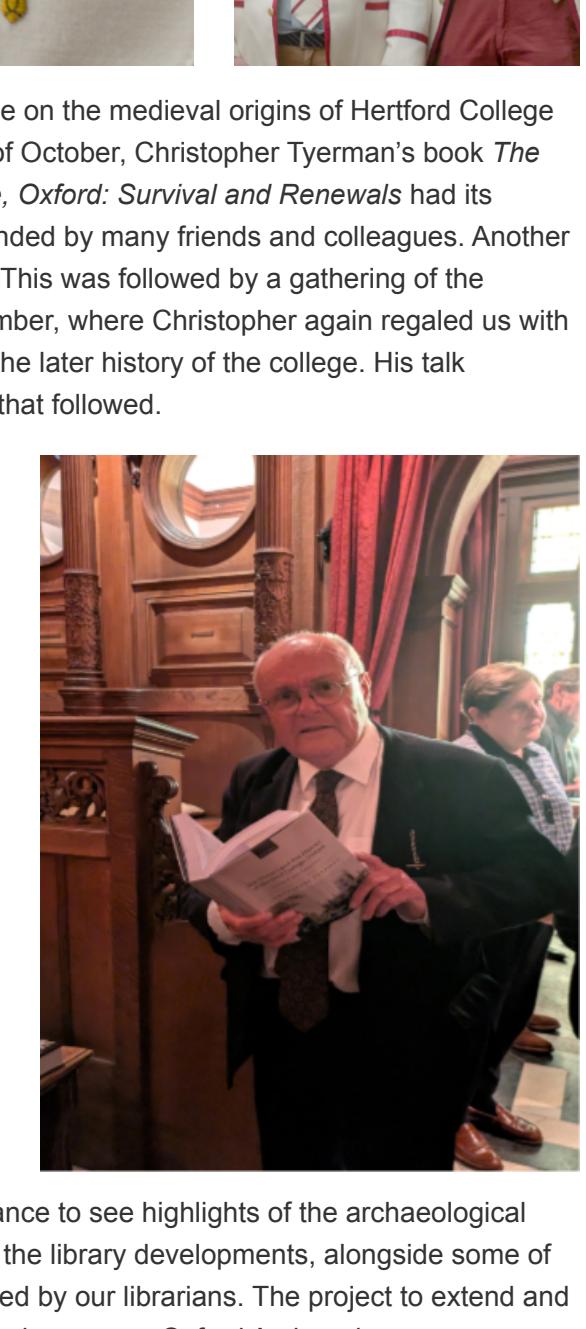
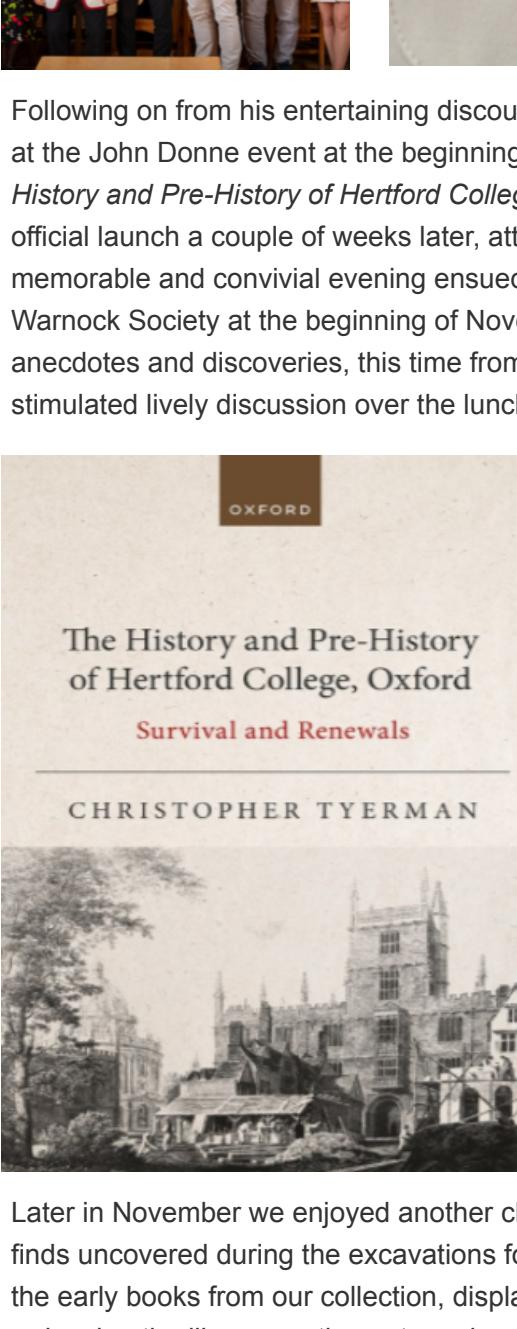


