



LMH  
Lady Margaret Hall

# LMH News

Issue 6 | 2023



# LMH is for life



Legacies have made LMH what it is today and will make it what it can be tomorrow. Including LMH in your Will is a life-affirming way to secure the future of the College and those we teach, for the long term. Your legacy will help our pioneering spirit live on, supporting and inspiring talented students from every background to share experiences that last a lifetime.

To find out more about leaving a legacy to LMH, please contact Carrie Scott by emailing [carrie.scott@lmh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scott@lmh.ox.ac.uk) or calling +44 (0)1865 611024.

"I can never pay my tutors back for what they gave to me, but I can pay it forward. Leaving a legacy gift to LMH will enable the students of tomorrow to enjoy the same outstanding opportunities I had at the College."

Amanda Taylor (née Smith, 1979, Modern Languages)



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**LMH would like to thank alumni and current College members who have contributed content for this issue of LMH News.**



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# Accelerating access

Reflecting on his first two terms as Principal of LMH, **Professor Stephen Blyth** explains how lessons he learned at Harvard are now at the heart of his thinking in Oxford.

The international influence of a career spent on both sides of the Atlantic is clear even before you enter Professor Stephen Blyth's LMH office. The words 'Lady Margaret Hall' are spelt out on the wall outside, each letter taken from a separate US car licence plate. Step inside and it's a similar story. Two US maps made of licence plates cut in the shape of the 50 states hang on the wall. One shows states that voted Democrat in the 2016 election, the other Republican. A UK map is similarly made up of a multitude of US plates, each one cut to the shape of a UK county.

"Yorkshire is made from a New York plate," Stephen explains, "Cornwall is from an Alaskan plate – the last frontier. I particularly like Lincolnshire. It's made from an Illinois plate, because Illinois is known as the Land of Lincoln."

While carving out a career that started at Imperial College in London before taking in Wall Street and most recently Harvard University, Stephen has also continued to carve out this striking range of automotive artworks. "The whole process of finding the right plates, identifying the sections to use and cutting the metal is very therapeutic," he explains. "It works



wonders for wellbeing.” He has exhibited in the US and sold to private collectors, and, as we look back on his first two terms as LMH Principal, it’s clear that this willingness to bring US influences to the UK is not limited to Stephen’s art. Harvard’s determination to attract the brightest and best students by providing the financial support that is needed is a particular inspiration.

“Harvard was transformational for me,” he says. “I was working in a financial role, as President of the Harvard Management Company responsible for Harvard’s endowment, and I was working for a mission and a purpose. It was the first time I had thought deeply about how a higher education institution can lead, and make a difference beyond the teaching of its students and its research.”

### **Bringing Harvard’s influence to Oxford**

Harvard’s focus on inclusion and providing financial support was a revelation, Stephen says, and has guided much of his thinking in his first months at LMH. “There is a formalised, structured system of financial aid for low-income students at Harvard,” he says. “It’s made very clear: ‘If you have the money, you can pay. But if you don’t have the resources, and are talented enough to be admitted, then we will pay’. It is incredibly generous – and expensive for Harvard – but they give you full support. There are no loans and no parental contributions. It means it’s cheaper for a talented British student from a low-income background to go to Harvard than to any UK university.”

His ambition to help change that,

***“A priority for me is championing the academic aspirations of our students and supporting the academic mission of our Fellows.”***

and to ensure LMH keeps breaking through barriers that act as a hindrance to the most talented scholars, comes up repeatedly during our conversation. LMH’s roots as an innovative and progressive institution were a big part of why Stephen wanted to become Principal. LMH’s legacy is built on increasing access, reflecting everything from our position as the first Oxford college to welcome women to the College’s pioneering role in launching the Foundation Year scheme. It is a legacy Stephen is determined to continue.

He is unafraid to state his frustration at a UK-funding system that leaves students “saddled with debt”, and admits to having a range of calculations in his head about how much LMH’s endowment would need to grow to reduce costs for students with lower incomes. “Every time an alumnus asks me, ‘How can I make a difference?’ this is what we talk about,” he says. “It’s such a compelling investment in the future.”

### **Building on LMH’s founding spirit**

Building inclusion is about more than breaking through financial barriers, of course, and Stephen also talks passionately about the need for

“sustained and thoughtful outreach”.

He is proud to describe the new position of Head of Access and Admissions Support, which bolsters the College’s outreach work and helps to “reduce misconceptions about Oxford, unlock ambition and make the applications process more manageable”.

He also lists his visit to Pakistan (see page 6) with the Oxford Pakistan Programme among his highlights of the year, and as another way LMH is leading the push for diversity. “It was a remarkable trip,” Stephen says. “We experienced an overwhelming sense of partnership and a great willingness and appetite for connectivity. One thing this partnership can do is bring different perspectives and expertise to the table, enabling and equipping the finest minds to address complex challenges – because these are the people who will be our future leaders.”

Back in Oxford, meanwhile, Stephen has been enjoying settling into LMH life. “The community here is distinctively supportive and distinctively open-minded,” he says, recalling how many times those words came up when he met with every new undergraduate during Michaelmas term. “That translates into my impression of the staff, too. I’ve seen a level of respect, of valuing what we do here, from our Fellows and from our non-academic staff. People seem very motivated to be here.”

“A priority for me is championing the academic aspirations of our students and supporting the academic mission of our Fellows.” He describes the joy it gives him to celebrate the work of LMH’s Fellows, including by recently hosting a series of book launches in College. “This is a place for being open to new ideas,” he says, before returning to an idea you sense is at the front of his mind even when he finds a few minutes to work on his licence plate art. “Now we need to keep on increasing access and keep welcoming new thinking – in LMH and across the wider university too.”

## **Professor Stephen Blyth: at a glance**

- Graduated from Christ’s College Cambridge as 3<sup>rd</sup> Wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos
- Obtained a PhD in Statistics at Harvard University
- Began his career in the Department of Mathematics at Imperial College London
- Moved to the financial industry, holding senior positions at Morgan Stanley and Deutsche Bank
- Returned to Harvard, becoming Chief Executive of the Harvard Management Company, the world’s largest university endowment, and Professor of the Practice of Statistics
- Joined LMH as Principal in Michaelmas Term 2022



# The rise and rise of the Oxford Pakistan Programme

In December 2022, a delegation from Oxford including **Professor Stephen Blyth** and alumnus **Haroon Zaman** (2016, Jurisprudence) travelled to Pakistan for a series of events to discuss the work and potential of the Oxford Pakistan Programme.

It is, says Haroon Zaman, LMH alumnus and one of the co-founders of the Oxford Pakistan Programme (OPP), “a little bit surreal”. It was as recently as 2019 that he first began discussing potential ways to increase opportunities for young Pakistani scholars at Oxford with his fellow co-founders, macroeconomist Professor Adeel Malik and Junior Research Fellow Dr Talha J Pirzada.

Yet when Haroon visited Pakistan at the end of 2022, the meetings and events he attended could not have been more high profile. The delegation from Oxford met with Dr Arif Alvi, President of Pakistan, to discuss the significance of what the OPP offers. They met Education Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain, at a meeting where the creation of an Oxford Pakistan

corridor was suggested to solidify the partnership between Oxford and Pakistan. They met Pakistan’s Chief Justice, Umar Ata Bandial, at the Supreme Court, and discussed ways to connect Oxford’s Faculty of Law with the legal community in Pakistan, including through scholarships. They also met with representatives from the World Bank and the British High Commission,





At the Lahore Fort. Back row, left to right: Dr Talha Pirzada, Haroon Zaman, Professor Stephen Blyth, Dr Nick Brown (Principal of Linacre College), Richard Hunt. Front row, left to right: Malala Yousafzai, Minahil Saqib, Mohsin Javed and Professor Adeel Malik.

### ***"The Oxford Pakistan Programme is a passion project for everybody involved."***

as well as spending time with former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Looking back, Haroon describes this experience in Pakistan as four of the most intense days of his life. "It's been a joy," he says "It's a passion project for everybody involved."

#### **Clear objectives, exponential growth**

The idea for the OPP was born in 2019, when Haroon was coming to the end of his undergraduate degree. "I had thought for a while that representation at Oxford for students of Pakistani origin was relatively low," he says, "and I was involved in various things to address that."

What he and his fellow co-founders wanted, however, was to go further. Their objectives were clear. They wanted to address the underrepresentation of Pakistani and British Pakistani students at Oxford, promote academic exchange between the two countries and broaden academic conversations on Pakistan. Their ideas on ways to achieve these aims included scholarships, bursaries, fellowships and research grants.

Haroon, Adeel and Talha took the idea to then-LMH Principal Alan Rusbridger, who advocated for the programme from the start. The next year, Haroon recalls, involved over 100 meetings about the OPP, and momentum just kept



growing. In the summer of 2022, the OPP announced its first funded scholars, all of whom are currently studying at Oxford.

Since then, the programme has secured funding to deliver seven bursaries for Pakistani and British Pakistani students this year, and it has built an internship scheme with the World Bank. A series of research grants and lectures are also being planned, and funding commitments over the next five years now total £1.6 million. Based on the level of interest from potential partners and funders, every sign is that this is just the beginning.

"I think it's more fulfilling than just about anything you can do," says Haroon, who volunteers his time for OPP while working full time as a corporate lawyer in London, "because you envisage something, then you plan it, then you construct it and implement it and worry about it and deal with the problems that come up, and then you grab opportunities that come along and watch it grow. That's a very special feeling."

### **Aims of the Oxford Pakistan Programme**

**Raise the academic profile** of Pakistan and Pakistan-related studies at the University of Oxford

**Act as a bridge** between the University of Oxford and Pakistan's academic community through the exchange of scholars and the sharing of scholarship

**Increase the representation** of Pakistani and British Pakistani students at the University of Oxford

Left to right: Minahil Saqib, Haroon Zaman, Ahmed Owais Pirzada, Dr Nick Brown (Principal of Linacre College), Professor Stephen Blyth, Dr Talha Pirzada, Mohsin Javed, Professor Adeel Malik and Richard Hunt at the Pakistan Supreme Court in Islamabad.



# What OPP means to me



## "This is more than just a programme."

Having just about completed my second term at Oxford, my own experience of being part of the Oxford Pakistan Programme (OPP) has been phenomenal. This initiative has the potential to revolutionise the academic landscape for students and academics from various underrepresented backgrounds. Hailing from a rural community in Southern Punjab, for me the OPP transformed a seemingly impossible dream into a more realistic and tangible possibility.

The OPP team's commitment to broadening the program's impact and helping more people is highly respectable. This is not just restricted to the financial assistance within the scholarship, but also their unwavering support and guidance throughout all of Oxford's unique hurdles. More than just a programme, it has established a community of impressive individuals who exchange insights and experiences, presenting extraordinary opportunities.

Witnessing such a strong Pakistani presence at such a prestigious college has also been breathtaking. OPP doesn't only benefit Pakistani students but, by offering new insights and perspectives, it enriches the Oxford community as a whole.

In a very short period of time, the programme has made a significant impact and its continued growth is essential. Its power lies in providing access and support for students and its success demonstrates the need for it to be sustained.

**Usama Salamat (2022, MPhil Development Studies)**



## "I am part of something larger than myself."

OPP's investment in Pakistani scholars showcases its commitment to safeguarding and building Pakistan's future. My selection as an OPP scholar puts me in the unique position to benefit from, but also contribute to, this commitment.

OPP has given me the opportunity to advance my area of study while being part of a collective that envisions a future of equity and progress for the country. Our shared sentiment gives me a sense of being part of something larger than myself: my degree is not just a personal endeavour, but an effort to contribute to Pakistani scholarship and use that scholarship to inform societal reform.

I am grateful for OPP's investment in me as a scholar, but also for the role it has played in developing my vision for the future of my country. Now, more than ever, this vision must guide our path forward as a people and as a nation.

**Minha Kahn (2022, MSc Social Policy and Intervention)**

To find out more about the Oxford Pakistan Programme, visit [oxpakprogramme.org](http://oxpakprogramme.org) and follow @Oxford Pakistan on Twitter.



# Alumni bring Ukrainian graduate scholar to LMH

Thanks to support from the LMH family, **Veronika Starodub** (2021, MSc Statistical Science) is now completing her postgraduate studies with us.

A college is a community of every person who has ever studied or worked there, and LMH's community recently showed again just how generous and welcoming it can be. When we appealed to alumni to donate in support of a new scholarship for talented Ukrainian students, we were hoping to raise £20,000. The eventual total reached more than £56,000.

Not only did this make it possible for us welcome our first Ukrainian Graduate Scholar, Veronika Starodub, to LMH, but it also meant we could participate in the University's Refugee Academic Futures Programme to support more people with refugee status or lived experience of forced migration to study at Oxford. We would like to thank everyone who gave so generously.



Veronika is now studying for her MSc in Statistical Science, and is already considering how the postgraduate course could contribute to Ukraine's recovery. "I am passionate about mathematics and all its possible applications to solve real-world problems," she says. "Specifically, I am interested in finance and the statistical analysis of financial data. In the future, I want to apply the knowledge acquired at Oxford in Ukraine's financial industry, which requires help as never before after all the damage the war has caused to our economic system."

Having completed her undergraduate studies at The American University in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, Veronika is well used to the challenges and opportunities of overseas study, and has settled in rapidly at Oxford. She has also come to appreciate features of our landscape that will resonate with many alumni who once called Norham Gardens home.

"I am unbelievably happy that I have become part of the LMH family," Veronika says. "The College is a very diverse and inclusive society. I appreciate the progressive views of LMH toward all minorities since its foundation."

"And the gardens are just stunning! My favourite place in the whole of Oxford is our riverside with its picturesque landscapes, weeping willows that bend their branches into the water, and a fast-flowing river, which is mesmerising. I find peace there after crazy-busy Oxford days. LMH has become home for me, and I am sure that my love for the College will grow even more during the next months here!"

***"I am incredibly thankful to LMH and all the donors who helped me with the funding for the programme."***



# Former Foundation Year student elected OUSU president

In early 2023, former Foundation Year student **Danial Hussain** (2021, PPE) was elected as President of the Oxford University Student Union (OUSU) for the next academic year.

**D**anial will become the first former LMH Foundation Year student to hold the position when he takes up his new role in the summer. He hopes his appointment can help illustrate the “tangible results” that access programmes such as the Foundation Year can have in terms of diversifying Oxford’s student body.

In an interview with *The Times*, Danial spoke about how he almost didn’t make it to Oxford at all, as “impostor syndrome” set in during his first admissions round. In his words: “I wasn’t used to that environment, of being questioned that way [...] I think my mind went blank and I never performed to my ability”. Regrouping after this difficult rejection, Danial decided to apply for the LMH Foundation Year with the support of his teacher back home in Bradford. Speaking of his Foundation Year experience in 2020-21, Danial said: “Once I was here for a year, and I knew what it was like, that it was actually a friendly place, that gave me the confidence to go into the [admissions] interviews”.

## A passionate advocate

During his time in Oxford, Danial has been co-chairman of the Oxford University Labour Society and of the Oxford Student Union Class Act campaign, which supports, represents and campaigns on behalf of students from working class, low income, first generation, and state comprehensive school backgrounds, as well as care leavers and estranged students.

High on Danial’s agenda when he takes up his new position will be campaigning for an end to the financial disparity students experience depending on which college they study at, which he feels can have an acute impact on access students like him in particular. Danial is passionate about the importance of diversity at Oxford, and of providing support to unleash the “untapped talent in British society”. He believes that Oxford benefits from this injection of new talent and perspective just as much as (if not more than) the students benefit from being at Oxford. He says: “It’s exciting to think



that me and my friends from the Foundation Year are part of a new generation that is changing things”.

LMH welcomed the final cohort of Foundation Year students this academic year. The University of Oxford’s Astrophoria Foundation Year, inspired by our pioneering initiative, will roll out in the autumn. The Astrophoria Foundation Year has offered 35 places to talented UK state school students who have been unable to apply directly for an Oxford undergraduate degree due to their experience of personal disadvantage or disrupted education. Initially, Astrophoria Foundation Year students will study at one of ten colleges, with two due to take up places at LMH.

As Danial prepares to launch into his new role, he would welcome input from anyone in the LMH community who has any words of advice or support for him. If you want to get in touch with Danial, please do contact us so your message can be passed on.



# Sustainability: from dorms to dinners

The ambitious Eleanor Lodge decarbonisation project and a new focus on the impact of our menus are among the ways LMH is working to reduce our environmental impact, as Domestic Bursar **Bart Ashton** explains.

## Did you know?

Oxford University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy sets two ambitious targets: achieving carbon net zero and a biodiversity net gain by 2035.

