a field. Overcome by remorse hearing the baby crying she returns to the field only to find the baby dead. Hetty is tried and convicted of murder and sentenced to hanging. That isn’t the end of the story but enough for my purposes here. Eliot is never polemical in her writing. We are not encouraged to condemn Hetty, rather to pity her. And why? Because as Eliot writes, ‘Hetty had never read a novel: if she had ever seen one, I think the words would have been too hard for her: how then could she find a shape for her expectations? They were as formless as the sweet languid colours of the garden…’. Fiction, Eliot suggests, is not about escapism or even the description of life. Stories are the means by which we recognise the patterns of life, and the significance of those patterns. It is these that help us to navigate the myriad complexities that beset the lives of each and every one of us.

Hetty is illiterate because of her class, like vast numbers of women in the mid-nineteenth century – and indeed in many parts of the world today. Through the centuries there have been constant attempts to control literacy or access to reading material and, of course, counterforces, such as the vigorous individual and collective campaigns to promote women’s literacy and free access to books and the Internet which, in some parts of the world, remain the sine qua non of women’s greater social and political equality.

“Fiction, Eliot suggests, is not about escapism or even the description of life. Stories are the means by which we recognise the patterns of life, and the significance of those patterns.”

The writer Doris Lessing, who grew up in colonial Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), makes the point very clearly: ‘With a library you are free,’ she writes, ‘not confined by temporary political climates’. For Lessing, who saw South Africa’s apartheid regime as an ideology which denied freedom to the majority, access to books is the most fundamental human right. The library, she writes, ‘is the most democratic of institutions because no-one – but no-one at all – can tell you what to read and when and how’.

Attempts to censor women’s reading in this country came to an end only quite recently. In the obscenity trial in 1960 of D.H.Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover, published by Penguin Books, the chief prosecutor, Mervyn Griffith-Jones, asked if the novel was the kind of book ‘you would wish your wife or servant to read?’ Implicit in his question was the suggestion that reading can encourage transgressive behaviour. Penguin won and millions of copies sold. This idea of the corruptible power of reading was long promulgated in writings – and also in paintings. Antoine Wiertz’s is one of the funniest. Entitled simply the Woman Reader of Novels (1853), it shows a naked woman lying on her back reading a novel, while a horned figure in the shadows beside her, the Devil, pushes more volumes towards her to speed her on her way to perdition. Fortunately, George Eliot’s view won out. But in many parts of the world Wiertz’s still prevails.

George Eliot’s novel, Adam Bede (1859), is arguably as much about Hetty Sorrel as it is about the eponymous hero.

And George Eliot was the pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans. It is a story by a woman about a woman. It is also a story about the power of the novel. At the heart of the novel is a love triangle: Adam, a decent local craftsman, loves the lowly Hetty, who in turn falls for the opportunistic Arthur, the local squire’s grandson. Hetty is seduced. Adam discovers the lovers and he and Arthur fight. Arthur agrees to leave the district and Hetty agrees to marry Adam. But before the nuptials she discovers that she is pregnant and sets out to find Arthur. She fails, but stays away on account of her shame. She is delivered of the baby by a sympathetic woman whom she encounters and then abandons the baby in a field. Overcome by remorse hearing the baby crying she returns to the field only to find the baby dead. Hetty is tried and convicted of murder and sentenced to hanging. That isn’t the end of the story but enough for my purposes here. Eliot is never polemical in her writing. We are not encouraged to condemn Hetty, rather to pity her. And why? Because as Eliot writes, ‘Hetty had never read a novel: if she had ever seen one, I think the words would have been too hard for her: how then could she find a shape for her expectations? They were as formless as the sweet languid colours of the garden…’. Fiction, Eliot suggests, is not about escapism or even the description of life. Stories are the means by which we recognise the patterns of life, and the significance of those patterns. It is these that help us to navigate the myriad complexities that beset the lives of each and every one of us.

Hetty is illiterate because of her class, like vast numbers of women in the mid-nineteenth century – and indeed in many parts of the world today. Through the centuries there have been constant attempts to control literacy or access to reading material and, of course, counterforces, such as the vigorous individual and collective campaigns to promote women’s literacy and free access to books and the Internet which, in some parts of the world, remain the sine qua non of women’s greater social and political equality.
The pandemic aside, my experiences as a woman at Christ Church have also been unforgettable. In such a female-dominated subject like languages, I have been fortunate to be surrounded by many female tutors and peers, a privilege I know many of my fellow female friends in STEM have perhaps not benefitted from as much. Representation is incredibly powerful and I see no better example than within the JCR over the past three years: prevented from running because of my Year Abroad, it was frustrating to see that in my first year, the five candidates that ran for the JCR President position were all men. As such, when the pandemic hit, and everything was forced online, I jumped at the chance of running for President even though I was still technically on my Year Abroad. I began my term as the only woman on the JCR Executive however, with the year drawing to a close, I couldn’t be prouder passing on the baton to an all-female JCR Executive. Although there is still a long way to go at Oxford, it is encouraging to have a female Senior Censor, and JCR and GCR Presidents to mark 40 Years of Women at The House and I cannot wait to attend the long-awaited weekend celebrations this coming September.

As this extraordinary year comes to a close, it is a good time to reflect on the many ‘firsts’ the JCR has undergone. There are undoubtedly the frustrating ‘firsts’ like household bubbles, socially-distanced meals or the umpteenth online tutorial, lecture or seminar; however this sudden change has not stopped us from experiencing different parts of college and organising new social events – many of which, I hope, will remain beyond the pandemic. Last September, we organised welcome calls with all the incoming freshers, which ensured that every student arriving knew a friendly face; during Black History Month, we hosted panels with tutors and alumnae; and in Arts Week, we organised a trail through college, allowing students to visit previously unseen areas of college. Another first was the introduction of a marquee in the Masters’ Garden, where the ‘Undie’ has been temporarily relocated. The Masters’ Garden remains a firm favourite with students in Trinity Term where this year, we’ve been able to host the Unity and ERM drinks, an outdoor cinema and even a temporary ‘crazy golf’ course!

Below: Arts Week Exhibition: The Relaunch of the JCR Picture Rental Scheme which JCR President Giulia da Cruz co-curated.
As president of the GCR, I have the honour of representing the graduate student body of Christ Church on a range of different committees. Besides communicating students’ needs, concerns or queries, I am able to voice my own views and ideas on matters that shape students’ life at the House. I am grateful to all graduate students for being given the responsibility, as well as the opportunity, to make an impact and I have greatly enjoyed the first two months of my presidency. Unfortunately, this has not always been a given. I am thankful to be alive in times during which there is no oddity to women holding positions like mine.

During the forty years in which women have been admitted to Christ Church, we have come to achieve a state in which gender has become irrelevant to having an impact and inducing change. In fact, 61% of GCR committee positions and 66% of GCR executive committee positions are currently held by women. As a scientist, I certainly am fond of numbers and statistics. While these can serve as guides, the bigger picture is often much more complex. For me, evaluating my own experience at Christ Church has provided me with first-hand insights and opportunities during which I both witnessed and was part of interactions between Junior Members of the House, as well as Senior Members and staff. Having advanced from being a committee member in my first year to later becoming the GCR Treasurer and ultimately the GCR President, I conclude from my experience that at Christ Church, individuals are recognised and appreciated not because of gender, but according to their qualifications and skill.

As we celebrate 40 years of women at the House, for the first time we are proud to have a Women’s officer as a member of our valued GCR committee and the scope of the position will be expanded to that of an equality officer, or officers, in Michaelmas Term 2021. I am pleased to see so much empathy and mutual support within the graduate student community and I am convinced that this will ultimately lead to the formation of strong interpersonal bonds, friendships and networks for a lifetime to last.

Below: GCR garden party in the Masters’ Garden, Trinity Term 2021.
Access activities for women and other under-represented groups

Dr Ana Hastoy, Admissions & Access Manager

Christ Church has significantly increased its Access activities in recent years. Within four years we have developed sustained engagement programmes in both our link regions: Christ Church Horizons, in the London borough of Barnet; and Aim for Oxford, in the North East of England. Going beyond our general offering of access events to schools in our link regions, these programmes offer sustained advice and guidance to state school students from disadvantaged backgrounds, from areas of low progression to higher education, students who would be the first in their families to go to university, who have been in care or are young carers, and students from ethnic minority backgrounds.

In the next academic year, provided they meet and accept their offers, we will have two Christ Church students who attended Horizons and Aim for Oxford, joining four other first-years from our link regions. We share one of our offer holders’ excitement at gaining an offer: ‘I was absolutely ecstatic when I found out I had gotten an offer, it was like a dream come true that I still haven’t fully grasped as a reality’ (Aim for Oxford 2020 participant).

We are also pleased to continue our annual Women in PPE Day, which aims to encourage more women to apply to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford. The event has had an online format since the beginning of the pandemic, but that has allowed us to remove the barriers of distance and to welcome even more students who identify as women to our academic tasters and tutor and student Q&As. We are delighted that several of last year’s Women in PPE participants are now Oxford offer holders, including a student who holds an offer from Christ Church.