## Dear Hertford Community,

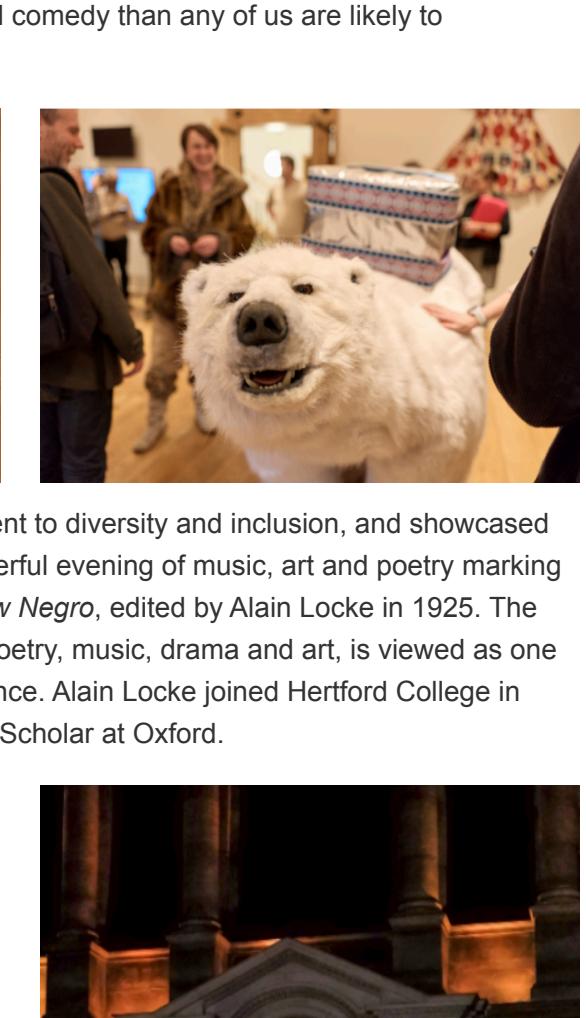
The start of a new academic year is always busy, but this Michaelmas term has had the additional excitement of the election of Hertford's next Principal. I am delighted that **Alexandra Freeman, Baroness Freeman of Steventon**, will become Principal of Hertford College in mid-March 2026. We are looking forward to her joining the Hertford community and imprinting her leadership on the college. I believe that she will find the college in good shape, although of course facing challenges, as does every other educational institution.

In October we welcomed an intake of 110 undergraduate students and 94 graduate students to Hertford. Whilst adjusting to the strange Oxford vocabulary and customs can undoubtedly be a bit of a challenge, they have quickly settled in and are very glad to be here, right in the middle of Oxford, with so many wonderful places on our doorstep and such a welcoming environment. In my meetings with the first-year undergraduates, they expressed appreciation for their accommodation in NB and Holywell Quads and the quality and pricing of the food provided by the college staff. They also enjoyed the various Freshers events and the support provided by everyone. Thank you to our staff and students who foster this.

