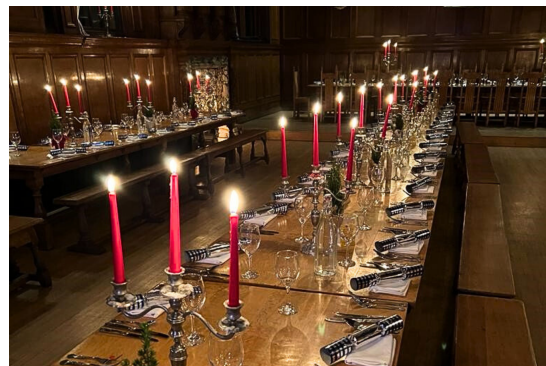


## ***Dear Hertford Community,***

We're into the final week of another busy term. The Christmas trees are up in the lodge and the lodgings, and the fireplace has been blazing in Hall for this week's packed Oxmas dinners. Not content with feeding the entire Hertford community, head chef Carl Isham is going a step further and cooking at Oxford's biggest charity Christmas lunch on Christmas Day: all volunteers welcome.



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A valiant effort by our University Challenge team came to an end on Monday. I joined them, and other students, to watch the battle with tournament favourites UCL. I'm sure many alumni will share my impression that the questions are getting harder. Host Amol Rajan told me we had the friendliest team in the competition. We'll be back next year. Meanwhile, we're looking for another alum to take the regular Hertford spot on Strictly. Congratulations to Krishnan Guru-Murthy on an exuberant run. I was reminded by recent leaver Charlie Hancock during her graduation ceremony last week that she was the first to get the announcement of Krishnan's participation, at our John Donne dinner. As ever, Hertfordians are making and breaking the news.

Next week, as the undergraduate students leave for a well-earned break, the tutors and admissions team turn to the tough task of selecting next year's undergrads, building on the effort over recent decades to find students based on potential not polish, and on where they are going, not where they have been. I know how seriously the interviewers take this process. We are always conscious that these are sliding door moments for the young people seeking opportunity here. I hope that they all gain something from the process, whatever the result.

## **Peace Processes of the Future**



Last week we concluded our 2023 speaker series on the peace processes of the future. The conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East are a reminder of why these themes matter. Over fourteen sessions and many other events and visits, students, staff, academics, alumni, and the local community have looked at challenges such as peace with the planet, with technology, between Big Tech and governments, or with our ancestors. We have been joined by delegations from South Africa, Northern Ireland, and the COP climate talks; leading international figures such as Cathy Ashton and Valerie Amos; former Prime Ministers (one now the Foreign Secretary...), Ambassadors, peacekeepers, and National Security Advisers; bestselling writers such as Peter Frankopan; the architects of the Good Friday Agreement; and journalists such as Lyse Doucet, Jeremy Bowen and Krishnan Guru-Murthy who have covered conflicts close up. Many sessions have been led by our Fellows, staff, and students. I have learnt a huge amount and been heartened to see our partners for the series – the new Oxford Diplomacy Society – grow to 2000 student members. Thank you to everybody who took part. I hope we will see the results for years to come.

Next year's speaker series will align with the 50th anniversary of female students arriving at Hertford. As the first Principal to be born since then, I'm constantly reminded of what that has meant for us: the upward trajectory of this college in that period is *unimaginable* without them. But I'm also conscious of the women who tell me their stories of how we could have done more, or of the obstacles they had to work too hard to make us dismantle. We cannot be complacent or take for granted the pioneers who made us better. Over the year we'll hear from many – across disciplines and fields - who are ensuring that women's voices and women's stories are heard.

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## Hertford 2030

We are now well into the plans to deliver the Hertford 2030 ambitions set by students, academics, staff, and alumni in 2021. At the heart of this project is **excellent teaching and research**. Several Hertford students secured prestigious university prizes this year. You will have read in these bulletins the phenomenal breadth of research being led by our academics. It is heartening to see much of this connect with our aspiration to be a frontline for a better society. On climate, for example, we hosted before next week's COP the top 30 chief sustainability officers to connect our academics with the urgent challenges they face. During October's big AI Summit, organised by Hertford's Heywood Fellow Jonathan Black, much of the expert media commentary was led by three other Fellows: Mike Wooldridge, Carissa Véliz and Ciaran Martin. Mike will of course become the fourth Hertford Fellow to present the prestigious **Royal Institution Christmas Lectures** this year, unmatched by any other organisation. Do tune in. It is increasingly rare

to switch on BBC Radio 4 and not hear a Hertford Fellow or alum. November marked the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's First Folio. Do catch up with Emma Smith's insights on Radio 4, Sky Arts, podcasts, and much more.