We have ambitious plans for the next academic year when, as well as continuing our current programmes, we hope to enhance our activities aimed specifically at women and students from ethnic minority backgrounds. We are excited to launch a programme for Black women with an interest in Computer Science, in collaboration with the Oxford Computer Science Department: year 11 students will have a chance to learn coding with our own Christ Church tutors, Prof. Yarin Gal and Dr Irwin Zaid over six months and will then be invited, together with their parents and carers, to Christ Church, for a graduation day. We are also starting a collaboration with Thinking Black, an organisation which provides interdisciplinary programmes of study, mentorship, and advice to Black students, and are hoping to continue our work with Target Oxbridge, supporting Black, mixed race and Caribbean students in making competitive applications to Oxford and Cambridge.

We are most grateful for our alumni’s support of our Access initiatives through the Open Doors programme (https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/alumnitom).
Women in the Cathedral

Canon Sarah Foot, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History

Women clergy came late to the Cathedral. The first female Canon Professor – Marilyn McCord Adams – did not arrive in Christ Church until 2004. Writing in the Annual Record for that year the editor, Ela Tandello, thought it pleasing ‘and one suspects perhaps even symbolic’ that Marilyn’s appointment coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the appointment of Professor Judy Pallot as the first woman Student. She also celebrated the fact that it fell within the term of Judy’s Censorship, since Professor Pallot had become the first female Censor.

Marilyn was the first woman, and the first American citizen, to hold the Regius Professorship of Divinity and its associated Residency Canonry. Ordained in the Episcopal Church in the USA, she had served in parishes in Los Angeles and New Haven, Connecticut. But she was not the first female canon, or the first female priest, or even the first woman to serve in the Cathedral.

That honour fell to Anne Oliver. Anne became a verger in 1986 and served as Canons’ Verger from 1990 until 1995. A stone tablet set into the floor of the South Transept commemorates her life. The Church of England first made women deacons in 1987 and, in 1992, Anne Ballard became the first female Precentor on the staff of any Cathedral when she was appointed to Christ Church. Chapter took some trouble to define her liturgical functions in the period before her priesting. As well as ‘leading matins and the litany and being Epistoler on Fridays, preaching at the Sung Eucharist when acting as Deacon or Sub Deacon’, and assisting at the 8am celebration on festivals, Anne acquired sole responsibility for all administration and preparation for funerals, weddings, and baptisms. The relevant Chapter minute notes that ‘it would be sensible to develop her role gradually’.

Marilyn Parry became the first female Canon of the Cathedral in 2001, holding that role with the post of Diocesan Director of Ordinands. The first American woman in the Cathedral, having studied at Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts before moving to the UK, Marilyn was ordained deaconess in 1979, deacon in 1987, and became (with Anne Ballard) one of the first priests ordained in England in 1994. When I joined Chapter in 2007 as Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History and a lay canon, the two Marilyns were still in post and played a prominent part in the life and worship of the Cathedral. Marilyn Adams memorably used to berate the Almighty in prayers that began with the exclamation: ‘Oh, God!’

Female clergy have lost their novelty in Christ Church. We currently have five women on Chapter (two Canons, the Precentor, the College Chaplain, and an Interim Cathedral Chaplain) and the Cathedral also has a female Licensed Lay Minister (a Reader). We look forward to our fortieth anniversary in twelve years’ time. Meanwhile, women in the Cathedral are here to stay.
Looking back at September 2019, when I arrived at Christ Church, the world now seems almost unrecognisable, our everyday experience of life and work is so altered. What a bizarre time, then, to have been attempting to embed Frideswide Voices, Christ Church’s newest choir, into the rhythms of the Cathedral and its worship. The choir was founded in 2014 as an independent organisation under the auspices of the Frideswide Foundation, to give girls the opportunity to sing Anglican liturgy of the highest standard as choristers – the first such choir in Oxford. In the first few years of its life, the Choir ‘chapel-hopped’, singing in many Oxford colleges and churches, finally settling into a pattern of one term each year at Christ Church, New College and Magdalen.

In May 2019, the Choir was adopted by Christ Church and brought into the Foundation, and now sits happily alongside the other three choirs which contribute to the Cathedral and College’s rich musical life. At this point, I was appointed to take over as Director from Will Dawes – himself an ex-Christ Church Cathedral lay clerk – who had already accomplished the Herculean task of founding a chorister team from scratch, alongside an ambitious, dedicated and supremely talented team of Trustees and staff.

The task ahead was in equal measure daunting and thrilling. Whilst the chance to lead the Cathedral’s first cohort of girl choristers was (and is) a privilege and a pleasure, there were challenges too: concerns both logistical and musical. One immediate issue was that the girls, who had up until then sung most of their services without lower voices, needed to learn a huge amount of full choir repertoire in order to match the task of singing each week with the Lay and Academical clerks. At the same time, the Frideswide Voices administrative machine needed to adapt to sit within the Cathedral and wider College framework.

Our installation service in September 2019 was a happy occasion, suffused with warmth and enthusiasm from the Cathedral community, and a sense of homecoming for the Choir’s founders, who had laboured long and hard for the cause of girls and young women in Oxford’s choral landscape. We were all moved by Canon Foot’s opening reminder that the girls were not new arrivals, but rather that they were returning to a site founded in order for women to sing the praise of God – long before the College, Cathedral or boys’ choir came into being. The girls themselves were rightly proud of their part in the history of Christ Church, but also – I think – bemused at the level of celebration. It is hard for them to comprehend that their forebears (and indeed, many of the women involved in the formation of the Choir) were excluded from similar opportunities as children, since their lives are largely untouched by gender inequality and latent sexism. Long may that continue.
I began my career at Oxford University with many ‘first-female’ roles, commencing with that of Assistant Bursar at St Edmund Hall, followed by Manciple at All Souls College, Domestic Bursar at Wadham College, before becoming the first female Steward of Christ Church.

Throughout my career I have encouraged, empowered and mentored many women into middle and senior management roles. I am pleased to say that this has continued at Christ Church. When I arrived at the House ten years ago, there were just two female senior managers. The situation is now reversed with nine female and two male senior managers. I am extremely fortunate to have a wonderful team of staff – both men and women – to assist me in the execution of my duties as Steward. The role has a wide-ranging portfolio and includes all aspects of the non-academic side of college life. First and foremost, the role requires one to be adept at spinning plates and having a clear overview, at all times, of what each of the satrapies within my department are doing! I work collaboratively with senior managers to agree and set strategies for each area whether that is in catering; bars; housekeeping; accommodation and the upkeep of the internal fabric; security; conferencing, visitor services or the shop. I maintain an open-door policy and always try to be available to mentor and advise staff as the need arises. I am a great believer in dealing with problems head on, as and when they arise, and I enjoy problem solving.

In addition, I am responsible for my own department’s HR which I do with the invaluable support of Bridget Guiste. We currently have a departmental staff consisting of 110 females and 77 males which includes a number of casual and seasonal staff. There is, of course, lots of administration, paperwork and emails, budgeting and the all-important financial side, as well as numerous committees – and I am particularly grateful for the support of the Manciple, Jackie Billington, and my Assistant, Jackie Folliard. I am active in the wider collegiate University and sit on the Domestic Bursar’s Executive Committee and a number of related sub-committees. I am also Senior Member and Treasurer of the Boat Club which provides me with some very enjoyable interaction with our Junior Member rowers.

I would like to introduce you to some of the key women within my department, and, at the same time, acknowledge and pay tribute to all members of my department – male and female – who do an amazing job on a day to day basis. I am very proud of all of them! It really is a team effort and there is never a dull moment, which is just the way we like it!
Bridget Guiste – HR Assistant & Training Coordinator
I report directly to the Steward and am primarily responsible for the comprehensive day-to-day administration of HR related activities for the department (c.140 permanent staff & 40 casual workers). This covers all aspects of the employee life cycle – from recruitment to marking staff milestones for long service – as well as the coordination of staff training for the department.

Jacqueline Folliard – Steward’s Assistant and Accommodation Officer
As the Steward’s Assistant and Accommodation Officer, my role is twofold. In the former, I assist the Steward with committees, taking minutes at various meetings, including the Sustainability Sub-Committee and the Health & Safety Sub-committee, chaired by the Steward, and the House Committee. I administer termly H&S audits and book High Table meals for alumni. I send out the invitations for the 101 Gaudy and assist the Steward with seating plans for special events. I chair the Staff Entertainment Committee and with the help of my colleagues arrange staff events.

As Accommodation Officer, I am responsible for allocating student rooms on a database and work with the JCR on the annual room ballot. I liaise with Junior Members on vacation residence and general accommodation queries, and work closely with the academic office on vacation residence requests and grants.

Jacqueline Billington – Manciple and the Accounts team
As Manciple, I prepare the annual budgets and five-year-plan for the Steward which are consolidated with the Treasury accounts. I am responsible for the monthly and year-end accounts for the Steward and liaise with the auditors. With my team of five, four of whom are female, I oversee the meal booking system, fees, battels, the Steward’s payroll, purchase and sales ledgers. I love my role and have a great team – it’s just a lovely place to work.

Haley Wiggins – Conference and Events Manager and her team
As Conference and Events Manager, I manage a team of three staff: Emma Timms (currently on maternity leave), Petra Varga and Rut Ferova. During term we arrange numerous events for Junior and Senior Members and, in the vacations, we arrange conferences, summer schools, banquets, alumni events, and run a bed and breakfast booking system. We all work conscientiously and collaboratively with the other members of the Steward’s department to ensure our members and guests have an enjoyable experience.

