



Dear Hertford Community,

It seems like yesterday that we were starting the [new term](#) by [celebrating matriculation in person](#) once again. Yet we are already at OxMas and getting ready for carols by candlelight, mince pies, admissions interviews and the break. It has been superb to experience Hertford come back to life after such a disrupted year. Everyone has worked with such [creativity](#) to balance academic and social life with the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.



We have especially enjoyed welcoming so many of our alumni back for a series of lively gaudies, including some memorable toasts from the 2010/11 cohorts. The turnout at the Hertford Society AGM was superb, with members warmly thanking Jacqui Smith for her leadership and welcoming Lord Pannick QC as our new President. As (I think) the first Hertford Society member to switch to Principal, it was also excellent to welcome back two former Principals who are now members of the Hertford Society (though we pretended not to hear the alumnus who muttered that the collective noun for Principals was 'a lack of...'). Please look out for more updates on next year's alumni events programme and do get in touch with the Development Office if you plan to visit Oxford: we'd love to see you here.



This term we've been able to once again welcome guests to challenge and be challenged by our students. FGM campaigner [Nimco Ali](#) talked about how to be an activist, while Theresa May's former Deputy (and longstanding Europe Minister), [Sir David Lidington](#) helped us think about how to be a pragmatist. As part of a series of debates on liberty and security in the digital age, we also hosted the Danish Tech Ambassador, the Global Tech Panel and the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Justice.



Nimco Ali on "how to be an activist"

The Vice-Chancellor, Honorary Fellow Roy Foster, and the Irish Ambassador joined us for a night focused on our extensive Irish links and research. And we filled the hall with US members of Congress and UK parliamentarians for a dinner to celebrate the Marshall Scholarships. The UK Ambassador to Madrid, Hugh Elliot, shared insights on Gibraltar negotiations and UK/Spanish relations. And next week we welcome a former Middle East Minister, Alistair Burt.



Sir David Lidington on "how to be a pragmatist"

We have made great progress this term on our [Hertford 2030](#) plans. In October we announced a [landmark donation](#) of £25m from John Porter, a transformational gift that will enable the building of our new graduate centre and establish an innovative Porter Centre for Diplomacy. Our Sustainability Board has been working through a comprehensive audit of our carbon emissions, to enable us to take the tough decisions on reaching [net zero by 2030](#). And Senior Tutor Claire Vallance is leading a revision of our Academic Strategy, focused on our core aim of excellent teaching and research. Watch this space for more on our 'Head, Hand and Hertford' course to develop life, work and citizenship skills; and the next steps on expanding access and opportunity.

As ever, the Hertford community has been active. There were [Medical Sciences Teaching Awards](#) for David Greaves and Alison Woollard. Mike Wooldridge has been appointed as one of the first UKRI [Turing AI World-Leading Researchers](#). Sally Bayley was elected as a Fellow of the [Royal Society of Literature](#). Carissa Véliz was recognised with an international [computing and philosophy award](#) in Hamburg. Physics Lecturer Sam Henry discussed new theories of the universe at the [HowTheLightGetsIn](#) festival in Hay; and DPhil student Nick D'Aloisio struck a flagship deal with Twitter for [Sphere](#), his innovative platform designed to make online conversations more meaningful and less divisive.

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Emma Smith became an inaugural Associate Scholar at the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#), working on their new plans to be a centre for research. Do also listen to Emma's new podcast, [The Hertford Bookshelf](#), in which she meets writers from our alumni discuss their work, their advice for would-be writers and their memories of Hertford. Our Library and Archives team have recently launched a [new blog](#), where you can read fascinating stories from the rare books and archival collections. New teachers' resources on our [unsung heroes of science](#) are now online too. You can also access [digitised editions of the Hertford Magazine](#) stretching back to 1963 - the remaining editions going back to 1910 will be available soon. The process revealed that there is a 'Bridge of Sighs' rose in OB Quad.

We were also delighted this month to confirm the elections of two new Emeritus Fellows, Christopher Tyerman and Dame Kay Davies. Watch this space for news of our frighteningly good [University Challenge](#) team. You can support our Kilimanjaro climbers [here](#). And Hertford's Music Society reconvened for their first concert this week in the University Church.



Our intrepid Kilimanjaro climbers: Hari Kope, Airi Visser, Marcus Allen and Molly Hey.

Peter Millican asked "Does God Exist?" at The Oxford Union and I experienced my first Union debate on "This House Believes We Cannot Survive the Age of Big Tech". You might be relieved to hear that our opposition to the motion prevailed. If you need some reading for those long winter nights, here are pieces on [the future of higher education](#) and [the international architecture](#) that aim to explain this optimism.

Our annual [Remembrance activities](#) took on greater poignance this year as we reflected on the loss of members of our community: [Tony Cockshut](#) (Emeritus Fellow), Rosemary Sloper (who worked in the bursary for 25 years), [John](#)

[Porter](#) (Foundation Fellow) and Victor Altherr (a bright student and prolific chess player). We also paid tribute to Derek Conran (founding member of the Hertford Society) at a moving memorial service. Hertford's JCR is holding its annual Movember fundraiser in memory of Victor, raising money to support life-changing men's health programmes. You can join us in honouring Victor by donating to this cause [here](#). They are all part of our story, and very much missed.



In happier news, Simpkin is back on top form following the ministrations of our vet and close attention from the porters (pictured here with Lodge Manager, Dave Haxell). He can be found most days holding court in the marquee and bullying cats at neighbouring colleges. Before Christmas he will be competing for quad space with the cast and crew of the new Wonka film. It is fake news that we are adopting as our new motto its title character's suggestion that "a little nonsense now and then, is relished by the wisest men."

My thanks as ever to the students, staff, alumni, fellows and tutors of Hertford who make this such a special place. I hope that you are all able to get the break you deserve. See you soon.

My best wishes,

Paul Fletcher



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