Students in our Eleanor Lodge building can now enjoy the double benefit of contributing to fewer greenhouse gas emissions while living in greater comfort, thanks to a £1.4m building project, £1.2m of which was funded by the government's Salix scheme. Gone is the old, single-glazing in our sash windows, replaced with modern, ultra-vacuum filled double glazing. As a result of the greater insulation this provides, we have also switched from old gas boilers to more efficient air source heat pumps. It is, as Bart Ashton explains, indicative of LMH's increasing focus on sustainability.

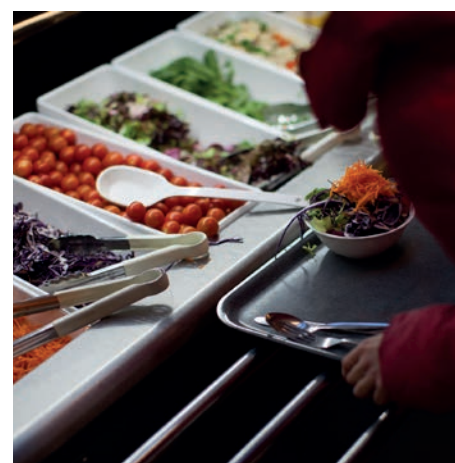
"I think there are a number of reasons why we are taking work like this forward. Partly it's because I have been standing up and talking about it and making a nuisance of myself," Bart laughs. "Partly because we do have this



Part of the new air source heat pump system

beautiful space rich in nature, with 12 or 13 acres of gardens. But also because it is simply the right thing to do, and we have to keep improving. I do think it relates to the story of who we are and LMH's progressive nature. We've been building a reputation for environmental sustainability, and this has actually been the first year I've had new students tell me they chose LMH because of that."

The work is significant not only because of its immediate impact but because of its future potential. As UK electricity is increasingly generated from renewable sources, so the building's carbon footprint will continue to drop. And the project shows what is possible in buildings of this size and age – including elsewhere at LMH and across the university. "We now have a design model contractors can work with and at least an estimated roadmap of what else we need to do," Bart says. "Other colleges will say, 'We get the theory', but LMH has put it into practice."



## Greening our eating

We are also working hard to reduce the environmental impact of our menus. LMH recently took part in a study published in *Nature Food*, looking at how organisations can reduce biodiversity loss through their food choices. With everything from coffee farming to meat production having a significant impact on deforestation, for example, we are determined to understand our impact and put measures in place to meet the University-wide target of delivering a net gain to biodiversity by 2035.

"I do think we've moved quite a long way already," Bart says. "Students are eating around 50% plant-based meals. We serve less chocolate. We've built relationships with a range of hyper-local suppliers, who provide bread, vegetables, herbs and so on. We're learning more and more, and we're now looking to develop a positive plan across our canteen operations. Again, as a college, we're happy to lead the way."





# The power of empowerment

## Did you know?

The LMH Foundation Year inspired the new, University-wide Astrophoria Foundation Year, which will fund up to 50 talented students every year from 2023.

**Vee Kativhu** (2017, Classical Archaeology and Ancient History) was one of the first students to join LMH's pioneering Foundation Year scheme. Frustrated by the lack of diversity she saw around her, Vee decided to take action – and her resulting efforts to empower young people have won her the prestigious Diana Award.

Vee Kativhu has inspired students across the globe to seek out and embrace opportunity, but one of her own formative experiences began with rejection. A high-performing sixth-form college student, she approached a teacher about the possibility of applying to Oxbridge. The idea was immediately shut down. "The teacher basically said, 'No it's not for someone like you,'" Vee recalls. "And so, long story short, I didn't apply."

A year passed, and when Vee heard that LMH was launching our first Foundation Year, she decided to ignore the naysayers and complete an application. Even then, the response was similar. "The same teacher said, 'Are you sure you're not going to be a quota-filler or a box-ticker?'" Considering Vee's achievements since then, there can be few clearer examples of why we must keep pushing to increase diversity and inclusion and break through the misconceptions that can make an Oxford education seem unattainable.

Vee loved her time at Oxford, but it was also when the activist inside her was born. "I looked around and thought, 'The level of diversity is awful'", she says, frankly. "I spoke to stakeholders across the university and heard again and again that people were talking about the issue and working to improve it, but I thought, 'I am not going to sit around here forever, waiting'. So I started my own YouTube channel, because I wanted to reach more people more quickly."

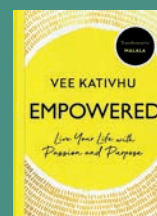
And reach people she did. Vee's videos chronicling Oxford life, sharing

her experiences of overcoming discouragement and answering penetrating questions such as 'Is Oxford racist?' gained hundreds of thousands of views. "I suddenly had lecturers telling me potential students were mentioning my videos in their applications. I know there are lots of contributing factors, but the number of Black students did increase. It showed me how much you can achieve – I was just one person, with my phone, no lighting or editing software. It was just me."

As word spread, young people began contacting Vee for advice. It led to her running an event to help students learn how to access further education – and another renowned LMH alumna helped her find a name. "Malala [Yousafzai] suggested the name Empowered by Vee, over tea and biscuits in an LMH room at 3am," Vee laughs. "I said, 'What? Who puts their own name onto a project like that?' And she said, 'Er, hello? The Malala Fund?!'"

Empowered by Vee has grown and grown, supporting a network of 15,000 young people at its events and conferences to bridge the gap between academic ability and self-belief. In addition to her Diana Award, Vee has been selected as a United Nations Young Leader, and wants to use the role to help more young people overcome barriers that

are placed in their way. "Empowerment matters," she says in conclusion. "I can't wait until the day empowerment becomes part of the school curriculum."



Vee's first book, *Empowered: Live Your Life with Passion and Purpose*, is available now, published by Square Peg. It will be reviewed in *The Brown Book* this autumn.



In *Islands of Abandonment*, Cal Flynn (2005, Experimental Psychology) visits places where humanity is eerily absent. Her fascinating, deeply thoughtful book won the Sunday Times Young Writer of the Award – and reflects the writing process she developed during her studies at LMH.

“I actually still write in much the same way that I wrote my essays at LMH,” Cal Flynn smiles, painting a picture that will be familiar to many alumni. “Overnight, in frantic bursts, with research papers scattered all over the desk and the floor, and my kettle on constant boil.”

It may not be the most calming process, but its effectiveness for Cal cannot be questioned. As well as winning the prestigious *Sunday Times* award for authors aged between 18 and 35 years old, her non-fiction work *Islands of Abandonment* was shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction and the Wainwright Prize for Writing on Global Conservation.

In it, Cal travels to ghost towns and exclusion zones, no man’s lands and fortress islands. It is a meditation on how life and nature continues when humanity leaves. On an uninhabited Scottish island, feral cattle live entirely wild. In Detroit, whole streets lie dormant, looters the only visitors. *Islands of Abandonment* tells a story that stretches from the Tanzanian mountains to Chernobyl, and shows how these disconnected, desolate places could offer us new ideas on helping our planet to recover.

“It was a huge, overwhelming surprise to win – I truly didn’t think I would – and a real joy,” Cal says, when asked about the *Sunday Times* award. “It’s been a big confidence boost, as of course as a writer you spend a lot of time alone at home, wrestling with bits of writing and feeling very dim-witted.”

And as for Oxford’s role in her development as a writer, other than showing her that inspiration can strike deep into the night, when the city’s own streets are deserted?

“I think Oxford taught me a lot about being self-motivated, and it also taught me not to be afraid of things that I didn’t, at first, understand. It taught me that, with application, I could come to understand them, and in fact explain them to other people. That was a very important stage in my development as a writer, which is ongoing.”

*Islands of Abandonment: Life in the Post-Human Landscape* by Cal Flynn is available now, published by HarperCollins.





When Zainab Usman is asked to describe some of the highlights of her time at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – one of the US’ most prominent think tanks – it’s clear the Africa Program she leads is getting noticed. It was less than two years ago that Zainab was recruited as its inaugural director, but she is already making waves across development, diplomacy and defence.

“I wrote a piece in *Foreign Affairs* magazine on how the US needs to reorient its engagement with Africa to focus more on economic development, because it has been too heavily focused on humanitarian and security issues,” Zainab says. “Africa is a continent that is changing rapidly, and there are so many changes that the US is missing out on. Based on that article, I was invited to speak at the US House Subcommittee on International Development, talking about how development assistance should be modernised. It’s an example of what I’ve always wanted to be involved in – combining analysis with policy dialogue and policy engagement.”

In early 2023, Zainab found herself in the White House, having been invited to give feedback to Vice President Kamala Harris’ team on the new US strategy for Africa. “That was an incredible experience. We were in the ceremonial office,” Zainab recalls, before adding with a smile: “I left behind several packets containing publications from the Carnegie Africa Program. Hopefully one of them will end up on the Vice President’s desk.”

And in a sign of how far interest in her work is spreading, Zainab was also asked to give a keynote speech at the US Africa Command’s African Chiefs of Defence Conference, where 45 African countries were represented. Exploring how digitalisation, the transition to renewable energy, new trade

# Making waves in Washington

**Zainab Usman** (2012, DPhil International Development), senior fellow and director of the Africa Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington D.C., explains how her time at LMH influenced her journey to the heart of the US foreign policy environment.

Zainab’s book, *Economic Diversification in Nigeria: The Politics of Building a Post-Oil Economy*, is available now, published by Bloomsbury.

deals and changing demographics are impacting life in Africa, she brought a fresh perspective to the defence-focused event. “Apparently people really appreciated being able to get a better sense of some of the driving factors behind security challenges, and my presentation was being referenced throughout the event,” Zainab says. “Being able to address all these military generals and know they appreciated what I was saying was pretty amazing.”

She says her desire to turn research into policy impact was nurtured at Oxford, and she also developed her LMH doctoral research into a book, *Economic Diversification in Nigeria*, that was recommended in the *Financial Times*’ end of year list in 2022. But perhaps the biggest influence from her time at Oxford is her sense of possibility. “One thing I really gained is the confidence or belief to know that if you put your mind to something and work really, really hard, you can make it happen. Of course, the stars need to align, but I think that sense of self-belief and self-assuredness grew in Oxford and can be so helpful.”

# The complexity of conservation

**Lena Karbe** (2011, MSt Film Aesthetics) picked up a raft of prizes and nominations in 2022 and 2023 for her documentary film, *BLACK MAMBAS* – including the prestigious Social Justice Award at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival. The film reveals a little-known clash at the heart of South African environmentalism, as Lena explains.

**B** *BLACK MAMBAS* explores a sensitive theme: the conflict between the need to conserve nature and the need for a local population, in this case in South Africa, to survive by using nature's resources. It's a conflict represented in my film by rangers on one side and poachers on the other, both from the same communities. With *BLACK MAMBAS*, I wanted to tell a story of animal protection through the impact it has on humans.

I found out about the Black Mambas – an all-female anti-poaching unit – through my interest in nature conservation. I was reading about the Kruger National Park and came across a fact that I found really striking: there are about three million people living in local, majority-Black, communities bordering the Kruger Park, and about 80-90% of those people are unemployed.

These communities have little connection to nature protection. I heard it described as a 'white man's thing'. Most poachers in the area come from these communities, particularly the bushmeat poachers, who hunt not for high value species, but for species like



antelopes, which are used for food.

And yet nature conservation has to be a huge issue for local people, because the park is one of the only sources of food and employment in the region. So while communities have been historically alienated from conservation and continue to be today, they rely on the natural resources that surround them. It is ironic how a big part of the Black Mambas' job is to promote environmental patriotism, even in communities where most people

live in poverty and do not benefit from the wildlife economy.

This multi-layered conflict – how the female rangers protect nature from the people of their own communities, while themselves having little personal connection to the park – immediately raised my interest. I felt that, alongside the spectacular personal journeys of these women, a bigger story needed to be told, showing the social context of conservation from a post-colonial perspective.

*BLACK MAMBAS* is primarily a reflection on value: the value of people and of animals in the eyes of society. I am very glad that the film still makes its way to its audiences worldwide, a year after its first distribution. It has been shown in more than 30 countries so far and it is a great honour to have received awards everywhere from Italy to California.

To find out more about *BLACK MAMBAS* and watch the film's trailer, visit [www.autlookfilms.com/films/black-mambas](http://www.autlookfilms.com/films/black-mambas)



***"We get to experience the struggles and empowerment of young women against the persisting power structures, within the frame of race, family dynamics and the tight grip of colonialism that refuses to let go."***

CPH:DOX film festival jury statement on *BLACK MAMBAS*



# Recipes for success

**Riaz Phillips** (2013, MSc Modern Chinese Studies) won the prestigious Jane Grigson Trust Award for new food and drink writers for his book *West Winds*. Though the book focuses on the Caribbean, Riaz explains how the perspective he gained at LMH remains a guiding influence on his work.



***“Riaz brings his fresh, honest insight into the food culture of Jamaica, and *West Winds* deserves the widest possible audience.”***

Geraldene Holt, Jane Grigson Award chair of judges

Riaz’s book, *West Winds: Recipes, History and Tales from Jamaica*, will be reviewed in *The Brown Book* this autumn.

**B**efore I was fortunate enough to receive this award, I had been aware of Jane Grigson’s name but, to be very honest, I hadn’t read in detail any of her books. I knew she was a pioneering British cookery writer and, as I went on to read her work, I realised it embodied almost everything I try to capture when I write about food: be it history, society, economics, politics or poetry.

I suppose it was this varying intersection of topics that first piqued my interest in writing about food, and the foundations of this were grounded in my studies at LMH. Studying a research-led postgraduate degree, I was suddenly presented with literally a world of options. I had already lived in China and as the country was experiencing a generational boom, I wanted to merge my undergraduate studies of colonial and post-colonial West Africa with Chinese studies. In the Modern Chinese studies arm of the International Studies department, I was able to fuse an international relations focus with Chinese history, language, environmental science, anti-governmental activism and research methods. I found that this wide, encompassing approach was both stimulating and also held me in great stead when deciding what to do next in life.

The summer after graduating, I began working for one of the largest sports teams in the world. The ultimate goal of the job wasn’t something I saw myself still being enamoured with long-term, however. A few of my immediate family had also passed, and I realised – for all the travelling and studying I had done up to this point – I didn’t really know anything about where my own family was from, predominantly the Caribbean nations of Jamaica and Guyana.

## Choosing to change direction

Through a number of different epiphanies and realisations, the idea came to me to write a book about the locale of my family heritage. But to write about food alone didn’t feel compelling. From the start, I wanted to employ research methods to talk to interviewees. I wanted to loop in historical, economic and social occurrences, as well as strands of activism and environmental discussions, all of which feed in effortlessly when discussing the food and culture of the Caribbean. As such, even though Chinese-centric international relations and Jamaican food seem a galaxy away, the approach to how I tackle a subject remains the same as it was at LMH.

Fortunately, thanks to social media, I’ve found a group of people who also are interested in the same intersections as me, and my fifth book, *East Winds: Recipes, History and Tales from the Eastern Caribbean* will be out in late 2023.





## Riaz's recipe for alumni: red pea soup

Red pea soup (aka stew peas, with peas here referring to kidney beans, not green garden peas!) is an institution in practically every nook and crevice of Jamaica. You can find it anywhere from uptown diners to roadside stalls. Growing up, this and cock soup were the staple dishes made by my mum as the days began to get shorter and colder. I never knew which one was being made until I was summoned from my bedroom with a loud shout, and I was always more excited when I found out it was red pea soup. Something about the slow infusion of kidney beans and coconut milk, combined with the seasoning in the soup's liquid base, was mesmerising to me, especially compared to school dinners.

A single pot would somehow last several days, especially when bolstered with extra starch and vegetables. These make an ample filler on their own, without the need for meat or poultry. During my time living with the Rastafari, whose belief system prohibits the consumption of animal by-products, their versions cemented for me that meat isn't necessary here. This dish usually comes loaded with chunks of pork, chicken or beef, which you can feel free to add at the initial boiling stage. Fortunately, this bowl is easy to make meat-free and still tastes great.

### Ingredients

- 2 cups of dried red kidney beans, soaked overnight, or 2 cans (400ml) of kidney beans
- 400ml coconut milk (1 tin)
- 2.5l hot water
- 3 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced
- 2 scallions (green part only), finely chopped
- 1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 medium white potato, peeled and diced in 3cm chunks
- 1 medium sweet potato or 100g yellow yam
- 1 medium carrot, peeled and sliced into rounds

#### Seasoning

- 6 pimento berries or 1 tsp ground allspice
- 3 sprigs of thyme
- 1 scotch bonnet pepper, whole
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tsp crushed black pepper
- 1 tbsp all-purpose seasoning

#### For the spinners (dumplings)

- 125g flour of your choice, plus additional if needed to get good dough
- 60ml water, plus additional if needed to get good dough
- Pinch of salt

### To make the dumplings

Combine the flour and salt in a bowl and carefully pour in water with one hand, combining them with the other until a dough consistency is formed. If the mix is too wet, liberally add more flour until you can roll the dough about in your hands without leaving any residue. Once this is done, wrap in cling film, place in a bowl and refrigerate for 30 minutes whilst you prepare the rest of the dish.