Karen King – Liddell Manager and her team
My role is to manage the Liddell accommodation annexe on the Iffley Road which is shared with Corpus Christi College. The complex consists of 133 rooms, 69 of which are occupied by Christ Church students. The site includes a porters’ lodge, two common rooms and gardens. I am
Izabel da Silva Santos Cromack – Food Services Assistant
I have been at Christ Church for three years. My role is to prepare and cook breakfasts, and to assist the chefs in their daily food preparation. In addition, I oversee the lunchtime food service for staff.

Pla Nutchanat Pinyachote and Jenny Narramore – Assistant Hall Managers
As Assistant Hall Managers, we work with – and supervise – a team of Hall staff to ensure excellent standards of service for Junior and Senior Members, as well as our many conference guests. We liaise closely with our colleagues in the kitchen and Conference and Events Office to ensure that events run smoothly. We train and develop staff, liaise with Junior Members regarding dietary requirements, and order and manage stock.

Patsy Brennen – Hall Assistant
My role in the Hall at Christ Church is to oversee and run the wash-up process. I also have considerable experience working in all aspects of the Hall catering operation having worked at the college for nine years. My role in the wash-up is a hard one, physically and mentally, but over the years I have stream-lined the process so that it runs smoothly and efficiently. Although the hours can be somewhat erratic, as well as physically demanding, I thoroughly enjoy my work at the House and hope to continue my role until my retirement – and perhaps beyond!
In our roles as Hall Assistants we serve food, provide cleaning and operate the tills. More recently, we have worked in the temporary Longhorn café where it’s been great to meet new people and learn new skills. We love the collegiate atmosphere, our colleagues and the old buildings. It’s a magnificent place to work, and great to be part of a group of hard-working women!

Ann Barrett – SCR Manager and her team
As the first female SCR Manager, my main role is to ensure the Senior Common Room runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. My duties are wide-ranging within the Senior Common Room – the most important one is to ensure that the coffee machine is fully operational, and that SCR members have their favourite biscuits readily available! I oversee, with the support of my team of four (three of whom are women), a variety of events – providing high standards of food and drink service for meetings, lunches, afternoon teas, High Table dinner, degree days as well as for private events, including christenings, drinks receptions and fine dining. I am also responsible for the SCR silver which is displayed on special occasions. I maintain the SCR wine cellar and account for routine stocktaking, correct storage of wines, Senior Members’ battels charges, and I have been known to purchase unique whiskies for after-dinner consumption.

Emily Robotham – Buttery & Wine Cellar Manager & SCR Wine Advisor (left)
My role at Christ Church as the first female Buttery and Wine Cellar Manager is curating and managing the House wine cellars. I also manage the Buttery and Undercroft bars and write a regular wine blog for the Development Office. My role includes attendance at wine tastings and advising the Steward and SCR on the purchase of wines and spirits. I also recommend wines for special events.

Camilla Mirto – House Manager and her team
I have been the House Manager for three years having been promoted from Assistant Hall Manager (a post I occupied for the previous twelve years). My role within the Steward’s department is primarily to oversee the housekeeping operation with the help of Deputy House Manager, Karen Fisk and Housekeeping Assistants, Sophie Durham and Carol Gibbs. Our department looks after some 500 rooms and we have five senior supervisors, 36 scouts and a part-time seamstress. In all we are currently 38 females and six males.

Our roles vary from day to day, but our shared duties include: ensuring compliance with health and safety, reporting defects, staff training and performance management including appraisals, reviews and room inspections to ensure standards are being met, the production of staff rosters and the ordering of housekeeping supplies. In vacations we prepare and service rooms for our conference guests.
**Amanda Roche – Lodge Manager and her team**
I have been Lodge Manager for four years and, prior to that, I was Deputy Hall Manager for ten years. As Lodge Manager I lead a team of ten porters of whom three are female. My focus is on customer service – about which I am passionate – and I am always thinking of ways to improve what we do. My team and I cover a wide range of tasks including reception duties, sorting post, telephone and emails, and security. I also assist the welfare team with student welfare, and ensure that Junior Members adhere to Blue Book rules in relation to good behaviour (reporting any contraventions to the Junior Censor). We also oversee student Bops! No two days are the same, but we wouldn’t have it any other way!

**Helen Camunas-Lopez – Visitor Manager and her team**
As the first female Visitor Manager I manage the team of bowler-hatted custodians in Christ Church. We are currently a team of 24: eleven men and thirteen women. I am responsible for gate security and overseeing the day to day visitor business at the College. A key part of my role is having an overview and understanding of everything that is happening on site so that I can balance the visitor experience around the day to day life of the College and Cathedral. Through the delivery of projects such as our multimedia guides, virtual tours, in-person tours, talks and events, my team and I aim to ensure that everyone who visits Christ Church has an enriching and enjoyable time.

**Elena Conway – Shop Manager**
My role is largely focused around the day-to-day running of the shop: purchasing of the stock; finding new products and designing bespoke products for sale. I am also responsible for the online shop, which was set-up during the first lockdown. I have recently worked with the catering and visitor services teams to set up the temporary Longhorn café, and with the Buttery Manager to sell wine and spirits to alumni and the public.

“It really is a team effort and there is never a dull moment, which is just the way we like it!”
The past year has been one of great upheaval, but it has also seen significant achievements for the Library. The Covid-19 pandemic has underscored the Library’s position as fundamental to the student experience, and as an essential service in supporting scholarly endeavour. The demand from returning students for access to the Library demonstrated the value and popularity of the library as a place to read, study, write and think. The working library staff, Rachel Pilgrim (Reader Services Librarian), Georgiana Datcu (Senior Library Assistant) and Chess Law (Graduate Trainee) worked tirelessly to open up safe and welcoming study spaces in the West Library, Upper Library and the Burn Law Library. I would like to express my thanks to all my library colleagues for their continued professionalism and collegiality.

We took all possible steps to ensure that students had access to the books and resources needed as quickly as possible. Demand for physical copies of books remained high, as many scholarly works are only available in print form. Several hundred new books were purchased and sent directly to students and we offered a collection service for members in Oxford. Along with a number of other colleges, Christ Church was able to fund new electronic book titles or more generous licences to existing online material.

Cristina Neagu (Keeper of Special Collections) and her colleagues in special collections have continued to make Christ Church’s historic collections accessible through digitisation and cataloguing. Recently digitised items now freely available on Digital Bodleian include a 12th century Greek Psalter, an edition of the Hagiographa in Hebrew and Aramaic, printed in 1487 and Lant’s Roll, a remarkable commemoration of the funeral of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586).

David Stumpp (Antiquarian Cataloguer) has been working from home cataloguing the pamphlets originally from the library of John Burgon (1813-1888), Dean of Chichester and Biblical scholar. Once catalogued, the collection will be of interest to researchers of church history and the Oxford Movement.
The second phase of the project to catalogue and promote Christ Church’s collection of Hebrew manuscripts and early printed books is progressing well. Over 300 items have been catalogued in this phase which is most generously supported by the Polonksy Foundation, the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe and many alumni. Rahel Fronda (Hebrew Antiquarian Cataloguer) has also been selecting unique and very rare material for digitisation and researching the collections.

We are thrilled to have lent items from Christ Church Library to two major exhibitions: material from the Lewis Carroll collection is now on display at the Victoria & Albert Museum’s ‘Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser’ exhibition and the red Cardinal’s hat or galero traditionally said to have belonged to Cardinal Wolsey is currently on display at ‘Gold and Glory: Henry VIII and the French King’ at Hampton Court Palace, celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

I joined Christ Church as College Librarian in January from the University of St Andrews where I had held the post of Assistant Director of Library Services and Head of Special Collections. It is a real honour to have been appointed as College Librarian. My priority is to make sure that the College Library continues to satisfy all the expectations of its users. I would also like to find new ways of embedding the use of Christ Church’s special collections in teaching and research, to seek out and encourage new users of its collections, and to find new ways to engage people with the Library.

“We are thrilled to have lent items from Christ Church Library to two major exhibitions: ‘Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser’ at the V&A and ‘Gold and Glory: Henry VIII and the French King’ at Hampton Court Palace.”
Who’s heard of...
Marianne Ursula d’Hervart, Catherine Elizabeth Landor and Ellen Landor Duke? No one, sadly.

Jacqueline Thalmann, Curator of the Picture Gallery

The art collections bequeathed and gifted to Christ Church are associated with and named after their male collectors, but the existence of at least two of them depend to a great extent on women. In the one case financially and in the other idealistically. We know little about these women – that’s almost the nature of the problem – but it should not stop us from becoming familiar with their names and recognising their roles in creating the Christ Church art collection.

In 1897 Miss C. E. Landor and Miss Ellen Landor Duke presented 26 early Italian paintings, including the exquisite Calvary by Giovanni di Paolo and the nine fragments of The Life of the Hermits to Christ Church. They had inherited the works from their great uncle, the poet Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864).

When that collection is discussed it is to look at the unusual collecting habits of Walter Savage Landor, which are indeed
an interesting topic, but the question why his nieces presented this gift to Christ Church has never been posed. Walter himself did not consider bequeathing his art to an institution. Nevertheless, a large group of his paintings – passed down the female line of the family – ended up on public display in Christ Church Picture Gallery.

