



## We did it!

Bridge to Bridge,  
Oxford to Venice bike ride

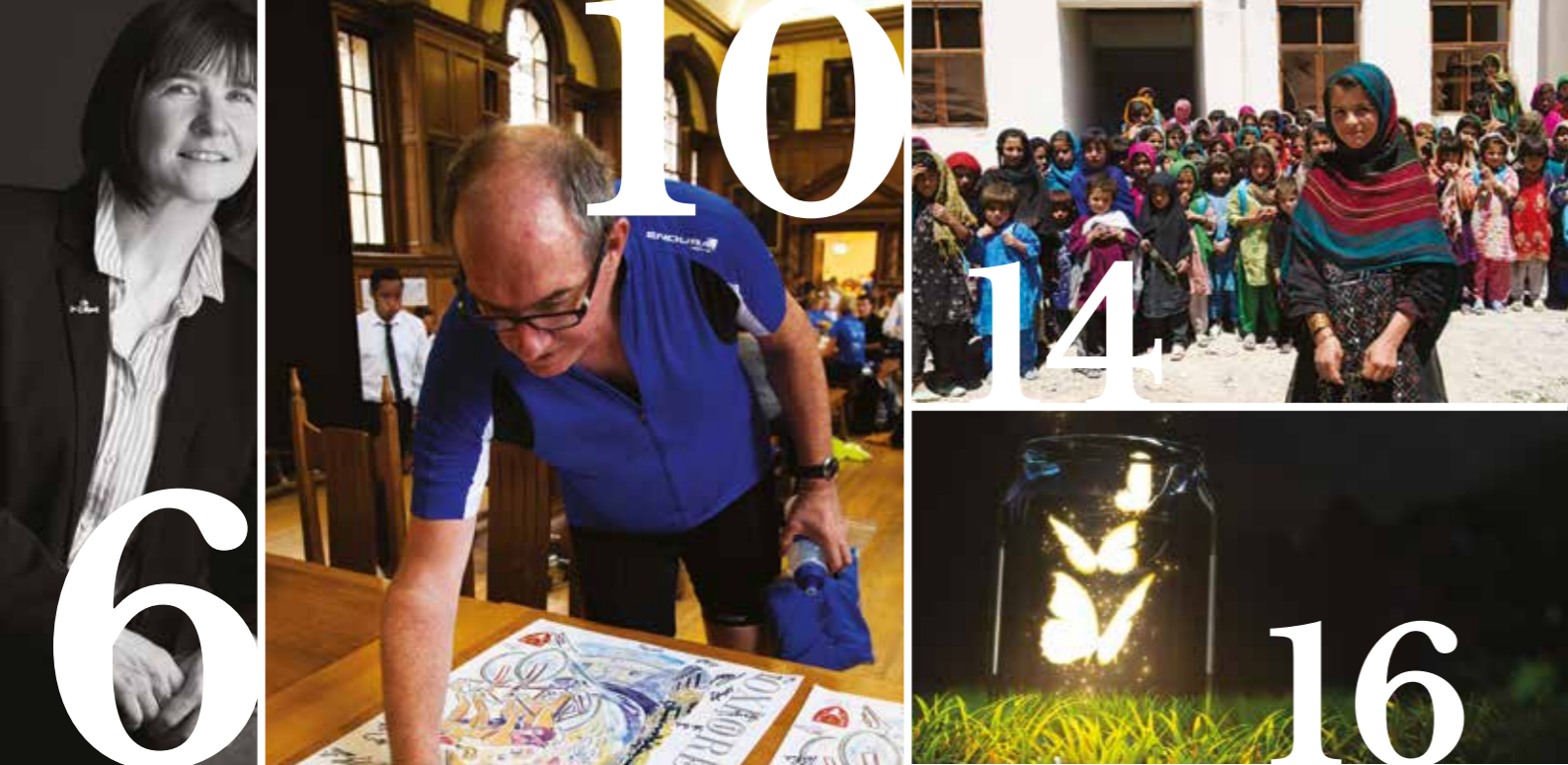
## Reflections

on the new portrait  
display in Hall

## Educating Afghanistan

Sarah Montgomery OBE





# FROM WILL HUTTON



2014 was somewhat of an *annus mirabilis* for us – with two fellowships endowed, the landmark bridge to bridge bike ride, a new portrait display in Hall, refurbishment of the Ferrar and Boyd rooms and a brace of awards and recognitions for Hertfordians, there is enormous momentum carrying us into 2015 with still more ambitious plans for the future.

