

Dear Hertford Community,

When I last wrote to you, we were in the first moments of rediscovering the beauty of the main quad in summer. Students were starting to take their revision breaks, and even in some cases (the lucky human scientists) their tutorials, on the lawn. The first pair of Professorial shorts had appeared, unbidden. And someone had found the pre-lockdown croquet mallets in a dusty basement. Today, the quad is full of sunshine and life. Glasses are set out for Schools Dinners. The revision breaks are being replaced by post exam celebrations (though trashings are consigned to the past by a generation more aware of the environmental and social impact). There are an even more flamboyant range of Professorial shorts on parade. And the Hertford croquet team, fuelled by Carl's Champion Picnic Boxes, has just triumphed in Cuppers, a sporting accolade that I never imagined we would achieve, and for which I can take no credit at all.



The victorious croquet cuppers team

Sporting successes and sad farewells

While we're on sport, congratulations to the men's second VIII, who joined the first VIII in securing Blades. My cork popping skills remain [work in progress](#), but the [celebratory chalkings](#) in the main and NB Quad have drawn glowing feedback even from our shadowy Works of Art Committee. It was great to have with us friends and family of Hertford rowing legends Paul Gleeson and Huw Peach. Meanwhile, the [women's football team](#) won the league, undefeated (like West Ham in Europe). Thanks to Keble for being part of that joint Hertble effort. For more elite sporting activity, do come to the renovated cricket ground today to see a Hertford XI take on the Principal's XI. Surely the most important and eagerly awaited cricketing encounter of the day.



M2 after their blades-winning race



The Hertble football champions

Away from the exam halls and sports pitches, this is a moment of farewell, with its accompanying celebration and sadness. I remember that long drive home at the end of 8th Week in 1997, hoping that my father wouldn't see my tears as we crawled down the M40. The Oxford seasons move all too fast, and the finalists' carnations turn all too quickly from white to pink to red. We'll celebrate many departing students with a leavers' BBQ on Saturday. This has been an incredible group of humans, many of whom arrived in lockdowns having missed much of their final school year. They had to help us preserve and adapt so much of what makes Hertford the place it is. I'll always be grateful to them for doing that with such resilience, purpose and energy. We are better for their time here, and I look forward to watching them change the world.

We are also saying goodbye to our wonderful Chaplain, Mia Smith, after seven years. At the heart of so much college life, Mia has carried our community through triumphs and tragedies, with thousands of quiet but powerful interventions, cups of tea, and – on the toughest days – doughnuts. She will be greatly missed, and will take with her a small sod of the quad, from the Chapel corner, nourished over the years by leftover Communion wine. Among the many staff, friends, students, choristers, tutors and Fellows at [Mia's final service](#) were three former Heads of Hertford, making this the first time that four Principals (or to use our Chapel role in this context, Ordinaries of the Peculiar) had gathered. It was great to welcome back Walter, John and Will, between us almost thirty years of responsibility without power.

This is also the final term as Tutorial Fellows for three colleagues who have been Hertford stalwarts for three decades. [Tony Wilson](#), [Charlotte Brewer](#) and [Pat Roche](#) will be familiar names to so many alumni, beyond their loyal and fortunate students in Engineering, English and Physics. Alongside teaching and research, they have also had noble stints as Senior Fellow, Senior Tutor and Investment Bursar respectively, and done much to set the tone of Hertford today. And, as we celebrated at the Boat Club dinner, Pat has been a longstanding (and latterly very successful) Senior Member of the Boat Club, having taken over the oars from Neil Tanner in the mid 90s. We are busy conspiring on creative ways to ensure that the three of them cannot really leave, and Governing Body has invited Pat to remain as Chair of the Investment Advisory Board.



The Revd Mia Smith



Professor Tony Wilson



Professor Charlotte Brewer



Professor Pat Roche

Welcoming our neighbours, and broadcasting to the world

Much more, as ever, to report. Thanks to all the Hertford musicians who put on a brilliant inaugural Principal's Concert in May. We celebrated [Oxford Pride](#) with a breakfast for the Hertford LGBTQ+ community and by handing out thousands of rainbow ice creams to marchers in Catte Street. I was joined for what I hope will be this new tradition by the Vice-Chancellor, the Chair of Conference of Colleges, and several Heads of House. This event, following opening the Hall and Boathouse to the public (for May Day brunch and Summer Vills respectively) continues to show that Hertford is open to the world beyond the college gate.

We are now well into the delivery phase of our Hertford 2030 plans. The excavations for the library project will begin over the summer, and we are expanding our property portfolio in North Oxford, to provide more graduate accommodation. We have just received a detailed report on how we will decarbonise the estate (more to come on our website). Our new access strategy is almost ready. I'm working closely with the University's newly appointed Head of Local and Global Initiatives, thinking about how we can be a good neighbour to Oxford and a force for good in the world. As part of this work, we held our latest sessions on the Peace Processes of the Future, one on peace with the planet and one on peace with Oxford. And [we hosted the S30 forum](#), comprising of Chief Sustainability Officers from thirty of the world's biggest companies. This is an opportunity to connect our extraordinary researchers to those working to adapt their business models. The ideas generated by our academics are too important to keep to ourselves.

Meanwhile, BBC R4 remains Hertford's college radio station. You can catch up here on recent appearances from [Emma Smith](#), [Mike Wooldridge](#) (1hr 50min in), [Ciaran Martin](#) (30 min in) or [me](#). Steve Furber will be honoured at next week's Encaenia, alongside Lyse Douset (of John Donne dinner fame). Oliver Bingham has won the Mattheu Arnol Memorial Prize. Athol Winnier received a Blue Print for Free Speech special recognition award. And alumnus Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku was remembered during the OU Greyhounds rugby tour to Japan.



Oxford Pride



S30 Forum Visit

Celebrating our college community

Coming up, we have gaudies in September for [1994/5](#) and [1974-76](#). [Get in touch](#) if you haven't received your invitations. By popular demand, I'm pleased to confirm that the bar will be open again for these vital alumni events. The PPE-ists gather on 22 September. The [Hertford Society](#) meet for lunch on 25 June. And we have a brilliant programme of events lined up for the [Hertford Festival](#), another opportunity to show that Hertford is open. Speakers include Fiona Bruce, Sarah Hannah, Peter Frankopan, Corin Throsby, Suzanne Heywood and Roberto Trotta. And there will be plenty of other events for the whole family. It promises to be a superb weekend. Do sign up [here](#). We want Hertford to be a community of learners: your opportunity to grow here doesn't end when you graduate. I'm particularly looking forward to the University Challenge between Hertford celebs and our current team.

Speaking of quiz questions, what do Peter Mandelson, Fiona Hill and Huw Edwards have in common? They all, it turns out, interviewed unsuccessfully for places at Hertford. It is a reminder of how demanding the process is, and how lucky those of us who get through it are. For everyone who celebrates the letter of admission, there are many who don't. Peter came to dinner this term, and recalled being grilled by Roger Van Norden in a college that smelt of cabbage. Huw mentioned his rejection in a [recent talk](#) and has accepted my subsequent invitation to come back. Fiona has gone on to extraordinary things as one of the world's top Russia experts: you can hear her Desert Island Discs [here](#). I hope to coax her in soon too, to show a more positive side of Hertford than the one she described.

So much more to say, but I am endeavouring to keep these shorter, and the fastest bowlers in the JCR are preparing to give me some chin music. I hope that you have a superb weekend ahead, wherever it finds you. As ever, do let me know if you have news or updates you would like included in these bulletins, or in our college publications.

Ben Fletcher