



Dear Hertford Community,

It has been a crisp and misty final week of term in Oxford. But the first two pairs of sunglasses (both sported stylishly by Fellows) appeared in the quad today, the pink magnolia tree at the Rad Cam end of the Old Lodgings is starting to flower, Catering Manager Simon Robinson got out the rabbit ears for Friday's Easter Formal (to wear not serve, I hope), and the Isis is almost back within its banks. Domestic Bursar James Hill is hoping these green shoots will mean further reductions in energy use. Most students headed off for a well-deserved break this weekend.



Last week we had a dinner to celebrate the great Roy Foster. The recent accolades to Roy have piled up faster than we can toast them, but the latest include a prestigious lifetime achievement award. Helping us mark the occasion in the 'Irish College' were the Chancellor, Bob Geldof, writers, academics and ambassadors, all marshalled deftly by Ian McBride, who holds the Chair named after Roy. A great night, with the Old Hall even experiencing some Irish singing. Other recent

speakers and visitors to Hertford have included Schona Jolly KC (our new Academic Visitor), Christoph Bettin (Earth Sciences, 1990, and ex-CEO of Rubik's Cube), Peter Mandelson, and Ivan Duque (ex-President of Colombia).

High water levels prevented Torpids this year, so I have no fresh rowing triumphs to report. But our women footballers have more than made up for that, [winning their Cuppers final 4-1](#) and completing a rampant year of victories. Many congratulations to them, to Anya Tregay for leading Oxford to a victory in the national cheerleading championship, and to [Zed Nott and Lilla Berry](#) for making the Blues Rugby team. Alfie Deere-Hall, fresh from masterminding this year's admissions process, won the college pancake race with panache in a treacherously wet quad. Alum Sam Tomlinson (PPE, 1994) somehow completed a 150km ultrarun across Gran Canaria (pausing only briefly halfway for an energy bar and to make a donation to our Giving Day). Our college boat man Jim Ronaldson rowed across the Atlantic in a boat named after late alum Paul Gleeson. Both Jim and Paul have Hertford boats named after them ready to compete next term.



Other alumni achievements in recent weeks include Dave Hart being pictured on the tube as one of London's best buskers and Ness Collingridge receiving an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. We have blitzed the current affairs podcasts this term, with Hertford getting a mention on four of the most popular - Political Currency, News Agents, How to Win an Election, and The Rest Is Politics. On the R4 Today programme Nick Robinson invited an unfavourable (for the MPs) comparison between parliament and our students. Meanwhile, both [Sally Bailey](#) and [Adam Fleming](#)'s podcasts continue to race up the charts. We're also proud of staff members who are developing their skills. Congrats

to Dean Campbell on qualifying as a Chartered Accountant and Jack Shirley for completing the BPEC Level 3 Diploma in Plumbing and Domestic Heating.

Huge thanks to everyone who supported our Giving Day in February. Your engagement made these the most successful ever, with 203 donors raising just over £150,000. This will fully fund ten undergraduate bursaries and makes a good dent in the library campaign. The recent Alumni Development Board meeting gave us the clear message that we should be less shy about setting out why we need this support, so here - with unashamed gusto - are the [fundraising pages](#). We want to preserve the Hertford that shaped so many of us, and ensure that it can do that for generations to come.



One of the unexpected bonuses of being a college Principal is that you become a Senior Member of several societies. Mine are the Oxford Diplomacy Society (started in 2020 by Hertford student Tiril Rahn and reaching 2,000 members in three years), the Oxford Boxing Club (who I went to Cambridge to support in the Varsity match this weekend), and the Oxford Media Society (who we hosted for their 20th anniversary last week, with political and media figures). At some point I'm considering uniting the three societies to give the diplomats a chance to practise on the boxers, and the journalists something to write about.

Another bonus of this role is that I get to hold Principal's Collections, meeting all the students to discuss their academic progress. Alumni may remember these as formal, if brutally swift, interactions. They have lost some of their formality but remain an indispensable way for me to take the temperature over high cholesterol breakfasts or high calorie cake. While piling on the pounds I learn enormous

amounts, and am constantly impressed by the enthusiasm and brilliance of our students. One of my favourites this term was with fourth year biologist Flynn Bizzell, who dropped in casually that he had just made a ground breaking discovery on how ants react to some diseases (spoiler alert – they eat each other). I'm looking forward to leading the next 'Head, Hand and Hertford' course over the coming fortnight, with some great external speakers joining us on leadership, emotional intelligence, activism, purpose, communication and much more.

I don't know that committees are a bonus of the role, but I get a lot of them, especially as Vice-Chair of the Conference of Colleges. Across the University we have tough decisions to take on pay and conditions, protecting free speech, supporting equality and diversity, and finding our next Chancellor. Our own Governing Body has been focused this term on the library plans, our ideal longer term size and shape, putting in place more robust processes for handling risk, and delivering our ambitious sustainability goals. On the latter we have several big projects planned, including one led by a mixture of Fellows, students and staff to develop one of our properties with the most innovative climate friendly tech available – working title the 'Go All Out House'.

Coming up later this week, the Hertford Society is hosting an event for young alumni in London, and we have an English reunion (led by Emma Smith and David Dwan) in college. Many of the 1964 cohort have booked in for a reunion dinner in April – do get in touch if you would like to arrange something similar. Our hugely popular [Unsung Heroes of Science](#) competition is underway again. I'm hosting head teachers next week from across the UK for a workshop on the future of learning. And I'm visiting alumni in Singapore and Hong Kong in April.

Our speaker series this year celebrates the 150th anniversary of our refounding in 1874, and the 50th anniversary of the arrival of female students. We have much planned to celebrate these two milestones, so watch this space and do contact the [Development Office](#) if you would like to be involved. Meanwhile, we finished the term with a series of events on Friday for International Women's Day, led by Fernanda Duarte as Fellow for Equality and Diversity. Among the IWD book recommendations from Fellows, staff and students are Invisible Women (Caroline Criado Perez, nominated by Carissa Véliz), Inferior (Angela Saini, nominated by Fernanda), and Wintering (Katherine May, nominated by Anette Mikes). On Friday evening we had a superb panel (including alumni Sarah Montgomery and Vicki

Herrington) on women, war and peace making. Meanwhile Fernanda took time off briefly from organising the day to [collect her award](#) as a UK finalist in the prestigious Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists.



A final plug. Several Hertford people are involved in this year's Oxford Literature Festival. You can hear my predecessor [Will Hutton](#) on his new book, or [Emma Smith](#), [Ian McBride](#) and alumni [Jen Cownie and Fiona Lensveldt](#). [Chris Patten and I](#) will be in discussion at the Sheldonian on 18th March, in his last public appearance as Chancellor. We'll be discussing the state of the world, and looking back over his career in diplomacy and time at Oxford. Don't tell him, but I have some surprises in store.

A final story. Those of you at the Hertford Festival may remember I went off script (always a risk) to talk about a potential Hertford student who had fled conflict and was about to miss the chance to come here, for financial reasons. Later that evening an alum offered to help. The two of them met last month for one of our guest night dinners, and discussed all that the student is achieving here, and will go on to achieve, because of that crucial intervention from someone who saw that they could make a difference. As I write this, another alum is mentoring one of our students in the office next door. Those are such Hertford stories. They are who we are and what we do, and that is why I love this place.

With warmest wishes,

Paul Fletcher



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