Boil a pan of water on a high heat and add a dash of salt. Take the dough out of the fridge and remove the clingfilm. Dust a chopping board or surface with flour and place the dough on it, then tear off pieces the size and shape of your little finger and roll until smooth. Repeat until the whole dough is used.

### To make the stew

If you are using dried red beans, wash them and soak for a minimum of seven hours. Rinse in a colander and then place in a large saucepan along with the water. Bring to boil on a medium-high heat and then turn down the heat to a medium simmer for 45 mins-one hour.

(If you are using kidney beans from a tin, add the water to your saucepan first and add in your seasoning and vegetables, cooking for 15 minutes before adding the beans straight from the tin, without rinsing.)

After this, add all chopped vegetables into the saucepan along with the whole scotch bonnet pepper (do not chop) and allow to cook for a further 20-25 minutes.

Remove the lid from the stew and add the tin of coconut milk, the spinners, and the allspice, sea salt, black pepper, thyme and all-purpose seasoning. Using a fork, slightly mash a quarter of the beans and simmer for an additional 15 minutes. If you find the final stew consistency too thick, add water to your taste.



# Beat poet

**Emmeline Armitage** (2018, English) recently signed a record deal backed by Sony. She describes how her lyrical style evolved in the corridors of LMH, and why it took her a while to tell her dad – Poet Laureate Simon Armitage – that she had started to write and perform.

**"W**hen I was 17, I was invited to a spoken word class," Emmeline Armitage smiles, remembering the early stages of a creative journey that would lead several years later to a record contract backed by Sony. "I went every week without telling my parents what I was doing. They must have thought I was up to something much worse! Then, again in secret, I applied for a national poetry slam competition. After I won that, I had to reveal what I'd been doing for the past few months."

Emmeline knew from experience that her parents would only be supportive and encouraging. But when your dad is the poet laureate, it can add an extra layer of pressure. "Having a great wordsmith as a father did mean I was always going to make internal comparisons," Emmeline says, before joking: "Plus, as their child I obviously didn't want anything to do with my parents! But I resisted for as long as I could before I had to come to the conclusion that maybe the apple doesn't

fall too far from the tree, in terms of what I'm interested in."

Emmeline's mellifluous, hip hop-tinged vocal flow led audiences to encourage her to put her poems to music, and while studying at LMH she began searching for potential collaborators. "I asked around if anyone was a producer or knew anyone who could make beats," she says, "and I was introduced to Joby Tennant (2019, Mathematics), an amazing LMH maths student and producer. We recorded some demos in our rooms at LMH, and that provided the next stage of development for me."

Jump forward several years and Emmeline spotted revered grime producer Fraser T Smith – who has worked with Stormzy, Kano and Ghetts, among others – at a gig. She introduced

herself, and within months the music they began making together, featuring Emmeline's lyrics over Smith's electronic backing, gained Sony's attention.

"I thought it was stratospherically impossible that music would ever come into fruition," Emmeline says, but as her success grows and her style evolves, she can see clearly the influence of her years at LMH. "Reading and writing are completely symbiotic for me. Through everything we were reading at university, we got an understanding of language and rhythm and rhyme and metre and form. And it was also such an intense time – intense work, intense play, intense friendships. It was such an intellectually nurturing environment and you see all the colours of life. I still carry all of that with me."

**Emmeline's EP, *Small Town Girls and Soft Summer Nights*, is out on all streaming services on 28th July. You can find out more about her music at [www.emmelineemmelineemmeline.com](http://www.emmelineemmelineemmeline.com)**



# A monumental achievement

In the town of Mountain Ash in the South Wales valleys, a posthumous tribute has been paid to LMH alumna, **Elaine Morgan** (1939, English). As part of the Monumental Welsh Women project, a statue has been created to celebrate the life of this truly remarkable writer and thinker.

**E**laine Morgan was a woman of many talents. Excelling in both the arts and science, she became a top TV writer, a feminist icon and a groundbreaking evolutionary theorist. Born into a mining family, Elaine won a scholarship to Oxford. On arrival, her accent, rarely heard in College at the time, sadly meant she was mistaken for an applicant for a vacant cleaning role. Elaine rapidly became a star student, however, chairing political societies and honing her literary skills.

From the 1950s to 1970s, she scripted much-loved television dramas from her Mountain Ash desk, including *How Green Was My Valley* and *The Life and Times of Lloyd George*. Her serialisation of Vera Brittain's wartime memoir, *Testament of Youth*, won her the Royal Television Society's writer of the year award in 1979.

Elaine switched her focus to science throughout the 1970s, taking on a male-dominated sector with a new theory of human evolution. In her book, *The*

*Descent of Woman*, she argued that human evolution wasn't just about the mighty male hunter – and that women should be given an equal role in evolutionary science. It was an instant bestseller, with Elaine feted in America in particular as a feminist icon.

She went on to publish several more books on evolution, and her ideas were championed by Sir David Attenborough among many others. Her influence never waned, and the Ted Talk Elaine gave at the age of 89 has been viewed more than a million times. She also continued to write an award-winning column in the *Western Mail* into her 90s. Elaine died in 2013, having always remained fiercely proud of her Welsh roots.

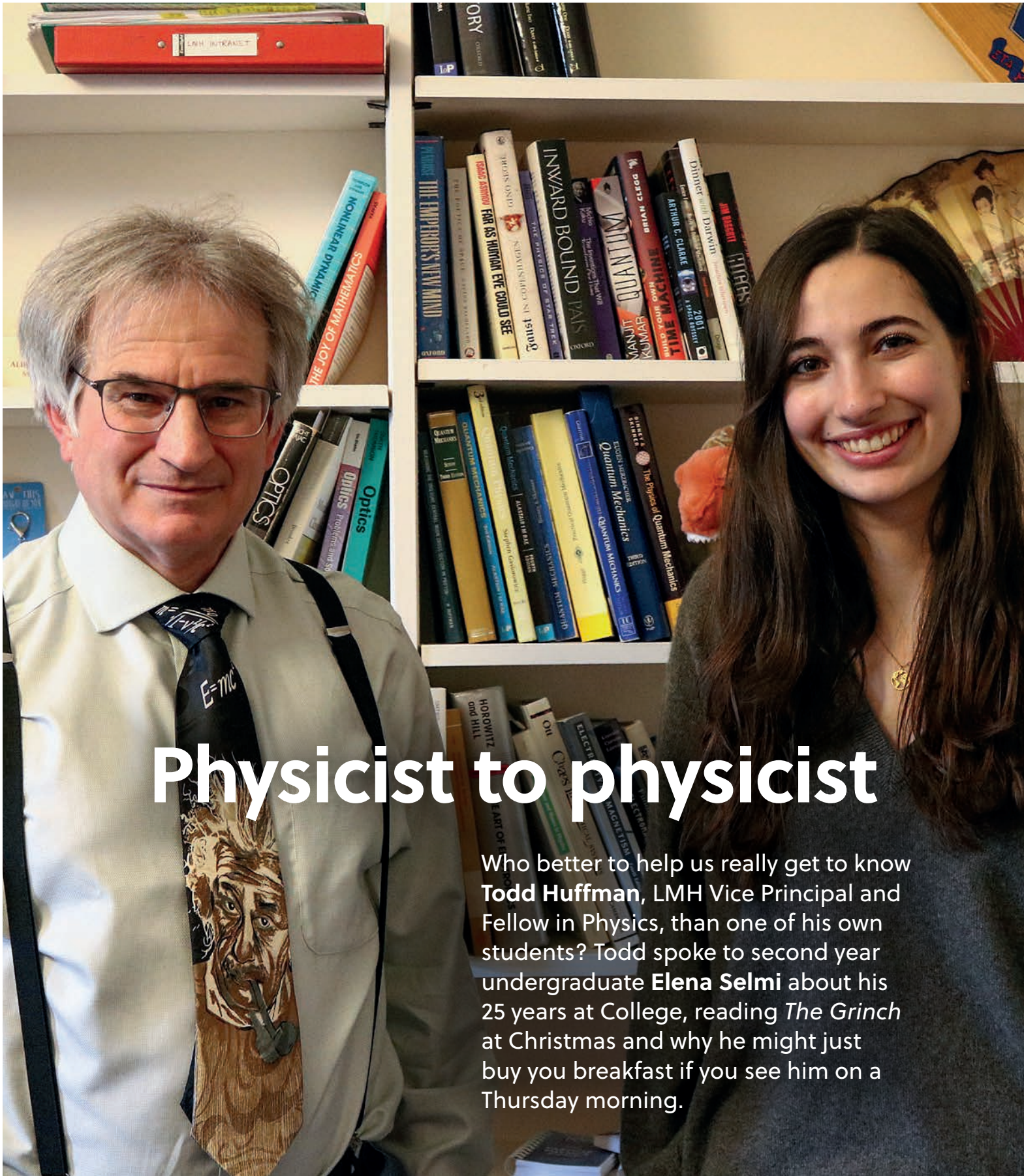
It seems only fitting, therefore, that hers was one of the first two statues unveiled as part of the Monumental Welsh Women project, which is erecting a series of sculptures to celebrate inspirational female figures. Created by renowned artist Emma Rodgers, Elaine's statue will ensure the memory of her many achievements lives on, long into the future.

***"There was a time when the writer was king and [Elaine] was one of the stars. If you saw that name on your script then you really wanted to do it."***

Actor Sian Phillips, who starred in Elaine's TV drama, *How Green Was My Valley*







# Physicist to physicist

Who better to help us really get to know **Todd Huffman**, LMH Vice Principal and Fellow in Physics, than one of his own students? Todd spoke to second year undergraduate **Elena Selmi** about his 25 years at College, reading *The Grinch* at Christmas and why he might just buy you breakfast if you see him on a Thursday morning.



**Elena:** Let's start at the beginning. How long have you been at Oxford?

**Todd:** Well, I started in Oxford in 1997. I actually was hired as a postdoctoral research officer in the physics department. It didn't come with a college association and was nominally for four or five years. I was working on the ATLAS and DELPHI experiments based at CERN in Switzerland. DELPHI was one of four large detectors in the Large Electron-Positron Collider, a particle accelerator. And ATLAS is a particle detector that's part of the Large Hadron Collider.

I was collecting data from DELPHI and helping with data acquisition systems for ATLAS, happily doing my research, and then after about eight months or so, a full lectureship opened up in the department, in association with LMH. I applied for it, and quite a lot of people said, 'You know, you really shouldn't apply because you probably won't get it'.

But I thought to myself, 'It's never my job to take myself off a shortlist'. And I tell that to lots of people. It's not your job to take yourself off a shortlist. And I figured, if they did, well, that's fine. I could understand that. But if they didn't, I was going to give it my best shot. They offered me the job – and I've been at LMH ever since. I think it was Michaelmas term of 1998.

**Elena:** So nearly 25 years then. Did you originally plan to stay this long?

**Todd:** Well, no, not really! The first couple of years I was not really sure what was going on. I was completely unfamiliar with the tutorial system. Thankfully my counterpart, Professor David Andrews, who sadly has passed away, was really fantastic. He laid the groundwork so I didn't have to do too many tutorials at first.

And it's funny the details you remember, looking back. I thought it was really great that there was this place in College I could go to have lunch! Although actually it was three or four years before I realised there were also these dinners you could go to – formals. I had no idea! That's very typical of the UK. They don't tell you the rules until you break one.

Anyway, I don't remember when exactly but then I was elected to be SCR secretary. Frances Lannon, who was a

history fellow at the time, before she was elected as our Principal, suggested in her quiet way that it would be a good thing to do to connect me with the College.

I wasn't on any College committee. I didn't even know most of the College committees. And Frances said if I became secretary I wouldn't really be asked to be on any committees.

**Elena:** But not being on any committees didn't go as planned, did it?

**Todd:** No! Very shortly after that, people realised, 'Hey, here's someone we can put on College committees'. So, I ended up on the academic policy committee and the finance committee and on the IT committee for a very long time. And very slowly the importance of the Governing Body began to dawn on me.

**Elena:** And now you're Vice Principal!

**Todd:** And now I'm Vice Principal.

**Elena:** You've come a long way since 1997. What are some of your favourite memories of LMH?

**Todd:** That is really hard. There are so many. Some of my favourite memories are of working with students. I remember one time we had a physicist who was the number one student in the whole year group. He was so polite, really excessively so, and it took me about a year to realise that when he asked a question, about half the time what it actually meant was that I'd just done something wrong!

He would very politely ask for more detail or for you to have another look at it. And what that actually meant was 'I think you've done something horrifically wrong but I'm too nice to say anything about it!' You know, most of the time, he was right.

**Elena:** I love it, and can hear how much the teaching means to you. How about LMH itself? What is your favourite place in College?

**Todd:** That's easier. For a long time it was the terrace outside the SCR. It faces the Fellows' Lawn and the great big copper beech tree. That's a really, really nice place to sit and have a coffee in the spring and the summer. But now I'm not so sure, because my new office, by pure luck, is the only one with a back garden.

**Elena:** And that makes it a nice spot for your telescope!

**Todd:** That's exactly right. The view of the sky is quite limited, but I'm starting to realise that that back garden is a real boon, especially with your blossoming of the LMH Astronomical Society. I'll give you a plug there, Elena.

**Elena:** Yes, I was getting there! As you know, we revived the Astronomical Society this year. We wanted to have something science-related that was accessible to everyone, and you've been so enthusiastic about it since the very beginning.

Everyone has been so excited about using the telescopes. I hadn't realised that so many people had never seen Jupiter or Saturn before, and at one event there was a meteor shower. We even had the president of the Royal Astronomical Society come to give a talk. It's been fantastic.

**Todd:** You should be very proud.

**Elena:** I am, and actually that relates to one of the questions I wanted to ask you. What would you say you're proudest of, either during your time as Vice Principal or throughout your time at LMH? ➔

***"I remember one physicist who was the number one student in the whole year group. When he asked a question, about half the time what it actually meant was that I'd just done something wrong!"***



**Todd:** I think the College's association with the Foundation Year, which has now been embraced by Oxford and Cambridge too. I think it's really important. There are a lot of really intelligent people out there who, just by virtue of where they live, are trying to survive in schools that are struggling.

Now one argument I hear sometimes against the Foundation Year is that it doesn't solve the general problem, and that's true. But it is absolutely better than doing nothing. The situation we're in is a failure of society, and we can't help everyone. But what we can do is help a few people every single year, and that will have an impact. We're already starting to see our Foundation Year students go big and have an impact. And the media is taking an interest, too. That's a start.

**Elena:** And how about your funniest moments?

**Todd:** Well, I know you know about Barry's Boot Camp. That's funny on many levels. Every Thursday morning, we meet at the tennis courts and Barry, who's a personal trainer, does 45 minutes of fitness exercises. It's fun, but it's also funny because I give him a hard time and he gives me a hard time.

It started during the pandemic, when we had these bubbles and isolations and people couldn't really get out to do anything. It was fantastic, and a great way to get people out, get them exercising and start the day off right. Then, once Covid tailed off a bit, we thought it would be a great thing to continue. And – here's the party piece – whenever I'm there, I buy everybody breakfast afterwards.

**Elena:** I know this, and I feel like a lot of people have started to show up because of it! And from what I've heard, it's not even because you offer breakfast, it's because people love the idea of you being so enthusiastic about Barry's Boot Camp that you would offer breakfast for it!

**Todd:** Well, I strongly encourage anybody to go to Barry's Boot Camp and I will continue to offer breakfast. Well, unless the numbers really explode...

**Elena:** One of my funniest memories of you involves Christmas. Can we talk about that?

## ***"My speech at the Christmas gaudy? That mostly involved baseball and quantum mechanics."***

**Todd:** Of course. Well, one of the things you have to do as Vice Principal is take on the role of Principal when the Principal is away. And that led to me needing to give a reading and a speech at the Christmas gaudy, the celebration meal.

Now the Chaplain knows full well that I'm basically a non-theist. I don't believe in a creator. So, he gave me the reading, and I couldn't turn it down because the reading that he gave me was from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and apparently that was a big hit.

**Elena:** That was the content I was there to see! But I also thought it was very much part of the LMH image, and the way we intend for the service and Chapel to be. It reflects Andrew's role as Chaplain too. Yes, it's a religious space, but it's also for people who want to be together and meditate and think and have fun as well.

