

## **Dear Hertford Community,**

When I last wrote, the college was surrounded by fake snow, courtesy of Warner Brothers. Today the sun is at last beginning to bounce off the Bodleian.

This term was meant to feel closer to normality. As I try to catch my breath midway through 8th Week, it has been anything but that. Like everyone, the college has had to rebuild a sense of community, with all of us adapting to this phase of the pandemic in different ways. The pace of Hilary Term is frenetic in normal times. And the international backdrop has added to the sense of uncertainty and anxiety. As I've just told staff (before a fiercely contested raffle), it is testimony to the sense of camaraderie and support at Hertford that the college is in such good shape as we stagger towards the break.

The term started against the backdrop of the Afghanistan crisis, and I was glad to

welcome brilliant Afghan academics from across the university to Hertford last week. The term ends against the chilling backdrop of Putin's invasion of Ukraine, the subject that has dominated discussions across the college over the last month. From my window I can see the placards and flags covering the fence outside the Radcliffe Camera and we have just had another marquee student debate on where the conflict leads. As a college, we have been keen to show our solidarity and most importantly – practical support for Ukrainians. So, alongside <u>lighting the</u> bridge, last week we sent a lorry full of essential supplies collected by staff, students and our friends at the Oxford Polish Association to refugees in Poland. Hertford is underwriting the costs of the transport and the operation has been led tirelessly by Ewa Gluza from the Bursary.





Ukraine's blue and yellow Meanwhile, college life is returning to a full tempo. I have just had a great

weekend at Torpids, watching three Hertford Eights ensuring that the deer remains feared. The men's First Eight bumped LMH right in front of our boathouse, to huge celebrations. Our rowers have had very little time together on the river, given the lockdowns, so their performances were remarkable. The Boat Club's Torpids bake sale also raised a fantastic £676 for the DEC Ukraine appeal. Elsewhere on the river we launched the Terry Hughes boat with Maria and the family, and scattered **Derek Conran's ashes**. We also toasted Derek at the Hertford Society's London dinner in February.



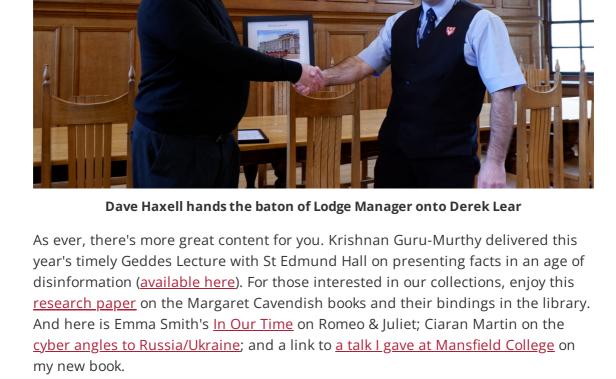
SAS Commander Graham Lamb to whistle-blower and alum Athol Williams. Pancake Day saw a resumption of the traditional Hertford race though a slippy

In other news, we 've had the usual range of great speakers this term, from former

quad made this more perilous than usual, with two students only narrowly avoiding casualty in their pursuit of a place in history. Also in the marquee last week we celebrated Hertford's women, on International Women's Day, with music, readings and cake. Up in the Octagon, the MCR have broken Simpkin's clawhold on the Animal Committee by purchasing a collection of jellyfish with appropriate names - 'Jimpkin' is thriving if aggressive, but 'Jom Fletcher' is rather spineless and flabby. Congratulations to Dave Haxell on completing his tone-setting tenure as Lodge Manager (we'll still see him around in semi retirement), to alum Alex Preston for the brilliant reception of new novel Winchelsea (I recommend his appearance on

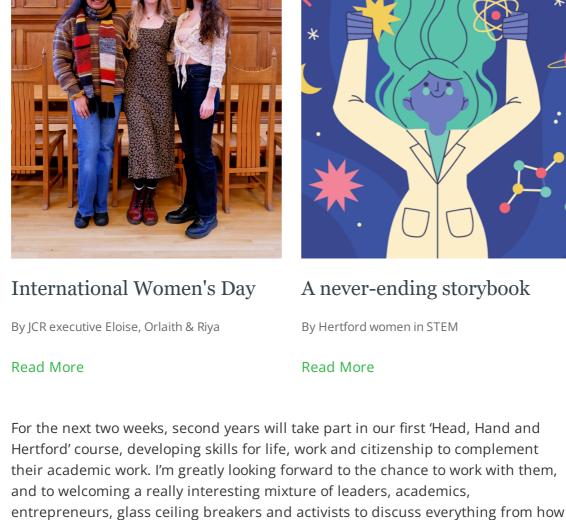
Rahim and Madeleine Wyburd for their appearances in parliament on Afghanistan and AI respectively. Congrats too to electrician Mo Ahmed for completing his apprenticeship with the college.

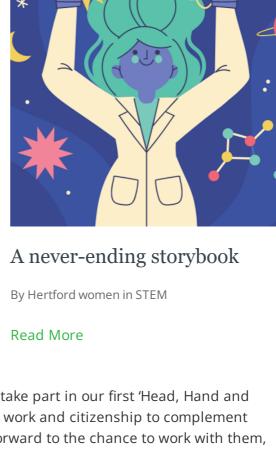
this podcast on the history of smuggling), and to current graduate students Sara



a barrier to study, and the next leap forward on access. We also agreed an ambitious set of more specific net zero priorities, including replacing our energy sources and changing catering. Thank you to alumni who have offered to help that work. Watch this space for updates on the library campaign and Porter Graduate Centre.

We press on with our <u>Hertford 2030</u> plans. Governing Body has agreed a new Academic Strategy, led by Senior Tutor Claire Vallance, setting out how we will enhance our teaching and research. We will look next term at reducing finance as





to stay curious to how to make change happen.

Later this month we will be launching the John Porter Diplomacy Centre. Among other initiatives it will look at how we support peacebuilding and conflict prevention, through research and practical action. We will also be announcing

scholarships for research on support for people displaced by conflict. World events are a reminder why this is such an important area of work. I am looking forward to events coming up in April to celebrate John Donne's 450th birthday, in June to connect our research to global challenges, and further ahead to bring together students, staff and alumni for a weekend of Hertford camaraderie - watch this space. Thank you once again to everyone for making this term special, and to our alumni

and supporters for your solidarity. I was struck by MCR President Teresa Taylor's message to grad students recently: "I call on all of us to embrace our community. It is here that we can find solace and

support, that we can 'unpack' and make sense of what is happening, that we can respectfully disagree and find understanding. The MCR is a vibrant place, filled with intelligent and kind people, and I have never been as grateful as I am now to be in your midst."

I feel that way about Hertford too.

All best wishes, Tom



Por Fletcher

