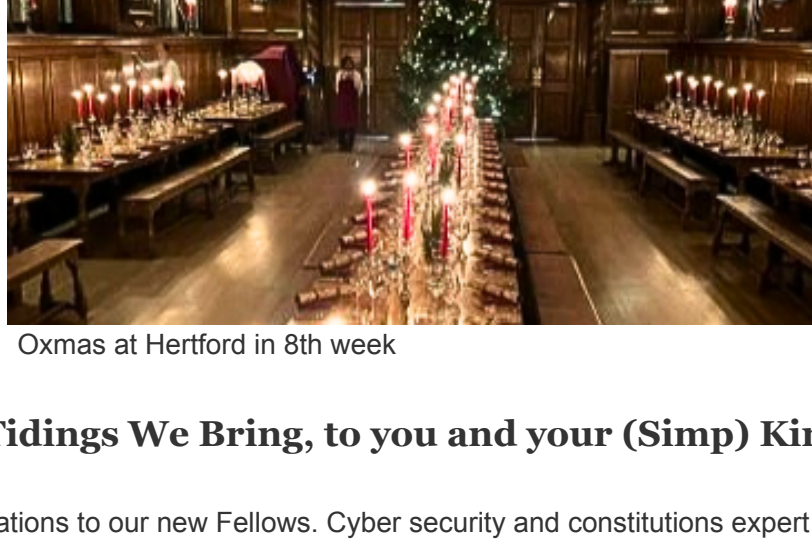


Driving Home for Christmas

The undergraduates left this weekend after an 8th Week flurry of over 500 turkey and vegan Oxmas dinners, final essays, two carol services, and (probably) occasional trips DTB. Thank you to the students for throwing themselves into another packed term, and to the tutors, staff and families who support them with such care and patience.

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Hertford now focuses on admissions for two weeks. Interviews are online again, as our tutors have concluded that this is fairer, greener, and more humane. Whatever you read in the grumpier parts of the media, the process is focused – with rigour and compassion – on finding the highest potential students we can. As I've reiterated on visits to schools (including to one run by excellent Head and Hertford alum David Atkinson) the interviews vary significantly by subject but are all designed to help tutors understand how the applicants think and solve problems. As Neil Tanner once said of the process, we know gold when we strike it. While we await the decisions on who will join us next year, many thanks to the tutors who work so hard to pan for gold. And congratulations to our current students who justify the search.



Oxmas at Hertford in 8th week

Good Tidings We Bring, to you and your (Simp) Kin

Congratulations to our new Fellows. Cyber security and constitutions expert [Ciaran Martin](#) has been elected a Senior Research Fellow. And we have three new [Honorary Fellows](#): journalists Fiona Bruce and Krishnan Guru-Murthy, and former Ambassador Moazzam Malik. We welcomed Krishnan back to Hertford in November to give a talk on whether journalism can survive the digital age.

Congratulations too to Nick Barton on his Emeritus Fellowship. It is a testament to the success of the subject that a second Arch and Anth Fellow, Dylan Gaffney, starts next year, joining Lambros Malafouris to chart the next 30 years of the subject.

Congratulations also to alumnus Jeremy Quin on joining the Cabinet as Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office.



Krishnan Guru-Murthy visiting Hertford in November

Feed The World

This has been the most normal term since I arrived. Bob Dylan turned down our invitation to stay in OB3 during his visit to Oxford, but it has been otherwise great to see the college so full of life again. 250 people now come in every Wednesday for a roast dinner. In recent weeks we have welcomed back six decades of JCR Presidents, including David Baker (1960), who is about to celebrate his 50th wedding anniversary to one of the first women to be invited to dine at Hertford. Listening to the anecdotes was a real insight into much needed change and much needed continuity in recent college history. That half of the JCR Presidents were historians is testimony to the leadership lessons of the degree, not – as I think I heard a scientist claim – its lack of academic rigour.

It was excellent to see so many Warnock Society members back for lunch in October, and to have the chapel filled with donors for carols on Saturday, including football Cuppers winner and Father of the House Norman Perrin (1948). I was sorry that a(nother) University dinner kept me from the London Drinks last week, generously hosted by Fiona Coady (2001) at Taylor Wessing.