**Todd:** Exactly. And then I had to give a speech, and again I wasn't sure what to do. And I said to the Chaplain, maybe the only thing I could do is recite *Casey at the Bat*, which is a famous baseball poem I know by heart. But I couldn't just start with that, so I figured I'd start off with some jokes about physics. So, I got my flipchart out and said 'OK, I'm going to talk about quantum mechanics', and I taught people a little bit about baseball, otherwise they wouldn't understand the poem.

**Elena:** I love the cheer you got when you said you were going to talk about quantum mechanics.

**Todd:** Well, they do say – and I think this is very good advice – if you don't know what to talk about, talk about what you know!

**Elena:** That seems like a good place to finish, so thank you for your time today. It's been great finding out more about you outside of a physics setting.

**Todd:** It's been a pleasure speaking to you too. See you in the next tutorial!

The centre of the ATLAS detector; a cylinder on its side and taller than a 5 storey building. A person can stand full height on the platform in the picture, which is removed when the detector is prepped for collisions.



Professor Todd Huffman continues to do research as part of the ATLAS experiment at CERN, as well as developing detectors for sub-atomic particles. To find out more about his research, visit [physics.ox.ac.uk/our-people/Huffman](https://physics.ox.ac.uk/our-people/Huffman). Todd has also asked to point out that Barry's Boot Camp takes place on Thursdays at 8am on the LMH tennis courts. Breakfast is on him afterwards!

# A better way to support wellbeing

*"It's very much recognised that student wellbeing and mental health are declining, and the pandemic had a significant impact on that."*

Dr Nicole Jones



With growing numbers of students nationally experiencing mental health difficulties, LMH is determined to improve and increase the support available in College. **Dr Nicole Jones** recently joined our team as LMH's first Head of Wellbeing, and she explains why a big part of her focus is on working to prevent problems before they occur.

Exact statistics on the level of mental health problems among students vary, but the overarching conclusion is worryingly consistent – student mental health is in crisis. The 2020 University Student Mental Health Survey, based on data from 21,000 UK students across 140 universities, found that one in five students had a current mental health diagnosis. In another study, commissioned by Accenture in 2021 and involving 12,000 students, 39% of respondents said their mental health had declined since starting university. The pressures of studying, a lack of preparedness for university life and a

sense of loneliness were among the key contributing factors. In information published by the mental health charity Mind, meanwhile, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation are listed as three of the most common problems reported by students who are struggling to cope.

"It's very much recognised that student wellbeing and mental health are declining, and the pandemic had a significant impact on that," says Dr Nicole Jones, LMH's new – and first – Head of Wellbeing. "LMH is placing wellbeing at the core of our strategy. I think the College could see first-hand that students

were struggling and was keen to do something proactive to address this."

## Bringing wellbeing to the fore

Nicole has been in post since Michaelmas term. She's the face of a revolution, albeit a quiet revolution. Her appointment reflects an entirely new approach to student welfare at LMH.

Traditionally, student wellbeing has been approached as a supplementary responsibility given to an academic, or the Chaplain has provided further support in addition to their day-to-day role. But as Head of Wellbeing, with 15 years of clinical experience in adult



mental health to draw on, Nicole's sole responsibility is to support students with non-academic concerns.

"The role very much fits with my ethos: the importance of wellbeing and preventative strategies. I obviously have the skills from my clinical work to respond to distress and triage. This isn't a clinical role, so I'm not doing therapy, but I can apply my interest and experience in psychological theory to proactive preventative strategies."

As current LMH students faced their own years of educational disruption during Covid, bearing the social-emotional cost of remote learning, Nicole was working in primary mental health for the NHS.

## **"We want to make wellbeing part of the everyday conversation for students – not just something with activity concentrated around awareness weeks."**

"I think one of the things that strikes me, particularly having worked in the NHS recently, is that the demand for support is so great and is increasing."

Compared to the noise of Covid – the masks, the headlines and the shared experience – the insidious nature of the mental health epidemic is a much quieter foe. So quiet, in fact, that symptoms aren't always obvious to the casual observer until the sufferer is at a crisis point. This is one of the reasons why Nicole is such an advocate for prevention rather than cure.

"Something that has always struck me about mental health in the NHS is that it's very reactive, as opposed to physical health, where there are now more proactive strategies. It's starting to change, but if you want to see a psychologist, you have to wait until you're feeling pretty bad before you get to see one.

"It seems really wrong to me that people have to be so unwell before they get proactive help and, in fact, a lot of the strategies that we teach in therapy are very helpful for all of us in managing life's ups and downs.

"It's very likely that for most people their student experience is not going to be completely happy. It's more likely that

there will be fluctuations over the course of university life. By supporting students to cultivate a mental toolkit, we can help them to develop insight, understanding and skills to manage and maintain their own wellbeing during these transitions."

### **Timely support, effective prevention**

So how does Nicole envisage wellbeing at LMH in the future? She's quick to expand. "Moving forward, we have two key priorities: first and foremost, to continue to provide effective and timely support to students currently experiencing difficulties. Secondly, to develop a holistic, proactive approach to promoting wellbeing and implementing preventative strategies.

"We want to develop and integrate wellbeing throughout the students' journey and experience with the College. From information for prospective applicants through to having a wellbeing provision at open days, we want to make wellbeing part of the everyday conversation for students – not just something with activity concentrated around awareness weeks."

Research by Palmer, O'Kane and Owens on the transitional experience of first-year students in the UK found that those who leave university often drop out in the first few weeks of term, or as a result of experiences during that term.

"What we would really like to do over the course of each student's journey at LMH is to help them to develop mental health literacy," Nicole says, "in a way that allows them to not only thrive at Oxford but to take these skills forward in life. It's about recognising and developing a resilience to stress and pressure."

Some of this advice is purely practical – eating well, sleeping well, engaging in social interaction and spending time in open spaces. These are considerations important for the wellbeing of everyone, not just students. But there are also factors that are unique to student life,

especially Oxford University student life. Cognitive functions such as problem-solving, creativity and academic excellence all benefit from good mental health, and the wellbeing strategies being developed at LMH will focus on areas such as these, too.

### **Building wellbeing for life**

Nicole has her own experience of being a student at Oxford, spending a year at Keble completing her Masters in Research and Psychology. It's an experience that she self-effacingly describes as being "a very long time ago now", but which gives her a "useful understanding of the Oxford system and how it works".

As we speak, students are walking past outside her window and conversations are flowing. It's easy to see why LMH is fondly remembered by so many of its alumni. And the College is, of course, no stranger to firsts. Leading change is one of LMH's founding principles and this latest shift – positioning wellbeing to be a central tenet of college life – is indicative of our never-ending determination to keep improving and innovating.

A point of reference for Nicole and the College now is *The University Mental Health Charter* – an evidence-based document supported by the British Psychological Society. The Charter stresses the impact of ongoing transitions on students' mental wellbeing, from application through to graduation and beyond. It's a step towards systemic, cultural change and building skills for life, and Nicole is fully focused on ensuring students' wellbeing is fully supported – at every stage of their LMH career and long into the future.



# Are you looking after your wellbeing?

Evidence suggests there are five key steps that can make the biggest difference to wellbeing.



Connect with  
other people



Be physically  
active



Learn  
new skills



Give to  
others



Pay attention  
to the present  
moment

LMH's gardens offer  
an opportunity for  
students to stay  
physically active





# A search for truth, justice and a sense of self

For five years, **Pauline Baer de Perignon** (1996, MSt European Literature) searched for answers that would reveal what happened to renowned artworks collected by her great-grandfather, Jules Strauss. The resulting book – *The Vanished Collection* – builds a bridge between Nazi-occupied France and the present day, and combines family history with deeply personal insights into generational trauma and looted art.

**P**auline Baer de Perignon's investigation into the fate of Jules Strauss' art collection began at a concert by Caetano Veloso, the pioneering Brazilian musician. It was 2014, and her cousin, Andrew, leaned towards her and suggested there could be 'something shady' about the sale of Strauss' celebrated art collection, more than 70 years earlier. The pair met again shortly afterwards, and Andrew presented Pauline with an astonishing list of paintings that had been declared stolen, having once been owned by Strauss. It included three by Degas, four Renoirs, two Sisleys and two Monets.

In the months and years that followed, Pauline immersed herself in research to try and unravel and understand what had happened to her great-grandfather's collection during the Nazi occupation

***"I felt that Jules Strauss was holding my hand during my research and I got to know him and my great-grandmother. It was really helpful, because research can be a lonely process."***

of France. Her enquiries took her across Europe and added a new dimension to many of her family relationships. "It began with curiosity about my family and about art and French history," says Pauline, who now lives in Paris but returns often to Oxford – a city she adores. "There was a mystery, an enigma, and that was fascinating to me. I've always loved mysteries and delighted in searching for the truth within my family – to uncover the post-war silence and better understand my origins.

"I reached a turning point," she adds, "where I discovered the injustice in this story. I wanted to uncover this and I had a feeling I could do something for my family."

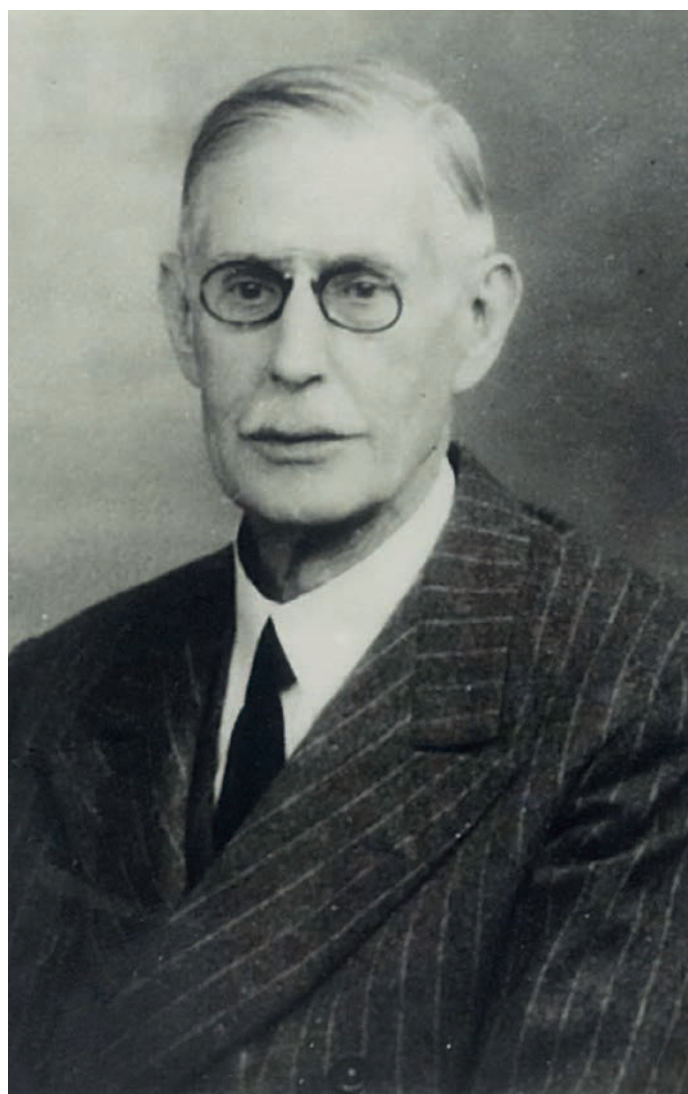
#### **A quest for repatriation**

It is estimated that the Nazis looted some 600,000 paintings from Jews during World War II, of which at least 100,000 are still missing. The practice was intended both to enrich the Third Reich and to eradicate Jewish culture. Before the outbreak of war, Jules Strauss had been a well-known Paris collector, who loved French 18<sup>th</sup> century art, and in particular the French Regency style. He lived among the furniture, ornaments, paintings and drawings he accrued and, though he remained in Paris during the war and avoided deportation, Pauline's research raised many questions about whether Jules' art was either stolen or he was forced to sell.

The strain he was placed under undoubtedly took a terrible toll. Jules lost his son, André, during the War and Pauline found evidence during her research that his home was expropriated. As the catalogue to a 1961 sale of Strauss' art explains: 'The collection never stopped growing and, during the terrible years of the Occupation, it was a difficult task to keep all these objects safe. Dismayed in the wake of his son's death, harried by persecution, devastated by the tragedy that had befallen his country, Jules Strauss died in 1943.'



Jules and Marie-Louise in Paris circa 1935



Jules Strauss 1861–1943



### Curiosity, not revenge

Pauline's approach to seeking out the truth was, by her own admission, entirely unstructured. "I started by looking into everything all at the same time," she smiles. "I made lists of artworks that had belonged to Jules and went through auction house archives to try and find out who'd bought and sold them. I wrote to everyone – academics, art historians, researchers... My method was that I had no method."

She believes, however, that her inexperience worked to her advantage. "It was helpful for me to be so naïve at the beginning," Pauline says, "because if I had known more, I wouldn't have dared to have bothered all these people. And people were very helpful, actually, because I think they could feel I was quite curious but in a good way."

"I remember talking to someone who told me that this kind of search and investigation has to be done with no anger against history or against people. It has to be about seeking the truth, but with no idea of revenge."

Pauline's research rapidly became an obsession. She spent day after day in the research rooms of the Musée d'Orsay and the Louvre and at the French Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Archives Centre, scouring art catalogues and articles. She discovered that her great-grandmother did file a report of painting theft in Paris after Jules' death. This leads her to reflect deeply on why this chapter of her family's history, and her Jewish identity, was so little discussed in the decades that followed. As a result, her book becomes as much a study of collective memory and the need to forget as the story of an investigation. "People had gone through so much loss. Family loss, lifestyle loss, art loss," Pauline says. "The War was the end of people's beliefs, the end of joy. People had to change everything afterwards, and I think that's why it wasn't easy to talk about it."

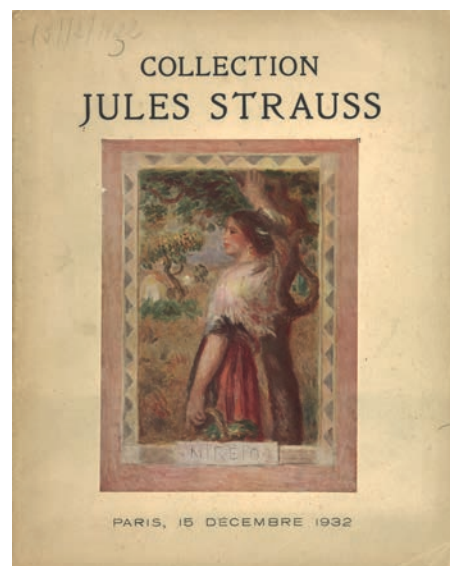
***"I remember talking to someone who told me that this kind of search and investigation has to be done with no anger against history or against people. It has to be about seeking the truth, but with no idea of revenge."***

"I can't repair that sadness and trauma," she adds, "but recovering memories and finding the truth matter. In situations like this, they are among the most important things you can do."

### The battle for justice

Pauline calls her investigation a sentimental journey. "You get very close to people you've never met", she says, describing what it meant to build a growing picture of this hidden period in her family's history. "I felt that Jules was holding my hand during my research and I got to know him and my great-grandmother. It was really helpful, because research can be a lonely process."

As the years went on, the many hours spent alone in archives began to pay dividends. Pauline travelled to Koblenz in Germany and, despite a range of frustrations – the archive had not been digitised, the language barrier prevented her from understanding the classification system, even her Airbnb apartment had been double booked – she found a key piece of evidence. It was a receipt, showing that a drawing by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, 'A Shepherd', had been sold to the Nazis. A



Jules's office in his apartment at 60 Avenue du Bois around 1920

Right, above: Pauline speaking at the French Ministry of Culture when Largillière's 'Portrait of a Lady as Pomona' (pictured right, below) was returned to her family as a result of her painstaking research.

short while later, she discovered that this painting had been listed as missing from Strauss' collection. It was the kind of proof she had been seeking all along.

At this point, Pauline began to encounter another challenge that required all of her resolve and analytical nous—appealing for artworks to be returned. She discovered that the Tiepolo drawing was now held by the Louvre. Documents there show that Strauss – a major donor to the Louvre during his lifetime – had owned it before the war. She began to question whether, 'the museum, which had been holding on to the drawing for 70 years, had no intention of returning it'.

Further painstaking research then revealed that 'Portrait of a Lady as Pomona' by Nicolas de Largillière, at the time housed in the Old Masters Picture Gallery in Dresden, also once belonged to Jules Strauss, before ending up in Nazi hands. Pauline travelled to the museum in Germany to ask for its return and was met with a response she says left her "speechless". The museum's director suggested that Strauss may have been 'happy' to sell his painting in the 1940s. The anger and upset Pauline felt penetrates the book at this stage, as it does when the museum later suggests that it will return the painting – but only if Strauss' ancestors then sell it back to the museum. As she writes, 'restitution is a way of acknowledging persecution' – and she was not willing to have conditions attached to it.