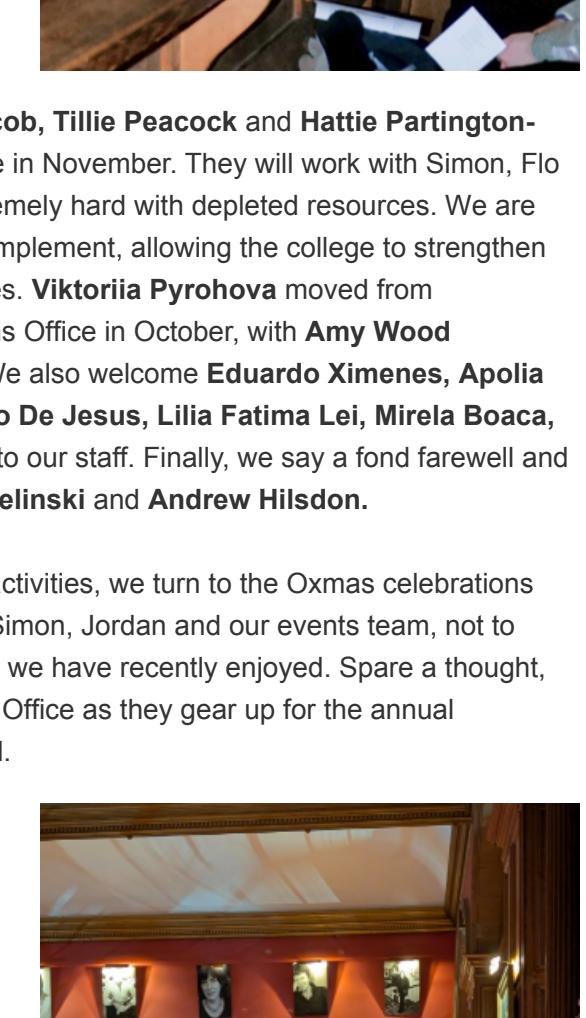


In response to the rapid development of ChatGPT and its roll-out by the University, our Senior Fellow Steve New ran a number of sessions introducing Artificial Intelligence to the new students, presenting well-received examples of where things can go awry – amongst them, entanglement with a one-time guitarist in the Sex Pistols. On this theme, it was a special pleasure for me to catch up over dinner with Mike Thorne (Physics, 1966) who visited the college with his wife Leila in November. Mike was instrumental in persuading EMI to sign the Sex Pistols in 1976 before the Punk wave exploded, and had a remarkable impact on the UK music scene. Mike and Leila's impact on the college has also been substantial, with generous support of bursaries and prizes in recognition of Neil Tanner's role in opening up Hertford to schools in the north-east of England.

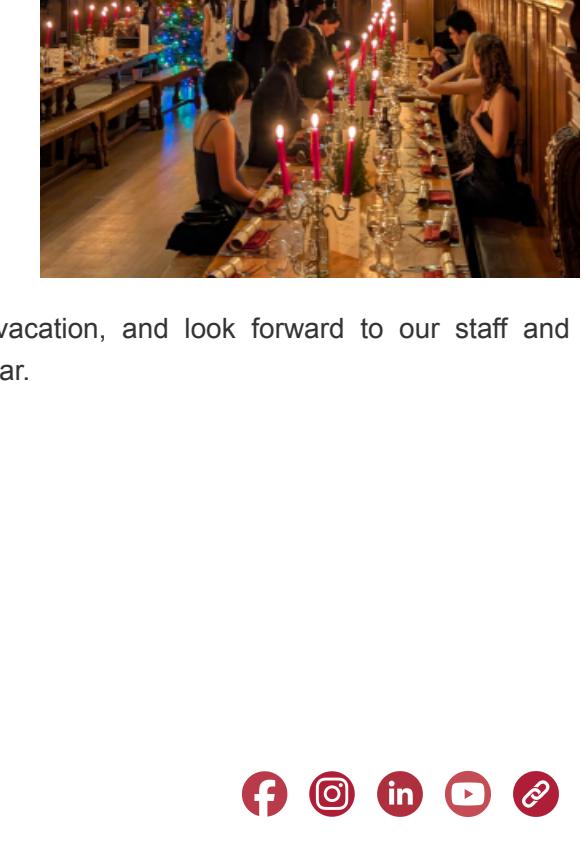
This may be straining the narrative, but another long-running connection with EMI music comes through Paul Watts, long-time stalwart and former chairman of the Boat Club Society. He, along with many other alumni, joined us in October for a rousing celebration of the 150th anniversary of the College Boat Club and 50 years of women rowing at Hertford. It was heartwarming to see so many former rowers and supporters returning to celebrate the club, including our world champions Paul Mattick and Steph Cullen and Olympic medallist Zoe Lee, as well as everyone who maintains a connection with this special part of our community. In addition to these important anniversaries, we also celebrated a remarkable 30-year record of excellent coaching by Graham Topping, and thanked all our supporters, and particularly Boris Tyzuk, who could not attend the event, but generously donated funding to enable current students and recent leavers to do so. Thankfully, river conditions have been kind this term and our new men's and women's crews have been able to participate in the novice regatta.



Following on from his entertaining discourse on the medieval origins of Hertford College at the John Donne event at the beginning of October, Christopher Tyerman's book *The History and Pre-History of Hertford College, Oxford: Survival and Renewals* had its official launch a couple of weeks later, attended by many friends and colleagues. Another memorable and convivial evening ensued. This was followed by a gathering of the Warnock Society at the beginning of November, where Christopher again regaled us with anecdotes and discoveries, this time from the later history of the college. His talk stimulated lively discussion over the lunch that followed.