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Hertfordians have been receiving distinctions in all fields, including the Queen's Birthday Honours which recognised contributions to football, archaeology and international development from our community. Our Fellow in Physics Pat Roche has been appointed President of the Council of the European Southern Observatory, an intergovernmental organisation which builds and operates some of the largest astronomical observatories in the world. Kay Davies was awarded the 2014 WISE (Women Into Science and Engineering) Lifetime Achievement Award and Academic Visitor Anthony Geffen received his second BAFTA, this time for his work on David Attenborough's *Natural History Museum Alive*. Fellow in Mathematics Fernando Alday won the coveted 'most acclaimed lecturer' in his division award through the students' teaching awards scheme, whilst I've also been busy writing my new book *How Good We Can Be* (due to be published in February) which I hope will galvanise real change. Finally, we've appointed our new Fellow and Outreach Officer: welcome to Catherine Redford, an Oxford graduate lecturing in English with research interests in Romantic and nineteenth century literature. You can read more news of prizes, books published and those mentioned in the Queen's birthday honours on pages 4-5.

The Hall has a striking new look with the curated portraits of Hertford women which are on display for the academic year 2014-5. I encourage you all to visit and see them for yourselves. We also celebrated the college's relationship with Otsuma Gakuin University in Tokyo by naming a seminar room in the Graduate Centre the Kotaka Room after the university's founder Otsuma Kotaka, a pioneer of women's education in Japan; it seemed a good year to mark our relationship with them alongside the anniversary of co-education at Oxford.

We climbed mountains (quite literally) cycling from Oxford to Venice in the Bridge to Bridge bike ride, raising over £345k for student support. People often seem bemused, and even amazed, that someone as seriously old as me could contemplate such a ride, let alone complete it. It is worth saying that I was by far and away the most consistent back marker, all too familiar with the view of a sea of lycra ahead of me becoming ever more distant. But team Hertford encouraged me on, even lending a helping hand on the steep hills. We worked together, serious cyclists and complete novices alike, to complete the challenge as one.

So strong was the community spirit on this ride that we want to do it all over again in 2015. Throughout this year we

will be celebrating the game-changing approach to access which Neil Tanner spearheaded in the 1960s. He spent a lot of time visiting state schools, often in the north of England, which had never before sent any candidates to Oxford. Following in his footsteps, we'll be cycling across Lancashire and Yorkshire on a three day challenge over 335km to raise money for student support. All levels of expertise are warmly welcomed (including slower cyclists who can keep the Principal company at the back – no shame and the conversation is not too bad!) so please visit [www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/tourdehertford](http://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/tourdehertford) for more information.

We look forward to another year full of interesting Hertford events, kicked off with the Women's Gaudy on 9 January sponsored by Russell-Cooke, and followed by events in Vienna and Cambridge as well as Oxford and London. The full list is on [www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/events](http://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/events). Keep in touch, and all the best for 2015.

## Get in touch



**Neil Tanner**  
We are collecting stories about Neil Tanner in preparation for celebrating his contributions to Hertford later this year – please contact us if you have something you'd like to share.

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Editor: Claire Blake  
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Produced by:  
Development Office  
Hertford College  
Oxford OX1 3BW  
T: +44 (0) 1865 279428  
E: [development.office@hertford.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development.office@hertford.ox.ac.uk)  
W: [www.hertford.ox.ac.uk](http://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk)

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# COLLEGE NEWS

## Gifts



### Two endowed fellowships

In 2014 Hertford was able to endow two fellowships: the **Roger Van Noorden Fellowship in Economics** and the **Ellis-Barnard History Fellowship**. We are incredibly grateful to all our alumni and friends who helped us reach the fundraising target, which will allow us to protect and strengthen the study of history and economics at the college for present and future students.

### Grand piano

The college was delighted to receive a gift from Joan Coles of a Boston Steinway grand piano, which is currently housed in the Drawing Room of the Old Lodgings. Claire Vallance, Senior Member of HCMS commented: 'the gift was a wonderful surprise, and will provide some of our most talented pianists with a top-quality instrument for practice and recitals.'



### Ben Ogden memorial fund established

33 people have contributed to an endowed £15,000 fund in Ben Ogden's memory. Every year, the fund will award £500 to support a law student with overseas pro bono work. Ben's father Andy walked 100 miles through the South Downs to raise sponsorship funds; we're delighted that we exceeded the original target and will continue to accept donations in order to increase the amount paid out by the fund.

## Leverhulme Award

Alan Bogg has been awarded a highly competitive Philip Leverhulme Award to develop his work in labour law over the next two years. These prestigious prizes 'recognise the achievement of early career researchers whose work has already attracted international recognition and whose future career is exceptionally promising'.



## Queen's birthday honours

Hearty congratulations to the Hertfordians recognised in the 2014 Queen's birthday honours:

Emeritus Fellow **Martin Biddle** was appointed CBE for services to archaeology.



Martin celebrates the investiture with his two daughters



**Sarah Montgomery** (1999) received an OBE for services to stabilisation and development in Helmand, Afghanistan

where she was the Senior Representative of the Department for International Development (read more about Sarah's work on p. 14).