Secondly, Hertford 2030 set the aspiration that we should be **a pioneer on access and sustainability**. This year we launched seven full scholarships for graduate students from less represented countries and displaced communities, with more on the way. I've seen this term how students from different backgrounds are enriching the academic community. Meanwhile, we have expanded our outreach and access work in the UK with a new access plan led by Senior Tutor Claire Vallance. Bursar Jamie Clark has led an overhaul of our student support, with the aim of further reducing financial barriers to studying here. On sustainability, Jamie and Domestic Bursar James Hill, supported energetically by staff and students, are leading our efforts to decarbonize the estate. Our focus in this period has been to shift to sustainable energy sources. Over the Christmas vac all gas equipment from the main site kitchen will be **replaced with energy-efficient electric appliances**. Next term we launch with students an experiment to make one of our new properties an example of sustainable student housing.



Thirdly, Hertford 2030 aims to **prepare students for life, work, and citizenship**. Thank you to alumni who are supporting our expanded mentoring and coaching initiatives. I'm seeing the clear benefit for students. My **'Head, Hand, Hertford' course** on life skills is now in its third year. As part of the effort to build this sense of a community of learners, we have also launched a college/student charter to set out our collective commitment to curiosity and to learning with independence and autonomy. At the heart of the charter, prepared with students, is an understanding that this is a small, close-knit community, and an openness to debate, challenge, and feedback. This includes respect for the rights of others to express views with which we may disagree. We don't expect perfection from each other: it is fine to make some mistakes along the way. The 1994/5 gaudy in September reminded me of plenty of mine.

Fourth, Hertford 2030 aims to underpin all this work with **excellent people and facilities**. Pro-Principal Emma Smith has been leading the effort to ensure that we have a library that matches our ambitions. The updated designs - **signed off last week by Governing Body** - are superb, and the intensive building work begins in 2024. On the people side, we have created new roles for a **Director of Music** and **Student Welfare Lead** to ensure that these vital areas of college life are well supported. Welcome to Hannah Towndrow and Jane Corrigan.



A key theme of Hertford 2030 is the effort to be a good neighbour. Carl's Christmas lunch is a great example of this, building on Summer Eights, Pride, the record-breaking May Day brunch, and the Hertford Festival, where we put the emphasis on throwing the doors to the quad wide open rather than closing ourselves off. We work with local pupils in Barton to teach them coding, logic, and reasoning skills, and are looking at more ways we can support local pupils. Accounts clerk Ewa Gluza has been coordinating our work to support community organisations and events, sharing our facilities where possible.

Beyond Hertford 2030, Governing Body has created space for thought about the college and university in 2050. We don't want to be a dining club in a theme park university in an uncertain country in a fragile world. Fellow for Sustainability Anette Mikes has been challenging us to think about how we could be a **Ministry of the Future**, connecting with recent guest Kim Stanley Robinson and other global thinkers.

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Earlier this month, we were honoured to host the funeral of alumnus and Hertford Society legend Jeffrey Preston. We also held a memorial football match (from which I am still recovering) for the great Kenny Lewis. We missed Kenny's bustling, exuberant presence on the pitch, just as we miss it in the Quad. The former team he coached at Kennington soundly defeated a valiant but less well-drilled ensemble of alumni, Fellows, staff and students. We should have asked our women footballers to take over: their joint Hertford/Keble team are unbeaten this season, heading for Cuppers glory, and never seem to win by fewer than ten goals.

I'm always struck at gaudies and gatherings that there are Hertford people running NGOs, courts, schools, hospitals and businesses, in the cabinet and shadow cabinet, working for the King, writing bestselling books, and much, much more. There has been a great turnout for our alumni events in college and London. We hosted drinks in Manchester earlier this week, and our annual Donor Drinks is coming up this weekend. Keep an eye on our events calendar for future dates, and look out for more information on how you can get involved with our Giving Day next February.

I hope you are getting a decent break when it comes. Thanks to everyone for another extraordinary Hertford year. See you in 2024.

*Paul Fletcher*