Finally on food, English student Fiona Zeka has [made an appearance](#) (supported by the Hertford Quad) in The Times, on how school meal programmes fuelled her chances of coming here.



Christmas Carols in the College Chapel



London Drinks at Taylor Wessing

Happy Xmas (Waugh is Over)

January is the [100th anniversary of Evelyn Waugh's arrival](#). Most students and alumni will at some point have pointed out to visitors what we might delicately call the Sebastian Flyte window in OB Quad. Waugh got a Third, started 'The Hypocrites', and fell out badly with Principal Cruttwell, so we now draw selectively on his example. But all this was briefly forgiven and forgotten during the MCR's celebration of his time here. As was his complaint that the college was dreary, cramped and impossible to reach by train. We are certainly not dreary, and many of the student rooms are much nicer than in 1922 (albeit probably not yet quite up to Waugh's expectations). The trains remain beyond our control.

Peace on Earth and Mercy Mild

Beyond Catte Street, we are engaged as ever on the wider challenges which dominate the news. A growing number of displaced academics and graduate scholars are part of our academic community, including from Ukraine. I recently spoke at the Pitt Rivers Museum on Hertford's effort to develop better leaders, mindful of the fact that 11 of the last 13 Prime Ministers were at Oxford (including three so far this term). I'm not sure what the student meant when they asked if it was a novel experience to eat and speak surrounded by dinosaurs.

On Thanksgiving, we debated prospects for the US, including with our excellent Visiting Students from America. A theme of next year's speaker series will be 'The Peace Processes of the Future'. Our research associates will be working on a series of projects, drawing on huge experience and expertise, including peace with the planet, with future generations, and with technology.



Underneath the dinosaurs at the Natural History Museum in Oxford

When the Kids Start Singing and the Band Begins to Play

Also coming up in 2023, do watch this space for news of the John Donne Lecture in April (with Lyse Doucet) and the Hertford Festival (weekend of 1st July). The choir, rebuilding swiftly after the distance of the lockdowns, are performing Handel's *Messiah* on 18th February in the Holywell Music Room.

The Chapel and choir have had a busy term, singing at several important services. At the All Souls service our Chaplain Mia Smith read out the names of special people, with the choir performing Faure's *Requiem*. At Advent we hosted a calming candlelit service of the ancient *O Antiphon* prayers set to music by the choir. The college's carol service saw a packed chapel for carols by candlelight, past and current members from babies to retired alumni, with mulled wine & mince pies in OB quad.

In the Bleak Midwinter

Governing Body has focused this term on weathering the financial storm. We have a cross college campaign on energy saving. We continue to focus on getting to carbon neutral by 2030. And we are making further spending reductions to balance the books. Alongside some tough decisions we also had a Fellows trip to Emma Smith's brilliant [Sensational Books](#) exhibition.



The Sensational Books exhibition at the Bodleian Libraries

Fairy Tale of New York

Next week we host a farewell dinner for the Vice-Chancellor, Louise Richardson, before she leaves for the US. As the Irish college, we will welcome various Emerald Isle notables, including the Ambassador and our very own Roy Foster. The Heads of the Oxford colleges have gifted Louise a Jack Yeats print in place of the three in the Old Lodgings that she has long coveted. Louise has made a strong point of emphasising freedom of speech in her farewell messages (as I've heard her do many times with all new students during their matriculation). Again, despite what you might read in parts of the media, freedom to debate, disagree and argue is as vibrant as ever here, and captured in our college/student charter. You can hear David Dwan on Orwell and free speech [here](#). Ian McBride can be heard on the 1798 Irish Rebellion [here](#).

All I Want for Christmas is ...

At this time of giving, have I mentioned the [H2030 campaigns](#) for the library, student support, net zero and other big priorities? Or the chance to [come back and eat in Hall](#)? We've launched a challenge to find the most generous year group: listen out for messages from your JCR President.



Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

Walking through the Magdalen deer park at the weekend, I mentioned to my 11-year-old son the report that Magdalen kill a deer each time a Fellow dies. Slightly shocked, and with a sentimental eye on the season, he immediately suggested that they should do the opposite. We have no plans to do so, but we are instead streamlining our committees.

With all best wishes,

Tom