### David Elleray

(1973) was awarded an MBE for services to football. David served as top flight referee from 1986 to 2003 and now works with a number of football associations, including chairing the FA Referees' Committee.



## Building blocks

There has been an unusual draw for prospective students to visit Hertford at the last two University Open Days. Home Bursar Andrew Beaumont modelled the bridge and part of the Old Buildings quadrangle including the Chapel entirely in lego. Each rendering used around 8,000 bricks and many devoted lunch breaks to construct.



## Hertford College Inflatable Boat Club

Members of the Hertford College Inflatable Boat Club have established a mini flotilla of boats named after feminists. The first boat, the HMS Greer, co-owned by Rebecca Grant and Florence Kettle, has been followed by others including the De Beauvoir, the Lessing, and the Dohm.



## Book corner

### New books published...

- Roy Foster's latest book *Vivid Faces* surveys the lives and beliefs of the people who made the Irish Revolution

'an immensely important analysis of Irish history that will be used again and again as a reference point for generations to come'  
J P O'Malley, *Sunday Independent Living*

- Giora Sternberg, our inaugural Ellis Barnard Fellow in History, has just published *Status Interaction during the Reign of Louis XIV*
- In addition to his duties as Home Bursar, Andrew Beaumont has just published his first book with OUP, entitled *Colonial America and the Earl of Halifax, 1748-1761*

### ...and old books restored

The college's book collections have survived fire, flood and many moves, in addition to centuries of use by scholars. A dedicated team of heritage volunteers support regular cleaning and conservation, but several items are so worn they require specialist attention.

In 2013-14 the lucky volumes chosen for restoration were Pontanus's 1631 *Rerum Danicarum historia*, a history of Denmark, and a 1653 anthology of works on astronomy by Gassendi, Galileo and Kepler. Fifty hours of conservation work later, the volumes returned transformed - their spines re-sewn to replicate the original bindings and whole sections of text that were previously unreadable were revealed.

Thank you to the donors who supported this restoration, including a donation made in memory of alumnus Philip Chadwick (1959).





# Portrait reflections

In September we unveiled a new display of portraits in Hall. For this academic year (as we continue our celebrations of 40 years of co-education) 21 women with a Hertford connection will be adorning the walls. Assembled following recommendations from alumni, students and Fellows, and including women from every decade of co-education, these women represent the range of careers and lives our students – both women and men – go into.

**'We hope that the range of people represented here will be inspiring to current and future students, as we continue our work to encourage under-represented groups to consider Hertford, and to support our students into fulfilling and rewarding professional lives'**  
– Will Hutton

The move has attracted a surprising amount of coverage, including a mention on *Have I Got News For You*. Articles have been published in *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and the BBC News website, even making their way across the pond to feature in the *New York Times* blog.

Sarah Crompton (1976), one of the portrait sitters, wrote an article titled 'Why I'm proud to be on the wall of my Oxford college' in *The Telegraph*:

I think everyone finds going to university daunting and if you chose one of the long-established institutions, then your fragile confidence in your own intellectual worth is always going to come into conflict with the heavy weight of history and tradition. Those men in the portraits represented an entire story and ethos which sometimes made me feel intimidated and lonely... Yet what any university should do – and what Hertford did for me – is to provide a place to begin, in

the most tentative way, to understand who you are and so start to make the best of yourself in your own way.

In that context, I humbly think that perhaps I do merit a place on its walls, for a little time. I have done what I set out to do in life; I am happy. I have achieved something, even if it is not climbing Everest, or inventing the internet. So have all the other women who now hang in the dining room – and we only represent the tiniest proportion of the potential and success that has passed through that space...

If my portrait, and those of my fellow women, can act as an incentive for even one prospective student who feels nervous and overwhelmed to think that actually she can aspire and expect to achieve, then I will be very proud.

**'People outside Hertford tend to assume this must have been terribly controversial, but it really wasn't at all: as soon as the idea had crystallised we were all agreed that it was a good project'** – Emma Smith

There has been much interesting debate outside Hertford on the project; we've also heard that Brasenose JCR have passed a motion to mount a similar display.

What will happen to the portraits next year? We'll keep you updated.

Turn over to see whose portraits are on display





Julia Briggs



Sukhvinder Kaur



Charlotte Hogg



Natasha Kaplinsky



Theresa Moran



Stephanie West

All photos © Robert Taylor www.taylor-photos.co.uk

# Who's Who

- **Alison Woollard** – Fellow in Biochemistry, 2000-  
*I've found collegiality, friendship and intellectual nourishment here*
- **Carol Sennett** (1982, History) – television editor
- Charlotte Hogg (1988, History and Economics) – banker  
*we have a responsibility to contribute in some way... We can make a difference*
- **Helen Alexander DBE** (1975, Geography) – business leader; Honorary Fellow 2002-  
*the college was willing to innovate, while not being stuffy or pleased with itself, and was keen to maintain academic standards while being a happy, down to earth place*
- **Jacqui Smith** (1981, PPE) – Hospital Trust Chair; Honorary Fellow, 2007-
- **Joanne Wicks QC** (1985, Law) – barrister  
*I am so pleased that Hertford has decided to celebrate it's women in this original way*
- **Julia Briggs** (1973-2007) – our first female fellow
- **Julie Dearden** (1979, Modern Languages) – educationalist  
*how wonderful to see all these women's faces in Hall!*
- **Kay Davies, DBE** – Dr Lee's Professor of Anatomy, 1998-  
*it's amazing to reflect on how much has changed for women in my field over the years... Women still have to fight hard to make it to the top, but it is getting easier because of awareness of the challenges and the increasing profile of successful*

