



Dear Hertford Community,

Summer has flown by, and we are once again seeing the quads filling up with the excitement of a new term. The marquee is today buzzing with freshers at the start of their Hertford life. Having regularly experienced separation anxiety when dropping my sons at school, I'm sympathising with the parents as they unload the boxes and watch them go. This year, for now, will be closer to normality, with the return of in person teaching and most college events. But we remain careful. My latest student video on all this is [here](#), filmed precariously on the chapel roof.



It has been superb to start to come together again in person. The staff had a hugely deserved Summer party in OB Quad: at every alumni and student gathering we've started by applauding those who did so much to carry us through the lockdowns. Like London buses, we've welcomed back three gaudies in the last week, and were even able to serve the first of Hertford's honey crop. The 2010/11 gaudy had the most creative toasts Hertford has experienced for some time. After a year in the job, I am relishing a little less Zoom.

We have a packed programme of Freshers' events coming up, and then a backlog of postponed gatherings.



Our students did a superb job in their Finals this year, scooping a fantastic crop of [university prizes](#). And I hope that you saw Hertford's stunning victory on [University Challenge](#). Even Jeremy Paxman was impressed, though Covid restrictions meant there were fewer chants of "Hertford 'Til I Die" than at our Cuppers cricket victory. Bring on the next round.



As ever, our Fellows also continue to excel. Mike Wooldridge was selected as one of the [Turing AI Scholars](#), a great tribute to his research, somehow achieved while also running Computer Science for seven years. [David Greaves](#) has just been awarded a Major Educator Award by the Medical Sciences Division and, at just 91, Laszlo Solymer has published [Getting the Message: A History of Communications](#). From Zhanfeng Cui (on [Covid-19 testing](#)) to Emma Smith (on [Shakespeare's sonnets](#)) to Henry Bettinson ([walking reporters around the JR](#)) and Ciaran Martin (on [cyber and constitutional issues](#)), Hertford has made regular appearances in the national media, and our members continue to audition for [Desert Island Discs](#). This weekend we marked the retirement of Christopher Tyerman (though he has agreed to stay with us to write the college history) and the departure of Jeri Wright (for a prestigious Chair in Zoology).

With sadness we said farewell to Emeritus Fellow [Gerald Stone](#) after a short illness. Gerry's work on Sorb (a Slavic language from what was to become Germany) was pioneering, and drew fond memories from a committed band of admirers across the world. He also spent years trying to locate Evelyn Waugh's rooms in OB Quad. We hosted his family and friends for a memorial lunch.

Among the alumni, Rhodes Scholar [Yolande Chan](#) (1982) has been appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Management at McGill University, Montreal and Krishnan Guru-Murthy (1989) has been announced as the 2022 Geddes Lecturer for the [Geddes Trust](#).

Many of you, not least former Ambassador to Kabul (and a speaker at one of our gaudies) Sherard Cowper-Coles, have – like me – followed closely the troubling events in Afghanistan this summer. I've been working, in close coordination with colleagues across the university, to secure exits from Afghanistan for several Oxford academics, students and alumni. We hosted the UN country representative, Rossella Pagliuchi, on 17th September, to discuss the barriers to refugee education. Watch this space.

In other news, I experienced my first Encaenia. A bizarre day, packed with parades and Latin. Six inspirational women received honorary degrees, including Hillary Clinton, who recalled visiting Hertford in her youth (and was pictured glancing with justified admiration towards our famous marquee). Hillary recalled meeting my son, then a toddler, when he interrupted a press conference with the PM in 2009. She had asked him if he was leaping around like a rabbit and he had replied firmly "no, I am a *monkey*."



For those who have got this far, you might also be interested in a long piece I have done for Tortoise on the [lessons of the lockdowns](#).

Finally, I know that many of you are anxious for news of Simpkin. He has had a few scrapes recently, with the (new) New College cat in particular reminded of Simpkin's right to roam through other colleges when peckish. Like many of us after the gaudies, the vet has asked him to take it steady, and to balance his diet. The porters are keeping a close eye.

As so many Summer visitors discovered or rediscovered, over cream teas and lunches in the marquee, Hertford is open. We're well set for a year of extraordinary teaching and research alongside our wider [2030 aspirations](#) on climate, opportunity, access and individual and collective development. Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

My best wishes,

Tom