Later in November we enjoyed another chance to see highlights of the archaeological finds uncovered during the excavations for the library developments, alongside some of the early books from our collection, displayed by our librarians. The project to extend and redevelop the library continues to make good progress. Oxford Archaeology are now working underneath the buildings in the south-west corner of OB Quad and continue to find interesting artefacts as they burrow further into the site. Once the finds have been inspected, analysed and catalogued, the story of the Hertford Dig will be a fascinating companion to Christopher's book. We hope that we are now approaching the mid-point of the project, but will have a more secure timeline when the archaeologists conclude their work.



It is a privilege to celebrate the achievements of our new Honorary Fellows **Professor Hagan Bayley**, **Professor Dame Kay Davies**, **Lord Stephen Massey**, **Professor Ross Rickaby** and **Dr Kim Stanley Robinson**. We look forward to seeing them at many of our college events in the coming years. We also welcome this year's Visiting Fellows: **Kate McGrath** for a second year associated with the new Schwarzman Centre's cultural programme; renowned film maker and storyteller **Anthony Geffen**; and our Heywood Fellow **Jenny Bates**.

Whilst we are glad to celebrate our new fellows, we also pause to remember those who have left us. My friend and colleague **Professor Robin Devenish** died in November. Robin was a tutor in Physics and a great citizen of both the college and the University. He provided calm and thoughtful counsel and undertook many important roles at Hertford, including as Senior Tutor and Dean. I am particularly grateful to him for his help when I took up my fellowship. We were also saddened to learn of the death of Honorary Fellow **Bishop Thomas McMahon**. He was a wonderful supporter of the college, officiating and preaching at many college events, including at the retirement of our long-serving chaplain Reverend Michael Chantry in 2002.



Speaking of college events, this term Anette Mikes organised another spectacular event under the Oxford Ministry for the Future banner, featuring authors and historians discussing the Arctic, the changes wrought by climate change, and the impact on its peoples, accompanied by musical performances and a polar bear! We also welcomed Will Hutton back for a session to save the UK economy – if only we had a left-leaning government to enact it... That evening concluded with a theatre visit for an evening of science stand-up, featuring our own Professor Alison Woollard, who reeled off more worm-based comedy than any of us are likely to encounter again.



Most recently we celebrated our commitment to diversity and inclusion, and showcased the talents of students and staff, in a wonderful evening of music, art and poetry marking the centenary of the publication of *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke in 1925. The book, an anthology of articles on culture, poetry, music, drama and art, is viewed as one of the foundations of the Harlem Renaissance. Alain Locke joined Hertford College in 1907 as the first African American Rhodes Scholar at Oxford.



With the imminent conclusion of teaching activities, we turn to the Oxmas celebrations and the festive delights masterminded by Simon, Jordan and our events team, not to mention the wonderful Thanksgiving meals we have recently enjoyed. Spare a thought, however, for our fellows and the Academic Office as they gear up for the annual undergraduate admissions interview period.



We extend a warm welcome to **Maddy Jacob**, **Tillie Peacock** and **Hattie Partington-Smyth**, who joined the Development Office in November. They will work with Simon, Flo and Georgia, who have been working extremely hard with depleted resources. We are delighted that the team is now up to full complement, allowing the college to strengthen its alumni relations and fundraising activities. **Viktoria Pyrohova** moved from Accommodation to the Events Office in October, **Amelia Wood** replaced her as Accommodation Officer. We also welcome **Eduardo Ximenes**, **Apolia Costa Santos** and **Ronaldo Lei** from the Jesus College, **Luisa Matalomani** to our staff. Finally, we say a fond farewell and thank you to **Linda Cassetta**, **Tomasz Zielinski** and **Andrew Hildson**.

With the imminent conclusion of teaching activities, we turn to the Oxmas celebrations and the festive delights masterminded by Simon, Jordan and our events team, not to mention the wonderful Thanksgiving meals we have recently enjoyed. Spare a thought, however, for our fellows and the Academic Office as they gear up for the annual undergraduate admissions interview period.



I wish everyone a happy and relaxing vacation, and look forward to our staff and students returning refreshed in the New Year.



*Kate*  
Professor Pat Roche, Interim Principal