In the end, some version of the justice Pauline had always been searching for was achieved. Staff at the Louvre proved accommodating to her requests, and the Tiepolo was returned to Pauline and her family at a ceremony in the French Ministry of Culture. Then, in January 2021, 80 years after the painting was first appropriated and more than four years after Pauline began appealing for its return, the Largillière was returned to France. With pandemic restrictions still in place, the painting was carefully carried into Pauline's home. She and her husband, Henri, stood looking at it in silence for several minutes, both still wearing the facemasks they had put on during the delivery, both thinking of the journey it had taken and what that journey represented.

***"The War was the end of people's beliefs, the end of joy. People had to change everything afterwards, and I think that's why it wasn't easy to talk about it."***



### A journey towards acceptance

*The Vanished Collection* is many things. It reads at times like a detective story and at others like a family history, but one with far-reaching and wide-ranging consequences. But it is notable throughout for being a search not only for truth but also for purpose. 'What I wanted to say,' Pauline writes, 'was that, at last, I had achieved something with my life.'


"That is my character," she adds today. "Educated as a girl in bourgeois society, it's easy to think you're not really worth anything. I knew I had always dropped things easily or discouraged myself. That was no longer the case."

Pauline is now considering what comes next. She has stopped spending whole days and weeks in archives, and has no intention of trying to locate all of the artworks that once took pride of place in her grandfather's collection. She may write a new book, she says, based on conversations with others who have faced similar challenges to her own.

But, whatever the future holds, it is clear that the labyrinthine journey that began at a Caetano Veloso concert has had profound consequences for Pauline's family, her history and her own sense of self. "I was always searching for something," she says, "and this gave me that purpose. It gave me a reason to be proud."

*The Vanished Collection: Stolen Masterpieces, Family Secrets and One Woman's Quest for the Truth* is available now, published by Head of Zeus. A review of Pauline's book was published in the 2022 edition of *The Brown Book* (p.144).





*"At a time when calls to diversify and decolonise the curriculum and to divest from the fossil fuel and border industries are on the rise, our universities' involvement with the global arms trade continues to remain largely untouched."*

# War starts at home

As her Junior Research Fellowship at LMH comes to an end, political sociologist **Dr Dilar Dirik** reflects on researching forced migration at Oxford, and asks challenging questions about whether universities should be doing more to acknowledge and confront their own links to conflict.



Ever since fleeing Turkey with my parents as a child refugee in the 1990s, the question of 'Why do wars exist?' has haunted me. Unsatisfied with simplistic statements about human nature, I turned to research to get to the root of the matter of war, violence and forced displacement.

Sceptical of power structures based on my own experience and expertise, I believe that scholarly analyses of law, policy and lived experience must be accompanied by profound political and philosophical questions about the role of war and violence in the contemporary global order. Despite the variety of disciplinary approaches in the field of forced migration studies, scholarship seldom centres on the politics and economy of war in today's world. Instead, it focuses on the experience and management of displacement. While many people are keen on learning about the conditions of people experiencing war and forced migration, few know of the role our educational institutions play within this, for example.

My appointment in late 2019 as the Joyce Pearce Junior Research Fellow at LMH and the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford made me one of the first and only scholars at the Centre with a forced displacement background focusing on refugees and forced migration. Previously, I studied the revolutionary women's movement in Kurdistan within the scope of my doctoral thesis at Cambridge. I conducted archival work, as well as ethnographic fieldwork in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. Last year, I published my findings in my book *The Kurdish Women's Movement: History, Theory, Practice*.

As part of my research agenda in Oxford, I had planned fieldwork in different parts of Kurdistan on stateless forms of self-determination. I wanted to examine democratic self-governance and confederalism in refugee camps co-administered by members of the revolutionary Kurdistan freedom movement, with a particular focus on women's struggles. A second aspect of my project related to women seeking justice in the aftermath of ISIS. Overall, I was keen on analysing the ways in which non-state, political communities develop and embrace radical models of democracy, from the margins of nation



Refugees and IDPs from Syria and Iraq in the autonomously-run Newroz refugee camp in Northern Syria. Dirik, 2015.

states. I wanted to consider how this can lead to alternative notions of justice and social organisation. My university-funded project, *Women & War: a Feminist Podcast*, launched in mid-2022, built on this, aiming to make cutting-edge research on the gendered dimensions of war and violence accessible to wider audiences.

### A broader view on contemporary conflict

As has been the case for many scholars, my research agenda was disrupted by the emergence of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Another factor was the resurgence of war. Mere weeks into my fellowship, in October 2019, in violation of international law, the Turkish army launched another comprehensive military operation ('Peace Spring') in the majority-Kurdish regions of Northern Syria, displacing hundreds of thousands of people within days.

Unable to conduct fieldwork as planned due to these developments, I came to 'shift the gaze' away from the Middle East and instead study the ways in which war is enabled and normalised – including through our knowledge production in the Global North. Most of today's conflicts can be traced back to earlier periods in history, and in particular

to centuries-old legacies of slavery, colonisation, capitalism and imperialism. Taking a long view provides the necessary historical context to make sense of today's social, political and economic issues, such as state violence, dispossession and exploitation, racism, gendered violence and environmental destruction.

Ongoing issues are not only an outcome of the borders drawn in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for the imperialist interests of the British and French (Gertrude Bell, one of the key actors in this period, is an alumna of LMH), but also of decades of aggressive nation-state building in the region, as well as contemporary geopolitical affairs, driven by state interests. The term 'conflict' often fails to capture the deep historical and sociological realities of violence and oppression endured by communities over the past century in different parts of the Middle East. It is also unable to capture the international dynamics that organise power on a global scale and render justice out of reach, especially for non-state groups.

Seen from this perspective, Kurdish forced displacement becomes a matter with large-scale international roots and implications, connected to global events and phenomena. Even a handful of news headlines from recent years illustrate its



scope. The photograph of Alan Kurdi, a Syrian-Kurdish toddler who lost his life drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, became the symbol of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015. Behrouz Boochani, an Iranian-Kurdish journalist and activist, spent six years imprisoned on Manus Island, an offshore migrant detention site used by the Australian state to externalise its borders. And many people who lost their lives drowning in the English Channel in recent years due to the UK Home Office's increasing restrictions on migration were Kurds from Iraq.

### Universities and the arms trade

As my research at Oxford continued, I increasingly began to pay attention to an opaque and unholy world, characterised by violence, corruption, secret deals, blackmail and deception: the global arms trade.

According to a 2021 *Huffington Post* article, more than one-third of UK Russell Group universities invested in or received funding from arms manufacturing companies, with Oxford having 'taken more than £10.5 million in research and consultancy funding since the 2015/16 financial year'. The Saïd Business School is named after Wafic Saïd, who struck one of the biggest and most controversial arms deals in history in the 1980s between Britain and Saudi Arabia. The 2021 *Huffington Post*

article also states that: 'Among the firms [Russell Group] universities [including Oxford] dealt with are BAE Systems, Rolls Royce and Cobham'. The weapons manufactured by such firms can be connected to war crimes committed in different parts of the world, including the regions I planned to visit for my project. Their technologies are frequently used to target civilians, leaders and community organisers, who are struggling for peace and for political solutions.

At a time when calls to diversify and decolonise the curriculum and to divest from fossil fuel and border industries are on the rise, our universities' links to the global arms trade continue to remain largely untouched, despite many joint student and staff campaigns. The decentralised nature of governance at Oxford and Cambridge makes it difficult to advocate for divestment at these universities.

In addition, inside a marketised education system, academics are often discouraged from chasing such questions, even though these tackle the core of the national and global political and economic systems that we inhabit, including the UK's role in conflicts around the world. This in turn raises questions about the climate in which we teach, learn and produce knowledge together. We cannot understand the 'root causes' of forced migration if we see war as

something far away. I believe that UK universities' links to the global arms trade are an assault on life, peace and freedom, including academic freedom. How can the same states, institutions and businesses that contribute to or profit from warfare and injustice in different parts of the world also fund research for solutions to forced migration?

### Reflections on research life

As I approach the end of my Junior Research Fellowship at LMH, I reflect on my own role as a researcher and member of the university community and the future of the study of forced migration. This future depends not only on the politics of funding but also on the freedom of people around the globe. What role will our universities play in a polarised world, with more war and ecological catastrophe on the immediate horizon? How much longer will our universities continue to benefit from the interests of institutions of power and privilege such as the fossil fuel, border and arms industries? Will they truly aspire to become sites of global leadership on the challenges faced by our planet today, as their leaders often suggest? What would genuine change imply for universities' relationships to funding from industries profiting from violence?

There is certainly no lack of empathy among students and staff at Oxford regarding such questions. However, it is relatively easy to issue statements of concern, hold vigils, establish scholarships and thereby express one's individual or collective sentiment through various acts of charity. Ultimately, such performances of care remain limited and unsustainable, as long as our universities continue to be a party to the arms trade and border industry. A morally principled and courageous stance would be to take an active stance against war, especially against those led under our watch.

**The Joyce Pearce Junior Research Fellowship is supported by Ockenden International.**

***The Kurdish Women's Movement: History, Theory, Practice* by Dilar Dirik is available now, published by Pluto Press.**



Newroz Camp was set up by majority-Kurdish self-governance structures inside Syria for Êzidî survivors of the ISIS genocide in Şengal (Sinjar), Iraq in August 2014. Dirik, 2015.

# LMH Connections:

## Médecins sans Frontières

The links that bring LMH alumni together span the globe. Here, **Sarah Wookey** (1974, Mathematics) and **Geoff Skingsley** (1979, PPE) share their recollections of time spent with the humanitarian medical charity, Médecins sans Frontières.

### Sarah's story: from Banbury to the DRC



I came to medicine late, following an outstandingly undistinguished undergraduate career at LMH, and didn't start working with MSF until my 60s. By then I had been a GP in North Oxfordshire for 30 years, and the apron strings attaching me to my children were fraying satisfactorily. As the Cotswolds aren't known for providing clinical exposure to tropical diseases, MSF recommended further training before considering my application, so I reverted to being a student and spent a very enjoyable three months at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

I expected my interview at MSF to consist of questions about tropical diseases and the management of disasters. Instead, I was asked if I thought I'd be able to cope living in a confined area, with a group of MSF staff from all over the world with whom I might have

little in common, eating the same food day after day, for up to nine months. It was only later that it dawned on me that what the interviewer was doing was assessing whether the other MSF staff would be able to put up with me!

I ended up doing three assignments. One was in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a conflict zone where there would be days when you were told to stay in the camp for your safety. I saw there how important it is to keep the local community on side. Your being there depends on trust, and that trust can so easily be lost if you do something that is considered wrong in that context. I also spent time in Chad, at the only hospital for hundreds of miles in an incredibly remote part of the south-west of the country. And I spent time in Ethiopia, at a huge refugee camp for 45,000 people, very near the border with South Sudan.



### A new way to work

As a GP, I am used to dealing with a wide range of problems. But, unsurprisingly, the problems I was presented with during my time with MSF were very different from those in leafy Banbury. I had never seen severe acute malnutrition before, for example. Thankfully MSF has very clear guidelines on how you manage everything, because otherwise everyone would be managing cases based on the protocols in their own countries. And you have no choice but to respond differently from how

you might in the UK. Whereas here you might do a blood test, take a swab, and wait and see how a patient progresses, often by the time people came to us they were pretty sick, and we didn't have the luxury of investigating in the same way, so we sometimes had to assume the worst case scenario and respond as such.

The local clinical staff were unfailingly dedicated, welcoming and polite. They knew I'd only be around for a few months and patiently put up with my cultural gaffes and local ignorance. And while it's true that I was out of

my depth most of the time, you also know you are doing the best you can in very challenging situations.

When I returned to the UK after my third assignment, I caught a train to one of the remotest parts of Britain, needing just to spend time close to water and sky, and to be in charge of my time. The period I spent with MSF made me realise things can fall apart far more quickly than any of us can imagine. I feel incredibly privileged to have had the opportunity to do this work and to make this later life career change.

### Geoff's story: Vive MSF!

**M**y journey to getting involved with Médecins sans Frontières started with an unusual but serendipitous moment. I had become a donor while living and working in France. As a result of a donation I gave, I was invited to an information evening, where I encountered a side to MSF that is not often seen.

A surgeon in his late 50s was the speaker. A doctor from a provincial French town, each year he gives two to three weeks of his annual leave to go into a difficult country to train local MSF medical staff on tricky surgical techniques. I knew about the volunteers who worked full time, but I hadn't appreciated that there were also these people – experts – who contribute in a very different but meaningful way.

Not being remotely medical myself, I decided that, if I was to get involved, it couldn't be in a medical capacity, and anyway my day job didn't permit much time. So I responded to a request to stand for the board of the MSF Foundation, becoming a non-executive director. Unlike many other foundations, this one is focused on the upstream and downstream humanitarian aid activity, rather than on current operational missions. By this I mean the foundation has a branch that generates analysis of (downstream) past interventions, through a unit called CRASH, which offers remarkably honest and sometimes difficult insights into issues that arose in earlier missions by MSF. And it also has an 'upstream' arm, which seeks to harness new technology to improve humanitarian solutions in the future.



Examples of this include:

- In situ 3D printing of prosthetic limbs, which MSF pioneered in a hospital for civilians wounded in the Syria and Iraq conflicts. I was fortunate enough to visit this facility and see how innocent victims of war can help rebuild their lives, thanks to this remarkable innovation.
- Mobile phone-based detection of diseases (which removes the need for patients in difficult terrain to travel to hospital to be diagnosed), and mobile phone-based measurement of resistance to antibiotics (which helps to ensure the most effective medication is prescribed).

### A commitment to innovation

There are several other projects under development that could, if successful, be equally impactful in improving the

speed, cost and accuracy of delivering medical aid in some of the world's most remote places. My humble contribution to this is to help the board collect funds, plan the timelines and budgets of project development, and generally blow the trumpet of the work being done.

It has permitted me to see the many activities of MSF beyond the core work of delivering emergency aid in conflict or disaster zones. MSF sources accessibly priced pharmaceuticals, investigates neglected diseases, develops exemplary aid logistics capabilities, harnesses digital and connected devices to equip local medical staff in the field, and is developing a mini-pharmaceutical laboratory for surgery that can be packed in a lorry or even a suitcase. All this is done using the unique perspective that MSF brings after decades of providing medical aid in the most difficult environments.

I wish I could claim some role as an actor in this, but I can't. All I can do is bear witness to the incredible work done and offer a modicum of business oversight into how the foundation goes about its mission. The MSF team are a passionate lot, which is vital for them to have the courage to do what they do. It makes for some interesting board meetings, but you have to admire people's persistence and dedication, doing work few would feel willing or able to do. So I say loud and clear: vive MSF!

**To find out more about Médecins sans Frontières, visit [msf.org](https://www.msf.org)**

# How can you help creativity to flourish?

In her recently published book, **Karen Hosack Janes** (2006, DPhil Education) explores what can be done in the classroom and at home to inspire young imaginations. Karen shares her insights into the secrets of creativity every teacher and parent should know.

It wasn't until I started researching the creative development of people well-known for being creative, in preparation for my book *Nurturing Creativity in the Classroom*, that I realised the significance of my growing up in a family where the arts were appreciated.

I don't mean that my parents hung expensive original works of art on our walls, or that classical literature was the staple for bedtime stories. Rather, there was simply a tacit understanding of the importance of creativity in our home. I have memories of my mother doing pen and ink sketches of birds, and of my father at his drawing board. The arts were part of everyday life. Everyone had our favourite bands and music genres, and I remember this being respected, never belittled.

## Accidentally limiting creativity

I began writing my book on creativity after completing my doctorate at the University of Oxford's Department of Education, exploring methods of teaching that enable creativity. The findings of my study uncovered that some methods used by primary school teachers actually seemed to inhibit creativity, rather than nurture it.

This wasn't limited to the arts but applied across subject areas. I found that teaching that encouraged individual responses from pupils led to more diverse and creative results. In contrast – but commonplace – was a more didactic approach to teaching, with children given step-by-step instructions. This was regularly used by teachers who were aiming to develop pupils' creative



skills, but it actually led to responses from pupils that were all broadly similar – essentially copies of the rules their teachers had set out.

As an educator myself, the research led me to reflect on the balance between teaching that focuses on technical skills and teaching that gives learners more creative agency.

***"I found that teaching that encouraged individual responses from pupils led to more diverse and creative results. In contrast – but commonplace – was a more didactic approach to teaching, with children given step-by-step instructions."***

## Finding inspiration through LMH

I remember listening to the author and former Children's Laureate, Malorie Blackman, at an LMH event during her time as a Visiting Fellow (2016-19). She talked about her mother encouraging her from a young age to use the local library and to write her own stories and poems. It made me want to explore whether my research findings chimed with the early experiences of people widely celebrated for their creativity. So I set about investigating.