The Landors had no connections to Christ Church. Walter had been at Trinity in Oxford (matriculated in 1792) and other male members of the Landor family usually chose Worcester as their college. By the time of the gift, in 1897, art museums had become more widespread in Britain and Catherine Elizabeth Landor and Ellen Landor Duke could have chosen newer and more rapidly expanding galleries. The National Gallery had established itself as the nation’s art museum and if they had wished for the paintings to be in Oxford, the Ashmolean had also begun to collect and display art in their new premises in Beaumont Street.

“The Picture Gallery’s reputation and Christ Church’s commitment to art and its inclusion in the academic teaching were certainly major factors for Catherine’s and Ellen’s gift.”

Above: Late 15th Century Tuscan, Fragment of a Thebaid panel with The Life of the Hermits.
However, they chose Christ Church and its Picture Gallery. Their exact motives for doing so are not known, but donating the works to Christ Church was a deliberate choice. They had approached the college with the offer. Catherine and Ellen must have visited the Picture Gallery before 1897 and must have seen its already impressive collection of early Italian paintings – among them the first two Botticellis in Britain. They must have also been aware that early Italian paintings were still far from mainstream and they might have felt that Christ Church’s pioneering attitude towards that group of paintings would provide the ideal setting – a recognition that would have also appealed to their great uncle’s idiosyncratic and original taste. After all, a gift of 37 Tuscan paintings by William Thomas Horner Fox-Strangways (1795-1865) – including those Botticellis – had already been on display.

The Picture Gallery’s reputation and Christ Church’s commitment to art and its inclusion in the academic teaching (a belief that Landor shared) were certainly major factors for Catherine’s and Ellen’s gift.

That an outstanding collection of fine art was part of the Oxford experience and education had become possible through the foresight of General John Guise, whose pioneering bequest to Christ Church of around 200 paintings and 2000 drawings lay the foundation to the Picture Gallery, and to easy access to high-quality fine art in Oxford. This is where Marianne Ursula d’Hervart enters the scene.

At the age of 41 John Guise made a highly advantageous marriage to the almost twenty years younger Marianne Ursula d’Hervart. Guise’s financial situation in life was not brilliant; as the orphaned son of an Oxford scholar he had to find a subsidiary profession as an adult, which he did in the army. His personal pecuniary position was not one that allowed him to indulge in collecting art on a large scale. However, his marriage changed that dramatically. Evidence of this can be found in two sheets from his collection. A drawing in a letter which was sent to him before his marriage, was addressed to him “at his Lodgings an Indian Shop on ye Pavd Stones on St Martens Lane” in London. Some twelve years later, in 1734, he had left his rooms above a shop behind and drew up grand plans for an 87-feet town house, as a design for it shows (below).

To show that Marianne Ursula d’Hervart’s money enabled her husband to pursue his hobby, one has to poke into some legal documents, which reveal unexpected familial turbulences.

Marianne came from a prominent Huguenot family. Her father Philibert d’Hervart, Baron von Hüningen, was a diplomat and governor of the French Huguenot Hospital.
His death in 1721 had left her with a substantial inheritance, a fortune that almost doubled after she also inherited part of her Swiss mother, Jedide Aube von Graffenried’s, estate. The difference in John’s and Marianne’s financial status might also explain her marriage contract, which Guise signed on the 22nd October 1723, one day before their wedding. Simplified, it states that her money, should she die before him and without issue, will have to be returned to her family.

Marianne died in 1749, sixteen years before her husband. On her deathbed she made a will in which she leaves almost everything to her last surviving son, William, once he has come of age. She doesn’t leave anything to John, her husband. In fact, she insists twice in her will that her marriage contract must be honoured and that it is her family, the d’Hervarts, who are in charge of her fortune.

William died less than two years after her in 1751 at the age of 22, having just come of age. At this point the money would probably still have gone to the d’Hervarts, but a drama worthy of a scene from a Richardson novel ensues. It starts innocently with Maximilian d’Hervart, Marianne’s brother, offering Guise a part of his sister’s estate, an idea to which Guise seems amenable. However, some days later he produces a document, which he says is a draft of his son’s will, in which almost the whole estate is left to him. The authenticity of the will is questionable and leads to a court case, but witnesses, all of them beneficiaries mentioned in the will, convince the judge otherwise and Guise inherits around £7,000 of Marianne d’Hervart’s money, with smaller sums of £50 and £60 going to the witnesses. (To give some context, at the time 83% of families had an annual income of less than £50.)

It is most likely that this windfall allowed Guise’s collecting habit to flourish in the 1750s and we know that he added substantially to the collection in his later years. By the end of his life he had accumulated a collection that he himself valued at over £2,500. While Marianne might not have been interested in the collection and in her husband’s hobby, it is evident that her fortune was used at least partially in funding it.

This does not diminish General John Guise’s extraordinary bequest and his pioneering vision for an art collection to be used in the Oxford education as well as making it accessible to a wider public, but we should also acknowledge where his means came from. We might even want to consider calling the collection the Guise-d’Hervart collection.

This year, as we celebrate forty years of women at the House, I can’t help but feel incredibly lucky to serve as Women’s Captain of Christ Church Boat Club. My mother (Tracy Betteridge, 1984) was the first female coxswain of the Men’s 1st VIII, and my sister (Laura Betteridge, 2015) Women’s Captain in 2017 – so this celebration is perhaps more meaningful to me than most. Yet, as someone who has heard stories about rowing at Christ Church for as long as I can remember, I was a little apprehensive when I arrived at the House. I showed up to my first few sessions at Christ Church Boat Club as a novice rower, full of the uneasiness that one typically associates with the phrase “don’t meet your heroes”. It’s safe to say, however, that I have not looked back since.

Over the last four decades, the women’s squad has gone from strength to strength, and this year has certainly been no exception. Having recruited an excess of sixty women’s novices in Michaelmas, and with another twenty seniors returning for another season, the Novice Captains and myself have worked with one of the largest women’s squads the House has seen in recent years. Many of the staples of the Oxford rowing experience have been new to our 2020 recruits, and as a 2019 novice, they have been firsts for me also. Trinity Term training, Summer Eights, and perhaps most importantly, opening my curtains to daylight ahead of a morning outing have more than lived up to expectations. I’m almost coming round to the 05:30am alarms, though I’m still waiting for the day when dragging myself out of bed isn’t a challenge!

This potential hasn’t been left undelivered. Our crews have remained committed to training and competing in one of the most challenging, and dare I say unprecedented, years for the club. During the lockdown our outstanding coaching team offered virtual training sessions while we waited for our return to the water, and our new base at Sandford Lock has proved to be invaluable during the reopening of the club. We have been able to tap into the wealth of talent hidden within our lower boats, some of which are hot on the heels of other college first VIIIs, let alone their counterparts. Summer Eights will certainly be unique this year, but I’m more than confident that all of our boats will do the House proud.

I’ve always felt right at home at Christ Church Boat Club, owing perhaps to my mother’s insistence that I should never place a ceiling on my ambitions. This is something I have seen reflected in the determination of the Club from my very first days as Captain: we’ve planned and prepared for bumps and blades across both of our squads since the beginning of the season, and fully intend to deliver on these ambitions come racing in 7th Week. I attended my first Summer Eights in 2016, witnessed...
the Men’s 1st VIII win Headship in 2017, and have dreamt ever since of the day I might be able to represent the House in the Oxford tradition my family prizes above all others. Perhaps the longevity of my drive to partake in Oxford bumps is unusual, but it is more than matched by the dedication, determination, and pride of the club around me. Though spectators aren’t permitted to attend this year’s regatta, you are safe in the knowledge that we will be competing not only for bumps and blades, but also for our friends and alumni at the House.

Summer Eights will certainly be unique this year, but I’m more than confident that all of our boats will do the House proud.”

A Christ Church Women’s VIII qualified for Henley Women’s Regatta 2021. Despite some last minute crew changes caused by Covid, the combination of the 1st and 2nd boats from Summer Torpids qualified 12th, and first out of the Oxford colleges that entered. They lost to Newcastle University on the Saturday. We believe this is the first Christ Church women’s boat to qualify for Henley Women’s Regatta, a fitting landmark in this special year.
‘She’ll Do’

Professor Judith Pallot (1979),
Emeritus Student in Geography

My first encounter with Christ Church was when I was called for interview for a post in the historical geography of Russia and the USSR. It was January of 1979 and, bearing in mind that this was long before the advent of personal computers, I had difficulty finding out much about the college. I was in a permanent post in Leeds University at the time and all I was able to discover was that fourteen British prime ministers and a clutch of Viceroy of India had been educated there, and that the college had only recently changed its statutes to admit women. The interview was preceded the evening before by ‘trial by high table’. I cannot remember what questions I was asked the following day, but the encounter with the interview committee left a powerful impression that has remained with me ever since.

I remember thinking that the seven men in suits and gowns lined up on the opposite side of the table resembled a row of crows on a telephone wire, looking down at me somewhat quizzically. I assume end of term collections have left a similar impression on many of you reading this.