- women, of which this exhibition is part
- **Louise Gullifer** (1979, Law) – academic
- **Marian Bell** (1977, PPE) – economist  
*Hertford gave me the opportunity to become who I am*
- **Baroness (Mary) Warnock** – philosopher; Honorary Fellow, 1997-
- **Natasha Kaplinsky** (1992, English) – broadcaster
- **Sarah Crompton** (1976, English) – journalist
- **Serine Najarian** (1998, Economics) – banker  
*it's imperative to know oneself, as Nietzsche indicates with the dictum "become who you are". I feel Oxford was a great place for this.*
- **Shahnaz Ahsan** (2006, History and English) – Thouron scholar
- **Stephanie Cullen** (1999, Chemistry) – rower  
*I didn't really "do" sport at school... Coming to Hertford College changed the course of my future*
- **Stephanie West FBA** – Fellow in Classics, 1990-2005, Emerita Fellow 2005-
- **Sukhvinder Kaur** (1981, Geography) – charity executive  
*my daughter is poised to achieve far more than I could have imagined for myself*
- **Theresa Moran** (1983, History) – teacher
- **Xanthe Brooke** (1978, History) – curator

## Was there any sense of trepidation at receiving the commission?

Being invited to interfere so boldly with one of the most well established ways that Hertford represents itself and its values did make me slightly queasy, at first. However, as soon as I started meeting the women in the project, my concerns were more than compensated for by their courage and enthusiasm. There are very few people who really relish being photographed for public reasons, but the women saw the good that the project might do as ample reason to risk being involved.

## The sitters have all written about their experience of being involved. Why is it important to view the portraits with their associated text?

Great as it was just to have the portraits of Hertford College women taking over the Hall, I felt it would be more powerful still if we could hear their feelings about Hertford, the impact of being there, and anything else that mattered to them.

## Talk us through how you chose to photograph the women

I opted for black and white portraits partly because I prefer them in an age of almost ubiquitous colour, and partly because they would minimise the amount of attention paid to the colour, cut etc of what the women were wearing. There's so much inappropriate attention paid to the way women look, when it is so often utterly irrelevant and unrelated to their skills, sensibilities and experience.

In this project I even went as far as letting the subjects have a say in which image, of the several that we might have chosen, they'd prefer. If the women in the pictures were happy, job done as far as I am concerned! In many cases we could easily have chosen sexier, funnier, and definitely more newsworthy images, but not in service of the peace of mind and dignity of the subjects.

It was a highly creative and bold way for the college to mark such a significant anniversary. It was definitely fun and fascinating delivering it.

*Robert Taylor was also interviewed by Emma Smith, who co-ordinated the exhibition, in the Hertford College Magazine 2013-4.*

Talking portraits – An interview with the photographer Robert Taylor







# THE RIDE IN NUMB3RS



66 CYCLISTS,  
AGED 19 TO 60+



9 DAYS IN THE SADDLE



£ RAISED  
£345,000



1,838 VIEWS  
OF OUR  
PHOTOS ON  
FLICKR

# WE DID IT!

## BRIDGE TO BRIDGE, OXFORD TO VENICE BIKE RIDE



In July 2014, a team of Hertford cyclists powered their way from Hertford's Bridge of Sighs to its Venetian namesake – and raised £345,000 to boost student support at Hertford.

The participants were a mixed crowd, from serious cyclists used to time and endurance trials to more recreational bikers and complete novices. Past and present college members (students, alumni, staff, Fellows and even the Principal) were all united by a desire to show just how far Hertford is prepared to go to improve access and support our students.

Supported by the cycling firm Passion in Events, and cycling in groups suited to their abilities, they circled the Arc de Triomphe, climbed Alpine gorges and sped past Burgundian vineyards before arriving triumphantly in Venice, vociferously greeted by family and friends who had flown over to join the end of ride party.

“ We affirmed something in which we believe – that access to our college and university should be available to anyone from whatever background – and we learned a great deal more about ourselves ”

Will Hutton

THE RIDE IN THREE WORDS FROM OUR CYCLISTS

LYCRA VASELINE CHAMOIS

PROGRESS THROUGH CYCLING

REWARDING INSPIRING (VERY) FUN

TEAM JOURNEY FRIENDSHIP

I LOVED IT!