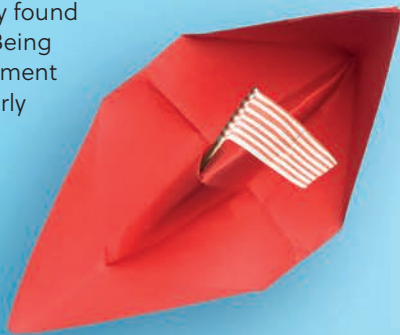
One of the people I interviewed was another LMH alumnus, the composer Julian Nott (1980, PPE). Like other creative people who feature in the book, he remembers the arts being held in high esteem when he was growing up, in both his home and at his school. He told me: "All my school years were about learning the piano, learning the organ, cello, learning things about music".

But in terms of being encouraged to create something of his own, that did not happen until he joined the National Film and Television School, in London. Until then "it was all about other people's creativity". He told me that he reacted well to the model of



learning that was used there, which he called a 'micro market' approach. Each student was given a sum of money to produce a film. "It was such an exciting time in my life," he said, "and I think other students would say the same thing, where you had this amazing opportunity to make a short film...and you just did it!"

I detail more insights about creative people throughout the book. They all grew up in environments where the arts were valued as part of everyday life. Most had homes full of music where conversations about the arts were normal. Many had memories of the arts being something they found enjoyable at school. Being encouraged to experiment with ideas from an early age was also typical.

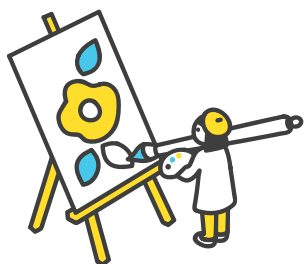


In this respect, Julian Nott's experiences were different from most of the other creatives, as it was only during his postgraduate course that he felt personally involved in the process of composing. I asked Julian if this might have happened sooner had his teachers encouraged his personal responses to the music he was learning. Initially, he said that the National Film and Television School methods "wouldn't have worked if I hadn't had beforehand that formal training, because I would have floundered". However, reflecting on whether this would still be the case had digital music apps (such as GarageBand and Logic Pro) been invented, he said: "Everything would have been massively different if GarageBand was around when I was a teenager, because I would have had more possibilities".

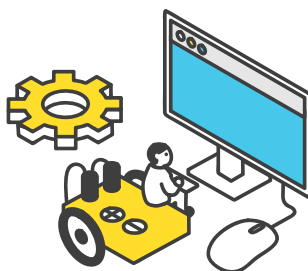
### Three conditions for creativity

In contrast, the mathematician and University of Oxford Professor Marcus du Sautoy talked to me about how, from the age of 12, he saw a strong connection between learning to play an instrument, acting in school plays and problem solving using maths. His view, which was inspired and encouraged by his teachers, was that: "someone has done some creation, but you move it on and add your own creativity to bring it alive". This was usually done in collaboration with other people, which is another thing the creatives in my book all describe as being instrumental in helping them to advance their creative skills.

## The three conditions for nurturing creativity



**Valuing the arts  
in everyday life**



**Having time for  
experimentation  
and play**



**Having opportunities  
to collaborate  
with others**

From my research, I believe the three 'conditions for nurturing creativity', as I call them, can be summed up as:

- Valuing the arts in everyday life
- Having time for experimentation and play
- Having opportunities to collaborate with others.

I use these as lenses throughout the book to ascertain how, and if, they are to be found in a variety of relevant educational theories and current educational practices. I conclude that there is a great deal of consensus about what creativity looks like, and also about how to go about creating the right conditions for it to be nurtured.

But, overall, I propose that if children and young people are able to be exposed to a wide range of art forms from different cultures across time and place, and if we welcome the richness that this variety brings, and if we put in place ample time for them to play with their imaginations, and if we acknowledge that creativity thrives on collaboration, we will definitely open up more opportunities for creativity to flourish. How could we not?

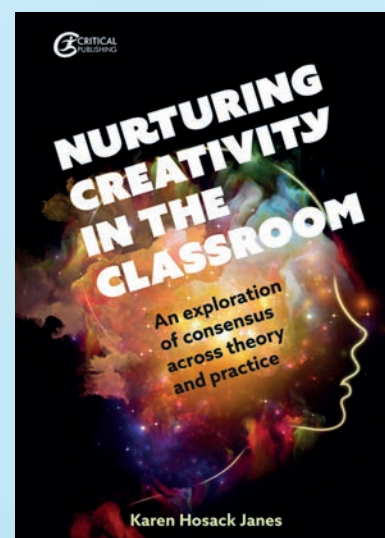
### Is AI changing creativity?

Further research into teaching methods that nurture creativity is much needed to support teachers. It can show where even small changes in lesson planning can make big differences to the level of creative agency given to pupils. This is the main focus of my work, and it is necessary because we live in an increasingly automated age, where the World Economic Forum (WEF) predicts tasks done by machines in the workplace could displace 85 million jobs globally by 2025. (Reassuringly, it also predicts that 97 million new roles may emerge that are more adapted to the new division of labour.)

The WEF has also suggested that we may need to change how we view success in education in light of increased automation. Perhaps the time has come to move away from standardised test scores and towards more wide-ranging measures of success that are tied to improving lives and having an impact on wider society.

Through my book, I consider how an education that focuses on nurturing creative skills – which I define as encouraging originality and independent thought – can be part of this. It has been

fascinating to think about the impact of providing children and young people with everything needed for creativity to flourish in our rapidly evolving times.



**Nurturing Creativity in the Classroom** is available now, published by Critical Publishing. If you would like to know more about Karen's work, please email [khosack-janes@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:khosack-janes@brookes.ac.uk)



# Telling the stories of Southeast Asian creators

After **Aisha Hassan** (2012, English) left LMH, she helped to set up an online retail store with a difference. Not only does Dia Guild showcase the best in Southeast Asian design – it gives a powerful voice to the designers too. Aisha tells us more.

Dia



Left to right: Dia Guild co-founders Kylie Francis, Alia Farouk and Aisha Hassan.

It's a typical Malaysian day – sweltering, sunny – and my best friends and I stand around a cluster of post-its. Nearby, a laptop screen reveals that, based on our market research, when people hear the words 'Southeast Asia', their most common association is the word 'cheap'. Scribbled across the post-its before us were all the ways we hoped to change this negative narrative. How could my home region, full of ancient temples and tropical havens, rich with heritage craftsmanship and vibrant culture, be reduced to a destination for cheap goods? My soon-to-be co-founders, Alia and Kylie, shared my indignation. Together, we would build a business that championed Southeast Asia to the world.

Today, two years after that fateful meeting, Dia Guild is a growing online platform celebrating Southeast Asian creators who are transforming artisanship through ethical fashion, luxury collections and unique design. We curate products and content that highlight the region's diversity, and include the personal stories of every partner we work with, and the context behind every product.

We have shell minaudières (small, decorative handbags) that were featured in *Crazy Rich Asians*, jewellery made of upcycled bullets from the Vietnam War, leather fans crafted by shadow puppet artisans, one-of-a-kind handwoven fabrics, accessories that support refugee education, and so much more. The vast majority of our collections are proudly handmade, and we ship all around the world.

Dia's ethos is to give context and credit, especially to craft. While we've seen versions of artisanship like batik printing or rattan weaving surface in the mainstream, there's often a lack of information around their origins. Sometimes the craft is simply white-labelled, or even just imitated, and then sold. For my co-founders and I, three women of various Southeast Asian ethnicities who had the privilege of studying and working abroad, it was crucial to represent the region's various cultures mindfully. This, we knew, would turn the shopping experience into a more conscious one.

***"We are intent on seeing what happens when you spotlight personal and cultural histories, and how this may enrich someone's understanding of an already beautifully crafted thing."***

***“Few people would know that while gingham may seem like a distinctly British print, it actually comes from Southeast Asia. The etymology of the word stems back to ‘genggang’, the Malay word for ‘striped’.”***

### Where selling and storytelling meet

That’s why Dia places a huge emphasis on storytelling and education. We share the journeys of every designer to bring a sense of humanity back to today’s fast-paced, overwhelming retail environment. We have an earring maker who started her business because of her father’s brain injury, a silversmith hoping to transform the trauma he experienced during life under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and an artisan who embarked on batik after discovering her late mother’s hidden box of tools, amidst many others. Beyond personal histories, we also explore the socioeconomic circumstances around craftsmanship.

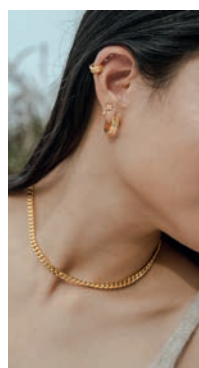
Few people would know, for instance, that while gingham may seem like a distinctly British print, it actually comes from Southeast Asia. The etymology of the word stems back to ‘genggang’, the Malay word for ‘striped’. Mills in Manchester latched onto gingham production in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in order to revive their struggling economies. Similarly, rattan furniture became a hallmark of Western mid-century interior design. But its history — including how it originally found its way out of Southeast Asia through European colonists who unethically harvested the vine-link palm and traded it to meet growing demand overseas, thus leading to a shortage in the 1970s — is usually drowned out.

### A celebration of craftsmanship

To be clear, Dia is not interested in historical blame games. Instead, we are intent on seeing what happens when you spotlight personal and cultural histories, and seeing how this may enrich someone’s understanding of an already beautifully crafted thing. We continually explore the intersection of craft and culture on Dia’s online platform, as well as during our offline events around the world. We also take pride in incorporating music and poetry during our pop-ups, as it brings together other storytelling communities alongside Dia’s partner artisans.

It would be incredible to see some of the LMH community at future events, and I encourage you to stay updated by signing up to our newsletter at [www.diaguild.com](http://www.diaguild.com) and following us on Instagram @diaguild. (And yes, you’ll find some discounts there too!) We want everyone in the world to experience what Southeast Asia has to offer and to discover something new.

The best part of this whole experience has been sharing it with my best friends and the incredible Southeast Asian creators we’ve met along the way. Working tirelessly to showcase their brands to a global community has been one of the hardest and most fulfilling experiences of my life. I sincerely hope you’ll take the time to explore our platform. You’re bound to stumble upon a meaningful story and, of course, some beautiful things.



## What LMH means to me

My experience at LMH epitomises what my parents never had and what they worked so hard to give me. Before me, no woman in my family had gone to university, and my father making his way out of a Malaysian village was no easy feat. One generation later, there I was at LMH for the primary purpose of learning, all while getting drunk on youth, friendship and love. That virtually carefree indulgence feels too good to be true. But it was true. LMH is a reminder of how eternally grateful I am to my family. As the Chinese proverb goes, “one generation plants the trees, another gets the shade”.





**Patricia Brown** (Bartley, 1936, PPE) was an undergraduate when she was recruited to support the famed Second World War codebreaking effort at Bletchley Park. Following Patricia's death in 2021, Karen Lewis celebrates her remarkable contribution to the UK's wartime security.

## A hidden wartime hero

By any measure, Patricia Brown's service at Bletchley Park was noteworthy, but for a woman it was exceptional. Few women became section leaders with line management responsibilities for male colleagues, and it was highly unusual for a young woman to have led the attack on a major cipher system used by Axis countries to encrypt communications. Patricia Bartley, as she then was, accomplished both. In recognition of her achievements, she was named as one of the four outstanding British female codebreakers of the Second World War in GCHQ's authorised history.

Patricia was born in 1917 in Dhaka, then part of British-ruled India. When she joined LMH in 1936 to study philosophy, politics and economics, the Bartley family had returned to Britain and were living in the village of Swanbourne, just a few miles to the south west of Bletchley.

The mansion and grounds of Bletchley Park were purchased in 1938 as a war station for the Government Code and Cypher School, and in the weeks preceding the outbreak of the Second World War, the organisation moved from its London base to Bletchley. Staff members were billeted in the surrounding villages, and in Swanbourne the Bartley family had Emily Anderson, the organisation's leading female cryptanalyst, billeted

upon them. Within weeks, Anderson had recruited Patricia for wartime service at Bletchley Park. Patricia's studies at LMH were placed on hold and she joined the Code and Cypher School as a linguist.

### From Oxbridge to Bletchley

The employment of Oxbridge dons as wartime codebreakers has become part of Bletchley Park's folklore, but little attention has been paid to the exclusively female linguists who were similarly drafted into the organisation on the outbreak of war. While the dons were recruited to take on the work of senior codebreakers, the linguists were expected to assume some of the work normally undertaken by the juniors. Typically, these young women were well educated and proficient in at least one modern language apart from English. A number of them were LMH alumnae, due in part to the then College Principal, Lynda Grier, who had been approached to help identify suitable candidates.

Initially, Patricia joined the military section. Its remit was to attack the encrypted communications of foreign armies. She worked on Italian army ciphers and later recalled being set to work with just a pencil and paper. In charge of the section was Brigadier John Tiltman, one of Britain's finest codebreakers, who recognised the importance of formal training for

the promising codebreakers among Bletchley's wartime recruits. Under Tiltman, Patricia received a grounding in the principles of cryptanalysis (the process of analysing and decrypting codes without having the original key).

### Taking on Floradora

In the spring of 1941, she was selected to join another legendary British codebreaker, Nigel De Grey, and restart the attack on one of the main ciphers used by German diplomats. Dubbed 'Floradora' by the British after a musical comedy of that name, this cipher had previously been deemed unbreakable.

Underlying Floradora was a standard German diplomatic code book, used to convert messages to code by substituting individual words or phrases for groups of numbers. Messages encoded in this way were insecure, so it was common practice to add another layer of encryption before transmission. With Floradora, however, the underlying code was enciphered not once but twice, which made these messages a more formidable proposition for any codebreaker.

A copy of the code book had been acquired before the war and subsequently the French Secret Service obtained a few rows of the tables used for the double encipherment. Even so, Patricia and De Grey faced a herculean task. More staff were brought in and a mutually beneficial



## LMH and Bletchley Park

Only relatively recently have we been able to identify LMH alumnae who served at Bletchley Park, as they all signed the Official Secrets Act. A list of alumnae who are included in the Bletchley Park roll of honour can be found on the Moment in Time section of the LMH website: [www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/lmh-moment-time](http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/lmh-moment-time).

exchange of information was established with codebreakers in the United States. Patricia was a lynchpin of this liaison.

### The first message decrypted

In January 1942, Patricia took over from De Grey as head of the German Diplomatic Section and by May considerable progress had been made on Floradora. A few messages transmitted earlier in the war had been read.

Further progress was dependent on securing a major commitment of Bletchley Park's punch-card sorting and tabulating machines, but demand for this resource invariably outstripped supply. In a remarkable memorandum for a young wartime recruit to address to a Deputy Director of the Code and Cypher School, Patricia argued that without significant mechanical assistance, it would be pointless to continue working on Floradora. Her intervention secured the necessary commitment and, in October 1942, the section read two current messages passed between the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin and its embassy in Buenos Aires.

This breakthrough elicited a personal letter from the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, congratulating the Code and Cypher School on a 'very remarkable performance'. While the Foreign Office was the principal customer for diplomatic decrypts, the information derived from

Floradora was also of considerable interest to the British counter-espionage services. For example, messages intercepted from the German consulate in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo, the capital of Mozambique) revealed that a regular flow of intelligence on Allied shipping movements around the Cape was being relayed by the Consul General. Close attention was also paid to messages transmitted by the German legation in Dublin, for any signs that intelligence on the build-up of Allied forces in Britain was being leaked to Berlin.

### A leader of men

Under Patricia's watch, the German Diplomatic Section increased in size to some 37 staff members. It speaks to the high regard in which she was held that distinguished, veteran codebreakers were working for a young woman on leave of absence from her undergraduate studies. Ernst Fetterlein, for instance, had been the Tsar's chief cryptanalyst before escaping to Britain

following the revolution in 1917. James Turner and Frank Adcock were also veterans of First World War codebreaking. In the inter-war period, Turner became the Code and Cypher School's master linguist while Adcock returned to academia, becoming Professor of Ancient History at Cambridge.

At the end of 1943, Patricia's mental health broke down and she was unable to return to work until the end of the war. She joined the team tasked with writing the internal history of wartime codebreaking, contributing chapters on breaking Italian cryptographic systems and on miscellaneous cipher systems that sadly remain classified to this day.

Patricia never returned to complete her studies at LMH. After a period working at the Foreign Office, she married Denys Downing Brown of the Foreign Service and accompanied him on various postings to the Middle East and Europe.