I cannot really understand why I was offered the post. True, the job description required an extremely specialised skill set, which I had: a good knowledge of Russian, first-hand research experience in the USSR (I had spent a year-and-half at Moscow university on a British Council exchange), sufficient knowledge to deliver thirty-six hours of lectures on the USSR for the university, a first-class degree (rare back in the 1970s) from a respectable red brick university, a University of London doctorate, and a wealth of varied teaching and lecturing experience. It may well have helped with some Governing Body (GB) members that I was a woman, but I learned soon after I arrived to take up my Official Studentship that my apportionment had been controversial, contested and involved a lot of traffic back-and-forth between faculty and college. Twenty-five years later, when we had a wonderful weekend celebrating the arrival of women at Christ Church, I needed to consult the archives from the late 1970s to check on the debates surrounding the decision to admit women for use in my after-dinner speech. The archivist gave me the GB minute on my appointment along with the other materials. I learned that I was not GB’s first choice, but that the assembled dons agreed that I ‘would do’. Well, that was a relief!

I remember thinking that the seven men in suits and gowns lined up on the opposite side of the table resembled a row of crows on a telephone wire...

In fact, I was always aware that I had not been the preferred candidate, but it did not cause me dismay. University in the late 1970s was still the preserve of fewer than ten per cent of school leavers in the country. The number of women making it to higher education was a smaller minority still. The odds were stacked against women landing prestigious jobs, let alone making it through the glass ceiling to the top. Those who succeeded had to be strong, resilient, and know how to pick their fights. My appointment coincided with Mrs Thatcher’s first term as prime minister and her message that the way to the top was by doing what men do, only better, was internalised by most women I knew. The women who came up to Christ Church the year after I had taken my place on governing body, appeared to me to be suitably strong and imbued with fighting spirit. I judged it best to leave them to get on with making a place for themselves in college. I was a feminist but thought I would make little headway campaigning for change in Christ Church because it would eventually catch up with the rest of the world anyway. I put my energies, instead, into an intercollegiate group that formed at that time of women tutors who, like me, were ‘single women’ in what were still called the men’s colleges. We managed to get the University to appoint a
women’s (now diversity) officer, to include a harassment code in the grey book, set up the university harassment committee which I chaired for a while, and to finance a series of women studies seminars. In retrospect, I deeply regret that I did not do more to push in those early days for the adjustments that were needed to make women feel as much a part of Christ Church, and legitimate heirs to its rich history, as their male counterparts. This did, indeed, happen in course of time, but there were some casualties on the way that could have been avoided if we had put safety nets in place and given some thought to the specific needs of women Junior Members, sooner.

For much of the 1980s, I was in a state of wondering when the curtains would come down and I could get on with real life. But there is nothing like the need to survive, to maintain focus on the important job at hand. That, for me, included preparing tutorials for the twelve undergraduates who came with the job, raising geography’s profile in the college, writing, and revising my thirty-six lectures and learning the folkways of the ‘House’. I quickly picked up the dos and don’ts of passing the port, that I should never call a student with a small “s” a student, and when to wear and not wear the gown. I taught myself to overlook the minor irritations of daily life, like being addressed in memos from the Senior History Tutor by the third-person singular male pronoun, being referred to as a Norn by the Regius Professor of Greek, being told that the dress I was wearing made me look like Joan Sutherland, and being split up from sitting next to a woman guest who might be dining at high table or taking desert because ‘women should not sit together’. And I made a point of smiling demurely when the wife of a colleague at the termly “Ladies Night” (when colleagues’ wives were invited to dine at High Table), insisted that it was wrong that I could dine at high table every night because my presence changed it from an academic to a social occasion. Little did she know what a group of gossips the live-in dons were. There were times when I found it more difficult to turn a blind eye. One such occasion was when the college was asked by the FCO to host an afternoon visit by Mikhail Gorbachev in the UK shortly before he became Soviet President. The college set up a committee of dons to plan the afternoon, to which I was not invited although I knew quite a bit about the USSR. The committee assigned me the task of taking ‘Mrs Gorbachev’, who was accompanying her husband, to ‘powder her nose’ if the need arose. In the event, the visit did not take place and so I missed the opportunity that my colleagues had set up for me to miss the opportunity to speak to the future President of the USSR.

I cannot say that I rose rapidly through the ranks, but I made steady progress especially once having a woman on a committee became mandatory. I recall fondly my first college job as the Senior Member responsible for liaising with the
college seamstress. I believe this post was set up especially for me because I never discovered who my predecessor or successor had been. The seamstress, who was tasked with repairing sheets and sewing on the young gentlemen’s shirt buttons, was a woman of rather large dimensions who inhabited a small room up the narrow winding stone staircase, accessed from the Tom Tower entrance. I was curious about how she ascended and descended the stairs and came to think of her as a latter-day Rapunzel. I was soon moved to higher office and lost touch with the seamstress, so I do not know her fate. I hope that she is not still there. Having done my stint as High Table menu planner, I graduated to be Senior member in charge of the Boat Club despite the objection of one Senior Tutor that the appointment of a woman would ‘not be understood by old members’. I am proud of my achievement as Boat Club Senior member of persuading GB to buy the women’s eight their own boat, rather than fobbing them off with a decommissioned men’s shell. I eventually did time on all the Governing Body committees, was Tutor for graduates for a period and, eventually, was trusted with the censorship. All the while, I was getting on with my teaching and research, the latter supported by generous sabbatical leaves and grants from Governing Body. And Governing Body continues to support my research, now on the management of diversity in the Russian prison system, even though I have relocated to the University of Helsinki. I retain an active involvement in Christ Church as censor for degrees.

I am delighted that we are celebrating forty years of women at Christ Church. The fact of women at Christ Church is no longer a topic that excites comment, but this should not be allowed to detract from the importance of remembering how momentous the arrival of the first cohort of women Junior Members was in the history of the college. Never should this be downplayed. The college was changed fundamentally, and for the better, at that moment. At the same time, the admission of women finally to what was one of the bastions of upper-class white male privilege is proof of the broader gains to be got by the advancement of education for all sections of society. All we need to do is look at the contributions the women who have become members of the House have gone on to make to a diverse range of professions and callings. I personally am immensely grateful that I was able to play a small part in the revolution that changed Christ Church forty years ago.

“All we need to do is look at the contributions the women who have become members of the House have gone on to make to a diverse range of professions and callings.”

44. The report of the Research Lectureships Committee was approved as typed, circulated and attached herein.

It was agreed to advertise two Senior Scholarships in 1979.

45. The report of the Committee on the Teaching of Geography as typed, circulated and attached hereto was amended by the addition of the words ‘and subject to her election to’ after ‘in conjunction with’, and by the substitution of the words ‘Lectureship in the Geography of the U.S.A. R.’ for the words ‘Lectureship in Geography’.

The Censor explained that, though the person concerned was not the candidate the House’s Committee had preferred, she was the best joint appointment that could be negotiated and was entirely acceptable as an Official Student. A debate followed, concluded by a vote in which 24 voted for and 14 against the Committee’s recommendation.

Mr. Stuart suggested that it should now be considered whether to raise the salary-scale of C.U.F. lecturers between the ages of 24 and 42 to equal that of University lecturers. The matter was referred to the Salaries Board.

46. There was no report of the Library Committee.

17. It was agreed to lend Strozzi, Judith with the head of Holofernes to the National Gallery’s exhibition of North Italian Painting from 5 September to 30 November 1979.
“In the Senior Common Room, along with enriching sociability I experienced some hostile questions and studious disregard. The handful of women in the common room learned to choose their seats carefully amongst what seemed like a sea of men.”

postgraduate ‘fellow’. On the other I was responsible to the Curator and Pictures Committee of the Governing Body for the security, practical care and public interpretation of the works of art housed in an elegant but emphatically impractical building.

No wonder my experience was mixed. At my job interview, in addition to a discussion of my PhD project, I was surprised by questions about whether I had the necessary physical strength and hands-on skills to be a curator. I was given a spacious flat at the entrance to The Meadow Building, which had the luxury of a basement kitchen. I wondered who had previously occupied it. Walking to work, I passed through the grand clerical domesticity of Tom Quad and noticed graffiti that read ‘A woman’s place is in the home and not in the House.’ In my everyday work I learned how to get things done without formal power and appreciated the generosity of the invisible people on whom the college depended.

In the Senior Common Room, along with enriching sociability, I experienced some hostile questions and studious disregard. The handful of women in the common room learned to choose their seats carefully amongst what seemed like a sea of men. The economist Wendy Carlin and classicist Nicola Mackie were allies – I remember our exchanges of sympathetic glances and some anecdotes – but there was no explicit solidarity between these ‘senior women’, let alone with the women undergraduates or women working elsewhere in the college. My academic colleagues and I were beneficiaries of the achievements of the second wave of feminism in the 1970s but my own experience at Christ Church was of personal triumphs and disasters in relation to institutional hierarchy and class distinctions, rather than gender. In retrospect, this belief in the possibility of discounting gender seems naively individualistic in a way characteristic of the 1980s. We were not ‘feminists’ but simply trying to survive and achieve. Yet change – even if still partial and incomplete – can also happen through the sheer presence of and encounter with difference.

