



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

Happy New Year. I hope that your 2024 has started well. A particular welcome to our newly arrived visiting students.

It is bright but very cold in Oxford, and the flooding has receded. Dodging puddles (and the occasional lake), it has been excellent to hear Hertford Geography Fellows [Louise Slater](#) and [Linda Speight](#) in the media, explaining [where all the water has come from](#) and [why](#). Undeterred by the weather, thank you the maintenance and catering teams who over the break oversaw the switch of our kitchens [from gas to electricity](#), a key part of our sustainability plan as part of Hertford 2030. I am pleased to confirm that head chef Carl and his team are happy with the kit, and that the food is as superb as ever.

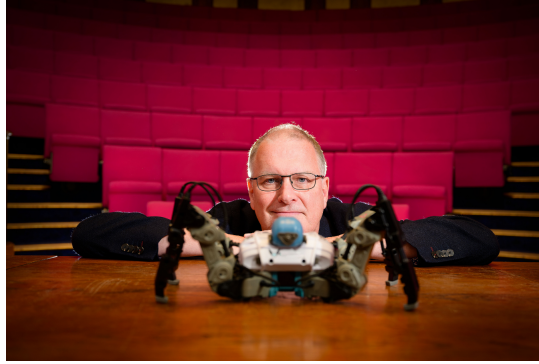


I hope you got to see Mike Wooldridge's fantastic series of Christmas lectures for the Royal Institution, [all available here](#). They are an essential introduction to artificial intelligence, and the response has been suitably enthusiastic. It is such a tribute to Mike's accessible expertise that he was asked to do this, and a great honour for Hertford to field our fourth speaker, a unique achievement. I am sure that the organisers will be loitering in the quad to find our fifth.

Much more Hertford content out there. I've just caught up with the excellent [BBC documentary](#) on Honorary Fellow Paul Muldoon's life and poetry, which features musical interpretations of his work by Bono, Paul Simon, Van Morrison, Paul McCartney and others. Not a bad supergroup. Over the break I also enjoyed the [BBC's 'Shakespeare: Rise of a Genius'](#), which Emma Smith helped bring to life. If you can bear to think about prospects for geopolitics in 2024, my [New Year's Day Radio4 interview](#) is here, with a convoluted set of metaphors that I suspect would not survive an Oxford tutorial.

Meanwhile, alum Elliot Hooson has shown that our quiz expertise goes beyond University Challenge, [winning his Mastermind round](#) and through to the semi-finals. Boatman Jim Ronaldson is rowing the Atlantic (you can [follow his progress](#) as part of team Never2Late online). Carissa Véliz has secured a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (and [published another book](#), out now), and Fernanda Duarte is a [Blavatnik Awards UK finalist](#). Warm congratulations all round.

Welcome to our new Dean, [Vlad Vyazovskiy](#). Vlad has encouraged me not to shorthand his distinguished and illustrious academic record as being about sleeping penguins and human hibernation. Perhaps better to [watch his excellent TED talk](#). Many thanks to outgoing Dean Oliver Noble Wood for his humane wisdom in the role. More than any other college role, the hardest parts are the ones least likely to feature in a college bulletin like this: they are much valued. Welcome too to new Academic Visitor, international human rights lawyer and KC, [Schona Jolly](#).



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Much coming up. This Sunday is our annual MacBride Sermon, when we welcome University colleagues for an early morning madeira, thanks to a bequest from a generous former Principal. You are welcome to join me for a session on the [battle for liberal democracy](#) in the year of elections, and talks from former Cabinet Secretary Lord Mark Sedwill (24th January) and FT Weekend Editor Alec Russell (26th January). I'm also looking forward to welcoming author Elif Shafak for a visit today.

This term's lecture series will be led by alumni, talking about how Hertford shaped them, starting with [James Weinberg on 1st February](#). All are welcome for the Principal's Recital on 15th February, led by our music students. Torpids is on 28th February - 2nd March, and the Golf Society are holding a gathering on 15th March. I'm looking forward to teaching the Head, Hand and Hertford course again over the Easter Vacation, and as ever would welcome any guest speakers from among our alumni. A Monday lunchtime craft club has started for staff and students. For more on any of these events, please contact [sophie.carp@hertford.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sophie.carp@hertford.ox.ac.uk).

Later this year, our speaker themes switch to the 150th anniversary of our refounding in 1874. And then to the 50th anniversary of the arrival of female students. Much planned. Watch this space.

I'm looking to get out to meet more alumni in the Spring. Do let me know if you are around Glasgow on 20th March, and Singapore in the week of 22nd April.

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Governing Body this term is thinking about our long-term size and shape, and pursuing our ambitious estate strategy. We are getting everything in place to get spades in the ground for the library over the Summer, with the aim of opening in 2026. Do look out for further updates on social media and the website.

Alumni will be hearing from us as we approach our annual Giving Day on 22nd and 23rd February. Over the course of 36 hours, we're asking alumni, staff, students, and friends to help ensure that Hertford remains a life-enhancing place for generations of students to come. We have made it much easier to choose [where your donation can go](#), and there are many ways in which you can take part. Please join us.

*With warmest wishes,*

Tom

*Tom Fletcher*



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