**Patricia Brown (née Bartley):**  
1 May 1917 – 26 February 2021

**About the author:** Before retiring from a career in educational research, Karen Lewis studied for a part-time master's degree in Second World War Studies at the University of Birmingham. Subsequently, her research interests have included wartime signals intelligence and, particularly, the employment of university-educated women in codebreaking.





# Why OxWiB means business

**Caitlin MacClay** (2020, Biochemistry, pictured front row, left) and **Coyla Vuki** (2021, History, pictured second row, second from right), are both committee members of Oxford Women in Business (OxWiB). OxWiB was founded 15 years ago to connect young women with opportunities and inspiration from the business world. Caitlin and Coyla explain how it delivers on this ambition.

**Caitlin:** "OxWiB provides opportunities for those who don't feel that they have a direct route into business. We try to inspire confidence and open doors to provide opportunities in areas of interest and enable people to network with others within those areas. It's a safe space for people who want to explore different business industries."

**Coyla:** "We know that most Oxford students look towards the traditional consulting, law, finance and tech roles but we're trying to open up doors to more creative industries and entrepreneurship. It's about making sure that we are catering for everyone, whatever career they want to go into."

"To help with this, our president for next term has introduced a dedicated careers and development team, to create tangible resources to help students navigate specific career paths. We want to increase the the diversity of opportunities and make sure that whatever careers people want to go into, OxWiB can provide a platform for them to do so."

"Each president is in post for a term, supported by a committee some 45-strong. All colleges have at least one ambassador on the committee. I think that's one of the really nice things about OxWiB. The committee is so big that you can really get involved with anything that you want to."

## Opportunities with impact

For Caitlin, the experience she gained through OxWiB led to the offer of a sponsored master's and a job as an in-house scientist with an SME:

"OxWiB has been a springboard. I met the CEO of a small business while working as an intern because of OxWiB. I will now be working for them after I graduate, and they will be funding my master's. That's all because of the connections I made through OxWiB. It's a huge part of where I am now."

Coyla's experiences as an OxWiB rep, meanwhile, have directed her towards a career in marketing. She explains:

"I am currently studying history and I didn't have any idea about what sector I wanted to go into. OxWiB opened the door to a variety of sectors and, through various internships I've been on, I realised that marketing is something that I'm interested in, and it's a sector

***“LMH opened the door to women getting degrees at Oxford, and we’re aiming to take this mission of empowerment further by opening doors to business industries, helping women to create networks and find where they fit in.”***

that I want to go into. My role at OxWiB has helped me learn more about that: managing social media, interacting with other societies and collaborating to make sure that we promote each other’s events. The interconnected nature of how the society works has been really helpful.”

#### **Building links across Oxford**

OxWiB isn’t only about the development of students. There’s also a strong belief in being a good neighbour in the local community.

**Caitlin:** “OxWiB prides itself on working with local businesses and supporting entrepreneurial charities in the area.

“We’re not only trying to advocate for students, we are also trying to boost the community. We’ve had some incredible projects that have aided more than just the students that go to the university. There’s been a primary school outreach programme and we’ve recently worked with a homeless charity and a women’s refuge.”

Both Caitlin and Coyla agree there’s also a parallel between OxWiB providing pathways for women and the ethos behind the foundation of LMH.

**Caitlin:** “I think there’s certainly an overlap in terms of empowerment and of opening doors to women. LMH opened the door to women getting degrees at Oxford, and we’re aiming to take this mission of empowerment further by opening doors to business industries, helping women to create networks and find where they fit in.

“Most people at Oxford want to go into consulting because that’s what everyone does but when you get to the heart of it, there are thousands of jobs that you never would have expected. We aim to provide the tools for people to

understand what it is they’re passionate about and to accelerate in those areas.”

#### **Investing in networking**

OxWiB events regularly offer an opportunity for members to network with speakers after the talks. Previous speakers include experts from the journalism, tech and finance sectors, as well as entrepreneurs.

For Caitlin, the relationship she has been able to develop with OxWiB’s patron, Julie Brown, has been particularly inspirational. Julie has just become Chief Financial Officer at GSK, having recently stepped down as Chief Operating Officer at Burberry.

“I was incredibly lucky as president to form a personal connection with Julie. OxWiB was invited to visit Burberry and discuss its sustainability and ethics. To talk to someone so successful and see just how grounded they are and how much they want to help was inspiring. Women help women to succeed. She’s a shining beacon of what OxWiB represents.”

For Coyla, meanwhile, an event about choosing alternative career paths after leaving university had a particular resonance.

“There were three women of colour talking about their different paths. The talk focused on their different backgrounds and how they managed to thrive in their chosen careers. After many of our events, there’s a networking session. It was lovely to have an opportunity to form a relationship with the speakers.”

#### **Empowered and inspired**

So how has being involved in OxWiB made Caitlin and Coyla see their future chances of success? Despite there clearly still being some way to go in terms of

gender equality in business, both are reasonably optimistic about what the years ahead will bring.

**Coyla:** “I think we are seeing a change. Being part of OxWiB and having events where people talk about the struggles of often being the only woman in the room – but overcoming adversity to reach senior positions – has been thoroughly empowering. When women who have succeeded speak to a room full of women, I think that’s a step in the right direction. OxWiB has a mentorship programme too. I think having an opportunity to create these relationships with women in business is inspirational and I do like that about the society. It provides a platform for people to get a real sense of the workplace in their chosen sector.”

### **OxWiB at-a-glance**

Oxford Women in Business was founded in 2008 to cultivate strong leaders by serving as a platform for enterprising young women and non-binary people across the university. Benefits for members include:

- Workshops, case studies and interview help
- Inspiring speakers, panellists and networks
- Access to great companies and opportunities
- A community of ambitious, friendly members

**Find out more about OxWiB and how to join at: [www.oxwib.com](http://www.oxwib.com)**



# How 'molecular movies' could unlock new medicines

**Professor Philip Biggin**, Ord Fellow and Tutor in Biochemistry, explains why groundbreaking work in progress at the Biggin Lab could point the way to better treatments for a wide range of diseases.

Understanding how life works at the molecular level has never been more important for humanity. Indeed, the popularity of biochemistry at degree level has seen record numbers of applicants to Oxford over the past decade. The recent pandemic raised the awareness of the importance of scientific contributions to society, and biochemists, in various forms, were central to the global response.

But what is biochemistry? Simply put, it is the application of chemistry to the study of biological processes at the molecular and cellular level. It started to emerge as a distinct discipline around the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as scientists started to combine ideas of chemistry, physics and physiology to the study of living things.

As a teenager, I was deeply interested in computing and chemistry, and that led me to read for my first degree in 'computer-aided chemistry'. At that time, I was not really aware that you could even read biochemistry as a distinct subject. However, during my first degree I spent a year working for what was at the time called SmithKlineBeecham (now GSK) down in Brockham Park, near Dorking. Brockham Park is famous for the discovery of the penicillin nucleus, 6-aminopenicillanic acid and the subsequent development of semi-synthetic penicillins. My time there was inspirational and put me on a path towards computational biochemistry. I came to Oxford in 1994 and joined the

Laboratory of Molecular Biophysics to undertake my DPhil in Computational Ion Channel Biophysics and this, along with membrane proteins in general, has been what has formed the basis of my research ever since. It's now at the heart of my work at the Biggin Lab, where we develop and apply computational techniques to understand proteins that live in the membrane that surrounds cells.

## Introducing molecular movies

So what do we actually do? In a nutshell, we use advanced computational methods to analyse and predict the way that proteins like channels, transporters or receptors change shape in response to a signal.

A signal could be a neurotransmitter, for example – a molecule released by a neuron to affect another cell. Or it could be a drug deliberately designed to change the shape of proteins, or to stop changes happening.

Channels, receptors and transporters are all types of membrane proteins, which means they are found within the membrane that surrounds cells like neurons. Membrane proteins are the target for around half of all drugs, so it's incredibly important to understand how they work as we seek to develop effective therapies.

Proteins are extremely dynamic, and that is especially true for membrane proteins. In fact, they need to be dynamic to function. But their movements and their location make them difficult to

capture using experimental techniques. Computational techniques, on the other hand, and more specifically 'molecular dynamics simulations', can provide excellent spatiotemporal resolution. In simple terms, that means they can help show exactly what is happening and when, and therefore show us exactly how proteins respond to different signals. They basically give us a movie of the way proteins move.

## Understanding how proteins change

So, how exactly can we use this? Let's look at one of the membrane proteins I mentioned earlier – transporters. The 'job' of transporters is to move solutes into or out of a cell, causing different levels of solutes and ions to build up either side of a cell membrane.

This enables cells to perform specific tasks. For example, cells in the intestine can use different levels of hydrogen ions to transport di-peptides (which are produced when protein is digested) from the gut into the cells.

In nearly all cases, we don't have a complete picture of the changes transporters go through. Using molecular dynamics simulations, however, we can fill this gap in our knowledge. This can give us crucial clues to help, for example, design drugs that restrict transporters in diseases where they are overactive. Another exciting possibility, which could help us improve drug delivery, is being able to design useful compounds that 'trick'



***"We know in many neurological disorders that transporters do not function as they should. If we could increase the function of these transporters, the potential for treating these disorders could be significant."***

transporters into taking them into cells – like a Trojan horse.

These kinds of questions are a major focus of our group at the Biggin Lab at the moment. We are trying to develop and apply new simulation methods to simulate the motions of transporters. It also turns out that the same calculations can be used to predict, or calculate, how tightly a small molecule, like a drug, can bind to proteins. Moreover, we can do this for each of the different shapes the transporter must cycle through as part of its function.

#### **From transporters to new treatments?**

So why should you care? Well, our knowledge of transporters and their role in diseases is increasing rapidly. We know that about 2,000 genes (of the 22,300 in humans) encode transporters. We also know that the malfunction of many of these genes is associated with a wide

range of diseases, including cancer. Their complex dynamics mean they are challenging targets to design compounds against. But the pharmaceutical industry has managed to target these proteins before. Inhibitors of sodium and glucose transporters are useful for the treatment of diabetes, and inhibitors of the serotonin transporter are some of the best-known treatments for depression – Prozac being the most famous.

Although most of the time we tend to think of drugs as inhibitors, in some cases it can also be therapeutically useful to have a small molecule that makes a transporter work faster or more efficiently. For example, in neurons there is a transporter responsible for removing the neurotransmitter glutamate from the synaptic cleft (the gap between neurons). Although the neurotransmitter is needed to transmit the signal between neurons, if it remains in the synaptic

cleft for too long, this can over-excite the neurons and eventually kill them. What clues could this hold to point towards new treatments?

The potential for progress is great. We know in many neurological disorders that transporters do not function as they should. If we could increase the function of these transporters, the potential for treating these disorders could be significant. It would currently be very difficult to do this, because we don't fully understand how these transporters function. But molecular dynamics simulations could give us the knowledge we need.

**To find out more about the work happening at the Biggin Lab, visit [bigglab.web.ox.ac.uk](http://bigglab.web.ox.ac.uk)**

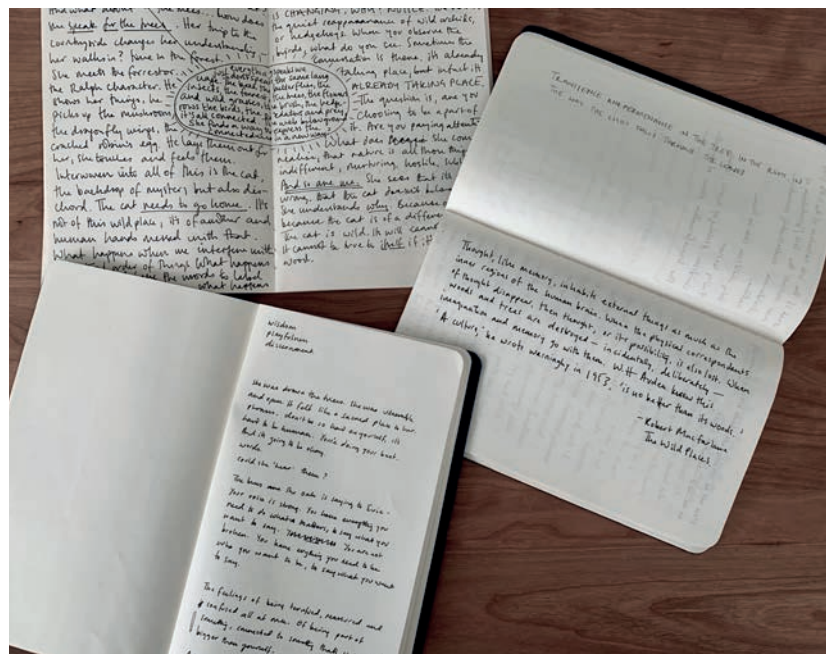


*"I came to writing from a place of loving literature, from a place of belief in the power of story to shape, challenge and nourish the way we try to understand the human experience. But I also came to it, in some ways, by accident."*

# How I wrote... *Wildoak*

**Christina Harrington** (1998, English) explains how snow-covered mountains, domesticated cheetahs and memories of childhood combined as she wrote her first, award-winning, novel.





I look back on my years at LMH as some of the happiest and most fulfilling of my life. I remember sitting in Dr Shrimpton's dimly-lit study, and Dr Barr's bright living room, hanging on every word they had to say. No doubt I remember my tutors with greater clarity and affection than they remember me. I was generally on the quiet side, happy to listen rather than talk and never quite sure if I ought to have been there in the first place. But I loved it.

I loved everything about my time there – I loved biking to the Bod, I loved reading and being surrounded by books and I loved writing about other people's books. But if you had told me then that one day I would try to write one of my own, I would've glanced over my shoulder, sure you were talking to somebody else.

### Childhood inspiration

I came to writing from a place of loving literature, from a place of belief in the power of story to shape, challenge and nourish the way we try to understand the human experience. But I also came to it, in some ways, by accident.

When my daughter was little, we spent a lot of time in our local library. For the first time in years, I picked up battered copies of my own childhood favourites and found a luminous sense of joy and solace in the rediscovery – *Charlotte's Web*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*,

*The Worst Witch*, *The Rats of Nimh*, the *Ramona* books, *Paddington Bear*, *Watership Down*. There were so many titles that conjured a way of seeing the world that I think I had, in many ways, lost hold of.

So, when I enrolled in my first community writing class, as a sleep-deprived new parent, the first story that showed up on the page was not about an adult, but a child. A child that was, in some ways, a version of my own 11-year-old self. I didn't set out with the intention of writing children's literature. I didn't have any expectations at all, really. I was just desperate to use my brain creatively. In fact, I found the whole experience of sitting in a classroom – after 10 years of not sitting in a classroom – intimidating. Intimidating but also exhilarating. The possibilities seemed endless, and because I wasn't writing for an audience and didn't really mind if anyone thought it was rubbish, I kept going. And kept going. For years.

### New start, new desk

I wrote in the pockets of time between school runs and ballet, between dentist appointments and trips to the vet. I wrote on days when I believed wholeheartedly in what I was doing, and on the days when it seemed hopeless at best, self-indulgent at worst. I just kept going.

By the time I came to write *Wildoak*, I had been writing for several years. We

had just moved to Colorado for a year, and I was struggling to get our family settled into a small cabin on the side of a mountain. But the cabin was cosy and warm, with enormous windows that looked across dramatic peaks and a rugged valley. And it had a desk. A clean, uncluttered desk.

*Wildoak* is set in Cornwall, in the early winter of 1963 during the Big Freeze. I think part of the reason it's set then and there, is because the Rocky Mountains were spectacular but also frigid and harsh. And much as I loved the breathtaking views and beautiful hikes, with the slim but electric possibility of running into a mountain lion, I felt homesick. I missed the gentler rolling hills and forests of my childhood, and I missed the feeling of belonging: of knowing the plants and the animals around me – the familiarity of blackbirds and robins, fields white with frost or the silhouette of an old oak at sunset.

That's only part of how the story came about, though. The main reason the book is set in 1963 is because I came across an extraordinary photograph of a smart woman walking a pet cheetah in London. Disbelieving, I did some research and discovered that Harrods really did sell leopard cubs at the time. The Pet Kingdom used to sell lions, cheetahs, baby elephants, alligators and all kinds of wild animals right up to 1976, when it thankfully became illegal.





*"I came across an extraordinary photograph of a smart woman walking a pet cheetah in London. Disbelieving, I did some research and discovered that Harrods really did sell leopard cubs at the time."*

I sat at the small, uncluttered desk in Colorado and read about Christian the Lion – a cub who was bought by two young backpackers and brought back to their apartment off the King's Road. Christian was eventually rehabilitated in Kenya and his story ended well, but it got me thinking about what might have happened to the thousands of other big cats that had been sold when they were small and cute-looking, without a second thought as to what would happen as they grew up.