Unfinished business

Dr Joanna Woodall (1982), Former Assistant Curator of the Picture Gallery

A recent exhibition at the British Library traces the huge variety of individual and collective contributions to the expansion of women’s rights, roles and expectations since 1920. The exhibition explores the intersections between gender, social and racial inequalities and is entitled ‘Unfinished Business.’

One of the shocks of getting older is recognising personal experiences and memories as fragments of an historical development, such as the admission of women to Christ Church. More precisely, this means the admission of women Students, tutors, researchers and undergraduates alongside the women already employed in domestic, administrative and other roles. My position as Assistant Curator of the Picture Gallery between 1982 and 1985 spanned the boundary between these visible and invisible women. On one hand I was a member of the Senior Common Room and was working on my doctorate in art history, like a
When I look back on my time at Christ Church, I see – like many people – an intense and slightly hazy whirlwind of discoveries, friendships, mentors, essays, parties, opportunities, ideas, information, missed breakfasts, exhaustion. So far, so normal. What was unusual about my experience was that so many of these elements revolved around the Cathedral, more than around the College, because there I held the role of Organ Scholar. It is an unusual post, in many ways: on the one hand it has elements of an apprenticeship, learning from the professionals you’re working alongside, yet at the same time an organ scholar expects themself to be working at a professional level. Wrong notes or lateness or haphazard preparation are simply not an option.

In my time at Christ Church, the Cathedral Choir sang eight services a week: I had to be in attendance at pretty much all of these, and played the organ for an increasing proportion of them during my three years. By my last year I was covering for substantial periods for the professionals, who had sabbaticals and overseas performing commitments: I would take 8am chorister rehearsals, write school reports, conduct the choir for Evensong, contribute to the planning of the choir’s activities. It was every bit as much a time commitment as my degree.

I remember being determined that the role wouldn’t prevent me from having a social life, so was often to be found practising at midnight, after an evening in the pub, and before writing an essay in the small hours. Sleep didn’t feature a great deal, I think.

We also had a regular carousel of other commitments – live broadcasts on Radio 3, CD recordings, international tours (New Zealand and America in my time), concerts in London, etc. These are all such an accepted part of any Cathedral Choir’s routine that we were relatively blasé about it all: it’s only with the distance of time that it strikes me both what a privilege and what a demand these things were!

But it’s the daily rhythm of a Cathedral’s musical life that is its essence. My nostalgia for this time is much more rooted in weekday Evensongs, light streaming through a window, than in the special events. As humans we are inherently cyclical. We respond, fundamentally, to the seasons and the days. Cathedral liturgy taps into the same things – Cranmer’s deeply evocative words, repeated day after day, for centuries, by different generations of people looking at the very same windows and arches, reflecting on life experiences that are so different, yet so much the same.

A distinctive element of my own experience in the cathedral was that I was the first woman appointed to the role of organ scholar – at Christ Church, or any of the other all-male Oxbridge choral foundations (New, Magdalen, King’s, St John’s). There had been a goodly trickle of female organ scholars at colleges whose choirs comprised mixed undergraduate voices, and many of those women are distinguished in the music world. But the particular sphere of male choral music was a tough nut to crack.

People often ask me how I found that, being the first woman, and the answer is: it was pretty straightforward. I just mucked in as ‘one of the guys’. I did a good job musically, and could hold my own in the pub – the two essential criteria (not necessarily in that order) for acceptance amongst a group of singers who were notoriously dedicated on both counts.

More recently, I’ve wondered whether I should have used my position then to influence the music world in the way other more vocal, more recent young women have done. At the time I felt the way to do it was to blend in, do a good job, not draw attention to the fact I was a woman. Perhaps that was partly my character, though I think many other women...
Choir schools historically were set up to provide a good education to poor children. And at the undergraduate level too, it is so much about learning and experience. How right, then, that girls are gradually getting equality of opportunity as choristers (including at Christ Church), how right that women can now sing alto here. How right that Anna Lapwood champions #PlayLikeAGirl on social media – how right that we no longer need to pretend to be men to succeed.

These days, playing the organ is only an occasional part of my life: I went on to specialise in piano playing, and continued my studies at the Royal Academy of Music. Much of my work now is collaborative – as a song pianist and chamber musician, and as a vocal coach. I’m fortunate to work with some of the country’s finest musicians in recital. I direct the New Paths festival, which I jointly founded, and am co-director with Martin Roscoe of the Beverley Chamber Music Festival. I was Head of Keyboard at Eton, and give outreach workshops to children from inner city schools for Steinway Hall.

So much of that range of expertise and interest stems from my time in the cathedral – particularly my love of working with voices, but also my educational focus, my work ethic, the standards I hold myself and others to, and, yes, often, still, my nocturnal hours. The organ scholar training sounds like something esoteric and perplexingly specialised – and yet its skills are skills for life. Thank you to those who gave me that chance.

I am so thrilled to see that since then things have continued to develop. Cathedral music is not just about worship or profession, but has always been fundamentally pedagogical.

found the same solution in many other fields. And, credit where it’s due, the team at the time made it very easy for me to just get on with it: Stephen Darlington, then Director of Music, as well as being a truly first-rate musician, is one of the kindest of people and most down-to-earth of cathedral musicians – a sometimes awkward or rarefied breed.

Top left: Libby performing at a recital in the Cathedral.
Left: Performance with violinist Fenella Humphreys on board the Cutty Sark in Greenwich.
I wanted to go to Christ Church because my father had been there. This vague ambition gained extra impetus when he died suddenly in 1978. When I found out I’d be among the House’s first women undergraduates, my down-to-earth Scottish mother kindly eased any burden of expectation I felt. She stressed that I should view this principally as offering the chance to make the friends I’d keep for life.

On this front, Christ Church delivered in spades. As I look back, it is the memories of my Christ Church friends no longer with us that are the most vivid. I’m thinking here of Annabel Freyberg, Alastair Gilchrist-Fisher and Tim Wilkinson. I miss you and I always will.

My Christ Church friends certainly shaped the future direction of my life. So too did my exceptional tutors: Richard Hamer, Christopher Butler and Peter Conrad. I know how good their teaching was: I had a term taught elsewhere when Peter Conrad took a sabbatical and I was miserable as sin.
Alongside the English high command, the two most important men in my Christ Church life were probably my long-suffering scouts Charlie and Jack. I remember their kindness, patience and forbearance with great fondness.

**Remembering Annabel Freyberg (1961-2013)**

by Isobel Walder

I first met Annabel shortly before we were about to compete with each other to become among the first women to read English at Christ Church in 1980. Unsurprisingly, our meeting was a bit frosty. Luckily, we both made it through, with Annabel winning a scholarship. We celebrated with our first trip to one of London’s newer restaurants (McDonald’s). From then on we were more or less joined at the hip. I have few memories of the House that don’t include her.

Annabel always cut an arresting figure. She was tall, gravely beautiful and had a distinctive ‘look’; she was an enthusiastic customer when theatrical costumier Charles Fox sold up in the early 1980s. She also enjoyed a quicksilver intelligence and originality of mind, as well as huge charm and great warmth. She had a tremendous gift for friendship and a rarer ability to draw people together. With great deftness of touch, she helped the wide and varied circle that flocked to her rooms in Blue Boar, Canterbury and Tom Quad forge lasting friendships. She changed my life by introducing me to many of the people who remain my closest friends; my experience was far from unique.

Annabel’s milieu was as idiosyncratic as her dress sense. Her rooms were decorated with hundreds of postcards and crammed with eclectic books, kitschy records and flamboyant dresses, bandannas and dressing gowns (which she wore as coats even in the coldest Oxford winters). Annabel’s many extra-curricular interests (in particular, she was a keen and talented actor) and busy social life sometimes threatened to interrupt her studies. But her easy charm masked an inner steely determination. Her finals papers were illustrated with delightful drawings that only added to the superiority of their content. She was viva-ed for a First.

“Annabel always cut an arresting figure. She was tall, gravely beautiful and had a distinctive ‘look’.”

After Christ Church, Annabel forged a highly successful career as a journalist. She wrote and edited obituaries for *The Independent*, but wrote mainly on the arts and interiors for *The World of Interiors*, *The Evening Standard* and *The Daily Telegraph*. She was an accomplished writer, whose erudition...
always brought something extra to her articles. She also was an enthusiastic participant in the social whirl of London’s arts and culture scene and her capacity for friendship-forging went undimmed.

Annabel built a happy family life in south Kensington with her husband Andrew Barrow and their children Otto and Blossom. (She loved the fact that their flat was opposite Kensington’s Christ Church.) This happiness was threatened when Blossom was diagnosed with neuroblastoma at the age of four. Annabel’s response was quite simply magnificent. She fought tirelessly to help Blossom through her treatment and just as tirelessly to give both her children a joyful and fulfilling life replete with guinea pigs, school friends and simply mucking about in the countryside.

Blossom died in 2012. Soon after, Annabel found out that she had terminal mesothelioma. During the rest of her life, Annabel worked and engaged with life at full throttle, while easing Andrew and Otto towards a future without her. She wrote several articles that chronicled Blossom’s illness and her own with remarkable candour and typical bravery:


Right to the end, Annabel remained unfailingly generous with the time she gave to her friends, while relying heavily on the loving support of Andrew, Otto and her mother, her sisters and her brother. Hardly a day has gone by since Annabel’s death in December 2013 that I haven’t thought about her. Christ Church was very lucky to count her as among its first women undergraduates; I’m hugely grateful to have given been the opportunity to know her.