UNBELIEVABLE LIFE-LONG MEMORY SUCCESSFUL

UNIFYING FUN SUCCESSFUL

CHALLENGING SATISFYING INSPIRING



# Peloton,

*n*: A group or cluster of cyclists in a cycle race

The teamwork and sense of community spirit which we saw on the bike ride was most surely demonstrated through the practice of cycling in a peloton (although this was by no means a race). By cycling in a close-knit line everyone would get the benefit of the leader's slipstream, whilst different riders could alternate to take the burden at the front.

The peloton even inspired Will to write an article on 'what my 700-mile bike ride taught me about togetherness and society' in the *Observer*:

“To everyone's amazement we formed a peloton and hurtled across the Normandy countryside at around 20mph for the best part of an hour. We were bound together into a team, each working for each other and flying along much faster for longer than any of us could have achieved as individuals”

“Once the physical aches eventually diminish, what will stay with me and, I hope with all of us, are the friendships formed and strengthened during the ride”

Matthew Abbott (1996)



## WE CAUGHT UP WITH SOME OF THE CYCLISTS TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY THOUGHT OF THE JOURNEY

### What is your favourite memory from the bike ride?

**Sam Johns:** Will Hutton leading the charge into Venice, front of the pack, at a sterling 35km/h, the lead out man in the bunch sprint to the Italian coastline.

**Dan Harvey:** Stopping for a rest-break in the central square of a small town in France and watching the end of the day's alpine tour stage on TV with some of the locals.

**Niels Linneman:** How we entered Paris! Via Versailles, cycling along the Champs-Élysées and then around the Arc de Triomphe, replete with honking cars and cheering crowds. Epic.

**Sabina Wu:** Sailing through beautiful countryside on little back roads – just like a dream!

**David Hopkin:** Being asked by an American tourist whether we were the Tour de France was nice.

### How did your experience differ from your expectations?

**Dan Harvey:** It just exceeded them in every way (already high enough to get

me to fly half way around the world to take part).

**Mark Atkins:** I did all of my pre-event training alone, and the experience of how a team of other cyclists can help you through difficulties and lift you when the batteries are low was completely unexpected.

**Sam Johns:** Fund raising was FAR harder than I had expected it would be.

**Niels Linneman:** I had expected an ambitious sports challenge but could not foresee such entertaining dinners (in particular thanks to highly motivating Will Power-speeches), such great views from high above, and such supporting and lovely people around me.

### Has the bike ride changed your opinion about Hertford College? How?

**Dan Harvey:** It hasn't. I already knew that Hertfordians are great.

**Niels Linneman:** Yes! As a postgraduate who basically just came to Oxford for a one-year program I had never had such a strong relationship to Hertford (apart from the MCR). I am happy to have met so many wonderful, warm-hearted, interesting people with a lot

of generosity and dedication to the important cause of social fairness!

**Sam Johns:** No. I've always loved Hertford and always will, bike or no bike.

**Sabina Wu:** A little...I've always thought Hertford an outstanding innovative risk-taking college and this bike ride reinforced that.

**Richard Spooner:** I knew about the college and its ethos. What I didn't know was that so many wonderful people have passed through the college – and are still doing so. Keep it up!

## SAVE THE DATE

We'll be holding another bike ride on 10-12 July from Morecambe to Robin Hood Bay. For more information please visit [www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/tourdehertford](http://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/tourdehertford).



# Educating Afghanistan

Sarah Montgomery (1999)



Sarah was awarded an OBE for services

to development in Afghanistan in the 2014 Queen's birthday honours.

After a varied career in the civil service, Sarah joined the Department for International Development (DFID) in June 2012 as their senior representative in Helmand. As Head of Development for Helmand's Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), Sarah was responsible for a thirty person team and an £80m programme which included education, health, private sector development and economic infrastructure, as well as the successful transition of this work to management from Kabul.

Sarah left Helmand in December 2013 and is now leading the newly formed DFID Ukraine team, based in London.



At first sight, Hertford College doesn't have much in common with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which was based in Helmand province Afghanistan, and where I worked for 18 months. The PRT was a UK-led international civilian-military mission to support reconstruction and development in the province. We lived and worked in a military base. Rocket attacks and other threats were a fairly regular occurrence. Travel was generally by helicopter, not bicycle. That said, just as in college, we lived, ate (albeit in a tented cookhouse not a hall lined with venerable portraits), socialised and worked together. The hours in the PRT were very long and the work demanding but there was a real sense of camaraderie. Whilst the compound didn't have a quad, it did have a lovely garden, with roses, hollyhocks and sunflowers. In the PRT we also had a cat called Churchill who, if you squinted, could have been the cousin of Simpkin.