### Searching for communication

On one level the book is about such a cub, abandoned in an ancient forest called Wildoak, where he is discovered by a 12-year-old girl named Maggie. Maggie has a severe stutter and struggles to speak to humans but has no trouble speaking to animals. The two of them must find ways of helping not only one another, but the forest as well.

On another level, it's a book about communication and understanding. The word 'understanding' primarily conveys a sense of intellectual comprehension, but it also carries emotional connotations too – and the need to forgive. Maggie understands the leopard cub in ways that others don't, but she has yet to

fully understand herself. The cub can't understand what is happening to him or why but, unlike Maggie, has no words to express himself. The two of them meet inside a forest that is, as forest ecologists all over the world are continuing to explore, potentially communicating in its own kind of 'language'. But, like the cub, the forest has no way of speaking out or defending itself.

As these three threads of the novel slowly came together – Maggie, the cub and the forest – I kept coming back to the interconnectedness of all living beings – humans, animals and plants. By the time we left Colorado, I had a full draft of the story on my laptop, with no idea if anyone would ever want to read it. But, in looking back on the process of researching and writing the book, I am now reminded of how it all came about, and of my early love of literature – as a child, and also as a young adult, when I first started at LMH.

*Wildoak* is a book for nine- to 12-year-olds (ish), but my hope is that it's a book for adults too. Adults who can see the world in all its complexity, fragility and heartache, but who can also read with a child's eye view of the world and embrace the wonder, possibility and natural beauty that comes with that kind of vision.



*Wildoak* is published by Scholastic Press in the United States and Chicken House Books in the UK. It's available wherever books are sold. To find out more about Christina's writing please visit [www.ccharrington.com](http://www.ccharrington.com)

# Five minutes with... Eve Bennett

**Eve Bennett** (2018, Modern Languages) clocked up hundreds of thousands of views for her YouTube videos from LMH, before helping to set up the *Meridian* podcast. What have her experiences taught her, and what does she miss most about LMH life?

## When did you first start producing content for social media?

I uploaded my first video when I was 13, using my phone propped up against some books as a tripod. Social media has changed a lot since then, but I've been posting regularly ever since on YouTube, Twitter and Instagram!

## How was it being at LMH and producing social content?

I'll admit that, when I arrived, I was really nervous about telling people that I posted content online. I didn't want to be judged before I'd had a chance to allow people to get to know me in 'real life'. That being said, my friends were always very supportive and many of them enjoyed watching the video blogs I was making. In fact, often their parents would watch them to get an insight into life at LMH and see what their kids were up to!

I definitely had to deal with some snide comments and rumours at times, but LMH and my tutors were always super supportive and interested in my work! I actually worked with the College to produce some social media content for its platforms during my time there.

Most of all though, as new groups of freshers started each year, there were more and more people telling me that my videos documenting life at LMH had encouraged them to apply. They often said my videos made them realise that Oxford was accessible for them, dispelling the shroud of mystery surrounding the university and the misconception that there is an 'ideal' type of person suited to Oxford life. That's one of my proudest achievements.

## How much did LMH feature in your content?

LMH was central to my content, just as it was central to my life at Oxford. The grounds are too pretty not to feature in every single video, and I must have filmed clips in every corner of the library! Watching them back makes me realise how lucky I was to study and live in such a beautiful place.



## How did the *Meridian* podcast come about?

During lockdown I started *Meridian* magazine to enable young, aspiring journalists to gain experience writing about topics they were passionate about. The online magazine was going from strength to strength and I was considering ways to further improve our output. One of my subeditors approached me with the idea of starting a podcast which would examine stories and issues from the magazine in more depth.

## What did you hope it would achieve?

I wanted to invite experienced journalists onto the podcast to talk about their illustrious careers and give tips to our listeners about breaking into the industry. We were lucky enough to have guests such as Jon Sopel and Julie Etchingam sharing their wisdom and experience.

## What do you think is needed to host a successful podcast?

You need hosts that are passionate about the podcast and its aims, and knowledgeable about the subject areas they are talking about. It's also really important that podcast hosts are active listeners and have a keen ear for key points to follow up on when interviewing.

## What are your favourite memories of life at LMH?

There are too many to mention! Wearing crazy costumes at bops. Carols by candlelight and Christmas formals. BBQs and summer picnics in the beautiful grounds. The two LMH balls I was lucky enough to attend. Above all though, I miss just sitting on the balcony of my final year flat in Katie Lea with my friends and watching the world go by, cup of tea in hand. I wish every day that I could do my time at LMH again!

To watch Eve's videos of life at LMH, follow her @RevisionWithEve Youtube channel ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com))





A moment in time

# Students dig up the Fellows' Lawn c. 1940

LMH Archivist **Oliver Mahony** digs through our historic photo collection and unearths memories of a time when tending the land formed part of students' weekly education.



This well-known and lively image shows students digging up the Fellows' Lawn outside Deneke in 1940. Alongside the photograph in the cuttings album is a regulation issued to students coming up in October 1943, detailing the expectations placed on them regarding war-work:

'Every woman undergraduate has, for some time past, been required to devote a maximum of 6 hours a week to practical work...including A.R.P. [Air Raid Precautions] duties, housework and food production in the garden.'

Looking back on her student years, Joan Pollock (1942, Modern Languages) recalled her experience of these conditions, saying:

'It was enjoyable, but in a rather desperate way, because of the war... [I] felt an enormous obligation to work hard in order to pass the examinations. Food was short, times were tough. LMH was strict, war-work was mandatory.'

War-work at College was structured. Rotas were issued each term by the JCR, allocating periods of the day for groups of students to concentrate on domestic work or tending to the vegetables in the grounds.

Writing in 1996, Marguerite Ruth Ruhl (1941, English) remembered she spent her six hours a week digging in the gardens, under the supervision of Research Fellow and director of vegetable production, Elinor Gardner:

'I remember most of all Miss Gardner, who organised wartime digging for victory on the College playing fields and taught me how to make compost heaps and bonfires.'

By the summer of 1942, potatoes were being cultivated next to the Chapel and LMH boasted three beehives. History tutor Naomi Hurnard was even tending to ducks and hens in the grounds to supply eggs. The hockey field, meanwhile, was given over to cabbages. Its impending alteration led to one sporty student in March 1942 typing out the following witty response to the ploughing of the turf:

***Green field, where oft our happy feet have stray'd.  
And annual cupper-teams their finals play'd  
Where croquet-mallets mote the painted ball,  
How shall I mourn thy decimated blade?***

Yet everyone was aware of the importance of the endeavour in supporting self-sufficiency on the home front. For, as the poem concludes:

***Ah me! What boots to curse unyielding fate?  
Our patriotic eyes must forward view.  
Hence, then. My mournful Muse, to vegetate.  
Tomorrow to fresh leeks, and 'taters new.***

**We are building a collection of shared memories. If you would like to share a recollection from your time at LMH, please email [development@lmh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development@lmh.ox.ac.uk). To view others' contributions please visit [www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/lmh-moment-time](http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/lmh-moment-time)**







# Oxford inspiration

**Paula Griffiths** (1968, History) recalls when her past and present combined at LMH and helped to shape the direction her life would take.

**W**ithout time nothing can be done. Without time nothing can come into being.  
*'Sine tempore nihil potest fieri'*

The plaque under the Wolfson archway bearing that inscription – under the LMH clock, constantly marking present time – also lists the LMH historians who funded the clock in the 1960s: including CV Wedgwood, Evelyn Jamison, and two who tutored me, Anne Whiteman and Susan Reynolds.

It is a profound historians' message. In time, held in the unfolding future, lies our potential – to be, and to act. That message spoke deeply to me some years ago. Something unexplained was going on in my mind. I needed space to think; and I had a precious opportunity to stay at LMH for two spring days.

In a whole day just walking, retracing undergraduate wanderings – into the parks, along by the river, into and around the city – I tried to connect the shy, gauche 19-year-old who walked those paths with the present me, nearly 37 years older.

The inscription reverberated in my mind. Without time, I would not have become the person I then was – or the one I would be. The long journey since those student years was still ongoing. So it is for us all, wherever our own paths have led. And I realised the distinctiveness of every single moment, each unique combination of time and place – and the uniqueness of every single person.

I followed a route I took in my second term, which then sparkled with deep snow. I remembered feeling that I didn't know where I was going – but knowing I would not lose the way. That insight hit me with new meaning. *I did not know where I was going – but I knew I would not lose the way.*

As I paused by the river in the middle of that May morning, watching the ducklings, these thoughts began to crystallise into the poem TIME (see page 53). It grew into a longer poetic reflection on those two days of reconnecting, which became the keynote, and provided the title, *This is the Only Moment*, for the collection of poems which I published in 2022.

I returned home calmer, though still wondering what was going on. By that December, I understood. I was being called to ordination. And that is another story.

I hope the poem may resonate with you: and that time has helped you also discover your unique self.

**Copies of *This is the Only Moment: Poems from a Journey* are available from [paula.greatford@btinternet.com](mailto:paula.greatford@btinternet.com), price £5 plus £1.70 postage. All proceeds support the churches of the Saffron Walden and the Villages Team Ministry.**



## TIME: 11 MAY 2005, 11.30 AM

Paula Griffiths

*This is the only moment  
Past, now or ever  
Of the elements in this precise combination:  
Here by the river, the cow parsley just so high, these particular leaves just so green  
And I here in it:*

*For already  
    The gently flowing water has moved on  
And in half an hour's time  
    The light will be different  
And this time tomorrow  
    The cow parsley will be even higher, those ducklings a day older  
And this time next year  
After vagaries of seasonal weather,  
    The spring will be more advanced or less so,  
    The trees further spread, the path either more green or more worn:  
Though the place and the essence remain.*

*Without time  
    There is no growth  
Without growth  
    There is no understanding  
Without understanding  
    There is no fulfilment.  
But there are some special moments which mark understanding:  
Quick now, etch, hold, capture this moment  
Capture its tranquil green essence.*



# Test your College knowledge

It's time to find out how well you really know LMH. We owe our thanks to **Bobby Seagull**, who studied mathematics here in 2003 before leading a team from Emmanuel Cambridge to the semi-finals of University Challenge in 2017, for setting this special quiz exclusively for LMH News.



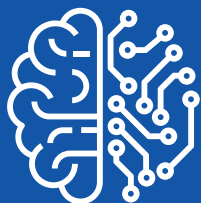
- 1 The College is named after Lady Margaret Beaufort. She was the mother of which King of England?
  - a. Edward V
  - b. Henry VII
  - c. Richard III
- 2 The original coat of arms of the College, which can be seen adorning Talbot Hall and the Wordsworth and Toynbee buildings, featured three of which item?
  - a. Daisies
  - b. Ducks
  - c. Lions
- 3 What is LMH's sister college at the University of Cambridge?
  - a. Girton
  - b. Lucy Cavendish
  - c. Newnham
- 4 In 1878, the Association for the Higher Education of Women was formed with the aim of creating a college for women in Oxford. It eventually split, with ES Talbot's group founding LMH and TH Green's group founding which college?
  - a. Somerville
  - b. St Anne's
  - c. St Hilda's
- 5 Eglantyne Jebb, college alumna (1895-98), co-founded which organisation with her sister Dorothy Buxton at the end of the First World War to relieve effects of famine in Austria-Hungary and Germany?
  - a. Oxfam
  - b. Save the Children
  - c. UNICEF
- 6 Which American author attended an Oxford summer school, European Civilisation in the Twentieth Century, held at LMH, St Hilda's and Worcester in 1948?
  - a. Harper Lee
  - b. Toni Morrison
  - c. Gertrude Stein
- 7 The Deneke Lectures are yearly talks given in memory of musicologist Philip Maurice Deneke, who died in 1924. In 1933, who delivered these lectures in College due to their friendly connection with Margaret Deneke, daughter of the musicologist?
  - a. Albert Einstein
  - b. Marie Curie
  - c. Sigmund Freud
- 8 What year did LMH begin admitting men to the College?
  - a. 1977
  - b. 1978
  - c. 1979
- 9 Aged 17, Malala Yousafzai became the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. She beat the previous record of which 25-year-old scientist, who was jointly awarded with his father in 1915 for 'analysis of crystal structure by means of X-rays'?
  - a. Lawrence Bragg
  - b. Leonid Hurwicz
  - c. Wilhelm Röntgen
- 10 LMH's pioneering Foundation Year programme for students from under-represented backgrounds was modelled after a programme at which institution?
  - a. Queen's University Belfast
  - b. University College Dublin
  - c. Trinity College Dublin

# Gain knowledge, develop your skills, and go further

## with an LMH Summer Programme

Three-to-six week academic programmes in a range of disciplines, all taught by expert academics using Oxford's renowned tutorial system.

Courses offered include:



Artificial  
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and Creative  
Writing

Join a residential programme for an authentic taste of the unique LMH experience, making friends and having fun as part of a diverse international cohort.

Or join us online for the same engaging and rewarding academic programme but with the convenience of taking part from where you are.

To explore our range of courses, search for LMH Summer Programmes at [lmh.ox.ac.uk](https://lmh.ox.ac.uk) or get in touch with Dr Christopher Adamson at [vacation.programmes@lmh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:vacation.programmes@lmh.ox.ac.uk) to find out more.

LMH is delighted to offer an 'Alumni Friends and Family' discount, with £250 off a residential programme and £100 off an online programme.



# Events Calendar 2023 – 24

Please find below our programme of events as it stands at the time of printing. The most up-to-date list of events can be found on our website at:

[www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events](http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events)

You will be notified of events by email so please ensure your details are up to date. We will also post updates on Facebook (LMHOxford) and on Twitter (@LMHOxford).

Further information about events and how to book can be found at: [www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events](http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events) or by contacting the Development Office: (0) +44 1865 274362

## Oxford Town and Gown

### Sunday 14th May

Join Team LMH 2023 for this 10K in aid of Muscular Dystrophy UK. Photos, T-shirts, drinks and Pizza available. Meet 9.00am; race begins 10.00am

## LMH East Coast Tour

LMHers in the US are invited to meet Principal Professor Stephen Blyth at the following events:

### Friday 19th May

**New York Reception** at the University's North American Office from 6pm – 8pm EST

### Monday 22nd May

**Washington DC Reception** at the offices of Gibson Dunn 6pm – 7.30pm EST

### Tuesday 23rd May

**Boston Reception** at the Cambridge Boat Club from 6.30pm EST

## Summer Vills Dinner

### Saturday 27th May

LMHBC looks forward to welcoming crews past and present for the 2023 celebration. Drinks 6.30pm; dinner 7.15pm. Black Tie (Boat Club blazers encouraged)

## Alumni Garden Party

### Saturday 24th June

Our Garden Party is back! Join us for afternoon tea; jazz on the grass; Literary lectures and storytelling for children; exhibitions; garden games and more. Gardens open 2pm; ends 5.30pm

## LMH Rhodes Scholars Drinks Reception

### Thursday 29th June

To coincide with The Rhodes Trust's celebrations to mark 120 years of Rhodes Scholarships, LMH will host a drinks reception for our scholars. Drinks 6pm – 7.30pm

## LMH West Coast Tour

### 11th -15th September

LMHers in the US are invited to meet Principal Professor Stephen Blyth – please check the website for more information

## Gaudy for 1994 – 1996

### Saturday 23rd September

Tea in the gardens; College update; drinks reception; dinner in Hall and a 90s bop-style disco.

B&B accommodation available

Gardens open from 3pm; ends 11.30pm

## 60th Anniversary of 1963

### Saturday 23rd September

Coffee with anniversary recollections; lunch; tea in the gardens and College update

Morning Coffee served from 11am; ends 5pm

## 50th Anniversary of 1973

### Saturday 23rd September

Coffee with anniversary recollections, lunch, tea in the Gardens and a College update

Morning Coffee served from 11am; ends 5pm

## Beaufort Circle Lunch for Legators

### Saturday 14th October

By invitation

## London Event for 2009 – 2019 Alumni

### Thursday 9th November

Join us at exclusive venue The Shoreditch Treehouse for a performance and talk from alumna Emmeline Armitage, who recently signed a record deal with Sony.

6pm – 8pm

## Winter Carols

### Friday 1st December

By invitation

## Napoleon at LMH

### Saturday 20th January 2024

Join us for a screening of Ridley Scott's *Napoleon* followed by a drinks reception and Q&A with Emeritus Fellow Professor Michael Broers – Director's Historical Consultant.

Screening at 2pm; ends 6pm

Priority booking for LMH Historians

For more information and bookings, please contact us by telephone:

+44 (0) 1865 274362 or by email: [development@lmh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development@lmh.ox.ac.uk)



Lady Margaret Hall



[www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events](http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events)

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