**Alison Hardy (née Todd) (1984)**

I have very ambivalent feelings about my time at Christ Church. On the one hand, I got a first rate education, which, in those days, was free; and I met some remarkable people, some of whom are still in my life decades later. But I still can’t help thinking that things were made a lot harder for us early, pioneering, women, than they needed to be, and the assumption was always that we needed to adapt ourselves to the House, not the other way around. As I wasn’t just a woman, but was also state-educated, I was in a minority twice over. My first feeling, in Freshers’ Week, was that I must have arrived a week late, as everyone else already seemed to know everyone. Of course many of them did, having been at school, or friends with, or related to at least some of their contemporaries. It took me a while to find the other “misfits”, who, of course, tended to also be the more interesting people.

While nothing truly awful happened to me at Christ Church, there was a lot of routine, almost daily unpleasantness. In my first year, I had a ground floor room in Blue Boar. Anyone who had a Blue Boar room will recall that there was a narrow strip at the top of the windows, that wasn’t covered by the curtains. Quite a few young men used to climb up onto the window ledge at night and peer through this strip of window into my room, in the hope of seeing me undressing. Years later, one of them confessed this to me. He was absolutely mortified by his behaviour, but at the time he had thought nothing of it. I remember complaining about the behaviour of these men and was told that there had been an administrative error – I had been given a ground floor room by mistake; these should only go to male undergraduates, to prevent this sort of thing from happening. From the perspective of the House, the issue was my being in the wrong room, not the behaviour of the young men in question. All this contributed to a rather unpleasant feeling of always being an object of attention, even of fantasy. I am afraid I responded by developing a rather feisty exterior. Sometimes I could be quite cruel to these male undergraduates who were, for the most part, rather sexually inexperienced teenage boys, and I regret some of my unkindnesses.
I’ve included a few photos that hopefully capture some of this. The first is my Bodleian card, kept all these years; the second is me looking rather fierce in my second year rooms (Tom 6:1 – also, coincidentally, on the ground floor); the final one is just before the Ball in 1987. I think my pose perfectly captures the ambivalence I’m feeling: are these beautiful young men my entourage, my guards or my oppressors? You be the judge!

Rebecca Johnson Bista (née Johnson) (1984)

I was part of the 1984 cohort, with only a handful of years of women’s presence before me and my peers.

I can’t say it was altogether easy. There was nothing specifically put in place to make women feel at home at the House. Of course we stuck together in solidarity, many of us thrived, the college was full of wonderful and talented women. I think my year was the first for English in which women outnumbered men. And yet the year above us was all men, not a single woman taking English at undergraduate level, so we were already outnumbered. And by and large, it was the male undergraduates’ careers that were fostered and nurtured, not so much the women. It was definitely still a club for the boys. There was no welfare provision, no women’s group (one was founded during my time there, but I found it intimidatingly Sloany), and very few women tutors that one felt one might approach if any issues of sexist behaviour or discrimination arose. I was taught only once by a woman in Christ Church (Penny Boumelha, a visiting lecturer), and had a woman from another college to supervise my extended essay. Other than that, it was all men – brilliant, inspiring men, but one always felt one was coming from a different point of view, and could not take them as role models. Still, we muddled – or perhaps that should be battled – through. I have often felt that I survived university, rather than graduated – and there were those during my time there that did not: deaths I have never forgotten.

One other incident particularly sticks in my mind from, perhaps, my second year. I was visiting (male) friends, in their rooms, who it turned out happened to be hosting a post-rugger drinks party. The hosts – a pair of lovely and undoubtedly well-intentioned young men – tried to usher me hastily out of the door again as I arrived, saying they had a whole barrel of beer there and some of the rugger players were very drunk already. “You might get raped”, they kindly warned me.

I was surprisingly unintimidated at the time, pooh-poohing their suggestion – I had never actually felt intimidated sexually by any of my male peer group, and thought most of them wouldn’t say boo to a goose, but the very fact that it was felt I OUGHT to be intimidated, and ought to have to watch out for myself – rather than the young men in question restraining their own behaviour – was typical of the time and place and attitudes fostered by a ‘hearty’ college culture. And had it happened, no doubt I would have been told I had been warned, and had only myself to blame. At least, that is how it felt.

I have many fond memories of my time in Christ Church, and a certain pride in being one of the early intake of women there. We threw ourselves into college life, sport and culture – for me this was rowing, drama society and writing for Cherwell. And
it is clear that many of those women have gone on to achieve a great deal. No question that we fully justified our places. I hope we left a legacy behind us that made it a little easier for the women who followed us, and that today there is no sense of being the lesser, or the intruders into an all-male bastion, as it still felt then. And let us not forget that in those days one had to walk across a quad, then up a staircase in order to have a bath – in a multi-bath fairly open and exposed facility in a draughty corridor. There were no comforts provided for women, or concern for safety in such circumstances. One ran the gamut of gaze and access continuously, one way or another. Most of us survived to tell the tale.

Best wishes for the next 40 – or 400 – years of women at Christ Church.

The Hon. Mrs Justice Joanna Smith QC (1986)

Over 30 years ago now, but it seems like yesterday. The nervous teenager not knowing what to expect, the dark wood panelled room on Tom Quad, the low chair set between the two law tutors. John Cartwright’s probing questions, Teddy Burns’ enigmatic smile. A lively discussion about the merits of the jury system and the anxiety I felt on leaving the room about whether I had been good enough. Little did I know then what my career at the Bar would hold, or that I would be lucky enough, many years later, to be appointed to the High Court Bench; a privilege that my teenage self could barely have imagined.

So much about my Christ Church experience contributed to the lawyer I am today. The rigorous intellectual challenge of the tutorials, the calm space of the law library (often enlivened by laughter over some seemingly incomprehensible judgment), the support and encouragement of (now) lifelong friends, even the occasional all-nighter. Of course it was not all work; I am immensely proud of the two blades I won as stroke for the Women’s first VIII. I loved the sweaty bops on a Friday night and sunny afternoons in the Masters’ Garden. I remember picnics in punts, fairy tale nights at College Balls and dressing up as the white rabbit for a charity tea party.

However, in the end, the jurisprudence that I studied at Christ Church gave me the strong foundations on which to build my career.

“The jurisprudence that I studied at Christ Church gave me the strong foundations on which to build my career.”

Left: Rebecca Johnson walking through Tom Quad (where her rooms were in second year).
Following the Francis Report into Mid Staffs where hundreds of patients needlessly died, Sir Robert Francis QC recommended that every trust should have a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, led by a National Guardian to support positive speaking up cultures and to support and challenge the system.

I was appointed National Guardian for the NHS in 2016 and have built a network of over 600 Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in more than 400 organisations in the health sector in England. Guardians support workers to speak up and work proactively to identify and tackle barriers to speaking up. This is the largest speak up culture change programme in the world and supports 1.3 million workers in health to speak up without fear of victimisation. I was appointed OBE in 2020 for services to the NHS.

The theme of my experience at Christ Church was all about opportunity and fun. I studied in Chicago during my second summer vacation and incorporated the research that I undertook there as part of the dissertation for my finals. I was supported by the Dean to travel and visit different parts of the USA and with my medical equipment when moving on to clinical training. There was always an ethos of maximising opportunity and as part of the Oxford OTC, where I won Top Female Cadet, I took part in a sailing adventure training course approved by my tutor even though this was in the British Virgin Islands during December so he doubted how arduous this would actually be.

To the incredulity of my family I played in the Christ Church Women’s tennis team where the qualification was owning a racket.

My family have strong connections with the College including two of my cousins following on for undergraduate courses and my uncle, James Lawrie, is the Treasurer. Coming back to visit is always a great pleasure and reliving the most fun three years of my life.

Dr Henrietta Hughes OBE (née Lawrie) (1987)

I applied to Christ Church for Medicine and read Physiological Sciences, matriculating in 1987. This was a life changing experience for me as for the next three years I had the privilege of being taught by Dr Claudio Stern and Dr Ian Thomson.

At that time it was still early days for women at Christ Church. However, I had come from Rugby School where the proportion of female to male students was 1:10 so it did not feel very different from being at school. It’s only now when I come to Gaudies that I realised how few women there were comparatively in the year. I made great friends and also had a lot of fun. I shared a double set in Peckwater (5:3) in my first year and this was party central. I remember people climbing up the stonework on the outside and entering through the windows knowing that they would always find food, drink and company!

On leaving Christ Church I did my clinical studies at Barts Hospital and then trained in obstetrics and gynecology, followed by General Practice and became a Medical Director at NHS England covering a third of London. The opportunity at Christ Church to discuss subjects and ask any question knowing that these would be greeted with curiosity not ridicule gave me a firm grounding of feeling safe to speak up. This was very different from my experience at clinical medical school where I learned very quickly to stop talking. My experience of this difference has been the basis of my current role as National Guardian for the NHS.

“I made great friends and also had a lot of fun. I shared a double set in Peckwater (5:3) in my first year and this was party central.”
Sowing the seeds: Christ Church and 30 years in the diplomatic service

Kate Smith (1983)

This piece might have begun with reflections on the nineteen-year-old Kate Smith and what I encountered as one of the PPE intake at Christ Church in October 1983. Instead I thought I would start from where I am today, on how my now was influenced by then.