The PRT, which was one of 33 in Afghanistan, closed in March 2014 as part of the transition of political and security responsibilities to the Government of Afghanistan. DFID and the UK Government are still working to help Afghanistan become a state that can increasingly respond to the needs of its people, to support stability and reduce poverty.

We had dozens of visitors to the PRT including Prime Ministers (both UK and Danish), royalty, ministers and MPs, generals, and journalists (although probably the most famous visitor to Helmand was David Beckham but he never made it as far as Lashkar Gah where the PRT was based). The one question that could always be guaranteed to come up was about the educational opportunities for girls. And understandably – a good education is a human right, a global public good and necessary for economic development and poverty reduction. Education

“Between 2010 and 2015, DFID will support 11 million girls and boys in school, especially in fragile and conflict-affected states”

enables people to live healthier and more productive lives, allowing them to fulfil their own potential as well as strengthen their own societies. In Helmand this was a right that had been denied to girls under the Taliban and increasing access to education was hugely important for the PRT, working with Afghan partners.

Most schools in the province had closed by 2006, following intimidation by the insurgency. Helmand's increasing youth population had limited access to any government-run education facilities, rendering them particularly vulnerable to recruitment by insurgent groups. There were no girls in school in 2001 and only a handful thereafter. The PRT prioritised developing basic education services, but public reluctance to engage at all with government services made this difficult. From 2008 gradual improvements in security, consolidation of local government structures and a strong outreach campaign by the Ministry of Education laid the foundations to turn this around. Parents still send their children to religious schools but popular demand for government provided basic, secondary and higher education has risen sharply.

At the point at which I arrived in the PRT the emphasis of our work had started to shift away from work on construction to capacity building for the provincial education department, and central government initiatives

funded through the government's own budget. We could see the results – the provincial education department was capable of a range of basic administrative operations and there was also a greater sense of accountability towards the Helmandi people.

The work to support education not just in Afghanistan but in other developing countries is a priority for the UK Government. Between 2010 and 2015, DFID will support 11 million girls and boys in school, especially in fragile and conflict-affected states, with up to 1 million more of the most marginalised girls supported through the Girls' Education Challenge. All of us know how life changing an education can be, and reflecting on the struggle for so many children around the world to access this basic right, especially girls, seems particularly apposite as Hertford celebrates forty years of co-education at Oxford. My work in the civil service since I left university has taken me to fascinating places – including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and now Ukraine – and in roles including private secretary to a Cabinet Minister and working on the Olympics. I doubt this would have been possible without the opportunities opened up by my time at Hertford.

Between 2007 and 2013:

the number of schools open rose from 47 to 207

the number of students enrolled rose from 54,000 to 130,000 – including 29,000 girls

the number of teachers increased from 1,570 to 3,450

89 schools were built

Public satisfaction with education services increased by over 40% between 2010 and 2013



© Save the Children



# WHAT ARE FAIRIES FOR?

Studying the social history of the illiterate  
David Hopkin

David Hopkin, Hertford's Fellow in History and a cyclist on our bike ride, gave a popular talk to the MCR recently about studying the history of people whose voices aren't normally heard.

To write the social history of the illiterate means finding sources in which their voices were recorded. To this end I use folksongs and folktales. But there one quickly encounters things that don't fit easily into a reconstruction of social reality, such as werewolves, witches and, above all, fairies.

The oral cultures of agrarian Europe teem with supernatural creatures who live alongside the human population. They go by many names – hidden folk in Iceland and Norway, mound-dwellers in Denmark, the *sidhe* in Ireland, *pharisees* in Sussex, *laminiak* in the Basque country, *donna di fori* (ladies from the outside) in Sicily. Most of these are circumlocutions because it is dangerous to name a thing of power; this evasiveness makes it difficult to know whether we are talking about the same thing. But there must be some connection, because, from Sicily to Norway, people told the same stories about them.

Fairies do harm – they are responsible for strokes (originally 'elf-stroke'), they ride horses into a sweat at night, they tangle hair, they stop the butter coming, they hide property. Children are especially at risk, but brides and young wives live under the threat of fairy abduction. Men too could be lured by fairy seductresses, as happened to Tam Lin in the Scottish ballad, or Ibsen's eponymous *Peer Gynt*.

But fairies can also benefit their human neighbours. They sometimes work for them, or endow them with gifts. Occasionally they appear to need humans, for example in the story of the fairy midwife found everywhere from Greece to Iceland. A fairy summons a neighbour: before they set off he dabs her eye with ointment, then he takes her to a house she has not seen before where she delivers a baby. Thereafter she has extraordinary skills as a midwife. It is not uncommon for midwives (in Iceland as recently as the 1980s) to tell this story to account for a family tradition of medical prowess.

To what extent were such narratives sustained by belief in the existence of fairies? Belief is a hard thing to measure and fluctuates according to context. Some people claimed direct contact with fairies, but then used this supposed secret knowledge to advance their own social position: belief in these cases was strategic. Other storytellers adopted an agnostic

or sceptical position, at least while talking to the folklorist who usually came from a more urbane and educated milieu. And yet propitiatory gestures are still quite common: who would deliberately set foot in a fairy-ring?