I’m just finishing four and a half years as British Ambassador to Greece. It’s been the peak – so far – of a 30-year career in the Diplomatic Service. A wholly unique role, in which you represent not just your government and its interests, but your country and people. An extraordinary privilege.

Those people sometimes rightly wonder – and ask – what an Ambassador does all day. In the last year of course, the regular business of diplomacy has suffered: the personal, face to face contacts that are so important; the private meetings, receptions, dinners and conferences; speechmaking and hosting events; media appearances and, of course, travelling the country and making connections outside the capital.

So not much of that recently, but I hope I haven’t lost the knack. Learning it has been the product of course of 30 years’ experience in the diplomatic service – starting off in Greece in early 1991, when I got my grounding in the language and understanding of the country; exercising the negotiating and networking muscles in multilateral diplomacy at the Security Council UN in New York, learning how to manage a diplomatic post (and a very
Socially, my experience will be no different from thousands of others. I suddenly came into contact with people from social strata I had never encountered before: unfamiliar behaviours and language, views and aspirations – and at times it could be intimidating. And yet the hothouse of three short terms a year, living in close proximity, sharing the same academic challenges and social opportunities together soon erase the inhibitions and reservations. The confidence to be able to mix and get on with diverse people has been invaluable.

My intake wasn’t the first batch of women – but we were still a distinct minority. That added of course to the challenge, and could be tough for some, as the prevailing culture remained quite male, but it was an advantage too: we got noticed! It was similar in the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service thirty five years ago. Being a sole woman in a meeting of men (and it does still happen) may be unfortunate, but has never felt uncomfortable: I’m sure my time at Christ Church had much to do with that.

Nigh on 40 years is a long time. Much water has flowed under the bridge for all of us, but the traces and influences as well as the memories of those golden years are not only still with me, but I think have left a profound impact. I’m very grateful and proud to have had that experience.

Left: With HRH The Prince of Wales as he said goodbye to Embassy staff in the Residence garden after his 2018 visit to Greece.

challenging bilateral relationship) as Deputy Head of Mission in Tehran. When I took nearly five years out, leading Shell’s government relations work in the UK following a secondment there, I sharpened those advocacy skills a bit more as, effectively, a corporate lobbyist.

I’ve certainly needed all of that for what has been, as a British Ambassador in Europe, my biggest challenge in recent years: Brexit. The high (and low) politics was one thing, but my most difficult, and rewarding, moments have been in meetings with British residents in Greece – listening to their fears and frustrations, trying to reassure and explain as best possible. Getting a good deal for them, finally, has been a high point.

So experience has certainly helped hone me as a diplomat, but it was Christ Church that sowed the seeds. The key asset I took away with me after three years of PPE in the challenging Oxford tutorial system, with brilliant teaching (Oscar Wood, Hugh Rice, David Hine, Peter Pulzer) and the nimble minds of my fellow students was confidence. First, intellectual: even at the time of applying, and then arriving at Christ Church in 1983, I was naturally convinced that everyone else would be much cleverer. Some of them of course were (and still are!) but finding you can hold your own is a revelation; after that, encountering eminent diplomats in the Foreign Office, and having to advise them effectively, was still a challenge – but manageable.

The confidence extends into other areas too. The tutorial system – requiring you not only to read, analyse, and marshal your thoughts in written form, but also to articulate them orally and be interrogated on your presentation by some of the sharpest intellects in Oxford – is a perfect grounding for diplomatic life. Many encounters in foreign ministries when I’ve had to defend a challenging set of policy instructions from London have not felt dissimilar to a Christ Church PPE philosophy tutorial.

Socially, my experience will be no different from thousands of others. I suddenly came into contact with people from social strata I had never encountered before: unfamiliar behaviours and language, views and aspirations – and at times it could be intimidating. And yet the hothouse of three short terms a year, living in close proximity, sharing the same academic challenges and social opportunities together soon erase the inhibitions and reservations. The confidence to be able to mix and get on with diverse people has been invaluable.

My intake wasn’t the first batch of women – but we were still a distinct minority. That added of course to the challenge, and could be tough for some, as the prevailing culture remained quite male, but it was an advantage too: we got noticed! It was similar in the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service thirty five years ago. Being a sole woman in a meeting of men (and it does still happen) may be unfortunate, but has never felt uncomfortable: I’m sure my time at Christ Church had much to do with that.

Nigh on 40 years is a long time. Much water has flowed under the bridge for all of us, but the traces and influences as well as the memories of those golden years are not only still with me, but I think have left a profound impact. I’m very grateful and proud to have had that experience.
Over the past fifty years, Brixton House (formerly Ovalhouse Theatre) has established an international reputation for pioneering and supporting experimental theatre companies. We were central to the emergence of gay, lesbian and women’s theatre throughout the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties, and we will continue this spirit of social engagement and radical thought into the future as Brixton House.

Brixton House was originally founded by graduates of Christ Church in the 1930s as Christ Church (Oxford) Clubs. In the 1960s its focus shifted from sport to drama. Twenty years later, three students on the Community Theatre Arts Course at Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama – Bernardette Evaristo, Patricia Hilaire and Paulette Randall – began to write, direct and perform their first shows at Ovalhouse Theatre. Among these was Coping, presented at Ovalhouse in 1980, which involved five black women from Rose Bruford College and ‘explored the relationship between black women and black men in England’.

In 1982 this collaborative partnership was established as Theatre of Black Women, formed from a need to see black women’s lives positively portrayed through theatre and to explore sexism, racism and class from a black woman’s perspective. Theatre of Black Women’s work challenged stereotypes whilst examining and redefining black women’s self-images. The plays created and presented by the company addressed a wide range of issues such as education, health, housing, feminism and black women’s roles within history and the arts.

Theatre of Black Women’s artistic statement clearly expressed their context and ambitions at a time when they were the only black women’s theatre company in London:

‘Compare the handful of Black Women’s plays that have only recently been produced in London to the hundreds of plays, mainstream and fringe, that are performed in London every year. Where other Black theatre groups tend to operate from the male viewpoint, our company caters for the Black Woman and her perspective. We feel that it is important for black men and white people to begin to know and understand our struggles and for their attitudes to be challenged.’

Theatre of Black Women was an active and alternative force in theatre until 1988, when funding cuts forced the company to close. In the decades that followed, the three founders continued to make an impact as women in theatre and the arts. Paulette Randall, for example, went on to direct extensively in black theatre and for television, while Bernadine Evaristo made literary history in 2019 by being the first black woman to win the Booker Prize for her eighth novel Girl, Woman, Other.

If you want to help Brixton House to continue creating theatre that showcases stories traditionally untold in the arts, please consider making a donation by visiting: www.brixtonhouse.co.uk, or contact Darryl de Prez, Head of Development at Brixton House, at Darryl.deprez@brixtonhouse.co.uk, to learn more about our work.
Christ Church Events 2021

4 September: 2020 Leavers’ Dinner
8 September: 1971-75 Gaudy
11 September: Board of Benefactors Gaudy
12 September: 1546 Lunch

17-19 September: Women’s 40th Anniversary Weekend
1 October: 1976-80 Gaudy
3 October: Family Programme Lunch and Tea
9 October: Boat Club Family Day
40th Anniversary of Women Weekend
17–19 September 2021

FRIDAY 17 September 2021
6 – 7.30pm Drinks for former women JCR and GCR Presidents
8 – 9.30pm Buffet supper

SATURDAY 18 September 2021
9.30 – 10.30am Welcome and talk
Women of the Picture Gallery Curators Past and Present
Jacqueline Thalmann, Professor Catherine Whistler, Dr Joanna Woodall, Lucy Whitaker, Professor Emanuela Tandello
11am – noon Women in Wine
Talk and tasting by Emily Robotham
Garden tour – John James
Cathedral tour and Q&A
Revd Clare Hayns and Cathedral Guide
Noon–1pm Library exhibition launch and talk
Gabriel Sewell, Cristina Neagu, Judith Curthoys OR
The Mysteries of Reading
Dr Belinda Jack
1 – 2pm Lunch
2 – 3pm Panel discussions
3 – 4.15pm Women in Wine
Talk and tasting by Emily Robotham
Garden tour – John James
Cathedral tour and Q&A
Revd Clare Hayns and Cathedral Guide
4.30 – 5.30pm Piano recital – Judith Valerie Engel
Art workshop – Ellie Thompson
5.30 – 6pm Group photo before Evensong
6pm Evensong, with Frideswide Voices
Cathedral
7pm Reception
Tom/Cathedral Garden/Picture Gallery
8pm Alumnae dinner
Speakers: Dame Emma Walmsley, Professor Geraldine Johnson

SUNDAY 19 September 2021
11am Family day begins
11am Choral Eucharist Cathedral
Canon Professor Sarah Foot and Revd Dr Melanie Marshall
12:30 – 2pm Family BBQ
2 – 4pm Tours: Alice in Wonderland and Harry Potter
4pm Tea and cake
4.30pm Event concludes

BOOK HERE
(event open to Old Members only)

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/womens-40th-anniversary-weekend-tickets-154818952655