The issue of belief is further complicated by the fact that stories that were once told about fairies are now told about other agents who unambiguously exist in the material world. Gypsies are accused of child abduction: remember the media storm over the 2013 Greek case that never was? In Denmark men tell stories about the dangers of sleeping with Greenlander women reminiscent of those told about *huldra*. Whereas once fairies stole and ate domestic animals, now that charge is made against immigrant families. The media can demonstrate the same credulity as any nineteenth-century storyteller.

Because the agents are interchangeable, one deduces that the characters are less important than the plots in which they feature. It is in the relationship between teller and listener that we should seek to understand what fairies are for. The narratives have functions.

Some of these are self-evident. Just as smugglers used ghost stories to warn off prying eyes (that actually happened – it's not just a conceit of *Scooby-Doo* or, a reference especially for Hertfordians, *Moonfleet*) so parents use stories of fairies to scare children away from dangerous places. Fairies inhabit cliffs, abandoned mines, mill races – don't go there. The child who spends too long in bed will get elf-knots in his hair because fairies reward the industrious and punish the lazy. It is not just that rules of behaviour are much more memorable if encapsulated in story: traditional face-to-face societies, in which everyone knows and relies on everyone else, tend to avoid the imperative mode. Direct claims to authority or obligation might damage vital relationships.

More generally, in societies with no NHS or Family Tax Credit, and which therefore rely on bonds of kinship and neighbourliness to operate, fairies act as moral enforcers. If a farmer in the Basque country lied about his wealth, in order to reduce his obligations, the fairies would take the difference. A woman who continues spinning on a holy day may well be

“Fairies provided a flexible language to address issues that affected traditional societies”

visited by mischief-minded fairies. An entrepreneurial farmer who in his egoism ploughs up a fairy mound will, inevitably, be ruined. In the moral economy of agrarian Europe no one should stand out from their neighbours.

Fairies police the boundaries of the community but they themselves are outsiders to it. Nowadays we tend to assume fairies inhabit palaces and drive pumpkin coaches, but in stories told they were more often poor and obliged to beg or steal. Narratives could then be a way to think about the obligations of the community to its most marginal members. But they could be more exclusionary. There is 'an us' and 'a them', and they are dangerous, so stick with us. The application of the same plots to recent immigrants or other outsiders works in the same way to define an ethnic community by stigmatizing its 'other'.

However, one cannot reduce fairies to functions, or stories to operating systems. Fairies provided a flexible language to address issues that affected traditional societies. For example, in Brittany in 1880 the fisherwoman Rose Renaud told the folklorist Paul Sébillot a story about a seaman who had taken up with a fairy before sailing off to America. As neither human nor fairy parents would accept her or her child, she was reduced to living in a hovel on the edge of the village. Shorn of its supernatural details, the circumstances she related also described events in her neighbour's family. Fairies offered a way to address difficult interpersonal issues, even suggest solutions to them, without causing offense. This story, and others like it, communicated many of the norms, imperatives, beliefs and hopes of this fishing community from one generation to another. And at the same time it was entertaining, which is another thing that fairies are for.



# Hertford Talking

## Re-writing Red Riding Hood

Carol Pearson (1990)

Last year, I had the honour of delivering a TED talk at TEDxBrighton. I'm sure you'll be familiar with the format of TED, which aims to bring together bright minds to give informative and provoking short talks. My TED talk ironically came out of sheer bad luck. I was recovering from surgery at the time I received the invitation. It was my 14th surgery in 10 years – by now, I can deal with surgery, but telling my story in public is a very different matter.

You see, this story is a bit gritty. It's dark and uncomfortable. It's bloody. The humour is bittersweet. To be frank with you – it's about periods. In order to prepare my audience, I took them back to Red Riding Hood, harking back to my undergraduate days when I enjoyed studying the way women rewrite their stories with Julia Briggs. But this is no fairy story, it's not a tale anyone wants to tell. It's a story about a disease that remains unspoken. It's about endometriosis.

If you haven't heard of it – you are in the majority. There's something about periods that make them unmentionable in polite company. But the statistics on this disease are shocking. It affects 1 in 10 women – and yet average diagnosis times are an astonishing 7.5 years. The main element of this delay is lack of awareness. We think painful periods are normal, but they may not be.

I was 31 by the time I was diagnosed with endometriosis. By 33, I had part of my bowel and bladder removed. Further bladder surgery ensued and at the age of 37, I developed serious complications. At 39, I was medically retired, deemed unemployable. I have come to terms with some of the physical challenges that I have been left with. It's been much harder to accept the other losses: my career, relationships and fertility.

What I have not accepted is that we have not yet left a legacy to young women – there have been no cures, no great discoveries yet. We still don't really know what causes endometriosis. There is no programme in schools to deliver information to girls about this common disease. There is no government initiative to reduce diagnosis times. With 1.5 million women with this disease in the UK, there is a heavy cost burden – around £10bn per annum in lost working time and treatment costs. There is still much work to be done.

Six years ago, I became a trustee on the board of Endometriosis UK. We're responsible for the strategic direction of the charity and ensure our resources are spent appropriately. The charity provides vital information and support to women with endometriosis and campaigns for greater awareness.

There have been some exciting developments in this time. Across the country, we have recently trained over 30 clinical nurse specialists – their work in supporting women through multiple complex surgeries is essential. In recent months, we have had wider media coverage, including on national television. But there is still so much more to be done – access to consultants who understand endometriosis is still limited in some parts of the country. There are still too many women with long diagnosis times, a steep challenge with a disease that can only be diagnosed via laparoscopic surgery.

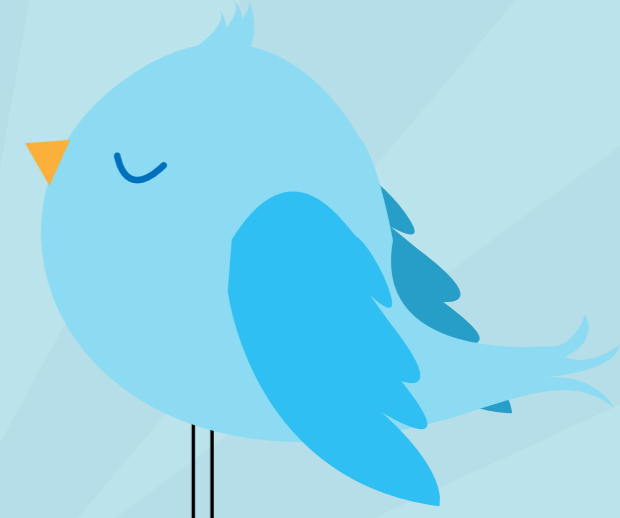
The message from my TED talk is ultimately very simple: let's talk about this disease. To do that, it's going to take all of us. Please watch and share this talk so that our daughters can know what's not normal and receive help earlier.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1D\\_ya4cJ8E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1D_ya4cJ8E)  
<http://endometriosis-uk.org>

It affects 1 in 10 women – and yet average diagnosis times are an astonishing 7.5 years



# Hertford tweeting



2014 saw Hertford College open a twitter account; you can now find us tweeting at [www.twitter.com/hertfordcollege](http://www.twitter.com/hertfordcollege).

Here's a selection of the our posts so far.



Hugh Grant followed his Hert to support @williamnhutton & #B2Bbikeride Thank you @HackedOffHugh & thanks for the cream



Congrats to Hertford's Mathematics Fellow Fernando Alday, who won an OUSU teaching award for most acclaimed lecturer.

Amazing cakes on sale at Hertford today raising money for #B2Bbikeride



Hertford's choir lining up before the last choral evensong of term. (Thanks to @HertfordChapel for the pic!)



An unexpected visitor at Hertford today – we think he got lost on his way home!



Our college #cat Simpkin has been taking the 'keep off the grass sign' a little too literally today...



To all Hertford students attending the Bridge of Sighs commemoration ball, have a great evening!

We love being in the centre of beautiful Oxford. Here's Christ Church meadows in the early morning sunshine





WE ARE DELIGHTED TO  
LAUNCH THIS YEAR'S

# BIKE RIDE



10-12 JULY [WWW.HERTFORD.OX.AC.UK/TOURDEHERTFORD](http://WWW.HERTFORD.OX.AC.UK/TOURDEHERTFORD)

## Dates for your diary

27 February: Law dinner  
for those who studied law, or  
who work in that field

10 April: John Donne lecture  
'On Liberty' by Shami  
Chakrabarti

24 April: Dinner in Vienna  
coincides with the University of  
Oxford's European Reunion

8 May: Geoffrey Warnock  
Society lunch  
to thank alumni who have left a  
legacy to Hertford

30 May: Eights Week buffet  
lunch  
held at the Graduate Centre,  
with a Pimm's stall at the  
boathouse to accompany the  
day's rowing

25 June: Hertford Talking: Gavin  
Maxwell  
held in London with a panel  
of speakers across the schools  
of biology, geography and  
literature, inspired by alumnus  
Gavin Maxwell (Scottish  
naturalist and author)

1 August: Family day  
informal entertainment in college  
for the whole family

5 September: Tanner day  
celebrating Neil Tanner and his  
unique approach to broadening  
access to Oxford

18 September: Gaudy for 2004 &  
2005 matriculands

Hertford has a keen group of golfers who will be playing on 13 March at Swinley Forest, and again on 17 April for the intercollegiate tournament at Frilford Heath

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